

Uttar Pradesh: The next global hub for IT, AI, GCCs, startups & deep tech

Ahead of the GCC Innovation Summit, scheduled to be held in Lucknow on October 26, Uttar Pradesh is sharpening its strategy to attract global technology investments, accelerate artificial intelligence (AI) adoption, foster startup innovation, develop future-ready talent and build a competitive digital economy.

In an exclusive interview with **Manoj Bhadra**, Alok Kumar, Principal Secretary, IT & Electronics, Government of Uttar Pradesh, outlines the state's vision for building an integrated technology and innovation ecosystem, attracting Global Capability Centres (GCCs), strengthening startups and DeepTech innovation, and translating investment commitments into sustainable economic growth and employment.

Excerpts from the interview:

Question : What is Uttar Pradesh's larger vision for IT/ITES, GCCs, AI, startups and DeepTech? How do these initiatives complement one another?

Answer : Our vision is to build an integrated technology and innovation economy, connecting IT/ITES companies and GCCs, startups, academia, AI initiatives, DeepTech Hubs and Centres of Excellence to turn ideas into commercially viable products.

For Uttar Pradesh, the goal is to move beyond supplying technology talent to attracting global investment, developing

products, generating intellectual property and creating skilled career opportunities within the state. Success will be measured by operational businesses, sustained employment, innovation outcomes and expanding investments—not just policy announcements.

Question : How will UP distinguish itself from established technology hubs while leveraging Noida, Greater Noida, Lucknow and emerging cities?

Answer : Our strategy is to compete through talent, connectivity, competitive operating costs, infrastructure, academic strength and responsive government facilitation, rather than replicate Bengaluru or Hyderabad. Instead, we aim to develop locations with complementary advantages.

Noida and Greater Noida offer established corporate and technology ecosystems with NCR access, while Lucknow presents potential for growth through its educational base, expanding digital ecosystem and hub-and-spoke operations. Other cities can develop specialised capabilities where demand and infrastructure support them. The focus is on offering global companies practical, location-specific options for establishing and expanding operations in Uttar Pradesh.

Question : How will the state attract new GCC

investments and encourage existing IT/ITES enterprises and GCCs to expand?

Answer : We are pursuing both objectives in parallel: attracting new GCCs through clear location intelligence, talent availability, infrastructure and policy support, while encouraging existing GCCs to bring higher-value mandates to Uttar Pradesh.

Invest UP will engage enterprise leaders, understand their needs, coordinate with relevant departments and development authorities, and address barriers to investment. The goal is not just more centres, but greater involvement in AI, R&D, product engineering and digital transformation. The upcoming summit offers a platform to advance both objectives.

Question: What is the vision behind the proposed UP AI Mission?

Answer: AI should be viewed as an economic capability, not just a technology programme. Our proposed strategic direction is to make AI useful and accessible to startups, universities, industry and government, while creating opportunities for businesses to build solutions in Uttar Pradesh.

This requires strengthening the entire AI value chain, from computing, governed data and technical talent to models, experimentation and application deployment. Key opportunities lie in healthcare, education, agriculture, manufacturing and public services. As the AI Mission



evolves, specific structures, funding and implementation mechanisms should be announced only after formal approval. Success will be measured by meaningful applications, enterprises and skilled jobs created.

Question : AI requires computing capacity, quality data and research capability. How could UP bring these pieces together?

Answer: Our priority is access and productive use, not just physical infrastructure. Compute resources must reach startups, researchers and enterprises that can develop solutions, supported by high-quality, lawfully usable data with strong privacy, security and governance safeguards. This could be enabled through partnerships with technology companies and academic institutions, industry-led challenges, shared experimentation environments and startup-support initiatives.

GCCs can provide business problems, researchers can develop solutions, and startups can turn them into deployable products. These are proposed ecosystem priorities, not claims that all components are already operational.

Question : How can the Startup Mission help startups move from early innovation to scalable businesses?

Answer : A strong startup ecosystem needs more than incubation and funding; founders need customers, mentors, technical infrastructure, skilled talent and pathways to commercial adoption. Our focus is to help startups move from proofs of concept to real-world deployments and scalable business models.

A key opportunity is to connect Uttar Pradesh startups with GCCs and large enterprises facing challenges in AI, cybersecurity, health technology, FinTech, manufacturing and enterprise software. Solving these problems can provide startups with market validation and opportunities to scale beyond the state. Government and ecosystem institutions should facilitate these connections transparently and reduce barriers to experimentation and adoption.

Question: What role could DeepTech Hubs and Centres of Excellence play in creating a globally competitive ecosystem?

Answer: DeepTech innovation

requires specialised researchers, advanced tools, laboratory access and sustained support. Centres of Excellence and DeepTech Hubs can provide shared capabilities that startups and smaller businesses may struggle to build independently. The focus should be industry-led, not infrastructure-driven: identify priority technology areas, secure corporate problem statements, connect leading institutions and experts, support testing and validation, and enable commercialisation. Potential areas include AI, semiconductors, advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity and healthcare technologies. Success should be measured by research outcomes, industry adoption, intellectual property and new enterprises—not physical infrastructure alone.

Question :How can GCCs, startups, universities and CoEs collaborate to convert research into commercial innovation?

Answer: The opportunity is to create a reinforcing cycle. GCCs can articulate global product and operational problems. Universities and research institutions can contribute deep technical knowledge. Startups can build and iterate solutions rapidly. Centres of Excellence can provide shared expertise and validation facilities. Industry customers can then assess and adopt solutions at scale.

We should encourage curated challenge programmes, industry-sponsored applied

research, joint proofs of concept, internships and talent exchanges, all with clear governance for data, intellectual property and commercial rights. The GCC Innovation Summit brings these communities into one room. Its value will depend on what follows through: named partners, agreed pilot opportunities and sustained follow-through.

Question: How will Invest UP ensure that investment commitments and partnerships translate into operational projects and employment?

Answer : Execution is what matters. An MoU is only a starting point, not an investment outcome. Investors need coordinated support for location selection, policy guidance, infrastructure, talent partnerships and resolving operational bottlenecks. Our approach is to support investors throughout the investment lifecycle, including expansion. Working with relevant departments and development authorities, we aim to turn serious interest into structured opportunities with clear project requirements, proposed locations, accountable relationship owners and defined next steps.

Progress will be measured through investment decisions, commencement of operations, realised investment and verified jobs. The goal is a predictable, responsive and long-term partnership with investors, not just one-time event facilitation.

Question: What makes the GCC Innovation Summit strategically important beyond GCC investments?

Answer: The GCC Summit, co-hosted by Invest UP and the IIT Kanpur Alumni Association in Lucknow on October 26, aims to connect key stakeholders across the technology ecosystem.

The planned programme includes a Chief Minister's keynote, a roundtable with GCC investors and developers, five Letters of Comfort, 15 investment MoUs and separate MoU exchanges with 13 leading universities and institutions, subject to final confirmation. The agenda features eight panel discussions across two halls, government and keynote addresses, and an exhibition showcasing GCCs, talent, startups and AI Centres of Excellence. Discussions will cover GCC location decisions, investment opportunities in Uttar Pradesh, AI-first GCCs, product ownership, startup-CoE partnerships, campus-to-GCC talent pathways and workforce reskilling. The broader goal is to connect investment with talent, technology, infrastructure and innovation. Uttar Pradesh aims to offer investors not just locations for establishing centres, but an ecosystem where enterprises can grow, startups can innovate, universities can commercialise research and young professionals can access global opportunities closer to home.

The guiding proposition is simple: Build in UP. Innovate in UP. Scale from UP.