

RACE WEEKLY INTELLIGENCE BRIEF

AI · CYBERSECURITY · CLOUD · LEADERSHIP

THIS WEEK'S COVER:

The Power Bill Behind the Prompt: AI's Energy & Water Crunch — and How to Get Ahead of It

ALSO INSIDE

The World in 5 · The Green Ledger · The Efficiency Playbook · Metric of the Week ·
The Procurement Scorecard · Fun Fact

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

RETINA's first arc - seven issues from agent ownership to the agent supply chain - was about control. This week, we open a new arc: the physical and environmental cost of the AI you are deploying, and what to do about it. Every prompt, every agent, every model your enterprise runs lands somewhere real - in a data centre drawing power off a strained grid and water from a stressed catchment. In 2026, that cost stopped being the cloud provider's problem and became a board-level one: a line in your ESG report, a question from your investors, a risk to your licence to operate. This issue maps the crunch honestly - and, because problems without answers are just anxiety, it is built around the moves a CXO can make now to turn an energy-and-water liability into an efficiency, cost, and reputation advantage.

SIGNAL

THE ENERGY & WATER CRUNCH — BY THE NUMBERS

~945 TWh

projected global data-centre electricity demand by 2030 — roughly double 2024, and if data centres were a country, among the world's largest consumers
IEA Energy & AI, base case

2M litres/day

water a single 100 MW data centre can consume for evaporative cooling — and two-thirds of new hyperscale campuses sit in already water-stressed areas
India Briefing 2026 / industry analysis

17 GW

India's projected data-centre capacity by 2030 — up roughly 8x from under 2 GW today, set to consume ~8% of national energy
DCD / industry forecasts, 2026

70–90%

direct water reduction achievable by switching from evaporative to liquid (direct-to-chip or immersion) cooling — the single biggest operational lever
IEA Energy & AI, base case

THE WORLD IN 5

NEW · GLOBAL HEADLINES A CXO
SHOULD BE ABLE TO REFERENCE

Five moves from the past fortnight, beyond AI agents, worth a note at your next leadership table.

1. **INFRASTRUCTURE:** A BlackRock-led consortium (with Microsoft, NVIDIA, MGX, xAI, Temasek) closed the ~\$40 billion acquisition of Aligned Data Centres - the largest data-centre deal on record, prized for its ~5 GW pipeline and liquid-cooling expertise. Capital is now chasing power and cooling, not just compute.
2. **CAPITAL MARKETS:** Both Anthropic and OpenAI confidentially filed S-1s with the SEC within a week of each other — the AI IPO era has begun, at valuations approaching and exceeding the trillion-dollar mark. Public markets are about to price AI directly.
3. **THE COST SHIFT:** GitHub Copilot moved every plan from flat-rate to token-based billing on 1 June — a single agentic coding session can now burn 3–4× a developer's monthly allotment. The shift from subscription to consumption pricing is spreading across enterprise AI.
4. **PROCUREMENT:** OpenAI models became available through Oracle's existing cloud credits, letting enterprises route AI workloads without a new vendor contract. Procurement friction - not model quality - is the real adoption barrier, and it is falling.
5. **ENERGY:** India added a record 25.1 GW of non-fossil power capacity in 2025 (CREA) - the clean-energy build-out that will decide whether the country's data-centre boom is green or coal-fed. The grid is the story behind the AI story.



HYPERFOCAL

WHAT BROKE THIS WEEK

Investors Force the Water Question - and Regulators Start Pricing the Power

Two developments moved data-centre sustainability from a disclosure footnote to the board agenda. First, more than a dozen institutional investors formally demanded site-level water and energy transparency from Amazon, Microsoft, and Alphabet ahead of their 2026 AGMs, citing community water stress - and AWS, the largest provider, still does not publish aggregate water figures. Second, in India, Karnataka announced (late May 2026) that it will fold low-water cooling incentives into its forthcoming data-centre policy, joining Chennai and Mumbai in mandating water-impact assessments at approval. The signal for every CXO who buys cloud or colocation: the environmental cost of your compute is becoming a disclosed, regulated, and investor-scrutinised number. Solution-first takeaway: get ahead of it by asking your providers for PUE and WUE figures now, and writing them into contracts before regulators write them into law.

