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THE GREAT INTEGRATION

Technology, Talent, and Transformation in Asia

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Executive Summary

The SpeakIn Asia Dialogues Forum convened in Pune bringing together 16 senior leaders from across India's most dynamic industries — financial technology, healthcare, manufacturing, media, banking, and professional services. The conversation, centred on Talent, Technology & Transformation, explored how India's organisations are navigating the seismic shift caused by artificial intelligence, generative tools, and rapidly evolving workforce expectations.

Pune, home to over 400,000 IT professionals and India's largest automotive manufacturing cluster, sits at a unique crossroads: a city steeped in industrial tradition yet racing toward a knowledge-economy future. Its GCC ecosystem, thriving startup culture, and world-class research institutions make it an ideal lens through which to examine how India's workforce and organisations must evolve.

The forum surfaced three irreversible shifts: first, AI is rapidly moving from pilot to production across enterprise functions — compressing timelines that previously took days to minutes; second, the traditional job description is becoming obsolete, replaced by skills marketplaces, career pathing, and an 'AI mindset'; third, technology adoption without cultural transformation is doomed to fail — human change management remains the hardest and most critical part of any transformation journey.

16	$17B	92%	3%
C-Suite Leaders across 8 industry sectors	India AI Market by 2027 (25–35% CAGR)	ML Forecast Accuracy — Deutsche Bank liquidity models	Organisations actually realising AI value

KEY FORUM THEMES

- AI adoption requires cultural change first — technology without mindset transformation creates expensive installations, not integration
- The corporate ladder is shrinking — AI will eliminate the bottom 3 entry-level steps, demanding academia rethink graduate readiness
- India's GCC advantage — deep process expertise positions India uniquely to reimagine enterprise AI across hire-to-retire, procure-to-pay
- Skill-based organisations are replacing role-based hierarchies — the job description is becoming an artefact of the past
- Cybersecurity and sustainability must be co-designed with AI — not added as afterthoughts

Pune: India's Industrial Powerhouse Meets Knowledge Economy

Pune occupies a singular position in India's economic geography. It is simultaneously the country's automotive capital — home to Bajaj, Tata Motors, Mercedes-Benz, and over 4,000 auto-component manufacturers — and one of its fastest-growing IT and GCC destinations. This industrial-digital duality makes Pune a living laboratory for the transformation agenda that dominated the forum discussion.

₹9.4L Cr	400K+	$8B+	4,000+
Pune Metro GDP — 3rd largest economic zone	IT Professionals across 500+ IT/ITeS companies	GCC Revenue from 50+ global capability centres	Auto-Component Firms — 40% of India's output

The juxtaposition of old-economy manufacturing and new-economy technology creates a distinctive workforce challenge in Pune that mirrors India's broader national dilemma. For every Deutsche Bank engineer building AI-powered KYC systems, there are thousands of factory workers whose livelihoods depend on how thoughtfully automation is introduced. Speakers at the forum were acutely conscious of this tension — and consistent in their conclusion: technology must be an enabler of human potential, not a replacement for it.

The city's academic infrastructure — anchored by institutions like Thapar University's research centres, Symbiosis, COEP, and Savitribai Phule Pune University — provides a talent pipeline that is both an asset and a responsibility. As one forum speaker noted, if AI eliminates the bottom three rungs of the corporate ladder, academia must fundamentally rethink what 'job-ready' means.

1 The AI Mindset Imperative: Beyond Tools to Transformation

The most significant consensus to emerge from the Pune forum was deceptively simple: organisations are confusing installation with integration. Adding an AI tool to an existing workflow is not transformation — it is decoration. True transformation requires redesigning roles, reimagining workflows, and above all, cultivating an entirely new mindset across every level of the organisation.

"Simply adding a tool is not integration — it's more like an installation. Organisations need to identify roles that can be meaningfully enhanced by the utilisation of AI, and instead of traditional skill sets, look for an AI mindset, adaptability, and a quick ability to learn and adopt."

