

AI reshapes leadership at mid-tier IT companies

SLOWING demand environment always leads to changes in the ways a sector operates. And Indian IT services industry is no exception. For the last 3 years, most large firms have clocked low single digit revenue growth rate. Similarly, growth rates of mid-tier IT companies have come down to high single digits from mid-teens recorded during the post-pandemic period. Increasing adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and an uncertain global business environment can be cited as the reasons behind such slowing demand.

As expected, such changes in the market place have led to a churn. Interestingly, this churn is more evident in case of mid-tier IT services companies. In the current financial year, there were several changes seen in the mid-tier IT space. For instance, veteran banker & former SBI chairman, OP Bhatt had resigned from the chairman post of mid-tier IT services company, Coforge. Reports suggested that friction between the board members was the reason for such exit. After Bhatt's resignation, another director- DK Singh also exited the board. After PE fund house- Advent's entry into the board post Coforge's Encoraa acquisition; differences cropped up, leading to eventual exit of Bhatt. This week, Akhil Kumar Gupta has been appointed as the chairman of Coforge. Similarly, another mid-tier IT firm- Hexaware has seen top level changes. This month, Hexaware announced the appointment of Vivek Jetley as CEO Designate, who will take over from October 28, 2026. The incumbent, Srikrishna Ramakarthikeyan will step down from the CEO role after a 12-

year stint at the company, it has informed.

Similarly, Bengaluru-headquartered Mphasis has roped in Girish Paranjpe as its new Chairperson. Paranjpe has been a veteran technocrat with several decades of experience in IT outsourcing market and had led Wipro as joint CEO earlier. Another mid-tier ER&D firm, Cyient has made several kye leadership changes this year. While these changes look like regular leadership churn on the surface, a deep dive provides more strategic reasons. With rapid adoption of AI, both IT services & ER&D firms are facing a budget squeeze at the client's end. A part of the technology budget is being diverted to AI tokens. Moreover, clients are asking for passing on the cost savings to them, which are arising out of AI. All these factors are resulting in slowdown in revenue growth rate coupled with margin pressure.

Mid-tier firms are trying to navigate such dynamics through bringing in leaders, who will help them win more AI projects, increase their market share and guide them in developing proprietary AI tools. To achieve this objective, old leaders are replaced with new ones, who have the ability to drive growth in such uncertain environment. In addition, the growth approach is also changing. Most companies are shunning the 'business as usual' approach and try to be early adopter of the AI wave. That is the reason the market has seen big-ticket acquisitions being done by several mid-tier IT companies in FY27 so far. In a way, these changes can be termed 'good' because old ways may not be sufficient for solving new problems in the market place.



Ram vs Shiva: Why is Congress standing by Revanth Reddy?

SHOULD GODS BE DIVIDED INTO RICH AND POOR?



THANKS to a narrow political outlook that revolves around vote-bank politics, the country has been divided on the basis of caste, religion, and region. Now, it seems there is an attempt to divide Hindu religious traditions along North-South and rich-poor lines. It is really a matter of shame that a Chief Minister of a rich state like Telangana has played to the gallery by resorting to a political divide between two deities, Lord Shiva and Lord Rama, who are both deeply revered.

Revanth Reddy said that people in the South were Dravidians while those in the North were from the Aryan race. Lord Ram is associated with the rich, and Lord Shiva with the poor, and the BJP has stolen the rich god, Lord Rama. That is why, he said, they never chant the mantra "Har Har Mahadev" from public platforms, while those in the South always chant "Har Har Mahadev".

His remarks clearly created a contrast between Ram and Shiva on regional, social and political lines. Why Revanth made such comments is what is puzzling, as he is considered a well-read, erudite and practising Hindu with an ABVP background.

I do not agree with someone saying that he did not know that what he said was not correct. Hence, the question arises: was it to please his political bosses, Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi, or was it simply a slip of the tongue?

Revanth Reddy is a man who was well trained during his tenure in the TDP in effective public speaking and

normally does not indulge in making such irrational comments. That makes his latest remarks even more intriguing.

What is more disturbing is why the Congress party has neither distanced itself from these comments nor stood by what he said. To make things more complicated, Telangana PCC president Mahesh Kumar Goud publicly defended Reddy, saying both deities are revered and arguing that the BJP is using Lord Ram for electoral politics. So, does Congress now want to use Shiva for politics?

