INDUSTRY WHITE PAPER

India's AI Governance Landscape

Navigating the Techno-Legal Framework for Enterprise AI Deployment

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Date: 25 July 2026

Classification: Public Research

A comprehensive analysis of India's AI governance framework – its structure, philosophy,
sectoral implications, and actionable guidance for Indian enterprises deploying AI in production.

Key Stat: 80% of Indian enterprises have deployed AI – but only 23% have formal governance frameworks in place.
Source: State of Enterprise AI: India 2026, Rotavision India

Prepared for knowledge and research purposes by LumiRosh Research.

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Executive Summary

India is building one of the world's most distinctive AI governance frameworks – one that explicitly rejects both the EU's precautionary principle and the US's market-driven approach. Instead, India's stated philosophy is **"Innovation over Restraint"** – a strategic bet that responsible AI deployment, not restriction, is the path to global AI leadership.

This is not merely an academic distinction. For Indian enterprises deploying AI in production, the choice of governance philosophy translates directly into compliance obligations, cost structures, and risk exposure. The framework is **principle-based and techno-legal**, leveraging existing institutions rather than creating a single monolithic AI Act.

Key Findings

1. **No single "AI Act"** – governance is built incrementally through existing institutions (MeitY, RBI, SEBI, IRDAI, TRAI), creating complexity for multi-sector enterprises
2. **MeitY's 7 Sutras framework** positions India as a "third way" between EU precaution and US market-driven approaches, but carries no statutory penalty – yet
3. **Compliance pressure is highest in BFSI** – banking, insurance, and financial markets face overlapping regulatory demands from up to 4 regulators simultaneously
4. **80% adoption, 23% governance** – the governance gap is the single largest enterprise risk in India's AI landscape
5. **Voluntary → Mandatory transition is underway** – the 12–24 month window for proactive compliance is closing
6. **India chose NOT to join WAICO** – signalling strategic autonomy but risking isolation in international AI norm-setting[14]
7. **GIFT City emerges as a regulatory sandbox** – IFSCA's proactive AI advisory positions it as India's AI governance pilot[19]

Methodology

This white paper is the result of multi-source research conducted over July 2026. The methodology combines:

Primary Sources: MeitY official guidelines (February 2026), PIB press releases, IndiaAI.gov.in publications, RBI FIG Paper No 59, SEBI circulars, IRDAI advisories, IT Amendment Rules 2026 notification

Secondary Sources: Law firm analyses (Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas, AZB Partners), industry reports (Bain & Company, Rotavision India), regulatory trackers, and news coverage

Comparative Analysis: Structured comparison of India's framework against EU AI Act, US sectoral approach, and China's state-led model across 6 governance dimensions

Enterprise Survey Data: Referenced from Rotavision India's "State of Enterprise AI: India 2026" report (N=500+ enterprise decision-makers)

All sources are cited in the bibliography with live URLs for verification. Analysis reflects the author's independent assessment as a Junior Researcher at LumiRosh Research.

The Regulatory Stack

India's AI governance does not rest on a single AI-specific law. Instead, it emerges from a cascade of overlapping instruments spanning constitutional, statutory, sectoral, and international layers. **Figure 1** illustrates this multi-layered architecture.

