



Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser
to the Government of India

DEMOCRATISING ACCESS TO AI INFRASTRUCTURE

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India's AI Policy Priorities White paper Series

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About: White Paper Series

Emerging Policy Priorities for India's AI Ecosystem

To foster informed deliberation and action among stakeholders engaged in shaping India's artificial intelligence (AI) policy and governance landscape, the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India is producing this White Paper Series. These papers are conceived as explanatory briefs that examine specific policy issues and their associated nuances, with the aim of enabling broader understanding and meaningful societal engagement. The White Papers are developed by drawing on collective insights from the extended AI ecosystem, including inputs from multi-stakeholder consultations, bilateral and multilateral AI policy engagements, and subsequent expert reviews. They are intended solely as explanatory documents that highlight identified policy priorities and stimulate further discussion. The views presented in these White Papers should not be construed as formal policy positions of the Office.

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1. Introduction

Democratising access to AI infrastructure means making the AI infrastructure - compute, datasets and model ecosystem available and affordable, such that it reaches a wide set of users. It refers to empowering a wide set of users to engage with and benefit from AI capabilities. When compute, datasets, and model tooling are broadly available, individuals and institutions expand what they are able to do, like aiming to design local language tools and adapt assistive technologies.

Access to AI infrastructure, including compute power, data repositories, and model ecosystems, has become a critical determinant of innovation, competitiveness, and governance in the digital economy. Currently, these resources are concentrated in a handful of global firms and urban hubs, thereby limiting equitable participation. For India, democratising access means treating these building blocks as shared resources so that innovators everywhere can participate in shaping the AI age. The IndiaAI Governance Guidelines [34] report highlights the importance of support from India's AI governance strategy for greater adoption of AI. The subcommittee places the focus on three enablers: 1) expanding access to high-quality and representative datasets, 2) providing affordable and reliable access to computing resources, and 3) integrating AI with Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). The subcommittee report also underlines the criticality of providing access to foundational resources for mitigating the risks of AI. Thus, democratising access to AI infrastructure becomes a policy priority for India. Globally, several examples illustrate how AI infrastructure can be provisioned with the objective of democratised access. For instance, the United States National AI Research Resource (NAIRR) provides a federated AI cyberinfrastructure through a common access portal, supporting researchers and innovators across institutions [38].

2. AI Infrastructure

The physical infrastructure enabling innovators to build, deploy, and benefit from AI solutions includes data centres (for the storage and management of data), specialised processing units such as Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) and Tensor Processing Units (TPUs) (for training AI models), and computational capacity, including high-performance supercomputing clusters. The foundational hubs of AI infrastructure are data centres. These are facilities that store, process, and distribute the massive datasets and computational workloads required to train and deploy AI systems. They are the physical layer on which the entire AI stack depends, enabling everything from high-speed data access to large-scale model training. Data centres perform two major functions: data storage and computation & processing (by hosting servers and accelerators that enable large-scale data operations). Storage infrastructure refers to the systems that allow AI-ready datasets to be securely stored, organised, and accessed at scale. A robust data infrastructure is the foundation of an AI ecosystem, as also underscored in TRAI's 2022 policy brief [4].

1. Processing unit: The processing unit is the core computational engine that powers AI workloads, ranging from general-purpose Central Processing Units (CPUs) to specialised accelerators such as Graphics Processing Units (GPUs), Tensor Processing Units (TPUs), and increasingly Neural Processing Units (NPU). These support the computational resources required to train large-scale AI models. India's compute capacity is growing to match the growing demands.

2. **Computational Capacity:** Together, these processing units form the backbone of High-Performance Computing (HPC) clusters¹ and supercomputers. These determine the feasibility, speed, efficiency, and energy costs associated with AI development. Computational capacity determines whether India can train large-scale models domestically or must rely on foreign cloud computing providers [10].

