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Indian Tech Billionaire Nandan Nilekani And Wife Rohini Join The Giving Pledge



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I write about India's wealth creators. [FULL BIO](#) ✓

Bangalore power couple Nandan Nilekani, cofounder of tech giant Infosys, who recently returned to the company as non-executive chairman after a boardroom shakeup, and his wife Rohini, announced over the weekend that they had signed on to the Giving Pledge. Their commitment to give away half their wealth, pegged at \$1.7 billion, was made in Bangalore in the presence of Bill Gates, who launched the Giving Pledge with wife Melinda and Warren Buffett seven years ago.



Co-founder of Infosys Nandan Nilekani (Photo credit:MANJUNATH KIRAN/AFP/Getty Images)

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The addition of the Nilekanis brings the total number of members of this elite network of donors to 171 from 21 countries. All four Indian signatories to the Giving Pledge are from the tech hub of Bangalore, which is now India's philanthropic hotspot. Other pledgers are tech magnate Azim Premji, India's most generous,

biotech billionaire Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and property tycoon P.N.C Menon of Sobha Developers.

The Nilekanis' public commitment caps two decades of backing various philanthropic causes led initially by Rohini, who founded Arghyam, a foundation focusing on water and sanitation issues. Her efforts earned her a spot among [Forbes Asia's](#) annual list of Asia's Heroes of [Philanthropy](#) in 2010.

Speaking to *The Economic Times* newspaper as to the timing of their announcement, Rohini disclosed: “ It took me some time to culturally adjust to this that we declare it so publicly...I think the time is right for us now. We're pretty much committed to doing only this.”



(Photo credit: Nilekanis)

Rohini Nilekani, founder, Arghyam

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In their pledge letter, the Nilekanis say their philanthropic efforts would be directed at “societal platforms”. These, they elaborate are “open, technology-enabled ecosystems or nurturing networks. Built on an elegant yet light digital infrastructure, they design spaces for cocreation and participation by all entities with a stake in positive change – from state institutions and entrepreneurs to non-profits or individual citizens. “

The Nilekanis can draw upon Nandan's invaluable experience in creating India's mammoth identity scheme Aadhaar, that has so far provided identity numbers to more than 1.1 billion Indians. Since resigning as chairman of the Unique Identification Authority of India in 2014, the billionaire got involved in various causes such as Ekstep, a non-stop founded by the couple to address learning challenges in primary education. He is also one of the biggest backers of a Bangalore startup that is building a spacecraft to land on the moon.

Gates, a regular visitor to India in recent years, has been personally encouraging India's fast-growing tribe of the super-rich to get more philanthropy-minded at annual gatherings convened together with Premji. While several billionaires have flocked to these meetings, there have been notable absentees such as Mukesh Ambani, India's wealthiest person, whose family is Asia's richest.