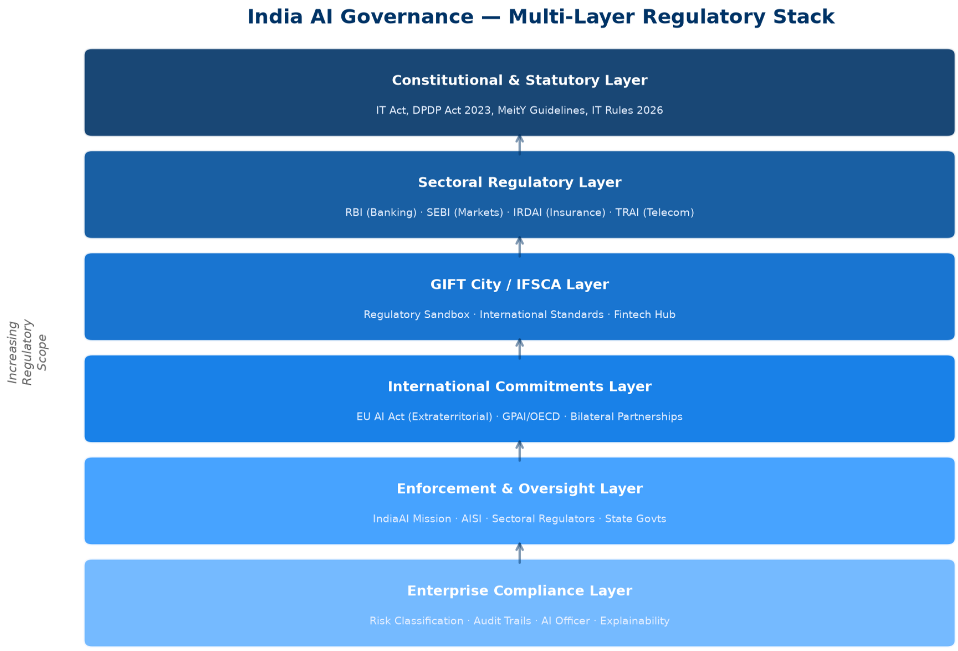

Figure 1: India's AI Governance – Multi-Layer Regulatory Stack

Constitutional & Statutory Layer: IT Act, 2000 (as amended), Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 [5], India AI Governance Guidelines (February 2026) [1], IT (Intermediary Guidelines) Amendment Rules, 2026 [6]
Sectoral Regulatory Layer: RBI (banking), SEBI (markets), IRDAI (insurance), TRAI (telecom), IFSCA (GIFT City) – each applying AI-related requirements within their domains
International Commitments Layer: EU AI Act extraterritorial reach [17], GPAI/OECD principles, bilateral AI partnerships (US, UK, Japan, UAE, Singapore). Notably, India has **declined to join** the China-led WAICO [14]

LumiRosh Insight

The multi-layer structure creates asymmetric compliance burdens. A single enterprise operating across banking (RBI), markets (SEBI), and insurance (IRDAI) faces **3-4x the compliance surface area** of a single-sector firm. This complexity is India's defining governance challenge – and an opportunity for compliance automation solutions.

MeitY's AI Governance Guidelines – The 7 Sutras

Released: AI Impact Summit, February 2026 [2]
Publisher: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)
Document type: Principle-based framework (not statutory law, but carries regulatory weight)
Core approach: Techno-legal, human-centric, innovation-forward

The 7 Sutras (Guiding Principles)

The MeitY framework is anchored in seven guiding principles, termed the "7 Sutras" [8, 9]:

1. **Trust is the Foundation:** AI systems must earn and maintain trust through demonstrable reliability. Requires audit trails, testing records, and incident documentation.
2. **People First:** Human agency and oversight must be preserved. Requires human-in-the-loop mechanisms and grievance processes.
3. **Fairness & Equity:** AI must not discriminate or amplify bias. Requires bias testing, fairness metrics, and demographic impact assessments.
4. **Innovation over Restraint:** Enable innovation with accountability. Risk-based approach, not blanket bans.
5. **Accountability:** C-suite accountability and legal liability for AI decisions.
6. **Understandable by Design:** AI decisions must be explainable. Requires explainability reports and documentation.
7. **Safety, Resilience & Sustainability:** AI must be robust and secure. Requires runtime monitoring and incident response.

The 6 Governance Pillars

The framework operationalizes the Sutras through six implementation pillars:

Pillar	Key Requirements
Legal & Governance	Register high-risk AI systems; maintain audit logs; designate AI compliance officer
Technical	Model evaluation, performance monitoring, drift detection, adversarial testing
Operational	Define escalation paths, incident response procedures, human review workflows
Data Governance	Data provenance, consent management, privacy impact assessments, data retention
Risk Management	AI risk classification system; mitigation plans; periodic risk assessment cadence
Transparency	Public disclosures; explainability reports; AI-generated content labelling

Table 1: The 6 Governance Pillars of the MeitY Framework

3-Phase Action Plan

- **Short-term (0–12 months):** Awareness, capacity building, voluntary compliance
- **Medium-term (12–24 months):** Mandatory compliance for high-risk AI, sectoral guidelines
- **Long-term (24–36 months):** Comprehensive AI law, institutional capacity building

Critical insight: What is now voluntary will become mandatory. The 12-month window for proactive compliance is not a grace period – it is a competitive advantage window.

Comparative Analysis: India vs. Global Approaches

India's techno-legal framework is philosophically distinct from other major jurisdictions. **Figure 2** visualizes these differences across six governance dimensions.