What one needs to note here is that politicians in India can only take such liberties with Hindu deities and shudder to make any comment even on issues like land grabbing by the Waqf or make any comment about the religious beliefs of any other faith. If anyone dared to do so, he would be punished by the party.

But in the case of Hindu gods, the party's top leadership would try to get away by saying that it is not the party line and that it may be the individual's opinion. But in this case, the so-called individual is a responsible person holding a constitutional position — the post of Chief Minister.

Is this part of the Congress's game plan to appease Muslim minorities and protect their real or illusory vote bank? Is that why the Congress is maintaining silence over Revanth's remarks?

If the Congress feels that the Telangana Chief Minister wanted to attack the BJP's political use of Lord Ram, it is a miscalculation. What Revanth said amounts to an attack on Hindu faith.

As far as people are concerned, whether from the North or South, Lord Ram and Lord Shiva are equally revered. Telangana has the famous Ram Temple at Bhadrachalam, which is considered



Revanth Reddy's remarks seeking to draw a North-South and rich-poor divide between Lord Ram and Lord Shiva raise serious questions about the politicisation of faith. From Ayodhya to Bhadrachalam and Kashi to Kedarnath, both deities command reverence across India, exposing the fallacy of reducing faith to political or regional identities

to be the second Ayodhya, and it is this very Chief Minister who has presented silk robes to Lord Rama on the day of the celestial wedding.

He needs to explain whether it was out of reverence or because Ram is a rich god. It would have been better if he had looked back into four-decade-old history.

It was on February 1, 1986, when the Faizabad district judge ordered the opening of the locks of the disputed structure at Ayodhya, allowing Hindu devotees access to worship Lord Rama. This happened during the regime of Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister.

On November 3, 1989, Rajiv Gandhi chose to launch his poll campaign from Ayodhya — to be more specific, Faizabad — where he spoke of establishing Ram Rajya. Originally, he was scheduled

to start the campaign from Nagaur.

Congress leaders do not get tired of praising Rajiv Gandhi to the skies. Fine, there is nothing wrong with it. But the question is: why did he choose Faizabad to launch his poll campaign? Was it because Ram was a rich god?

Does it mean that only the rich mattered to Congress at that point in time and not the poor, or was it part of the game plan to win over Hindu votes?

Even if we keep politics aside, Revanth was wrong about the fact that Shiva is the God of the South. Does he know that six of the 12 Jyotirlingas are in North, West, or Central India?

The prominent Shiva temple where the chant of "Har Har Mahadev" reverberates is the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh,

the constituency represented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Then there is the Kedarnath Temple in Uttarakhand, which is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas and one of the four Char Dham sites in the Himalayas

Rudranath, Neelkanth Mahadev and Tungnath are also in Uttarakhand. Has he forgotten how Modi spent the night meditating for about 17 hours in the Rudra Meditation Cave, roughly 1-2 km from the Kedarnath shrine? Similarly, the ancient Shiva temple of Baijnath is in the Kangra region of Himachal Pradesh. The Somnath Temple in Gujarat and the Nageshwar Temple near Dwarka are also among the Dwadasa Jyotirlingas.

Another Jyotirlinga temple is Mahakaleshwar Temple at Ujjain, while Omkareshwar is in Madhya Pradesh. There are three other Jyotirlinga temples in Maharashtra — Bhimashankar, Trimbareshwar at Nashik, and Grishneshwar in the Aurangabad region.

Neither Gujaratis nor Maharashtrians are Dravidians, but they still revere Lord Shiva as much as people from the South and the so-called Aryans from the North do.

The reality is that neither Lord Shiva nor Lord Rama belongs to one region, one caste or one economic class. They are revered across India.

A politician should strive to unite all regions, religions, and castes, not make any attempt to divide them. That was a colonial concept — to divide and rule — which unfortunately our leaders are still not able to shed. Unless our leaders change their mindset, it would be better if they stopped talking about protecting the Constitution while meddling with issues related to the Hindu religion. Gods do not need political identities. Politicians do.

