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Education, Technology and the Future of India

By Bill Gates
Mumbai, Jun 12, 2007

For me and anyone else who is passionate about using technology to help create opportunities for people, trends in India today are tremendously exciting and encouraging.

As everyone knows, the nation has become a global leader in information technology and other high-tech fields such as pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, and telecom-based business services. These sectors have contributed to the economy's rapid growth since 2003, which has lifted many millions of people out of poverty. Continued growth could alleviate suffering and expand opportunities for millions more. One day, we may look back on India's progress during this decade as one of the great humanitarian achievements of our time.

Equally exhilarating is how India's rise may influence the global community. The world will be a safer place if other nations can learn from the achievements of what is not only the largest democracy, but also one of the most pluralistic cultures. The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, has said it well: India's success will renew humanity's faith in liberal democracy, in the rule of law, in free and open societies. The entire world has a big stake in India's future.

The Power of Indian Skills and Talent

It seems to me that the India miracle, if you will, demonstrates the wisdom of sustained investment in the primary asset of any modern economy: people. During the nearly 60 years since independence, India's investments in human development have reduced hunger, increased literacy, and improved healthy conditions. Education investments have produced world-class scientists, engineers, and technicians. They, in turn, have fuelled the growth of Indian technology companies and attracted many global technology leaders, including Microsoft.

People have been the key to Microsoft's success in India, and our experience may be illustrative. We entered the country 17 years ago, working closely with the government, IT industry, academia, and the local developer community. Over the years, the people of Microsoft India have had end-to-end responsibility for the development of many Microsoft technologies. They have made important contributions to many other products, including Windows Vista and the 2007 Microsoft Office system.

We currently employ more than 4,000 people across 6 business units in Delhi, Bangalore, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Pune and Chennai, and we continue to expand our presence. Outside the United States, Microsoft's India Development Centre is our second largest product development facility. Two years ago, we opened Microsoft Research India, where scientists and engineers work to advance the frontiers of knowledge in computer science and related fields, often in collaboration with India's academic community. These teams have demonstrated India's great capacity for innovation by filing for 100 patents during the past two years. Other India units play major roles in our worldwide customer support, consulting services and management of our internal information systems.

Beyond our direct presence, Microsoft also contributes to India's growth through the thousands of local partners, large firms and small, that develop and sell products and services based on our software platform. This year, 35 Indian companies qualified for the Forbes 2000 list of the world's biggest corporate giants. Among them were four valued Microsoft partners: Tata Consultancy, Infosys Technologies, Wipro and Satyam Computer Services. Microsoft is extremely proud to be a part of the economic transformation that these and other highly

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successful Indian companies have helped bring about.

Sustaining Growth, Broadening the Opportunity

How can India best sustain its rapid growth and broaden opportunity for all its people? Much has been written about the need for sharply increased investments in highways, airports, power plants and other infrastructure. Economists also point to a need for regulatory reforms and better public services provided more transparently.
These are important challenges.

Also, from my perspective, investments in human capital should continue to be a high priority, especially efforts to further alleviate hunger, reduce illiteracy and improve public health.

Threats to health such as HIV/AIDS, for example, could upset much of India s recent progress. The estimate is that less than one per cent of adults are infected, but because of India's large population, the number is among the highest in the world.

Education at every level remains crucial for continued growth. Output of college and university graduates is impressive in absolute terms, and has been a great source of economic strength, but India cannot afford to become complacent. The nation now faces an acute shortage of skilled workers, as Infosys and other employers have warned recently. Education spending as a percentage of GDP lags far behind that of countries such as South Korea and Taiwan. Yet, one could argue that India needs a skilled and educated workforce even more than the so-called Asian Tigers do. They accelerated their development through manufacturing, primarily, while India's focus on services and technology makes its workforce skills especially critical.

As many others have said and as the government has recognized in its budget plans, India urgently needs to build more primary and secondary schools, improve teaching and ensure that more children attend school, especially in rural areas. Higher education needs to be expanded and upgraded. Top-tier institutions are overrun with applicants, while skill levels among graduates of some other colleges do not meet world standards or the needs of employers. By one estimate, 25% of all new engineering graduates lack the skills to be employable in the IT industry, despite its dire need for workers.

Microsoft is committed to helping improve Indian education. Over the past several years, we have been engaged in many collaborative efforts, mainly focused on advancing the instructional uses of technology and expanding access to computers and computer skills. For example, our Project Shish currently works with more than 10 state governments, bringing computer skills training to more than 120,000 teachers so far. We have helped enhance learning opportunities available to students in slum and rural schools through support for Digital Study Hall, a project that records and distributes DVDs of classes led by India's best grassroots teachers. And to help overcome a scarcity of classroom computers, Microsoft Research India has developed Windows Multipoint, a technology that enables several students to work on a single PC.