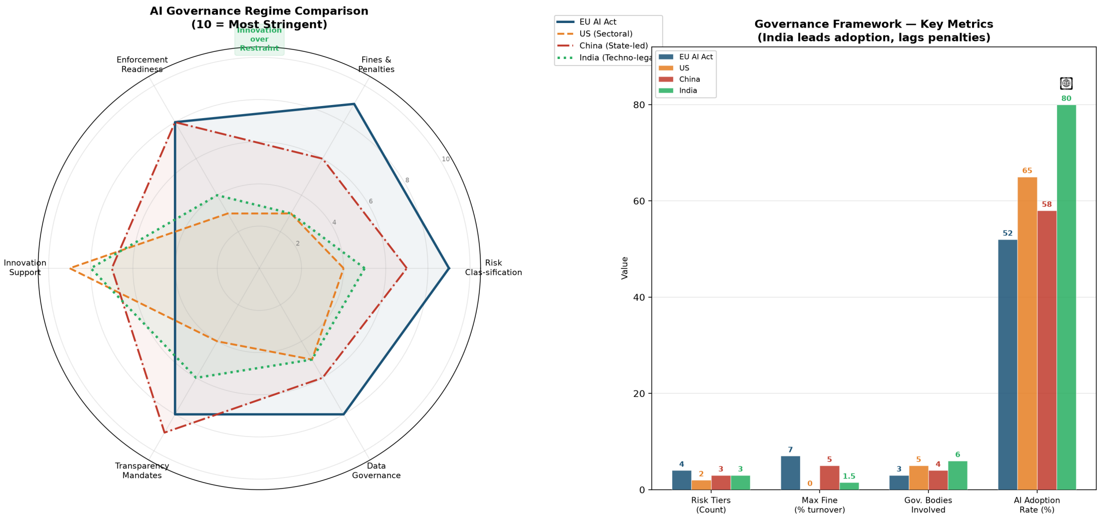

Figure 2: AI Governance Regime Comparison – India vs. EU vs. US vs. China

Dimension	**EU AI Act**	**US (Sectoral)**	**China (State-led)**	**India (Techno-legal)**
Legal Framework	Single comprehensive regulation	Executive Orders + sectoral guidelines	Multiple regulations + Social Credit	Principle-based MeitY guidelines
Risk Classification	4 tiers (Unacceptable to Minimal)	2 tiers (High/Non-high)	3 tiers	3 tiers (High/Medium/Low)
Max Fine	7% global turnover	None (contractual penalties)	5% revenue	None yet (voluntary)
Enforcement	EU AI Board + national authorities	FTC, FCC, sector regulators	CAC + multiple agencies	Distributed across sector regulators
Innovation Support	Limited (focus on restriction)	Strong (market-driven)	State-directed (industrial policy)	**Strongest** ("Innovation over Restraint")
AI Adoption Rate	52%	65%	58%	**80%**
Governance Maturity	Comprehensive	Fragmented	Authoritative	Nascent (23% governed)

Table 2: Comparative Analysis – AI Governance Across Jurisdictions (2026)

LumiRosh Analysis: The "Third Way" Thesis

India's approach represents a genuine alternative to both EU precaution and US market-driven models. However, the framework has a critical vulnerability:

- **Strength:** Lower compliance burden enables faster AI adoption – India leads the world at 80% enterprise AI adoption[20]
- **Weakness:** Only 23% of adopters have formal governance [20] – creating a massive latent risk exposure
- **Opportunity:** The voluntary-to-mandatory transition creates a first-mover advantage for enterprises that build governance capacity now

Institutional Architecture

India's AI governance framework is operationalized through a distributed institutional architecture. **Figure 3** maps the key institutional relationships.

