

immersion INDIA®

FIELD NOTES · SHEET 07

Adoption Ran Ahead of Invention

Why India Uses More AI Than It Builds

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE · BENGALURU · MUMBAI · NEW DELHI

An illustration, not reportage: the benches, floors, classrooms and counters where AI is landing in India.

100m
weekly ChatGPT users
second-largest market after the US

38,000+
GPUs on the state portal
from about ₹134 an hour for an H100

$676m
AI startup funding, H1 2026
four times H1 2025, across 57 deals

3.0×
AI skills against the world
the highest penetration of any country

> India uses more AI than almost anywhere on earth and builds less of it than its size suggests. Those are not two facts. They are the same one: the users arrived first, and everything since has been an attempt to catch up with them.

A hundred million Indians open ChatGPT in a given week — the second-largest user base on earth, and the largest population of student users anywhere. None of it waited for an Indian model, an Indian data centre or an Indian rule book: it arrived on phones that were already there, over data that was already cheap.

The building is younger and far smaller. Indian AI startups raised $676m in the first half of 2026 — four times the year before, and a rounding error beside the single rounds two American labs closed in the same months. So the state is buying compute rather than backing capital: more than 38,000 GPUs on a common portal at roughly ₹134 an hour, and public money behind four attempts at a foundation model.

THE SIGNAL TO WATCH Whether an Indian model ends up inside something people pay for. Parameters and GPU counts are inputs; production is the only output that counts.

Make India your classroom

A field guide for global executive education. Turn over for the site visits, the questions for the room and what we run.

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BENGALURU, KARNATAKA, INDIA

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Bring the cohort to the case.

Every sheet in this series is a place you can stand in. The dark store, the fab, the swap kiosk, the mandi, the GCC floor — all of them within a day of Bengaluru, and all of them take visitors.

Field Notes is a series on the forces shaping India now, designed to give decision-makers exploring India the right perspective before they commit to it. Each one takes a single force, gives you the argument and the four numbers that anchor it, and names the places in India where you can go and stand in front of it. The series is drawn from *The India That Is Unique*, Immersion India's field guide for global executive education.

ON THE GROUND — ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Sarvam AI, Bengaluru
Shipped 30- and 105-billion-parameter models in February. India's second AI unicorn, on $234m.

BharatGen, IIT Bombay
Param2: 17 billion parameters across 22 Indian languages, built with public money and Nvidia's stack.

Gnani.ai, Bengaluru
Vachana clones a voice from under ten seconds of speech, in twelve Indian languages.

THREE QUESTIONS FOR THE ROOM

01 India leads the world both in AI skill penetration and in AI talent leaving. Which of those two will still be true in 2030, and what would change it?

02 The state is subsidising compute rather than funding models directly. Is cheap GPU time industrial policy, or a transfer to whoever was going to buy them anyway?

03 Indian labs build for 22 languages and the low-end phone — constraints no frontier lab carries. Defensible moat, or a smaller market dressed up as a strategy?

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