Physical Infrastructure to Digital Infrastructure

For the physical infrastructure to act as an enabler of socio-economic development, the building blocks of the AI system, i.e., data, compute, and an ecosystem of models and algorithms, need to be made widely accessible and usable. To democratise AI infrastructure, efforts need to focus on ensuring wider and more equitable access for all stakeholders. For that, it is critical to institutionalise governance frameworks that treat the building blocks of AI systems as Digital Public Goods (DPGs), alongside building and developing AI infrastructure. This implies that the stakeholders are enabled to utilise the data, compute and the ecosystem of models and algorithms without needing to be in physical proximity and access to the infrastructure. Building on the existing Digital Public Infrastructure of India can enable innovation and adoption of AI, as discussed in detail in the subsequent sections of this paper. Treating the building blocks of AI as a DPG means positioning these resources as shared public utilities, rather than proprietary assets. In the context of AI, DPGs can take the form of open data repositories, subsidised compute clouds, and open-source model hubs, ensuring that the core building blocks of AI systems remain universally accessible. The National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence [1] also proposes building an “AI commons”, i.e., a shared public digital infrastructure with standardised datasets, tools, and platforms driven by strong public-private collaboration. It positioned public data as a national asset, and argued that curated, interoperable datasets would be India’s competitive advantage in building inclusive AI solutions [6]. The importance of democratising access to AI infrastructure can be understood on multiple levels of the AI infrastructure - data storage centres, compute infrastructure and models.

3. State of AI Infrastructure in India

The structure and evolution of the Indian AI ecosystem is influenced by the country’s physical infrastructure, regulatory and policy environment, and industry initiatives.

Physical Infrastructure

1. **Data centres:** India hosts nearly 20% of the world’s data, but only 3% of global data centre capacity [5]. In India, demand for data infrastructure is rapidly rising with the growth of AI workload and the current installed capacity of nearly 960 MW is expected to reach 9.2 GW by 2030 [18]. There are active efforts from both the industry and the government. Mumbai and Navi Mumbai is the largest hub of data Center, accounting for over 25% of live capacity, owing to its dense subsea

¹ High-Performance Computing (HPC) refers to clusters of powerful processors networked together to perform large-scale computations, that process large-scale AI computations faster than standard machines.[11]

cable network and supportive policy environment². Chennai ranks a distant second, hosting about 13% of India's total data centre capacity. Established technology hubs such as Bengaluru and Hyderabad each hold around 22% of the share. The Delhi NCR region (New Delhi, Noida, Gurgram) accounts for roughly 14%, while Pune and Kolkata contribute approximately 6% and 3%, respectively [2].

2. **Processing unit:** Under the IndiaAI Mission, a secure GPU cluster is also being constructed to house 3,000 next-generation GPUs for sovereign and strategic applications³. Furthermore, the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) is supporting the foundational layer of all processing units, the semiconductor chips⁴. The mission is backed by an investment of Rs. 76,000 crore and has facilitated the approval of 10 advanced chip-making projects, including domestic fabrication and packaging facilities⁵ [23].
3. **Computational capacity:** The National Supercomputing Mission (NSM) has already deployed over 40 petaflops machines across IITs, IISERs, and research labs, creating a distributed HPC base for academia. India's PARAM Siddhi-AI (C-DAC) achieved a global ranking in the TOP500 list and has been applied to Natural Language Processing (NLP), weather prediction, and drug discovery. AIRAWAT, launched in 2023 under the POC by MeitY, is now India's fastest AI-dedicated supercomputer, integrated with PARAM Siddhi-AI to provide shared compute⁶.

Digital Infrastructure

1. Access to datasets:

- In 2025, IndiaAIKosh was launched under the IndiaAI Mission. It aims to serve as a national repository of AI datasets, models and tools. The platform organises datasets in 20 sectors, covering a wide range of domains critical to India's development [30]. As of December 2025, it has onboarded 5722 datasets and 251 AI models from 54 entities across 20 sectors [31]. The platform provides permission-based access, allowing contributors to retain control over data usage while facilitating AI development.
- Bhashini (National Language Translation Mission) is a government initiative to create language datasets (text and speech) and models for the diverse set of Indian languages⁷.
- The Geospatial Data sharing Interface (GDI) [35] provides easy and controlled access to geospatial data from both public and private sources. It facilitates open API-based data

² Physical proximity to the cable landing station reduces latency for global transactions and cloud workloads and multiple landing stations ensure resilience during outages or natural disasters. Mumbai houses the highest number of cable landing stations in India, ensuring near-instant access to global networks.[17]

³ Data provided by India AI Mission.