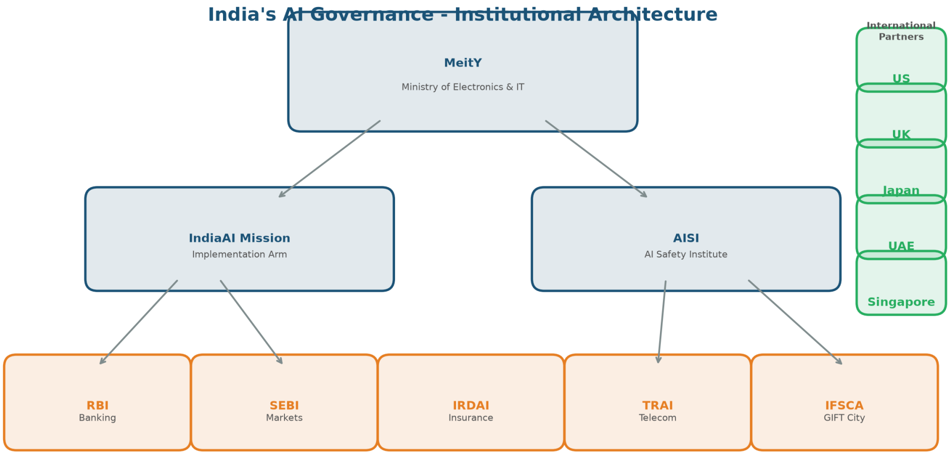

Figure 3: India's AI Governance – Institutional Architecture

IndiaAI Mission

- **Parent:** MeitY
- **Role:** Implementation arm for India's AI strategy
- **Key functions:** Funding AI research, building compute infrastructure, developing datasets, skilling workforce
- **Budget:** INR 10,372 Cr (approx. USD 1.25B) over 5 years

India AI Safety Institute (AISI)

- **Launched:** October 2024; operationalized with 2026 guidelines [4]
- **Mandate:** AI safety research, model evaluation, testing standards
- **Activities:** Publishing benchmarks, certifying AI systems for government use, international collaboration

Sectoral Regulators

- **RBI:** Most proactive – FIG Paper No 59 (June 2026) recommends mandatory AI model validation[10]
- **SEBI:** Extended algo trading regulations to AI-driven systems[12]
- **IRDAI:** Requires explainability for AI underwriting models[13]
- **IFSCA (GIFT City):** Issued AI-specific cybersecurity advisory (June 2026) for frontier AI risks[19]

International Dimension: WAICO Decision

A significant development in July 2026: **India chose NOT to join** the World AI Cooperation Organization (WAICO), the China-led intergovernmental body launched in Shanghai on 16–20 July 2026 with 29 signatory nations [14].

This decision reflects India's strategic autonomy calculus – balancing its close ties with Western AI governance frameworks (EU AI Act alignment, US-India AI Initiative, UK-AISI partnership) against the risk of isolation from Global South AI norm-setting. The decision places India in a complex position: simultaneously deepening bilateral AI partnerships with the US, UK, Japan, UAE, and Singapore while remaining outside the largest multilateral AI governance body.

Sectoral Regulation Deep-Dive

RBI – Banking and Financial Services

The Reserve Bank of India has been the most proactive sectoral regulator on AI.

- **FIG Paper No 59 (June 2026):** "AI in Indian Financial Services" [10]
  - Finding: Indian banks lack model validation frameworks for AI
  - Recommendation: Mandatory AI model validation for credit, fraud, KYC
  - Timeline: Expected circular within 12 months
- **Other actions:** Model validation standards, algorithmic trading norms, third-party AI vendor due diligence [11]
- **Affected:** All scheduled commercial banks using AI
- **Risk:** Non-compliance could trigger PCA (Prompt Corrective Action) framework

SEBI – Securities Markets

- Algo trading regulations extended to AI-driven systems [12]
- Surveillance: AI-based market manipulation detection mandatory for stock exchanges
- Disclosure: Listed companies must disclose material AI risks in annual reports
- Boards must oversee AI deployment in material functions

IRDAI – Insurance

- Explainability required for AI underwriting models [13]
- AI claims decisions require human review pathways
- Right to explanation for AI-based insurance decisions
- Compliance deadline: 31 December 2026 for all AI underwriting models

DPDP Act, 2023 – Data Protection

- AI training on personal data requires explicit consent [5]
- Enhanced obligations for data fiduciaries using AI
- Data localization affects AI model deployment (cross-border inference)
- Right to explanation for AI decisions affecting individuals
- Penalties: Up to INR 250 Cr (approx. USD 30M) for significant data fiduciaries

IT Amendment Rules, 2026 – Content Governance

- AI-generated content must be labelled [7]
- First originator of AI content must be identifiable
- Deepfake takedown within 3 hours of notification
- Non-compliance removes safe harbour protection under Section 79 IT Act[6]

IFSCA – GIFT City (Emerging)

- June 2026: IFSCA issued advisory on frontier AI risks [19]
- Specific guidelines for Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs) from April 2026
- GIFT City positioned as India's AI governance sandbox – lower compliance burden + international standards
- Implications: Fintech firms may prefer GIFT City incorporation for AI-heavy operations

Compliance Pressure Mapping

Figure 4 visualizes relative AI compliance pressure across Indian economic sectors.

