

Young Indians today have the chance to reimagine what's possible on a much bigger scale

# INVESTING IN THE NEXT FRONTIER OF INDIAN INNOVATION

Sundar Pichai

**T**he internet has helped billions of people access information, increase their knowledge, and improve their lives. Now a new wave of technological advances is creating more opportunities, enabling businesses to grow and giving people better tools around the world.

Increasingly, many of these innovations start in India – sparked by a generation of young people energised by what technology can do. Two examples: India has written the playbook on how businesses can better serve customers using mobile payments by building on

technologies, initiatives like the government's Digital India strategy, and leadership of Indian companies, India is in the midst of a digital transformation. As a result, today, 700 million people are online in India, and last year, India's technology sector grew at double the rate of its economy as a

faster and better internet.

Another opportunity is building products and services relevant to India's unique needs. That includes making sure Indian users can get information in their own language, whether it's Hindi, Tamil, Punjabi or any other. Our AI lab in Bengaluru has developed a powerful translation model that provides support for transliterated text, like when you're writing Hindi using Roman script. We've also developed models that can translate languages without ever seeing a direct translation, enabling us to add Sanskrit and other Indian languages to Google Translate.

Finally technology companies can help Indians succeed in the digital economy. It's estimated tens of millions of new technology jobs could be added by 2025 – supported by investments from both home-grown companies and global businesses. Flexible training programmes, like our Google Career Certificates, can reach learners on mobile and prepare them for new careers. We've built a hiring consortium with companies keen to hire graduates, including Tech Mahindra, Wipro, Genpact and Better.com. At the same time, we want to encourage the growing number of Indian businesses building apps and services for people everywhere. The Appscale Academy – a partnership between Google and the government's MeitY Startup Hub – will help Indian startups expand into global markets and take Indian innovation to the world.

Looking ahead, I'm excited by the opportunity to invest in the next generation of technologists. Young people aren't satisfied with today's technology, and that's a good thing.

They're already applying technology to improve lives, like the high-schoolers who developed Silai Mitr, an app connecting neighbourhood dressmakers to local customers, or the engineering students who built a deep learning approach to identify phishing on websites. To help harness this energy, we're forming partnerships with schools to connect classrooms, train tens of thousands of teachers, and help students build confidence with technology. It's a model others can follow.

While I once marvelled at the arrival of my first refrigerator, television or dial-up connection, young Indians today have the chance to reimagine what's possible on a much bigger scale. Their ambition and impatience are what make me optimistic about the future – and why I believe companies should invest to help them shape it.

*The writer is CEO of Google and Alphabet*



WHILE I ONCE MARVELLED AT THE ARRIVAL OF MY FIRST REFRIGERATOR, TELEVISION OR DIAL-UP CONNECTION, YOUNG INDIANS TODAY HAVE THE CHANCE TO REIMAGINE WHAT'S POSSIBLE ON A MUCH BIGGER SCALE. THEIR AMBITION AND IMPATIENCE ARE WHAT MAKE ME OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE – AND WHY I BELIEVE COMPANIES SHOULD INVEST TO HELP THEM SHAPE IT.

the Unified Payments Interface – a great example of collaboration between government and industry. And Indian users are increasingly interacting with their devices through voice assistants to do things like book Covid vaccine appointments and get updates on cricket matches, helping to improve this technology for people everywhere.

This is a big shift from when I was growing up in Chennai. Back then, I expected the next new technology to arrive at my doorstep in India from somewhere else. Thanks to the willingness to embrace new

whole. Yet there is still more to do to make sure every Indian benefits from the opportunities technology creates – and technology companies play an important role.

For Google, investing in India is a core part of our mission to organise the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful. For more than 18 years, we've been working to deliver smartphones at scale and help bring hundreds of millions of users online, among other efforts. In 2020, we launched a \$10 billion, 10-year India Digitisation Fund, focused on enabling access and information for every Indian, empowering businesses as they continue their digital transformation, and leveraging technology and AI for social good.

More investment is needed. I see a few opportunities here. One is lowering the barriers to connectivity. This is a key goal of the partnerships Google is forming with leading Indian technology companies.

With Reliance Jio, for example, we've launched the JioPhone Next – an affordable smartphone built on a custom Pragati OS – and we're partnering on 5G to help Indians experience a