(The author is a former Chief Editor at The Hans India)

Digital push takes tourism into new era

AI IS TRANSFORMING TRAVEL PLANNING WHILE RAISING CONCERNS OVER ACCESS

VINCENT FERNANDES

IN 1979 during a session in Spain, the UNWTO decided to establish World Tourism Day. The first official observance was held on September 27th, 1980. The date reflected the anniversary of the adoption of the UNWTO Statutes, an event that happened in 1970. World Tourism Day occurs each year during a time when tourism is on the minds of millions of people. While the tourism season is wrapping up in the Northern Hemisphere, it's just beginning in the Southern Hemisphere. World Tourism Day celebrates the many ways tourism connects cultures and enriches lives.

This year, it also asks what kind of future we want for tourism. The theme, "Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence to Redesign Tourism," reflects one of the defining transformations of our time.

AI is changing how travellers choose destinations, how the industry operates, and how travel experiences are designed. It can strengthen small businesses, improve



services and create new opportunities. Yet left unchecked, it can funnel tourists to the same few places and platforms, leaving many worthwhile destinations behind. Technology must serve humanity. Tourism workers, local communities and emerging destinations must help shape what comes next. This requires investing in digital skills, widening access to technology, and ensuring innovation benefits the people and places that make tourism possible. Let us build a digital future for tourism that is open, inclusive and human — and harness these new tools to drive sustainable development for all. On September 17, 2026, World International tourism holds steady at 0.4% growth in first half of 2026 as Middle East conflict and rising costs weigh on momentum International tourism grew modestly in the first half of 2026, with global arrivals up by 0.4% even as insecurity in the Middle East, elevated oil prices, and broader inflationary pressures tested the sector's resilience.

An estimated 690 million tourists travelled internationally between January and June 2026, some 3 million more than the same period last year. While global arrivals increased by 2% in Q1 2026, they then dropped by 1% in Q2, following a 3% de-

cline in April. That drop was largely due to the calendar effect of the Easter holiday period starting in March and because of the impacts of the Middle East conflict.

Globally, arrivals then dropped 3% in June. That was driven by a 6% decline in Western Europe, partly due to a heatwave in some destinations. South-East Asia recorded 5% fewer arrivals in June as a result of weaker demand from Asian markets, geopolitical tensions, air travel disruptions through the Middle East, and increased travel costs. Some destinations in Oceania (-6% in June) were also impacted by Typhoon Sinlaku in Q2. The Middle East situation has touched destinations far beyond the region itself and serves as a clear reminder that, in such a connected world, resilience needs to be built everywhere and not just when a crisis begins.

UN Tourism Secretary-General Shaikha Al Nuwais said: "The latest data shows a sector absorbing real pressure and finding a way forward. Tourism has not stopped growing, but that growth is fragile. The Middle East situation has touched destinations far beyond the region itself and serves as a clear reminder that, in such a connected world, resilience needs to be built everywhere and not just when a crisis begins." In view of the lat-

est data and current geopolitical volatility, international tourist arrivals are now expected to grow by between 1% and 2% globally in 2026, compared to UN Tourism's January forecast of 3% to 4%. However, this will depend on the conflict's actual duration and its effect on oil prices and overall inflation.

At the same time, international travellers are expected to continue to seek value for money and travel either closer to home or domestically, again in response to elevated prices and uncertainty. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make up approximately 80% of the global tourism sector, acting as the backbone of the industry by providing unique experiences, fostering innovation, and driving local economies. AI helps optimize operations, reduce costs, and support more sustainable and smarter destination management. There is also greater access to markets and innovation. Digital tools democratize opportunities, helping small firms reach global customers and adopt new business models. SMEs can develop digital/AI-based services without heavy infrastructure, allowing them to compete more easily with larger companies. Technology enhances booking platforms, personalization, and accessibility, making tourism more inclusive for diverse travellers. Beyond Tourism Day takes place two days ahead of World Tourism Day on 27 September, providing a platform to carry the conversation to a broader global discussion on how travel and tourism can strengthen economic resilience, create quality jobs and opportunities, and deliver greater value to communities and destinations.

