IBM's software lab in Lucknow to focus on 'AI for GovTech'

With IIT Kanpur, IIT BHU and IIM Lucknow in UP, there is no better eco system for the talent pool, says top IBM official, lauds state govt's support

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LUCKNOW: The Uttar Pradesh government's attempt to develop Lucknow as an AI (Artificial Intelligence) City is going to get a boost as IT giant IBM is all set to start its software lab in Lucknow by 2025-end. Aiming to tap the young talent in the state, IBM's main focus for their upcoming software lab in Lucknow will be on AI for GovTech.

Speaking to HT in Lucknow on Monday, Vishal Chahal, vice president, IBM India Software Lab, said, "The identification of place has been addressed but IBM has a very strict protocol towards safety and employee safety specification in our office, that is under way now. The place that has been selected for setting up the software lab is a facility in Ansals behind Lulu Mall. We are hopeful to start operations at IBM Software Lab in Lucknow by the end of this year."

"AI for Govtech is our focus at the moment, which means application of generative AI in government's efficiency and productivity. We are focussing on Lucknow for that purpose and also we have plans for our innovation centre in Lucknow soon. So that those set of solutions, platforms and technologies can be driven from here. The government has already declared that they intend to develop it as an AI City and I am proud to say that we make that a reality and participate with talent here locally," he said.

Award ceremony of the hackathon organised in collaboration with AKTU underway in Lucknow on Monday. **HT**

"Apart from the normal software business that we do along with world class products and platforms. AI for GovTech will be done specifically from Lucknow. The government of UP has been very, very supportive in providing all the help along with the policy. The UP Government has also been very helpful in connecting us to academia," added Chahal, who was in Lucknow for award ceremony of the hackathon that was organised in collaboration with AKTU.

Asked what made IBM skip cities like Noida and Gurugram and focus on Lucknow instead, Chahal said. "As a software business it is not a city that drives us, it will eventually be the talent and skill level of the people. At the moment we are already present in Bengaluru, Chennai, Pune, Hyderabad, Gandhinagar (gift city) and also in Kochi.

Lucknow will be our seventh lab."

"We felt that we actually do not have a large presence in a talent pool cluster around this region geographically. In UP, we have IIT Kanpur, IIT BHU, IIIT, IIM Lucknow, there could not have been a better eco system for the talent pool. For us the strategic decision was simple, let's go where the talent lies. Secondly, we found very positive intent from UP government, they have been very forthcoming in helping us set up and helping us in connecting with the right set of colleges. The policies of government have also been very supportive for us and of course the incentives which help in setting up facilities," Chahal said.

Chahal had met chief minister Yogi Adityanath a few months back and was highly impressed by the keenness of the government to help IT firms.

IBM SAYS

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STUDENT HACKATHON WINNERS FELICITATED

IBM, in collaboration with Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Technical University (AKTU) and the Uttar Pradesh government, conducted a student hackathon Prarambh 2025, aimed at accelerating the "AI City in Lucknow" initiative. Samadhan AI from GL Bajaj (AKTU), Mosaic from Shiv Nadar University (ERA University) and Byte Knights from Pranveer Singh Institute of Technology emerged as winners for their innovative solutions demonstrating exceptional creativity, skill and teamwork.

The winning teams were felicitated at a function held at a prominent hotel in Lucknow, presided over by Anurag Yadav, IAS, principal secretary, department of information technology and electronics, government of Uttar Pradesh, Neha Jain, IAS, special secretary, MD, UPDESCO, information technology and electronics department, government of Uttar Pradesh, Neelam Srivastava, dean, Training & Placement, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Technical University and Vishal Chahal, vice president, IBM India Software Labs. As many as 3,400 students registered for this hackathon.

Participants were invited to develop AI-powered solutions that address key societal challenges and enhance citizen-centric services in Uttar Pradesh.