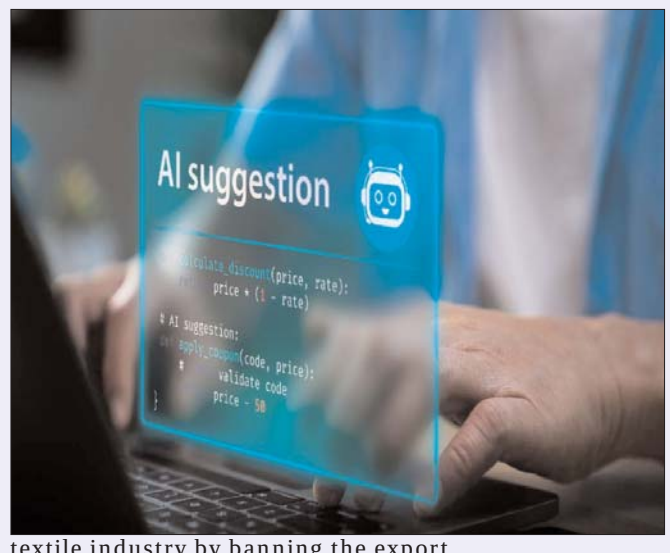
RAHMAN TAKES

Bangladesh has a new Prime Minister and an elected government in place in Dhaka. Tarique Rahman. the first male head of the government in 35 years, comes across as a modern day, soft spoken and a liberal premier for a country where Islamic fundamentalist party the Jamaat-e-Islami is seeking to raise its heads. Jamaat did not win election despite the hype but it has registered its presence and is the largest opposition party. Bangladesh has suffered losses due to the regime change and with Muhammad Yunus being installed as the care taken head of the government. Tarique Rahman carries a lot of political baggage. When his mother was elected the Prime Minister, she joined hands with Jamaat, the very party which was against the formation of Bangladesh. Now is in adversarial position to the same party and it remains to be seen how to manages to keep balance. He also needs to reset his country's ties with India keeping in mind the sensitivities at home. India is alert and yet not allowing itself to be provoked. However, India understands that Bangladesh has allowed itself to become a testing lab for the gliobal forces which want a foothold in the region. Tarique Rahman will also have to prove his mettle against such elements and not allow his country to become a testing lab for global players.

One thing is clear – India will always remain cautious of Bangladesh and its potential to host forces inimical to India's interests and security. Though Delhi and Dhaka should ideally get their relations back on the tracks, realistically, it would never be the same again. India will always be wary of Dhaka and keep a eye on the country. This is from purely security perspective. Resetting ties will be more in favour of Bangladesh as it could avail of the huge benefits India used to give it for trade.

Three tests for India's AI future

Vivan Sharan | Vedika Pandey



Economic historians have long shown that technologies spread not simply because they exist, but because societies are prepared for them - through skills, infrastructure, institutions, and systems that make technology inclusive. As global leaders convene at the India AI Impact Summit, this is the lens through which India's AI moment must be viewed — human capital readiness, access to enabling infrastructure, and institutional capacity. The recent Economic Survey strikes a note of caution, warning that rapid AI deployment could outpace the economy's structural ability to reabsorb labour. With over seven per cent of India's GDP tied to the IT/IT-enabled services sector, the stakes are significant. Unlike previous industrial transformations that automated manual labour, job displacement risks associated with AI are more complex to analyse.

On the one hand, what we already know is that AI systems are increasingly capable of writing and improving their own code, compressing the ladder of skills that once trained human programmers. For a country that relies on human-led services for its export strength, this raises hard questions about the durability of India's talent advantage. But protectionism through delay is also a dead end. Slowing AI diffusion to save jobs will inadvertently subsidise domestic inefficiency, leaving industries vulnerable to more agile global competitors who route around — or simply operate beyond — such barriers. An earlier parallel comes from Britain's attempt to protect its domestic textile industry by banning the export of advanced machinery to preserve its competitive edge. Although these restrictions targeted exports, not imports, they were rooted in the same logic of limiting the spread of technology to protect domestic industries. Nonetheless, British machines were smuggled out and used to establish mills across continental Europe. Britain could not stop the rise of competing manufacturing hubs. The way forward is to invest in the capacity to assist workers in their transition, rather than trying to protect them from AI. This entails imagining a meaningful social safety net that is appropriate for the AI era and encouraging companies, to invest in innovation and R&D.

Debates on AI also tend to pose a false choice between centralised computing exemplified by cloud services and decentralised on-device computing. In reality, developing economies will likely operate somewhere in between, balancing brute force with resilience and access.