Source: <https://axis-intelligence.com/ai-data-center-energy-consumption-statistics/>



HYPERFOCAL

WHAT BROKE THIS WEEK

The Cooling Revolution Goes Mainstream - Because Air Can No Longer Keep Up

AI GPU racks now draw 50–135 kW each — far beyond what air cooling can economically handle — forcing liquid cooling from exotic to default. The shift is consequential: direct-to-chip and immersion cooling cut direct water use 70–90% and cooling energy by roughly 18%, while Indian operators deploying it are hitting PUE as low as 1.3 against a global average of 1.5–1.8. The honest caveat RETINA insists on: liquid cooling fixes direct water and cooling efficiency, but the dominant footprint — the electricity itself, and the water consumed generating it — only shrinks when the power turns green. Solution-first takeaway: treat cooling architecture and energy sourcing as one decision, not two. Liquid cooling on a coal grid solves the visible problem and leaves the larger one intact.

Source:

<https://www.turnerandtownsend.com/insights/decarbonisation-ensuring-efficiency-in-indias-data-centres/>

**RETINA
TAKE**

The crunch is real, but it is not a reason to slow AI adoption - it is a reason to adopt it deliberately. Every enterprise now faces three converging pressures on its compute: a strained grid, a stressed water table, and a watching investor. The organisations that win will treat energy and water efficiency the way they learned to treat cost and security - as a design constraint set before deployment, not a clean-up afterwards.



PANORAMA

THREE FORCES — AND THE MOVE EACH ONE DEMANDS

1

Power Availability Is Now the Binding Constraint on AI — Not Chips

US data-centre demand is forecast to nearly double from 80 to 150 GW between 2025 and 2028 - the equivalent of adding Spain's entire electricity need in three years. Grids in Virginia (26% of state power) and Ireland (heading toward a third of national supply) are already strained, and India's grid still lacks the 'five-nines' reliability data centres need, driving a 'dirty secret' reliance on diesel backup. The constraint on your AI ambitions in 2027 may not be GPU supply - it may be whether the grid can power them. The move: make power sourcing a first-class part of every cloud and colocation decision. Ask where the electrons come from, demand renewable power-purchase agreements (PPAs), and favour providers with on-site generation and battery storage over those leaning on diesel.

Source:

<https://kpmg.com/in/en/blogs/2025/11/indias-data-center-revolution-powering-the-trillion-dollar-digital-dream.html>

THE
GRID



PANORAMA

THREE FORCES SHAPING YOUR DECISIONS

2

THE
WATER
TABLE**The Least-Disclosed Risk Is the One Closest to Your Licence to Operate**

Water is the sector's biggest transparency gap and its sharpest community-relations risk: a 100 MW facility can consume up to 2 million litres a day, and most are sited where water is already scarce. In India, a typical 1 MW facility uses up to 25 million litres a year, and the Indian Green Building Council now targets water-usage effectiveness (WUE) below 2.2 litres/kWh. Unlike carbon, water is intensely local – a stressed catchment turns into a planning objection, a protest, or a denied permit. The move: measure and disclose WUE before you are asked. Prioritise closed-loop and air-side (free) cooling in water-stressed zones, invest in water recycling (operators like CtrlS have recycled ~10 million litres), and treat rainwater harvesting and wastewater reuse as standard, not optional.

Source:

<https://www.india-briefing.com/news/india-data-center-cooling-market-investment-opportunities-45352.html> 2026.

