

21st century will be India's, says IBM chairman Rometty

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Bengaluru: IBM chairman & CEO Virginia Rometty says the 21st century will be India's century.

"I really believe that," she said on a visit to Bengaluru on Tuesday. She said IBM had done a study on India six months ago in



which over 1,000 people participated. It clearly demonstrated India's potential.

"And I believe that for lots of reasons: better governance and reduced regulation. Some 55% of the participants in the study said the ecosystem enables growth," she said. IBM has its biggest

employee base in India, estimated to be well over 1,00,000; at least a fourth of its global workforce.

Rometty, on a visit for the second time in six months, said India would be at the centre of the fourth technology shift that she refers to as the cognitive era.

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'IBM wants deeper engagements here'

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India will not be at the centre; it will be the centre of this fourth technology shift. Remember we started with cloud, big data, and mobility, and now we have cognitive. It's going to be the most disruptive and the most transformative one," she said.

IBM has invested significantly in the cognitive space, most prominently in its Watson technology. Watson rose to fame in 2011 when it beat the best of human competitors in the complex quiz show Jeopardy in the US. Back then, Watson just did one service — question-and-answer using technologies like machine learning and natural language processing. Today, it has more than 32 different capabilities including dialogue framing, knowledge validation, voice synthesis, language modeling and visual analysis.

The technology is now used in several areas, partic-

ularly healthcare. In India, IBM has inked a five-year deal with Manipal Hospital to deploy Watson to assist oncologists provide personalized treatment options to cancer patients. Deploying Watson will not only free up oncologists' time, but it will provide a comprehensive information on best practices in treatment and care management.

Rometty believes that cognitive provides "the best chance to solve a lot of humanities big problems."

Rometty said IBM wants deeper engagements here in India. Its India research lab is its biggest in the world, doing research and not just development.

"Their main mission is cognitive technology and solutions specializing in natural language and machine learning. As a team, they have already worked with a South East Asian bank to do a Watson wealth adviser — cognitive finance to personalize portfolios," she said.