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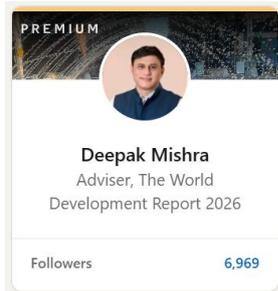
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Blog #1

Title: Will India's AI Path Be Different from Its ICT and Internet Journey?

Date: January 18, 2026

Will India's AI Path Be Different from Its ICT and Internet Journey?

Listening to the discussions at the AI Conclave in Lucknow (Jan 12), I was struck by how differently India's AI revolution appears to be unfolding compared to its ICT and internet journey over the past two decades. Three thoughts crossed my mind:

1 Who occupies the commanding heights?

India's internet revolution was clearly private-sector led. Tom Friedman's "flat world" insight—conceived on the Infosys campus—captured an era when firms like Infosys, TCS, Wipro, and Satyam were the fountainhead of ideas and innovation.

In the AI era, the centre of gravity appears to have shifted. The government is in the driver's seat. From narrative-building and strategy to large-scale diffusion, institutions like the PMO, MeitY, and NITI Aayog are leading the charge. India's ambition to become the third country to host the Global AI Summit is a visible marker of this shift.

2 From class to mass?

The IT revolution was led by a relatively small class of visionary entrepreneurs and technocrats. Even transformative initiatives like Aadhaar were conceived and implemented by a tight group of experts.

AI feels different. New-age AI entrepreneurs are emerging from across the country. Participants in regional conclaves like those in Lucknow or Bhubaneswar seemed as well informed and engaged as those in Delhi or Mumbai.

3 Digital divides vs. AI inclusion

Despite five decades of the digital revolution, over half of Indians still lack smartphones and internet access. India is among the world's most digitalised economies—and yet also among the most digitally divided.



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Will the AI era be different? Possibly. Early efforts to make the AI stack—compute, data, models, and interfaces—widely accessible hold the promise of a more inclusive transformation than the internet era delivered.

So the big question: Will India harness AI more effectively than it did the ICT and internet revolution—by making it state-led, mass-driven, and inclusion-first?

Here is the result of the public poll:

Is India's AI moment fundamentally different from its internet era?

You can see how people vote. [Learn more](#)

Yes: state-led, mass-driven	27%
Partly: Directionally different	27%
No: Private-led, as before	18%
Too early to tell	27%

11 votes • Poll closed