3

India's
Edge**Green Infrastructure Is Becoming a Competitive Advantage, Not a Cost**

India is building green digital infrastructure faster than almost anywhere: 25.1 GW of non-fossil capacity added in 2025, operators like AdaniConneX and Nxtra by Airtel pledging 100% renewables by 2030, and the Draft National Data Centre Policy 2025 proposing 20-year tax exemptions and faster approvals for green-certified facilities. By 2030, ~30% of India's data-centre capacity is expected to be renewable-powered. For Indian enterprises this flips the script: sustainability is no longer a compliance cost but a procurement advantage and an export credential, since US and EU clients now audit the carbon and water footprint of their entire supply chain – including their Indian vendors. The move: make your data-centre and cloud partners' PUE, WUE, and renewable percentage part of your own ESG and BRSR story – and use a credible green footprint as a differentiator when you sell to global clients.

Source: <https://www.resiindia.org/post/sustainability-in-indian-data-centers>



THE GREEN LEDGER

NEW · THE SUSTAINABILITY
NUMBERS THAT MOVED

A new standing fixture: the energy, water, and emissions figures every CXO now owns – because they will appear in your ESG report whether you tracked them or not.

PUE – Power Usage Effectiveness

Total facility energy ÷ IT energy. Global average 1.5–1.8; best Indian operators hit 1.3. Lower is better. Ask every provider for it; write a ceiling into the contract.



THE GREEN LEDGER

NEW · THE SUSTAINABILITY
NUMBERS THAT MOVED

WUE — Water Usage Effectiveness	Litres of water per kWh of IT energy. IGBC targets below 2.2 L/kWh. The number regulators and communities will ask for first — measure it before they do.
Renewable %	Share of facility power from renewables. STT GDC hit 62.5% in 2023, ahead of target; leaders target 100% by 2030. The single biggest lever on your true (indirect) footprint.
Heat reuse	Excess server heat captured for nearby buildings/industry (Danfoss + HPE module in India). Turns a waste stream into a clean-energy credit — an emerging, under-used win.



PERSPECTIVES

DEEP TECH — ANALYSIS BY THE RACE TEAM

Your AI Strategy Now Has a Utility Bill - and It Belongs on the Board Agenda

By **Dr. Shinu Abhi** · Director – Corporate Training, REVA Academy for Corporate Excellence

For two years, the enterprise AI conversation has been about capability — what the model can do, what the agent can automate. In the executive cohorts at RACE, a quieter question has started to surface, usually from a CFO or a sustainability head rather than a technologist: what does all of this actually consume? It is the right question, and most organisations cannot answer it. They know their cloud bill. They do not know their power draw, their water footprint, or the carbon attached to the inference they run every day. That gap is about to become expensive.

Here is the shift I want our readers to internalise. The environmental cost of AI used to be invisible to the enterprise because it sat inside the cloud provider's walls. Three forces are pulling it onto your balance sheet at once: investors demanding site-level water and energy disclosure, regulators in India and abroad attaching it to approvals and

reporting, and global clients auditing the footprint of their entire supply chain — which now includes you. The cost did not appear. It was always there. What changed is that it is now yours to account for.

The encouraging part — and I insist on the encouraging part — is that nearly every lever here is also a cost lever. A lower PUE means you are paying for compute, not for cooling. A renewable PPA hedges you against volatile power prices. Water recycling reduces both your bill and your community risk. Heat reuse turns a waste stream into a credit. Efficiency and sustainability are not in tension with the business case; for once, they are the same case. The enterprises that treat this well will not be the ones that slow their AI ambitions out of guilt. They will be the ones that engineer efficiency in from the start and report it with confidence.



PERSPECTIVES

DEEP TECH — ANALYSIS BY THE RACE TEAM

So the action for a leadership team is concrete. Put three numbers on your next board pack — PUE, WUE, and the renewable percentage for the infrastructure your AI runs on. If you cannot get them from your provider, that absence is itself the finding. Then set a target trajectory for each, the way you would for cost or risk. You do not need to become an energy company. You need to stop treating the most physical input to your AI strategy as someone else's problem.