There is a financial aspect to this discussion too. Cloud computing, once assumed to be infinitely scalable, now faces profitability pressures as AI workloads become vastly more expensive. The orchestration of AI workloads between the cloud and last-mile devices such as smartphones is a feasible alternative in many use cases. This is also where sector-specific deployment is crucial and AI skills can be viewed as 'foundational' infrastructure. In the past, organisations relied on IT departments to choose software, troubleshoot problems, and train staff on tools. AI is different. Hospitals, banks, courts, and factories need in-house expertise that understands both the technology and the domain in which it operates. Building such enlightened workforces may be as important as building data centres.

There is yet another facet of AI diffusion that must concern us all. Regulatory and policy institutions lacking the technical capacity to supervise new technologies tend to rely on blunt measures that are often antithetical to progress.

We have seen this cycle play out in the regulation of encrypted messaging and digital assets. In the face of encrypted communication, legitimate concerns over illicit activity have sometimes led to demands to bypass encryption altogether. This is characteristic of a policy environment where the absence of precise investigative tools leads to "all-or-nothing" approaches. Similarly, in the early days of cryptocurrency, regulatory responses often sought to isolate or restrict the technology due to limited visibility into its flows. In both cases, regulatory insecurity stemmed from gaps in supervisory capacity rather than a desire for censorship. When regulators cannot easily distinguish between legitimate and harmful activity, the default response tends towards precautionary restrictions, with unintended consequences such as the offshoring of digital asset entrepreneurs and innovation from India to the UAE and Singapore.

With AI, the stakes are even higher. If we do not build institutional capacity to understand and respond to AI-driven threats with technical nuance, we risk a future where online trust is managed through restrictions that constrain innovation, speech, creativity, and the future of work itself. Regulators, courts, and even the executive branch must bridge technical capacity gaps so they are not forced to choose between vulnerability and regressive rulemaking.

It is in this overarching context that the AI Knowledge Consortium, which consists of 16 research-led institutions, and The Pioneer, are hosting a panel discussion on February 19th, which brings together senior tech and policy leaders for a conversation on how AI is reshaping economies, institutions, and societies.

The conversation will examine why some economies move from experimentation to widespread use of new technologies while others do not.

WHY GOD ALLOWS SUFFERING DESPITE HIS DIVINE CONTROL

Ajit Kumar Bishnoi

A question arises: if this is so, why do we see a despot giving trouble to his countrymen? Why is he not stopped by God — the Controller? The same question arises about a tsunami washing away innocent people. And why does a good man suffer while a bad man enjoys? Why do even devotees endure suffering?

Before I answer these questions, let me give a broad picture of what God does as the Controller. God, by His Divine willpower, creates when the time comes to give a new start to Creation. God causes dissolution when the time runs out for the old Creation. In the interim, God maintains it by providing sufficient energy, light, fresh air, potable water, fertile land, etc. In this period, no one can destroy Creation. In spite of being the Controller, God allows free will to all souls; otherwise, they would become robots. God enforces the 'Karmaphala Siddhanta', which is: what you sow is what you reap. This is based on 'dharma' - righteousness. Surely, profit and loss, birth and death, honour and dishonour are in God's hands. God also sets in motion material nature, which causes rain, summer, winter, etc. Three types of miseries — caused by oneself, by others, and by natural forces like earthquakes — always exist because this planet is 'duhkhalaya' — a place of misery (The Bhagavad Gita 8.15).

Now, the answers to the questions raised in the beginning. A despot reaches that position because of good 'karmas' (acts) done in the past. If he decides to misuse this privilege to trouble others, he now creates bad karmaphalas — punishable in the future. No one escapes this, and it may happen in a future life. Rewards and punishments are strictly between God and souls; others have no role in it. God strictly follows dharma, which He Himself has formulated. A tsunami causes death because those who die were destined to. A bad man may be enjoying now because good karmaphalas have manifested. Similarly, a good man may be suffering now because bad karmas have manifested. The same is true of devotees, who must have sinned before taking shelter of God.

All devotees, good people, and bad people are qualified for this planet, where both enjoyment and suffering always exist. It is neither heaven nor Vaikuntha — the abode of God. One must deal with 'sukha' and 'duhkha' appropriately; devotees do so with help from God. They seek liberation, being unhappy with being placed on this earthly planet.

The conclusion is: God's control is perfect; He is absolutely fair. Everything is logical. Great devotees of the past are proofs of God's 'kripa' (grace). God's will always prevails. There should be no doubts about it. This is the Big Picture.