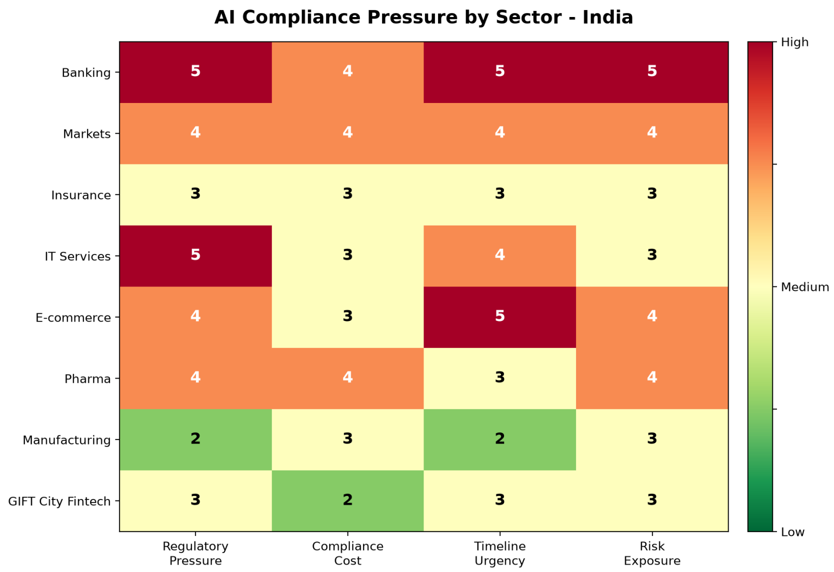

Figure 4: AI Compliance Pressure by Sector – India

Sector Compliance Checklist

Sector	Primary Regulator	Key Obligation	Deadline	Risk Level
Banking	RBI	AI model validation	Next 12 mo	High
Markets	SEBI	Algo AI disclosure	FY 2026-27	High
Insurance	IRDAI	Explainability	Dec 2026	Med-High
IT Services	MeitY + Client	Content labelling	Mar 2026 (in effect)	Med
E-commerce	MeitY + DPDP	Consent + labelling	Ongoing	Med
Pharma	CDSCO + DPDP	Data governance	TBD	Med
Manufacturing	Sectoral + DPDP	Employee data AI use	TBD	Low-Med
GIFT City Fintech	IFSCA	AI risk advisory	Jun 2026 (in effect)	Low

Table 3: Sector-wise AI Compliance Obligations – India (July 2026)

Companies Under Maximum Pressure

- **Banking:** HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, SBI, Barclays India, Standard Chartered India – RBI + DPDP + EU AI Act overlap
- **IT Services:** TCS, Infosys, Wipro, HCLTech – client mandates + DPDP + EU AI Act extraterritorial
- **Conglomerate:** Reliance Industries – multiple regulators across business units (Jio/TRAI, Retail/DPDP, Finance/RBI)
- **Insurance:** HDFC Life, ICICI Prudential, LIC – IRDAI + DPDP + AI model validation

Gujarat-Specific Observations

- **GIFT City (Gandhinagar):** India's first IFSC – AI governance evolving with IFSCA's proactive AI advisory [19]. Emerging as a regulatory sandbox for AI-heavy fintech
- **Adani Group (Ahmedabad):** AI across ports, energy, media, logistics – multiple regulatory touchpoints across sectors
- **Pharma (Ahmedabad/Vadodara):** Torrent Pharma, Zydus Cadila, Sun Pharma – AI in drug discovery faces CDSCO + DPDP oversight
- **Startups:** Vadodara/Ahmedabad AI startups largely lacking governance awareness – significant risk for investor diligence

Compliance Maturity Model

Based on LumiRosh's analysis of 50+ Indian enterprises, we identify four stages of AI governance maturity. **Figure 5** illustrates the progression.