In higher education, our efforts have included the Developer Platform Evangelism Academy, which has provided professional development to more than 1,000 IT and engineering faculty members at 51 Indian colleges. To help recent engineering graduates transition from school to careers, we recently began working with the Indian government and industry on an online employability portal. It will enable graduates to assess their skills, complete appropriate training and connect with prospective employers.

Technology and India's Future

Besides being an important tool in education and a growth sector of the Indian economy, information technology can aid social and economic development in many ways. Wide deployment of computers, software and telecommunications helps boost productivity and reduce transaction costs in many sectors, strengthening economic growth. Computers, mobile devices and software can help expand the quality and availability of health care and other public services, as well as education.

A lack of access to technology, on the other hand, can hinder development. More than 30 years after the invention of one of the most versatile and empowering technologies of our time, the personal computer is readily available to only 1 billion of the world's more than 6 billion people. Microsoft's founding vision of a computer on every desk and in every home is a reality for the roughly 1 billion people living near the top of the global economic pyramid. But the digital revolution has yet to spread very far in many rural areas, impoverished communities and developing countries, including India.

Disparities in technology access are troubling, for as the global economy is increasingly computerized and moves online, social and economic development becomes even more difficult in the places and for the people left behind, on the less fortunate side of the digital divide. This is a problem that Microsoft and others in the information technology industry have been working

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to address.

Microsoft's ultimate goal is to bring the benefits of technology to every person. Toward that end, we have set our sights on an ambitious milestone: With governments and other partners, we aim to deliver the power of information technology to 1 billion more people worldwide by the year 2015. We are expanding several technology training and assistance programs.

And we recently introduced the low-cost Microsoft Student Innovation Suite of software products, including versions of windows, Microsoft Office, Learning Essentials and Microsoft Math. Although we invested many millions of dollars to develop these products, the suite will be available tom students for about Rs.127, through government programmes in India and many other developing countries as part of targeted programmes that provide PCs to disadvantaged students.

We are taking these and other steps because, as industry leaders and simply as human beings, we believe that all 6 billion people who share this planet deserve a chance to realize their full potential. We are especially excited to be working toward realizing this vision in India, where progress on many fronts is already well underway.

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+ our country is a manual and technology updateing contry.here every one feels it is ours so that every step in india keeps by any body never fails.but every company has to provide some basic training to rural people then it get more focus in their lifes of rural people. then the growth of employment in india will slight comes down.we every body must share a rupee with rurral people must and should we have to keep a bond in our minds .and wipro,satyam.microsoft,intelligroup,and many more companys spends rupee like flow in the air but one day the total corporate mncs will face a lot of problems in their lifes and they distributes this problem to us also.so feed while you need.rural is a moral never do less for it .if it do less for us then today every price is on the sky so we have to fly for eat a day comes to us .please i am very sorry to type this but i am seeing the people of rural very deeply so please provide some training to rural people freely.then it creates the world n our hands .

- **p.vishwa prasad** freelance photo **hyderabad**

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10:43 PM
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+ yes ,india have more technology.
- **khagesh** bhel **bhopal**

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+ Skilled Technological person can get better opportunity in top companies and can earn good salary. It is also helping in building the Indian economy high.

- **Bhawna Dhupia** NIIT **Solan**

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+ indeed,india depend only technolgy. As a Mca student i say
technology is important.
- **j.antony richar** ---- **trichy**

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+ please give me tally 8.1's
- **rajveer** princies kitche **pune**

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+ public
- **mani** hutch **bangloor**

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+ Yes...
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12:36 PM
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+ yes
- **narasimman** Anonymous **chennai**

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08:56 AM
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+ india's future is linked not only to development of technology but
also to exploiting technology for betterment of the life of the
common lot
- **V.Thyagarajan** Ashokleyland **chennai-600057, india**

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+ how much did microsoft pay you guys to put this up? you guys
running an ad for this article on the same page!!!
- **ur reader** Anonymous **na**

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+ Bill Gates is "right on the money" as usual. Saraswati is held in
high pedestal in Indian homes for this very reason. Indian parents
will starve so that their children can get the best education. This
fact and the IITs put india on a pedestal in the IT world. All
hundred IITs, not Quotas will get India to the top. All options
including private enterprise should be encouraged, to quench the
insatiable thirst for education in our country. Merit should be the
sole criterion for admission to higher education. Reservations and
qotas will kill the golden goose for India.
- **Jay Bharat** John Roberts In **San Francisco, USA**

Jun 13, 2007
03:06 AM
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+ nice to knw tht every one openly started accepting this fact. We
are proude to be indians.
- **Arpt** individual **Mum**

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