⁴ Prime Minister Modi, during his Independence Day 2025 address, announced that the government has also kickstarted the "Made in India" 28–90 nm chips, expected in the market by late 2025.[26]

⁵ On the design front, IIT Madras' Shakti processors and C-DAC's VEGA microprocessors (based on RISC-V) are leading homegrown semiconductor design, with Shakti-based IRIS chips developed in collaboration with ISRO for space and IoT applications.[24]

⁶ Other systems like Pratyush (IITM) and Mihir (NCMRWF) serve climate and weather modeling, indirectly supporting AI-driven forecasting and analytics.

⁷ Platforms like the National Data & Analytics Platform (NDAP) also, consolidate publicly available government datasets, offering searchable, downloadable, and machine-readable formats.[7]

exchange while maintaining secure identity, consent, and is equipped with authorisation mechanisms.

- In addition to the central government efforts, some state government efforts also serve as examples, including: Telangana Data Exchange (TGDeX)- India's first state-led DPI for AI. It integrates government, academic, and industry datasets into a unified exchange. It aims to create 2,000 AI-ready datasets in five years (2025-30) and serves as a blueprint for other states [3]. This model/platform also demonstrates how federated exchanges allow datasets to be shared without central pooling. This enables multiple stakeholders to collaborate on AI development while maintaining data sovereignty, as it provides secure and privacy-compliant sharing of datasets without requiring movement of raw data.

2. Access to compute

- The national GPU pool being expanded by the IndiaAI Mission is accessible through a government-supported cloud infrastructure. The IndiaAI Compute Portal operates over 38,000 GPUs and 1,050 TPUs [13]. This is available at subsidised rates of under Rs. 100/hour, compared to the global rates of more than Rs. 200/ hour [12].
- The IndiaAI mission is developed a unified compute portal, IndiaAI Compute Portal, where researchers, startups, and government bodies can request access. This helped to increase the reach of AI infrastructure and enable customisation & localisation of AI services. For example, startups in smaller cities can train or fine-tune models for niche local markets at subsidised rates, while universities without on-premise HPC infrastructure can conduct advanced AI research⁸. The IndiaAI Compute Platform functions as a compute-as-a-service platform⁹.

3. Access to models and tools

- IndiaAI Datasets Platform, AIKosha, is an Indian model that aims to provide a centralised hub for pre-trained models. Some models, such as those for specific Indian use-cases, like InLegalBERT for Indian legal texts, are also trained specifically on Indian data and are publicly available on platforms like HuggingFace [15]. Additionally, platforms like Bhashini act as repositories, hosting over 350 language AI models that cover Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), Machine Translation (MT), Text-to-Speech (TTS), Optical Character Recognition (OCR), transliteration, and language detection across 17+ Indian languages [16]. Under the IndiaAI mission, eight startups are being supported to develop India's sovereign models [32]. They will receive credits and funding covering up to 25% of compute costs, provided through a mix of grants (40%) and equity (60%)¹⁰.

⁸ India holds less than 5% of global AI-optimized compute power while the U.S. and China combined hold over 70%.[9] Globally, access to compute infrastructure has become a key axis of competition, with a few technology companies and countries controlling most of the world's GPU clusters and AI-optimized data centres.

⁹ Compute-as-a-Service is a plug-and-play model where users access GPUs/TPUs through a platform without dealing with system configuration or infrastructure management.

¹⁰ Data provided by India AI Mission.

Regulatory and Policy Environment Enabling AI Infrastructure

1. The MeitY-supported MeghRaj (GI Cloud) initiative creates a base for AI-oriented public storage by providing cloud storage services to government bodies [8].
2. Legal enablers also affect the accessibility of data. The Government Open Data License - India (GODL-India), introduced in 2017 under the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP, 2012)¹¹, aims to govern the reuse of non-sensitive, shareable public data. The national platform for public data publishing, data.gov.in, operates under GODL-India. Under the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, the safeguard and compliance requirements are now stronger in cases of handling of personal data by any entity.
3. **State policies**
 - Maharashtra's latest Policy (2023) formally recognises data centres as an essential service, offering 100% electricity duty exemption, stamp duty waivers, and relaxed building norms.
 - Tamil Nadu's data centre policy requires a minimum of 30% energy from renewables to qualify for incentives and supports increased solar and wind integration.
 - Karnataka's Data Centre Policy (2022–2027) incentivises development beyond Bengaluru. It provides 10% land subsidies (up to 10 acres), 100% stamp duty exemptions, and favours facilities using $\geq 30\%$ renewable energy.
 - Other states with formal data centre policies include West Bengal, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, and Gujarat [25]. The focus of many of these policies is on green energy and cooling infrastructure (along with financial and real estate incentives), since data centres demand substantial energy and advanced cooling solutions to maintain operational stability and efficiency.
 - Several State governments are also exploring state-level cloud and data lake facilities¹² to support localised AI and digital governance projects. For instance, Telangana has partnered with Yotta Data Services to develop a high-density, AI-ready data centre campus (Yotta H1) with an initial phase of 4,000 GPUs [21].