AI helps communities reclaim their language space

Local groups are building digital tools for languages largely overlooked by mainstream AI models

EKATERINA VYLOMOVA & RAPHAEL MERX

THERE's plenty of warranted anxiety about the effect artificial intelligence (AI) will have on social and economic inequality. AI built by big tech firms is set to reward capital owners at the expense of workers. Technologically advanced countries will benefit, at the expense of low-income countries. But might AI also be driving linguistic inequality? After all, generative AI chatbots are powered by large language models. These aren't trained only in English, but there's a great divide between which languages get included, and which do not. Generative AI works best on majority languages, making minority languages — ones with very little representation online — less relevant. Hula, in Papua New Guinea, has around 10,000 speakers. Tetun, the lingua franca of Timor-Leste, has just over 1 million speakers. Both represent a tiny fraction of AI model training data, and as such are very likely to be misrepresented in the output, if they show up at all. On the other hand, we've observed another trend over the past year. AI can also be an enabler, letting local knowledge owners build the tools they envision for their community.

Community tools, with a little help from AI

One such tool is Vavanagi, a language documentation platform for the Hula language in Papua New Guinea. It was built entirely by and for the Hula community, with coding help from AI. With around 10,000 speakers, the Hula community lacks the workforce — such as linguists



and software engineers — typically needed to build an online language documentation platform. Yet members of the community (led by Bri Olewale, who contributed to this article) have been able to design, build and run Vavanagi with the help of AI coding tools. The platform now has more than 80 users, who together have contributed over 12,000 English-Hula translations. Their ultimate goal is to collect enough data to build a Hula language translator app. Another example is Tulun, a platform to help health educators translate health education material into Tetun, the main language in Timor-Leste. Built in partnership with local non-governmental organisation Maluk Timor, it lets staff manage their own list of approved terms and phrases, tailoring translated material to their needs and ensuring accuracy. Tulun relies on AI models to adapt the translation to user-uploaded content, making automated translation a collaborative exercise between AI and Tetun health experts. A third example is the Dinka-English dictionary, by Alier Makoi Achuth from South Sudan. Dinka has about 5 million speakers, yet it has very limited digital representation. The app is designed to support and expand Dinka vocabulary by allowing Dinka speakers to translate and verify word meanings. AI models helped Achuth design and build the app, collect and organise its

data. He told us he wanted to develop a practical solution instead of waiting for another person or organisation to address the problem.

Lowering the bar

These three tools serve different purposes, yet share a similarity: they leverage AI to better channel local knowledge back within their language community. For Vavanagi, this means elder-led review of a language that is losing ground (to Tok Pisin) among Hula youth. For Tulun, this means Timorese health educators adapting training material for Timorese health workers. For the Dinka-English dictionary, this means giving the Dinka community access to educational tools. AI is reducing the time and financial costs needed to put these tools together, to the point where communities can own and build them without any external funding. Minority language speakers don't need to live in a high-income country to be able to support their needs. This shift in linguistic communities reflects similar geopolitical and socio-economic trends. For example, AI adoption in Kenya and Nigeria is as high as that in the United States, calling into question the framing of low-income countries as laggards in AI adoption. Similarly, AI models are helping smaller companies in the Global South compete with big-

ger ones. Small businesses can now afford quality machine translation of marketing content where they wouldn't have been able to afford professional translation.

Communities can manage their own

Research on AI in the Global South often treats local communities as mere affected parties. The reality is more nuanced, and more positive. For researchers and funders, this is an opportunity to move away from top-down research and towards more community-led projects. This is especially important for Indigenous communities across Australia. Cat Kutay, a computer scientist of Aboriginal descent from Charles Darwin University, told us that several First Nations are now working on their own language technology: we understand the needs and the possibilities as well as the culture being preserved.

(The writers are Senior Lecturers in The University of Melbourne, Australia)

CREDRIGHT FINANCE PRIVATE LTD
6th Floor, Vasavi Sky City, Tower-1, Units Nos. 604 & 605
Gachibowli Circle, Telecom Nagar, Telangana-500032
Phone No. +91 910485515, Email: contactus@credright.com
CIN No. U65991TG2019PTC130322

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Date: 01-10-2026 (DIN: 07526610)

CREDRIGHT FINANCE PRIVATE LTD
6th Floor, Vasavi Sky City, Tower-1, Units Nos. 604 & 605
Gachibowli Circle, Telecom Nagar, Telangana-500032
Phone No. +91 910485515, Email: contactus@credright.com
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Neeraj Bansal, Managing Director
Date: 01-10-2026 (DIN: 07526610)