

# Bangladesh can unlock new growth with ethical, data-ready AI: Salesforce MD

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For nearly three decades, Arun Kumar Parameswaran has worked across multiple regions, building a career that mirrors the rapid global shifts in technology and digital transformation. Now, as the Executive Vice-President and Managing Director for Salesforce in South Asia, he is turning that experience toward one of the region's fastest-growing digital markets: Bangladesh.

In a recent conversation with The Daily Star, Arun discusses the opportunities and anxieties surrounding AI adoption, the regulatory gaps that shape its rollout, and why he believes Bangladesh's young, tech-driven population is positioned to shape the next phase of the country's digital economy.

**The Daily Star (TDS):** You have spent nearly three decades working across India, the United States, Australia, and Singapore. How has this global perspective shaped your approach to driving Salesforce's growth in South Asia, particularly in markets like Bangladesh?

**Arun Kumar Parameswaran (AKP):** Having worked across diverse markets, one consistent learning is that technology's impact is universal, but its success depends on how deeply it's localised. My global experience reinforces the importance of understanding local context, customer priorities, and talent ecosystems. In South Asia, and particularly in Bangladesh, we see a young, ambitious, and digitally savvy population eager to embrace innovation. Our focus is to empower these businesses and individuals with trusted AI, data, and automation, so they can leapfrog traditional stages of growth and compete globally.

**TDS:** What unique opportunities and challenges do you see for AI adoption in this market?

**AKP:** Bangladesh is making steady progress on its digital transformation journey. With expanding connectivity and a dynamic SME ecosystem, the country is well-positioned to harness the potential of AI to drive efficiency and innovation. From advancing financial inclusion to enabling smarter manufacturing and improving public service delivery, the opportunities are immense. As digital adoption accelerates across the country, AI, particularly agentic AI, can empower



Arun Kumar Parameswaran, EVP & MD, Salesforce - South Asia

businesses of all sizes to compete globally, enhance productivity, and improve services across sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, and finance. With AI agents, routine tasks can be automated, freeing employees to focus on higher-value, creative, and customer-centric work.

For example, textile factories can use AI to detect fabric inconsistencies, banks can streamline onboarding, and service teams can deliver personalised, real-time support. By leveraging these capabilities, Bangladeshi businesses can unlock new efficiencies, revenue opportunities, and innovative ways of working, accelerating the nation's digital transformation. The challenge, however, lies in building trust, data readiness, and digital skills at scale. Every AI transformation begins with a data transformation - and with Salesforce data cloud, businesses can unify fragmented data to create a strong foundation for AI. As Bangladesh continues its digital journey, trusted, ethical, and human-centred AI will be key to unlocking its full potential.

**TDS:** In regions where regulatory frameworks for AI are still emerging, how do you ensure businesses can confidently adopt your technologies without compromising ethics or accountability?

**AKP:** We have spent over a decade

investing in ethical AI, both in our business and with our customers. Building on our trusted AI principles, we have published guidelines for Generative AI, an AI acceptable use policy, and guiding principles for the responsible development of agentic AI. We believe that AI regulation serves as a baseline. We work to not just "check the boxes" but also meet and exceed customer and stakeholder expectations on data privacy, protection, security, etc., helping businesses adopt AI technologies confidently.

As an example, we have been building the Einstein Trust Layer with responsible and safe AI expectations in mind. This layer keeps customers in control of their data and protects the privacy of individuals using our services through techniques like secure data retrieval, data masking, and zero retention. Our Atlas Reasoning Engine adds enhanced accuracy and nuance to the outputs, meaning that users can be confident in every step of the agent experience. That isn't only a reflection of what we believe is a responsible thing to do, but it is also a reflection of where we expect public policy will be going and what those baseline expectations are.

**TDS:** Bangladesh recently initiated steps towards a national roadmap on digital transformation with support from the UNDP. How can Salesforce

contribute to such public-private collaborations in shaping an inclusive AI policy environment?

**AKP:** We contribute by sharing our expertise in ethical AI, providing technology solutions built with trust at their core, and participating in multi-stakeholder initiatives that guide policy and best practices. These efforts help create an environment where AI delivers benefits for all people and communities. We continue to proactively engage with governments and all stakeholder groups to advance responsible, risk-based, and globally applicable AI norms.

**TDS:** Sustainability is often cited in your responsible AI guidelines. With rising concerns about the environmental footprint of large AI models, what concrete measures is Salesforce taking to minimise that impact, and how do you see this resonating in South Asia?

