

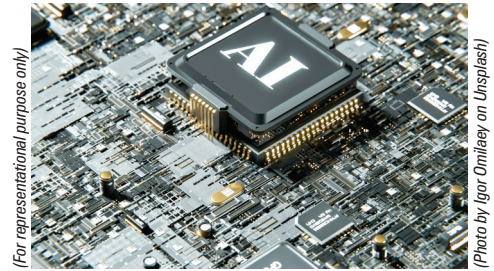


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At the technology crossroads

The recent ugly ten-minute verbal battle between the world’s superpower and the subject of a three-year war should alarm us about the potential for AI enabled global players to decimate weaker opponents. The challenges that policy makers will have to address will include ensuring responsible AI, mitigating bias, and maintaining human oversight



(For representational purpose only)

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Two recent high profile events raised expectations for the push that will come from AI, not only to the IT sector in India but also for the nation and all industries in the economy. However, as the country faces declining stock markets and a world full of geo-political and economic uncertainties, the jury is still out if 2024-25 will be a year of transformation or decline for industry players and eager entrepreneurs.

The first event was TiECon Pune, our local summit for entrepreneurs in the city which featured star speakers not only from Pune, but also Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata. Two power panels at the session explored the future applications of AI across industry sectors. The panel led by me brought in perspectives of NASSCOM and Indian and global industry on the threat posed by Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) and Artificial Super Intelligence (ASI). It also discussed the enormous opportunities in combining machine intelligence with human intelligence, and creating an environment of Dual Intelligence to grow future facing businesses.

The tech industry’s annual extravaganza, NASSCOM Technology Leadership Forum (NTLF) in Mumbai further expanded the thinking dimensions around human centric artificial intelligence deployment.

From an industry point of view, Sindhu Gangadharan, Chairperson, NASSCOM and Rajesh Nambiar, President, NASSCOM, underlined the presence of over 30,000 start-ups with ten percent in the deep tech area, to demonstrate why AI skills intensity in India is three times higher than other G20 countries, and emphasised that upskilling and reskilling must be continuous in industry to cope with rapidly changing technologies.

The reason why AI is entering every boardroom

as a discussion point is its potential to transform. India’s leader in financial services, the State Bank of India, and a world leader in digital banking, DBS, both had CEOs arguing that from fraud detection to customer experiences, the potential and delivered performance of AI is tremendous.

Other industry CEOs and veterans like the Chairman of Nestle India, spoke about the continuous change in all stakeholder touch points, including learning processes in organisations, which are now becoming a fluid lifelong learning cycle and shared problem solving with Gen AI.

On the customer side, there is a clear consensus emerging that “smart” customers of the future will wield more power and have much lower switching costs and hence exhibit less loyalty. Businesses that are not just pushers but engage in consultative selling will win more customer traction in a crowded marketplace.

Take away from these three days of deliberation — the world is changing at a rapid pace, first because of AI, then Gen AI and soon Agentic AI solutions. Add to this ready mix, the sheer power of quantum computing and one can be clear that the power of prediction will increase manifold,

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driving productivity, actionable insights, and the expectations of all stakeholders from firms, students from academic institutions, and every citizen. Woe betides the institution that has not prepared itself for these changes.

With the cost of intelligence, irrespective of the source, dropping at a rapid pace, the only aspect that will continue to be the prerogative of humans will be consciousness. It is this consciousness that will keep the evil potential of AGI and ASI at bay, even as technological advancements surprise us with their capabilities and pace. And, with the world moving more and more towards centralisation of power in the hands of a few, it will need a very conscious citizenry to ensure that great power does not get manipulated.

The recent ugly ten-minute verbal battle between the world’s superpower and the subject of a three-year war should alarm us about the potential for AI enabled global players to decimate weaker opponents. The challenges that policy makers will have to address will include ensuring responsible AI, mitigating bias, and maintaining human oversight.

America has announced a total opening up of AI Innovation while Europe is still leaning towards massive regulation and governance. India has a roadmap to becoming an AI powerhouse while balancing innovation with regulation. In the words of Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, “India is writing its own digital destiny,” and the plans outlined by him for centres of excellence and techno-legal frameworks to address security concerns while fostering innovation, can give us all confidence that the future is in safe hands.

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