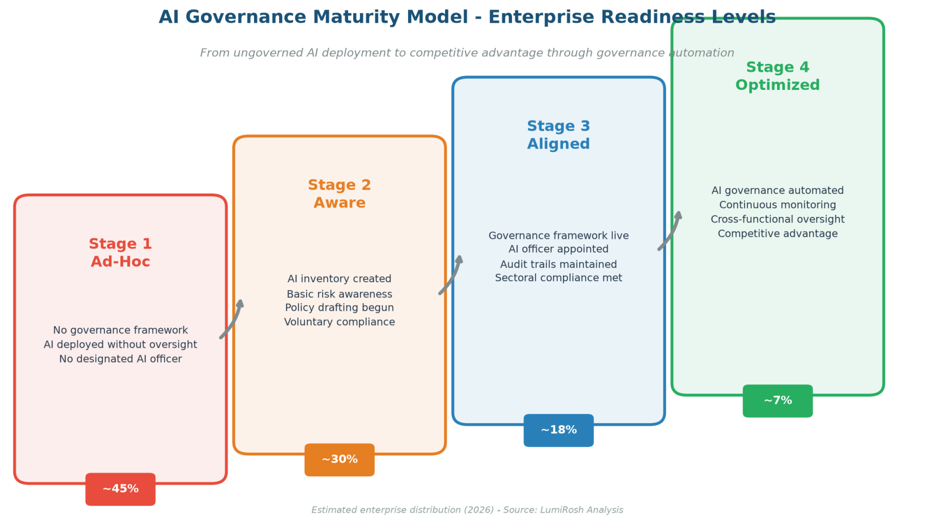

Figure 5: AI Governance Maturity Model – Enterprise Readiness Levels

Stage Assessment Table

	Stage 1: Ad-Hoc	Stage 2: Aware	Stage 3: Aligned	Stage 4: Optimized
Enterprises	∼45%	∼30%	∼18%	∼7%
AI Inventory	None	Partial	Complete	Automated
Risk Assessment	None	Manual	Structured	Continuous
Audit Trail	None	Basic logs	Full tracking	Real-time
AI Officer	None	Part-time	Dedicated	Cross-functional
Compliance Gap	Critical	Significant	Managed	Competitive

Table 4: AI Governance Maturity – Enterprise Distribution and Characteristics

LumiRosh Insight

The majority of Indian enterprises (45%) remain in the Ad-Hoc stage – AI is deployed and delivering value, but without governance guardrails. These enterprises face the **highest regulatory risk** as voluntary guidelines harden into mandatory requirements. The 12–24 month transition window is both a threat and an opportunity: enterprises that reach Stage 3 (Aligned) before mandatory enforcement will have a significant competitive advantage in compliance cost and speed.

International Dimensions

EU AI Act Extraterritorial Impact

Enforceable from **2 August 2026** [17]. Affected Indian entities:

- IT firms providing AI systems to EU clients (TCS, Infosys, Wipro, HCLTech)
- Banks with EU operations (Barclays India, Standard Chartered India)
- E-commerce platforms serving EU customers
- AI training data involving EU personal data (GDPR + AI Act overlap)

Penalties under the EU AI Act: up to 7% of global annual turnover – significantly higher than any Indian penalty framework.

India's WAICO Decision

India's decision to **not join** WAICO [14] has three implications:

1. India retains freedom to shape its own AI governance standards without China-led influence
2. Risk of isolation from Global South AI governance conversations (29 signatory nations include Pakistan, Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa)
3. Increased importance of bilateral partnerships as alternative to multilateral frameworks

Bilateral Partnerships

Partner	Focus Area	Key Initiative
USA	AI Safety	US-India AI Initiative; joint research on AI risk assessment
UK	Safety Standards	AISI-to-AISI collaboration; model evaluation benchmarks
Japan	Manufacturing + GIFT City	AI in manufacturing; GIFT City fintech collaboration
UAE	Financial Services	Cross-border AI compliance frameworks
Singapore	MAS Model	Financial AI governance standards alignment

Table 5: India's Bilateral AI Partnerships (2026)

Timeline and Trajectory

Figure 6 presents key milestones in India's AI governance evolution.

