India will lead in AI use for solving 'real' issues: Nadella

'Cloud a game changer; tremendous momentum in its adoption'

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Microsoft Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Satya Nadella is optimistic about India's future, especially in the field of technology, with the expanding base of software developers from the country, rising number of artificial intelligence (AI) projects, and growing aspiration in Indian youths for upskilling themselves.

Nadella, who is on a four-day visit to India, said India would lead in using AI for solving real problems. "India leads when it comes to digital public goods. There is India and then there is daylight, when it comes to the enlightened way in which India is building its digital infrastructure," he said on Tuesday while addressing a select gathering of India's top CEOs at the Microsoft Future Ready Leadership Summit in Mumbai.

He listed cloud and AI as imperatives that could be helpful in driving economic growth. "Cloud has been a big game changer...Cloud is still in its early-to-intermediate innings," he said on Tuesday while addressing a select gathering of India's top CEOs at the Microsoft

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Future Ready Leadership Summit in Mumbai. He added that there was "tremendous momentum" in cloud adoption. Hyderabad-born Nadella further said India would be the third-largest economy by the end of this decade.

Recently, India overtook the UK to become the fifth-largest economy in the world. "Github is the largest base for developers around the globe, and India is the second-biggest contributor to the developer ecosystem. Second, in terms of AI projects, India is number one," he said.

enterprises, and fragmented across the country.

K S Babu, secretary, IPCA, said dumping from China and Hong Kong had been going on for more than four years.

"We have somehow managed it so far but now our existence depends on anti-dumping duty. If it continues like this, there will be no PCB industry in India in a few years. We are not able to use our optimum capacity as China and Hong Kong have been running the show. Unless we utilise our full capacity, we will not be able to survive in the market," he said.

Yogesh Gupta, managing partner at Comercinate Advisor LLP, a firm specialising in indirect taxes, said anti-dumping duty would protect Indian PCB manufacturers who had been trying to scale up in recent years. "It will also encourage R&D in electronic component manufacturing," he added.

After a detailed investigation, the DGTR recommends to the Department of Revenue in the finance ministry whether or not to impose anti-dumping on a product. However, the finance ministry has the final authority to either accept or reject the recommendations of the DGTR.

Nadella...

"If the next big age is going to be AI, then human capital is already here and doing innovative things," Nadella said.

He also said the upskilling aspiration in India was huge. "According to the LinkedIn data, India has 2x the rate of skilling. What is important in the labour force is how updated one is about their skill and taking pride in it, and market forces rewarding is magic."

Nadella said that as India and countries across the globe faced the challenges of marco uncertainty, it was important for companies to achieve more with less. "In this, cloud will be the game changer...Cloud is 70-80 per cent energy efficient on

workload. You hedge against the demand cycle, you consume it only when you need it," he said. Microsoft, said Nadella, was investing in 60-plus regions and 200-plus data centres worldwide. In India, the tech giant is expanding and setting its fourth data centre, in Hyderabad. "We want to make the cloud available everywhere," he said, adding that by 2025, most applications would be built on cloud-native infrastructure.

Microsoft has operated in India for more than 32 years. The country is a hub of innovation and resourcefulness for the company. He also shared that AI-powered models like ChatGPT and Dall-E would help knowledge workers and enhance their productivity. "Every knowledge worker is going to be more creative, more expressive, and more productive. Every frontline worker will be able to do more knowledge work than they ever did. Every design task, whether it's software engineering, mechanical design or architecture, is going to be much more productive

going forward. So, it's ultimately, in my opinion, going to accelerate human creativity, human ingenuity, and human productivity across a range of tasks." Nadella highlighted six "digital imperatives" that businesses must focus on today: Migrate to the cloud; unify data and apply AI models as platforms; empower fusion teams (basically remote work); re-energise your workforce (upskilling); embrace collaborative business processes; and prioritise security.

When it came to productivity, he said, there was productivity paranoia, where leaders and managers believed employees were not productive when, in fact, they were becoming burned out. He believed that data could bridge the gap. "Conducting soft skilling, and during meetings everyone's voice should be heard. People value upgrading skills and this is critical for building loyalty," he added.

When asked about the current inflationary environment impacting tech companies, Nadella said everyone had to be

much more productive. He also questioned if productivity needed to be seen through a new lens with models like CoPilot allowing more time for software developers.

"Do not let stories about what's happening in the tech industry confuse the rest; because the opportunity is growing. Tech talent is getting hired across industries. I feel this is the rebalancing of the talent pool so that every sector becomes tech powered," he added.

Space parks...

Creating a dedicated park had been a key suggestion of the Indian Space Association (ISpA), the apex industry body for space and satellite companies. Established in 2020, it represents a disparate list of corporations with growing stake in the sector such as Bharti Airtel, Larsen & Toubro, Nelco (Tata), Bharat Forge, Godrej, OneWeb India, BAE Systems, and others.

ISpA has pushed for establishing parks to bring together firms operating across the space-tech value chain.

The move will also be important for attracting global start-ups working in the space sector, provide a ready ecosystem for small and medium enterprises focused on components and sub-component of satellite manufacturing, and identify new downstream revenue-generating use cases.

ISpA was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and is touted to become the "single-window" agency for enabling the opening up of the space sector, and create more commercial avenues for the tech developed by Indian Space Research Organisation.

Its suggestion to run the parks on a public-private partnership (PPP) mode has been received well by the government, sources said.

Growing fast

According to a recent report

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella in Mumbai on Tuesday PHOTO: PTI