Industry Initiatives

1. **Data centres**
 - Industry is also investing heavily in storage solutions for AI. Companies like Yotta Data Services, NTT, CtrlS, and AdaniConneX have made large investments in hyperscale and sovereign cloud storage facilities. Yotta Data Services operates Asia's largest single-building data centre in Navi Mumbai (72 MW IT load) [19]. CtrlS Data Centres operates 19 facilities

¹¹ This applies to all ministries, departments, agencies, and state bodies that generate data through public expenditure and led to the creation of the Open Government Data (OGD) Platform India (data.gov.in), a unified portal for accessing datasets across government agencies under common standards and licenses.[27, 28]

¹² A data lake is a central repository of large volumes of data, stored in its original, unprocessed form. Since, the stored data is raw and unstructured, data lakes are considered cost-effective compared to other cloud data storage infrastructure,

with a combined load of 250 MW [20]. Private hyperscale data centres are also contributing to this growth, complementing the public infrastructure.

- Indian startups and researchers are also utilising commercial cloud services like AWS Open Data Registry, Google Cloud Public Datasets, and Microsoft Azure Open Datasets to access AI-ready datasets globally¹³.

2. Computational and processing units

- The industry players are also playing a critical role in the development of AI computational and processing power. Some examples include Yotta NMI and Reliance Jio's GPU-as-a-service initiative [29]. Yotta Data Services, a leader in AI, Sovereign Cloud and digital transformation, has announced a partnership with the Government of Telangana to establish a high-performance GPU-based AI Supercomputer.

4. Democratising Access to AI infrastructure

India's priority to democratise access to AI infrastructure requires a scalable and transparent framework that lowers structural barriers while enabling innovation. This refers to making foundational AI resources, such as compute capacity, high-quality datasets, and enabling tools available beyond a limited set of large firms and major urban hubs, so that a wider range of actors can build, test, and deploy AI responsibly. In practice, this requires reducing costs, administrative friction and uneven institutional capacity while enabling predictable access pathways for startups, researchers, public institutions, and smaller organisations to use AI infrastructure without needing to own it. Crucially, such access must be governed in a manner that protects privacy, ensures accountability, and sustains public trust, particularly when AI systems rely on sensitive or public-interest datasets.

DPI Approach

A Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) approach offers one such pathway to advance the democratisation of access to AI infrastructure by establishing shared, standards-based layers that improve access, interoperability, accountability and trust. For India, a DPI approach is particularly relevant given the country's prior experience in building population-scale digital rails and interoperable systems [36]. DPI for AI should be understood not as a single platform or monolithic system, but as a set of modular public-good enablers that address specific coordination gaps in the AI ecosystem. Its value lies in creating predictable, transparent and interoperable access pathways, particularly for smaller firms, research institutions, and startups that face prohibitive entry barriers. By reducing costs, standardising interfaces and establishing common governance norms, DPI can meaningfully expand the base of participants who can benefit from AI infrastructure [37].

A key next step is to examine the technical pathways for building an integrated stack that connects foundational AI Infrastructure layers such as compute and data into a coherent and equitable access

¹³ International open-domain platforms such as Kaggle and Hugging Face Datasets also host a wide range of datasets, including collections curated for Indian languages, agriculture, and healthcare. Open domain datasets for images too, such as OpenImages or ImageNet, are widely used. However, these are not specifically anchored towards Indian language, cultural, and environmental representation.

experience for users. Rather than treating these layers as separate systems, the focus should be on identifying a shared technical architecture that can unify and provide equitable access across distributed providers, reduce fragmentation, and make the use of compute and datasets more seamless. Importantly, DPI for AI should evolve in a phased and modular manner. Initial phases can focus on lighter-weight elements such as directories, metadata standards, access protocols, or registries. As institutional and technical capacity grows, more advanced elements such as federated data access systems, consent-based data flows, or coordinated compute-exchange mechanisms can be built. This approach ensures feasibility while signalling a clear long-term direction for ecosystem development.

