

# AI calling: Indian software engineers seen writing own code for success

Techies who understand how to use the technology are in big demand

**VENKATESH GANESH**

Mumbai, March 5

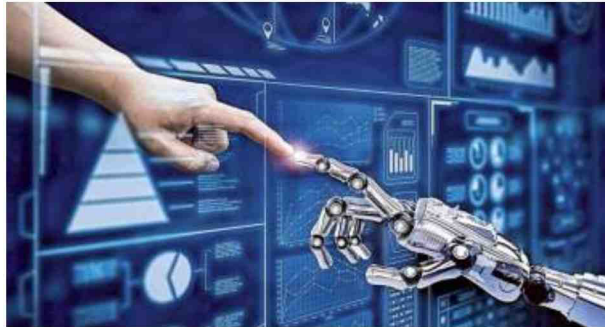
Call it Indian IT 3.0. After Y2K and the BPO boom, Indian software engineers are making rapid inroads in acquiring artificial intelligence (AI) skills.

AI, considered the holy grail for nerds, is seeing increasing adoption and this is resulting in a huge requirement for techies who understand how to use this technology.

## Skills penetration

A report by Stanford titled AI Index 2019 points out some interesting trends. It states that the average penetration of AI skills in India in select sectors is 2.6 times the global average. Stanford, along with LinkedIn, analysed sectors such as software and IT, education, finance, manufacturing and hardware and networking.

Apart from manufacturing, India has topped in AI penetration in all the other sectors. Stanford analysed this informa-



tion, based on the logic that for a given country, the relative skill group penetration is the ratio between the penetration rate of a given skill group in each country and the global average penetration rate.

India currently has 40 lakh people working in the IT sector. Industry body Nasscom, in its recent report, said that the sector has added two lakh jobs in 2019-20, with sector revenues of \$191 billion in 2019, including exports. In AI, India is followed by the US, China and France across all the categories.

While it is hard to ascertain the break-up of people working in non-AI-related job roles, every bit of technology work

eventually has some touch point with AI.

“It is like the old idiom — all roads lead to Rome,” Keshav Muruges, Chairman, Nasscom, said, recently.

## India at an inflection point

Unlike any other market, Stanford points out that India with its one crore workforce additions in a decade has the demographic dividend to train, produce, and export sophisticated AI products and services for inclusive growth and development.

“We are seeing India at an inflection point when it comes to AI talent,” said Erica Brescia, Chief Operating Officer, Git-

Hub, an open source repository of software codes through which techies can collaborate. GitHub recently set up its Indian subsidiary.

Start-ups such as Chennai-based YAP, a payments solution provider, is now looking at using AI to help in better decision-making based on the data it keeps getting. However, tech talent in AI is hard to find.

“As a strategy, most of our hirings come from smaller towns and almost all the graduates need to undergo some form of training as their college education is insufficient,” said Madhusudanan R, founder YAP.

In this perfect AI storm, the number of AI companies receiving funding has increased, with over 3,000 firms receiving funding in 2018. In 2019, till November, globally \$37.4 billion in funding has gone to AI start-ups.

In the midst of the increased positivity around AI skills, India still lags behind China. According to a Tsinghua University study, in September 2018, the amount of investment and financing in AI technology in China accounted for 60 per cent of the overall investment of \$27 billion.