India's AI Impact Summit: Advancing structural transformation for the world of work

Dinesh Sood

India's AI Impact Summit represents more than a diplomatic achievement. It demonstrates a broader understanding that artificial intelligence constitutes a structural transformation in how societies generate, allocate, and prepare for future work. While public discourse frequently portrays AI as a threat to employment, this perspective overlooks a more significant reality. AI is not eradicating the future of work; rather, it is rendering obsolete certain skills and employment pathways, compelling economies to adopt continuous re-skilling as the cornerstone of opportunity. This distinction is critical. While fixed job roles may diminish, transform, or vanish, the concept of work is expanding, diversifying, and becoming increasingly accessible to individuals who adapt alongside technological advancements.

Historically, particularly in emerging economies such as India, employment followed a linear progression: education led to degrees, entry-level positions, and eventual advancement to senior roles. While this structure provided stability, it also fostered rigidity through repetition, specialisation, and incremental growth. Artificial intelligence disrupts this traditional model by performing structured, repeatable tasks such as coding standard modules, processing documents, generating reports, managing routine customer enquiries, and analysing large datasets — functions that have long formed the foundation of entry-level roles across sectors like IT services, finance, legal support, and media. As AI assumes responsibility for these tasks, traditional entry-level positions are declining in significance. This does not signal the disappearance of work, but a reduction in the economic value of repetitive functions, as employers increasingly rely on intelligent systems to perform predictable tasks more efficiently and accurately than large human teams.

Technological advancements have previously disrupted established career pathways. The Industrial Revolution, for example, eliminated many forms of manual artisanal labour but generated new roles in factory management, engineering, and logistics. Similarly, the computer revolution of the 1990s automated clerical work while creating opportunities in software engineering, digital marketing, and information management. Each technological wave has displaced specific tasks while simultaneously generating new categories of employment. Artificial intelligence represents the next phase of this evolution, distinguished by its unprecedented speed.

The most significant impact of AI lies in its capacity to augment human capabilities rather than merely replace them. While AI can generate content, analyse trends, and automate workflows, it remains dependent on human judgement to establish objectives, interpret outcomes, ensure ethical application, and translate outputs into meaningful actions. Consequently, the economic value is shifting from task execution to skills such as problem-solving and creativity. For example, a junior software engineer can now utilise AI to generate functional code rapidly. However, the design of complex systems, assurance of reliability, comprehension of user requirements, and integration of technology into business objectives continue to necessitate human expertise. Similarly, while AI can support medical professionals in diagnosis, attributes such as empathy, clinical judgement, and the cultivation of patient trust remain uniquely human responsibilities.

This transformation redefines work as the orchestration of intelligence rather than the mere execution of tasks. Individuals who develop the ability to collaborate effectively with AI systems increase their productivity and value. Rather than replacing human workers, AI enhances their output, enabling individuals to achieve results that previously required entire teams. As a result, re-skilling has become essential. The conventional model of front-loaded education, in which individuals complete their studies early and rely on that knowledge throughout their careers, is increasingly unsustainable.

Re-skilling is evolving into a continuous process rather than a singular event. This process extends beyond technical training. Although digital literacy, proficiency with AI tools, and data analysis are important, human-centric competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, and interdisciplinary understanding are equally vital. This shift also democratises access to opportunity. In the past, advanced tools and capabilities were primarily available to specialists. Currently, AI tools enable individuals with limited formal training to perform complex tasks, design products, analyse markets, and establish businesses. For India, AI presents a complex opportunity. Sectors that have traditionally depended on routine services, especially IT-enabled and back-office operations, are experiencing significant disruption. However, India's large population, robust digital infrastructure, and entrepreneurial dynamism uniquely position the country to lead in AI-driven growth.

India's digital public infrastructure - including identity systems, digital payments, and large-scale service delivery platforms — demonstrates the nation's capacity to implement technology at scale. AI can leverage this foundation to enhance healthcare delivery, agricultural productivity, educational access, and governance efficiency.

The Global South AI Impact Summit reflects India's recognition that AI must not remain concentrated among a few nations or corporations. Instead, it should be harnessed to expand opportunity across developing economies. The primary challenge is not a lack of jobs, but rather workforce readiness in terms of relevant skills.

The challenge is not job scarcity — it is skill readiness. If India invests in re-skilling, it can transform its workforce into the world's largest pool of AI-enabled talent. If it fails, it risks widening inequality between those who adapt and those who do not. AI is also transforming the concept of employment. The future workforce will likely consist of fewer individuals committed to single, lifelong careers and more 'portfolio workers' who integrate multiple skills across various domains.

A professional may be a data analyst, content creator, entrepreneur, and consultant at the same time, using AI tools to enhance productivity across roles. Workers must actively shape their own careers rather than relying solely on institutional pathways. Responsibility for employability is shifting from institutions to individuals.

Paradoxically, the advancement of artificial intelligence heightens the significance of human intelligence. While AI can process information, it cannot experience meaning.