Roshni Parkhi— Head of Human Resources, India, Allvue Systems

From Skills to Mindsets: The New Hiring Calculus

Forum leaders from across sectors — fintech, manufacturing, healthcare and banking — converged on a striking shift in talent philosophy: the question is no longer 'what does this candidate know?' but 'how quickly can they learn, adapt, and operate with AI?' Cornerstone OnDemand has gone so far as to abolish fixed job descriptions entirely, replacing them with career pathing frameworks and talent marketplaces that match skills dynamically to organisational needs.

"We've done away with fixed job descriptions. Today it's about career pathing and the talent marketplace. The current generation is a very hybrid generation — learning is for transformation, not just to build a resume."

Harsha Vanvari Peter — Vice President, Human Resources, Cornerstone OnDemand

68%	40%	2 Yrs
of HR Leaders plan to redesign roles around AI in 2026	Productivity Gain when AI augments, not replaces, workers	Skills Half-Life — down from 5 years in pre-AI era

The English Proficiency Parallel

Webasto's Dr. Vikas Prasad offered a compelling historical analogy: fifteen to twenty years ago, English proficiency was a differentiating skill. Today it is a baseline necessity. AI literacy is on the same trajectory. The window to build this competency is measured in months, not years — and those who fail to climb to the 'competency bracket' will find AI has absorbed their role entirely.

"People are getting lost between workbenches and capabilities. AI is taking over workbenches. If people do not climb up to the competency bracket, they face a very real challenge. A robotic email written by AI, requesting money from a customer, still lacks the necessary human touch."

Dr. Vikas Prasad — President & Managing Director, Webasto Roofsystems India

2 Culture as the Catalyst: Why Technology Alone Always Fails

If there was one theme that united every speaker regardless of industry, it was this: technology without cultural change is of no use. This was not a platitude — it was backed by concrete examples of transformation initiatives that stalled, not because the technology failed, but because hearts and minds were not carried along.

"Technology without cultural change is of no use. Technology should be utilised to reduce decision latency, human fatigue, and human error — but the culture must shift first."

Denu Thomas — Group Head, Grant Medical Foundation, Ruby Hall Clinic

Making Change Invisible: The Art of Subtle Transformation

CRIF India's Manisha Prasad shared a masterclass in change management: the language of transformation matters as much as the substance. Her team deliberately avoids words like 'change' and 'transformation,' replacing them with 'optimise' and 'efficient.' Innovation contests replace mandates. Employee ideas replace top-down edicts. The result: buy-in without resistance, adoption without fear.

"We make subtle. We use terms like 'optimise' and 'efficient' instead of 'change' or 'transformation'. We run innovation contests to get employee ideas and buy-in, which also removes the fear of job loss."

Manisha Sharma Prasad — Regional HR Director India, ME & South Asia, CRIF India

The Arjuna Principle: Mindset Over Weaponry

Deepak Fertilisers' Naresh Kumar Pinisetti drew on Devdutt Pattanaik's reading of the Mahabharata to make a profound point about technology adoption. Arjuna, the master archer, threw away his bow not because his weapons (Yantra) or techniques (Tantra) failed him — but because his mindset (Mantra) failed him. The same dynamic plays out in every enterprise AI initiative. The HR function's primary job in the AI era is not procurement or deployment — it is managing the human change journey.

THE CHANGE MANAGEMENT IMPERATIVE: WHAT LEADERS ARE DOING

- **CRIF India:** Running employee innovation contests to generate internal AI ideas and remove fear of job loss
- **Thermax:** Piloting AI bots in specific use cases while keeping humans in oversight roles to build gradual trust
- **Deepak Fertilisers:** Deploying IoT sensors for predictive maintenance with transparent communication on human benefit
- **Sakal Media:** Building toward a skill-based organisation by 2032 — moving from roles to capabilities
- **Cornerstone OnDemand:** Abolishing fixed job descriptions in favour of dynamic career pathing

The Humanoid Robot Test Case

The forum discussion gained global context when Naresh Kumar Pinisetti referenced Hyundai's challenge in Korea: the automaker faces significant worker pushback over deploying humanoid robots in a new manufacturing plant, with the CEO forced to make public commitments to upskilling and reskilling. The lesson for Indian manufacturers in Pune's auto cluster is clear — the social contract of automation must be written before the machines arrive.