At the same time, implementing a DPI approach for democratising access brings practical challenges that require careful consideration. It is important to define it with precision to avoid overstating its scope or positioning it as a solution to all ecosystem challenges. The DPI for AI approach depends on consistent technical standards, high-quality metadata, and sustained institutional capacity for governance, oversight and auditability across multiple custodians and providers. As access scales, the importance of privacy safeguards, cybersecurity, and clear accountability arrangements becomes increasingly critical. Interoperability can also be difficult to achieve in fragmented ecosystems, and inadequately designed access layers may introduce new bottlenecks or exclusion risks for smaller institutions. These constraints reinforce the need for sequencing DPI for AI in modular phases and to positioning it as a complementary governance and access layer alongside other ecosystem interventions, including market-led infrastructure expansion and broader investments in capacity building and adoption. Democratisation could not also emerge from state-owned infrastructure alone, but from the creation of fair, transparent, and reusable public-good layers that reduce exclusionary barriers and enable innovators across India to build, test, and deploy AI responsibly. This balanced framing preserves the benefits of India's DPI approach while setting realistic expectations and providing a clearer pathway for implementation.

5. Considerations for Democratising Access to AI Infrastructure

Democratising access to AI infrastructure is critical for ensuring fair and equitable opportunities and benefits across the country, from villages to cities, and from small institutions and startups to industry. Through tools and platforms like AIKosha, India AI Compute, and TGDeX, India's AI ecosystem is supporting innovation and services by increasing access. To complement this, the IndiaAI governance guidelines highlight three enablers for India's AI governance framework to support greater adoption: expanding access to high-quality and representative datasets, providing affordable and reliable access to computing resources, and integrating AI with Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). Further, dedicated government initiatives on infrastructure development and increasing access to data and computing resources would empower the IndiaAI Mission, line ministries, sectoral regulators and state governments. As India's AI ecosystem advances the development of these tools and frameworks, several cross-cutting considerations emerge that need to be addressed for the realisation of the country's vision for AI. Some of the concerns are discussed below:

1. **Role of private sector:** Public-private partnerships can play a critical role in increasing access to AI infrastructure. To support the growing volume of AI workloads, more regional AI-focused data

centres can be established through public-private partnerships. For example, edge facilities¹⁴ are planned in regional hubs like Jaipur, Coimbatore, and Chandigarh [22]. Collaborative approaches are supported by incentives, which encourages private entities to contribute to existing platforms like AIKosh, the Open Government Data Platform, and the National Data and Analytics Platform.

2. **Resource-efficient development of AI:** A significant challenge arising from the AI development is resource efficiency. Scaling AI data centres will require an additional 45-50 million square feet of real estate by 2030, underscoring the need to integrate sustainability planning with compute expansion [6]. To complement the scales and pace of development of data centres and HPC clusters, the power and cooling infrastructure will be required to adopt energy-efficient cooling systems and hybrid power sources. States like Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have demonstrated the value of renewable energy mandates. The India AI governance guidelines recommend that special schemes be designed with the specific goal of encouraging investments at all levels of the AI value chain. Data centres currently account for roughly 0.5% of India's total electricity consumption, a share that could rise to nearly 3% by 2030 as capacity and workloads expand. India's data centre cooling market was valued at USD 2.1 billion in 2024 and is projected to grow to USD 7.13 billion by 2030 [14]. The AI ecosystem should integrate concentrated and dynamic efforts to mitigate these challenges.
3. **Sectoral adoption:** While technology-mature sectors such as telecom, media, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing are scaling AI rapidly, adoption remains uneven in agriculture, education, healthcare, and public services due to a lack of adequate infrastructure and access to resources [33]. Therefore, ecosystem-wide efforts are needed for expanding access to data and computing for scaling AI development and adoption.

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