**AKP:** Agentforce, our enterprise-grade system for agentic AI, is built with sustainability at its core, leveraging specialised, efficient models designed for specific use cases, like automating customer support or generating sales recommendations. We train our models in low-carbon regions, and deploy them with energy-efficient hardware, helping mitigate AI's impact on the planet. Across our operations, ecosystem, and investments, we are working to make AI more sustainable and ensure equitable access to AI. These efforts resonate strongly in South Asia, where balancing innovation with sustainability is essential for long-term progress.

**TDS:** How is Salesforce contributing to talent development in South Asia, particularly for Bangladeshi graduates?

**AKP:** AI will transform every job, creating new roles even as it redefines existing ones. At Salesforce, we are deeply committed to helping the workforce adapt through continuous learning and reskilling. Our free online learning platform, Trailhead, helps equip individuals with the skills essential for thriving careers in the digital economy. Across South Asia, learners are leveraging Trailhead to build in-demand digital and AI skills. We are also working with local partners and institutions across South Asia to extend AI skilling programs, helping ensure that the next generation of talent, including recent graduates, can thrive in the AI era.

## JOBS SPOTLIGHT

act:onaid

ActionAid Bangladesh

Inspirator, Digital Leadership and Campaign

Deadline: December 17

Eligibility:

Graduate from any discipline with good academic results.

Minimum experience: 1 year

Habitat for Humanity Bangladesh

Officer, Fundraising and Partnerships

Deadline: December 13

Eligibility:

Master's degree in Social Science, Political Science or International Relations, Media and Communication, Marketing, Development Studies, Resource Mobilisation and International Development, or similar subjects.

Minimum experience: 4-5 years

Concern Worldwide

Programme Coordinator, MEAL

Deadline: December 25

Eligibility:

Postgraduate degree in Statistics, Social Sciences, Development Studies, or a related field.

Minimum experience: 5-7 years

American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB)

Lecturer, various departments

Deadline: December 27

Eligibility:

MBA/Master's with a Bachelor's/Honors degree in a relevant discipline with no third class in all examinations with a minimum 3.80 CGPA.

Minimum experience: N/A

FOR MORE DETAILS AND THE APPLICATION LINKS, SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW.



## Google will surpass OpenAI in AI race: 'Godfather of AI'

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Geoffrey Hinton, a leading AI researcher often referred to as the 'godfather of AI', has recently stated that Google is likely to surpass rival OpenAI in the AI race. In a recent interview with Business Insider, Hinton expressed surprise that it had taken Google, where he previously worked, this long to catch up. He cited Google's recent release of the Gemini 3 model and the Nano Banana Pro image generator as factors that have shifted momentum.

Hinton noted in the interview that Google has significant advantages, including a large team of researchers, vast data resources, and its own custom AI chips, which he called a "big advantage." Hinton left Google in 2023 to speak freely about AI risks and was jointly awarded a Nobel Prize in physics in 2024. Additionally, Google recently announced a donation of \$10 million CAD to help establish a chair in AI at the University of Toronto in Hinton's honour, which the university said will match.



## New York Times sues Perplexity

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The New York Times has filed a lawsuit against the AI software company Perplexity AI, accusing it of using millions of the newspaper's articles without permission to power its AI products. The lawsuit, filed in federal court in New York, alleges that Perplexity's business model relies on scraping and copying copyrighted material, including content behind paywalls. The Times also claims that Perplexity's AI tools have generated fabricated information and falsely attributed these inaccuracies to the newspaper by displaying them alongside its trademarks.

Perplexity's head of communication, Jesse Dwyer, dismissed the lawsuit, characterising



IMAGE: REUTERS

it as an unsuccessful tactic historically used by publishers against new technologies. The startup has previously stated it does not scrape data to build its core models but instead indexes web pages and

provides citations. Perplexity, which is valued at about \$20 billion, is also facing similar lawsuits from other publishers, including the Chicago Tribune, Dow Jones, the New York Post, and Encyclopedia Britannica.

## Meta signs AI deals with several news publishers

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Meta has announced commercial agreements with several news publishers to use their content for its AI services. The deals include outlets such as CNN, Fox News, The Washington Examiner, USA Today, and France's Le Monde. The agreements will allow Meta's AI chatbot to provide users with "real-time" news updates by linking directly to articles and websites from these publishers. The company stated this will help users discover more timely and relevant content when they ask news-related questions.

The move is part of Meta's effort to attract more users to its AI products amid intense competition in the market. Financial terms of the new publisher agreements were not disclosed. Meta stated it plans to add more partnerships and explore new features in the future.

"Success is most often achieved by those who don't know that failure is inevitable."

COCO CHANEL