3 Enterprise AI: India's GCC Opportunity & the Production Shift

The banking and professional services leaders at the forum brought a different and critical perspective: AI is rapidly exiting the pilot phase and entering production. This is not a future scenario — it is happening now, with measurable efficiency gains, compressed timelines, and fundamental changes to how business processes operate.

"The banking industry is moving from pilot to production with AI. Data quality is the most crucial factor. AI has already delivered 10-15% efficiency gains in engineering through intent-based coding. We've compressed the KYC process from days to minutes."

Sunil Gandhi — CIO — Treasury Technology, Deutsche Bank

Days→Min	92%	10–15%	$99B
KYC Processing Time — Deutsche Bank AI implementation	Forecast Accuracy — ML-driven liquidity prediction	Engineering Efficiency via intent-based AI coding	India GCC Market 2030 — up from $46B today

India's GCC Superpower Moment

PwC's Subhayu Mukharji made the case that India is uniquely positioned to lead the global enterprise AI revolution — not as trainers of large language models, but as the world's foremost reimaginers of business processes. India has been the 'back office' of the world for two decades, accumulating unparalleled process expertise in hire-to-retire, procure-to-pay, and record-to-report. That expertise is now a strategic asset in an AI-first world.

"India is well-poised to capitalize on the application of large language models. The biggest impact will be in enterprise AI — hire to retire, procure to pay, record to report. India has the talent and process understanding to reimagine these. Future applications will be AI-led, and agents will handle conversations, mimicking human voice and empathy."

Subhayu Mukharji — Managing Director, PwC

Decision Velocity: The Competitive Differentiator

Tech Mahindra's Kedar Deo framed the enterprise AI agenda around a single concept: decision velocity. The organisation that can process data, surface insight, and commit to action fastest wins. He cited a Telco client in Japan using AI to make real-time decisions about which cell sites to shut down during off-peak hours — optimising energy use based on live emission data. Similar logic applies across every sector represented at the forum.

ENTERPRISE AI USE CASES — FORUM EXAMPLES

- **Deutsche Bank:** KYC process compressed from days to minutes; ML liquidity forecasting at 92% accuracy; 12-week AI Engineer Programme with Google
- **Allvue Systems:** Workflow redesign to identify roles genuinely enhanced by AI, not just augmented superficially
- **FlexifyMe:** India's first AI posture analysis tool — standardising physiotherapy diagnosis via computer vision
- **Sakal Media:** AI-assisted content creation with mandatory human editorial oversight for news value and policy sensitivity
- **Suzlon Group:** Gig-model 'islands of agents' plugging into core architecture for learning and HR tasks
- **Deepak Fertilisers:** IoT sensor networks for predictive equipment maintenance across 7 factories

4 The Future of Work: Singularity, Agents & the Shrinking Ladder

The most thought-provoking — and at times unsettling — perspectives at the forum came from those looking furthest into the horizon. Three provocative predictions emerged: the traditional corporate hierarchy is approaching a 'theory of singularity'; AI will eliminate the bottom three entry-level rungs of the career ladder; and the SaaS model itself faces disruption from a gig-based architecture of autonomous agents.

"AI will kill the bottom three entry-level steps of the corporate ladder. This is a significant challenge for academia — they must now produce students who are ready to climb from the fourth step. The new generation will rely on tools like ChatGPT instead of traditional learning."

Sajith Chakkingal — Group Chief Technology Officer, Anthesis Group

The Singularity of Succession

Suzlon Group's Captain Shantanu Chakrabarti presented perhaps the most radical view of the forum: that the entire architecture of human capital management — succession planning, learning management systems, performance hierarchies — is about to become invisible infrastructure. As natural language processing evolves to dialect-based and context-based understanding, traditional SaaS HR platforms will dissolve into ambient intelligence. The future workforce will operate through 'islands of agents' that plug into organisational architectures on demand.

"Habits become norms, norms become behaviour, and behaviour becomes culture. Traditional SAS models will be completely disrupted. The future of work will involve a gig model where islands of agents plug into the main architecture to deliver results."