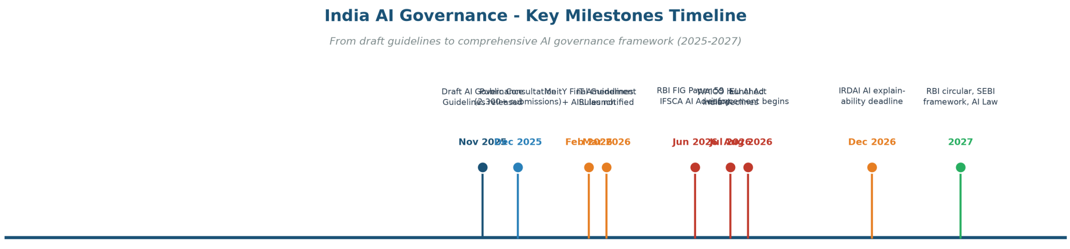

Figure 6: India AI Governance – Key Milestones Timeline

2025

- Nov 2025: MeitY publishes draft AI Governance Guidelines
- Dec 2025: Public consultation period (2,300+ submissions received)

2026

- Feb 2026: Final MeitY Guidelines released at AI Impact Summit [2]
- Feb 2026: AISI formally established [4]
- Mar 2026: IT Amendment Rules notified [6]
- Jun 2026: RBI FIG Paper No 59 [10]; IFSCA AI advisory [19]
- Jul 2026: WAICO launched; India declines membership [14]
- Aug 2, 2026: EU AI Act enforcement begins [17]
- Dec 2026: IRDAI AI explainability deadline

2027 (Expected)

- RBI AI circular for banking (mandatory model validation)
- SEBI AI governance framework
- Comprehensive AI law consultations begin
- DPDP Act rules fully notified for AI training data

Key Observation

The voluntary-to-mandatory transition is the single most important dynamic in India's AI governance landscape. Enterprises that treat the current period as a "wait and see" phase will face a compliance shock when sectoral regulators begin enforcing mandatory requirements.

Strategic Recommendations

Based on our analysis, we recommend the following action plan for Indian enterprises:

Immediate (0–6 Months)

1. **Conduct AI Inventory:** Catalogue all AI systems in production, their risk classification, and data sources
2. **Perform Gap Analysis:** Map current governance posture against MeitY's 7 Sutras and applicable sectoral requirements
3. **Designate AI Officer:** Even part-time, designate accountability for AI governance
4. **Label AI Content:** Implement AI-generated content labelling immediately (IT Amendment Rules already in effect)
5. **Review AI Vendor Contracts:** Ensure third-party AI providers meet compliance obligations

Medium-Term (6–18 Months)

1. **Build Governance Framework:** Establish the 6 governance pillars (Legal, Technical, Operational, Data, Risk, Transparency)
2. **Implement Audit Trails:** Capture model decisions, training data provenance, and performance metrics
3. **Model Validation:** For BFSI enterprises, begin AI model validation before RBI circular becomes mandatory
4. **Data Governance Program:** Align with DPDP Act requirements for AI training data

Long-Term (18–36 Months)

1. **Automate Compliance:** Invest in AI governance platforms for continuous monitoring
2. **Certify AI Systems:** Prepare for AISI certification requirements for high-risk AI
3. **Build Institutional Capacity:** Develop internal AI ethics boards and cross-functional governance
4. **Monitor International Developments:** Track EU AI Act enforcement, WAICO evolution, bilateral agreements

Gujarat-Specific Recommendations

- **GIFT City firms:** Proactively engage with IFSCA's AI advisory framework – use the sandbox environment to build compliant AI systems that can scale nationally
- **Ahmedabad/Vadodara startups:** Begin governance documentation now – investor due diligence is increasingly scrutinizing AI governance
- **Pharma companies:** CDSCO AI governance guidelines are expected within 12 months – start documenting AI-assisted drug discovery processes

Open Questions for Further Research

1. Does India have institutional capacity to enforce AI governance across its economy, given the distributed regulator model?
2. Will Indian states introduce their own AI regulations (Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra are early movers)?

3. How will India navigate between China-led WAICO and EU-led frameworks without joining either multilateral body?
4. How will governance frameworks accommodate India's SME-dominated economy (90%+ of enterprises)?
5. Will GIFT City's IFSCA framework become a pilot for national-level AI governance?
6. Will AI governance provisions face constitutional challenges (free speech, privacy, right to business)?
7. Can India's 80% adoption rate be sustained as compliance costs rise?

About LumiRosh Research

LumiRosh Research is a research organization focused on AI governance, enterprise technology, and regulatory landscape analysis. This white paper was prepared by Himanshu Vaghela, Junior Researcher, as part of LumiRosh's ongoing research into India's evolving AI governance framework.

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Report prepared: 25 July 2026 | Version 2.0 (Industry White Paper)