

# AWS CLOUD SERVICES PROPEL INDIA'S STARTUP BOOM

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Over the last five years, the number of registered startups in India have grown from 452 in 2016 to 84,012 according to figures presented in Parliament this week. While they span a variety of industries from financial tech, gaming and health tech, several are based in the cloud – the servers and data storage accessible via the internet – and data-storage companies are offering a slew of incentives to draw and retain them on their platforms.

AWS, or Amazon Web Services, one of India's largest providers of cloud-based services, has provided start up credits that allow aspirant startups to use a suite of services from computing, storage and hosting for free.

"If you are a college student, you get credits worth \$1,000 (about 82,600) and can straightaway get started on your idea, and as you expand you get credits worth \$5,000 (over 4 lakh) or \$10,000 (8.26 lakh) all the way till \$100,000 (82 lakh). Since 2020, we have given, across the world, credits worth \$2 billion (more than 16,500 crore). And I don't have exact numbers, but a significant proportion of them are in India. Once some of these companies matured, there were different levels of support offered," said Kumara Raghavan, Head – AWS Startups India, Amazon Internet Services Private Limited.

Kumara Raghavan, Head, Startups, Amazon Web Services. | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

AWS has helped "compress" the lifecycle of a startup, allowing them to become more innovative. "Cloud services mean that they can simulate experiments on the cloud, run tests, fail, learn from it," averred Mr. Raghavan.

India has the world's third-largest startup ecosystem, and therefore, one of the biggest markets for such cloud services. Some of the companies supported by AWS included: HealthifyME, which developed an app called 'Vaccinate Me,' which allowed feature phones to book close to 50 million vaccination-appointments; Fittr, which helps track body vitals and meet fitness goals; Credit Vidya, which allows workers who have never used a bank account to 'digitise' their salaries; Arogya.ai, which works on genomics, and relied on the AWS system to store on the cloud data from blood samples in places with limited internet connectivity. AWS also powered

the Ayushman Bharat Digital mission as well as the Cowin system for COVID-19 vaccinations, said Mr. Raghavan.

India's cloud computing market was expected to grow at 28.1% during the forecast period until 2027. "The high concentration and increasing number of small and medium-sized businesses in India that are rapidly shifting towards cloud computing is emerging as the major driving factor for the market. Furthermore, growing investment towards the construction of cloud data centres is expected to boost the India cloud computing market," according to a report by Blueweave Consulting, a market-research firm.

While Bengaluru continues to be the country's startup capital, AWS is increasingly connecting to startups located in cities outside the metropolitan centres of Delhi and Mumbai. AWS had several programmes ongoing to train even those with minimal education in cloud computing skills. Through nearly 500 free courses and 11 certifications, the company has trained nearly three million across the country so far. The company worked with 28 educational institutes to have AWS in their course curriculum, added Mr. Raghavan.

Betting on the growing demand for cloud services, AWS launched their second data-cluster region in Hyderabad, entailing an investment of \$4.4 billion (about 36,300 crore) by 2030. This would make 48,000 jobs available across a variety of services from the new infrastructure and its services. The first such region was in Mumbai.

"How we design such infrastructure is to locate them in different seismic zones. Every region has three 'availability zones'. This is so that if ever there are natural calamities, there's always backup storage available. However, the centres are also designed in such a way that they aren't too far and there is minimal latency (or lag) such that users spread across the country can access their applications seamlessly. The exact locations of these zones aren't publicly disclosed," said Mr. Raghavan.

*(The writer was hosted by AWS at Re:Invent, a technology conference, at Las Vegas, in the United States.)*

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