Captain Shantanu Chakrabarti — Chief Learning Officer, Suzlon Group

85M	97M	50%	Step 4
Jobs Displaced by 2030 — World Economic Forum estimate	New Roles Created — Net positive: 12M new positions	Tasks Automatable in current white-collar roles	New Career Entry Point — bottom 3 steps absorbed by AI

Academia's Unanswered Challenge

Thapar University's Dr. W. Kumar offered the academic counterpoint. Thapar, with its Nvidia-partnered Centre of Excellence in data science and AI, and India's only university-based supercomputer, is already building research-embedded undergraduate education. But the pace of industry change demands more: a generation of graduates who enter the workforce already comfortable with AI tools, agents, and the ambiguity that comes with them.

"Our undergraduate students work closely with faculty, PhD students, and postdoctoral researchers on cutting-edge projects. We are a hidden gem in the northern part of the country — a research-centred institution with a supercomputer on campus and a Centre of Excellence with Nvidia."

Dr. W. Kumar — Dean, Thapar School of Liberal Arts & Sciences

5 Responsible AI: Cybersecurity, Sustainability & Human Oversight

Two dimensions of the AI agenda received less coverage in public discourse but generated significant discussion at the Pune forum: the cybersecurity implications of rapid AI adoption, and the sustainability cost of AI's exponentially growing compute demands. Both represent systemic risks that must be co-designed into AI strategies from the outset.

The CISO's Dilemma: Adoption vs. Control

Lentra's Vikas Madhok articulated the CISO's framework clearly: adopt AI for problem-solving or opportunity creation, but maintain controlled governance especially in decision-making contexts. As AI agents begin mimicking human voice and empathy convincingly enough that humans cannot tell the difference — as PwC's Subhayu Mukharji predicted — the authentication and verification challenges become exponential.

"I am always very cautious and very scared when new technologies like AI emerge. AI must be adopted — but only for two reasons: to solve a problem or to create an opportunity. Be a little controlled and guarded when AI is used for decisioning. Human oversight will always be there in AI."

Vikas Madhok — Global Chief Information Security Officer, Lentra

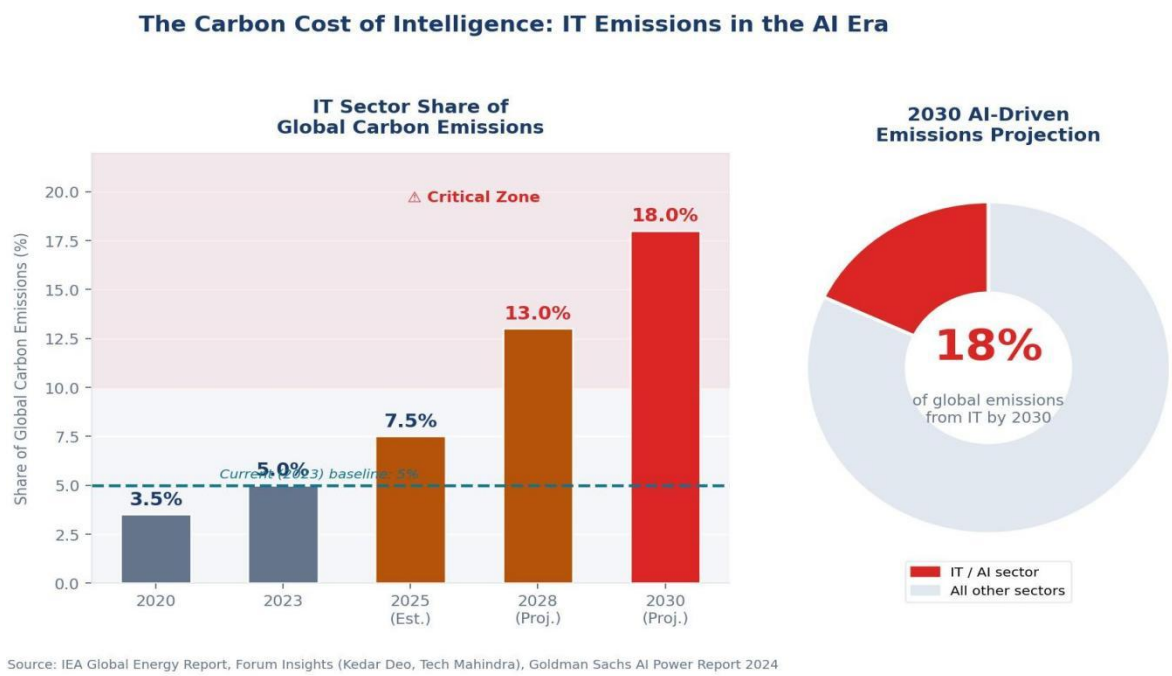
The Carbon Cost of Intelligence

AI's exponentially growing compute demands present a sustainability challenge that cannot be deferred. The IT sector currently contributes approximately 5% of global carbon emissions. Without deliberate architectural choices prioritising efficiency, AI scaling could push that figure to 15–20% within four to five years.

"IT currently contributes 5% of global emissions. AI is predicted to increase this to 15-20% in the next four to five years. Sustainability is about making systems smarter and transforming architectures so they can run efficiently on existing hardware."

Kedar Deo — IT Transformation Executive VP, Tech Mahindra

5%	15–20%	4–5 Yrs
IT's Current Share of global carbon emissions	Projected Share if AI scaling continues unchecked	Timeline to Crisis without efficiency-first architecture



IT Sector Carbon Emissions Share — Current vs AI-Driven Projections | Source: IEA, Goldman Sachs AI Power Report 2024

RESPONSIBLE AI FRAMEWORK — FORUM CONSENSUS

- **Adopt AI with clear purpose:** every deployment must address a specific problem or create a defined opportunity
- **Human oversight is non-negotiable:** AI augments human judgement in decisioning, never replaces it unilaterally
- **Sustainability by design:** compute efficiency must be an architectural consideration from day one
- **Cybersecurity as co-designer:** security teams embedded in AI deployment, not added at the end
- **Governance before scale:** controlled experimentation and validation before enterprise-wide rollout

Industry Spotlight: Healthcare Technology in Pune

Pune's healthcare sector — anchored by institutions like Ruby Hall Clinic, Jehangir Hospital, and KEM Hospital — was represented at the forum by Denu Thomas, CHRO of the Grant Medical Foundation. His perspective offered a powerful illustration of how technology transforms outcomes when properly integrated with clinical expertise.

Healthcare AI Metric	Value
₹1.6 Lakh Crore healthcare AI market by 2025	Growing at 39% CAGR
Diagnostic errors preventable with AI-assisted imaging	65%
Drug discovery speed with AI vs traditional methods	4× faster

Ruby Hall Clinic Case Study

A newly inaugurated advanced technology at Ruby Hall uses focused ultrasound rays to treat prostate cancer as a daycare procedure — allowing the patient to be cancer-free and discharged the same evening. Crucially, this technology does not replace the expertise of the specialist. The physician's clinical judgement, refined over decades, remains the irreplaceable element. Technology reduces latency and fatigue; expertise delivers the outcome.

FlexifyMe Parallel

India's first AI posture analysis tool standardises physiotherapy diagnosis, removing subjectivity from assessment. Yet the expert physiotherapist makes the final decision — AI provides the evidence base, humans provide the judgement. This human-AI collaboration model is the template for responsible healthcare AI deployment.

The Skill-Based Organisation: Reimagining Structure for the AI Era

One of the forum's most consequential discussions centred on the architectural shift from role-based to skill-based organisations. This is not merely an HR restructuring exercise — it is a fundamental rethinking of how organisations deploy human capital in an environment where the shelf life of specific skills has collapsed from years to months.

"The focus needs to shift from a role-based organisation to a skill-based organisation. Augmentation — human and technology working together — is more important than substitution. AI improves the writing, but human intervention is necessary for news value, policy sensitivity, and the human angle."

Dr. Vinod Bidwaik — CHRO & Group Director HR, Sakal Media Group

Dimension	Role-Based (Yesterday)	Skill-Based (Today)
Hiring	Job descriptions with fixed requirements	AI mindset + adaptability + learning velocity
Structure	Fixed hierarchical roles	Dynamic talent marketplace
Learning	Periodic training programmes	Continuous, transformation-focused growth
Career Path	Linear vertical ladder	Lattice of skills and experiences
Performance	Role-based KPIs	Skill contribution and value creation
AI Integration	Tool added to existing role	Role redesigned around AI capability

Conclusion: Pune's Transformation Imperative

The SpeakIn Asia Dialogues Forum in Pune surfaced a city and an economy at an inflection point. The conversations — spanning fintech, healthcare, manufacturing, banking, media, and professional services — pointed to a single, uncomfortable truth: the window for managed transformation is narrowing rapidly.

AI is not approaching — it is here. Deutsche Bank has moved from pilot to production. FlexifyMe has built India's first AI diagnostic tool. Suzlon is planning for a world of autonomous agents. The question is no longer whether to adopt, but how fast to integrate, how deeply to redesign, and how responsibly to govern.

The leaders at this forum were unanimous on one point that transcends sector, company size, or geography: the organisations that will win in the AI era are not those with the best algorithms, but those with the most adaptive cultures, the most genuinely curious people, and the clearest sense of what 'meaningfully enhanced by AI' actually means for every role they employ.

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES FOR PUNE'S ORGANISATIONS

- **Audit AI readiness at every level:** identify roles for enhancement, invest in the AI mindset — not just AI tools
- **Make change invisible:** adopt the language of optimisation, not transformation, to reduce adoption friction
- **Partner with academia:** co-design curriculum that produces graduates ready to enter at 'step four' of the AI-era career ladder
- **Embed cybersecurity and sustainability from day one:** responsible AI is a governance imperative, not an afterthought
- **Accelerate the skill-based transition:** dynamic talent marketplaces and career pathing replace static job descriptions now

Additional Voices from the Forum

"We built India's first AI posture analysis tool to standardize diagnosis and treatment using a computer camera to analyze static and dynamic posture. For a startup, technology is about speed and faster execution. But the expert still takes the final decision — the technology helps the expert, it does not replace them. That is the distinction that matters."

Manjeet Singh — Co-Founder, FlexifyMe

"In the Mahabharata, Arjuna had the bow, the arrows, and the training — the Yantra and the Tantra. But when his mindset failed him on the battlefield, he threw his weapons down and could not act. The same is true in organisations today. People can have all the tools and all the skills, but if the Mantra — the mindset — is not right, transformation will not happen. The HR function's job is to manage that change process."

Naresh Kumar Pinisetti — President HR & Governance, Deepak Fertilisers

"My aunt was terrified of computers when they were introduced in India. She retired as the head of cybersecurity from that same bank. That is the human mindset of adoption — fear first, mastery eventually. Organizations must identify where AI is required and who will use it, then focus on the adoption methodology and mindset. Continuous change is not just about AI today — it is about Gen AI tomorrow and whatever comes after that."

Sandeep Kapoor — Head HRSS & HR CIO, Thermax

Forum Participants — Pune Edition 2026

Name	Designation	Organisation
Roshni Parkhi	Head of Human Resources, India	Allvue Systems
Dr. W. Kumar	Dean, School of Liberal Arts & Sciences	Thapar University
Denu Thomas	Group Head	Grant Medical Foundation, Ruby Hall Clinic
Harsha Vanvari Peter	Vice President, Human Resources	Cornerstone OnDemand
Manjeet Singh	Co-Founder	FlexifyMe
Capt. Shantanu Chakrabarti	Chief Learning Officer	Suzlon Group
Dr. Vikas Prasad	President & Managing Director	Webasto Roofsystems India
Dr. Vinod Bidwaik	CHRO & Group Director HR	Sakal Media Group
Subhayu Mukharji	Managing Director	PwC
Vikas Madhok	Global Chief Information Security Officer	Lentra
Sajith Chakkingal	Group Chief Technology Officer	Anthesis Group
Sunil Gandhi	CIO — Treasury Technology	Deutsche Bank
Kedar Deo	IT Transformation Executive VP	Tech Mahindra
Manisha Prasad	Regional HR Director, India ME & South Asia	CRIF India
Naresh Kumar Pinisetti	President — HR & Governance	Deepak Fertilisers & Petrochemicals
Sandeep Kapoor	Head HRSS & HR CIO	Thermax

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Asia Dialogues Forum is a curated platform bringing together Asia's top 1% of leaders from business, bureaucracy, academia, and media to shape conversations on the continent's future. Through invitation-only roundtables across major Asian cities, the forum creates high-trust environments for substantive dialogue on technology, talent, policy, and transformation.

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