RACE PERSPECTIVE

AI's energy and water cost is not an argument against AI - it is an argument for running it deliberately. The leaders of 2027 will be those who can state, on one slide, the PUE, WUE, and renewable mix behind their AI, and show the trajectory improving. Efficiency engineered in from the start is cheaper, cleaner, and more defensible than efficiency bolted on under pressure.



THE EFFICIENCY PLAYBOOK

NEW · TURNING THE CRUNCH
INTO AN ADVANTAGE

Five moves, ordered from fastest to most strategic, that any enterprise can act on — none require becoming an energy company.

MOVE 1 Measure	Get PUE, WUE, and renewable % from every cloud and colocation provider you use. If they cannot or will not share them, that is your first finding. You cannot manage - or report - what you do not measure.
MOVE 2 Right-size	Cut the demand before sourcing the supply. Use smaller, fit-for-purpose models where they work (echoing the SLM theme of earlier issues), retire idle and zombie workloads, and avoid unnecessary retraining that accelerates hardware churn. The greenest kilowatt is the one you never draw.
MOVE 3 Cool smarter	Move AI workloads to liquid-cooled (direct-to-chip or immersion) capacity and prioritise closed-loop or free-cooling designs in water-stressed regions. 70–90% less direct water, ~18% less cooling energy, and a path to PUE near 1.3.
MOVE 4 Source green	Favour providers with renewable PPAs, on-site solar, and battery storage over diesel-backed grid-tied facilities. This is the lever that shrinks the dominant, indirect footprint — and hedges you against power-price volatility.
MOVE 5 Report & differentiate	Put the three numbers in your ESG/BRSR disclosure with a target trajectory, and use a credible green footprint as a selling point to global clients who now audit their supply chain. Turn a compliance obligation into a commercial edge.



METRIC OF THE WEEK

ONE NUMBER,
PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD

Compute Carbon Intensity (gCO₂ per useful output)

What it is: the carbon emitted per unit of real business output from your AI — per thousand inferences, per resolved ticket, per document processed — not per model or per data centre. It ties the environmental cost to the work actually delivered.

Why it matters now: headline figures ('AI uses X TWh') are too abstract to manage. Carbon-per-output makes efficiency legible: a smaller model on a renewable-powered, liquid-cooled facility can deliver the same outcome at a fraction of the intensity — and that ratio is what improves, or doesn't, when you act.

How leaders use it: as the single number that connects the Efficiency Playbook to the board. Set a baseline, apply the five moves, and track the intensity falling. It converts 'we should be greener' into 'we cut carbon-per-output 40% while doubling AI usage' — a sentence a board understands.



ZOOM

CASE STUDY — THE INNOVATION LENS

The Green Data-Centre Playbook in Practice: How Indian Operators Are Engineering the Crunch Away

Case Study: Three Solution Patterns from Operators Building India's Sustainable Digital Backbone

THE RENEWABLE-FIRST BET. AdaniConneX raised \$1.44 billion to build a 1 GW renewable-powered platform; Nxtra by Airtel committed to procure 140 GWh of renewable energy annually and pledged 100% renewables by 2030. The pattern: lock in long-term clean-power contracts early, before demand and prices climb — turning energy from a volatile cost into a fixed, green input.

THE WATER-AND-HEAT DISCIPLINE. CtrlS has recycled nearly 10 million litres of water and saved 18.5 GWh annually through efficiency, targeting net-zero by 2040 — 30 years ahead of India's national commitment. Danfoss India, with HPE, shipped an off-the-shelf heat-recovery module that turns waste server heat into usable clean energy. The pattern: treat water and heat as recoverable assets, not waste.

THE EFFICIENCY-AS-PRODUCT MOVE. Operators deploying immersion and direct-to-chip cooling are reaching PUE of 1.3, well below the 1.5–1.8 global norm, and Karnataka is preparing incentives specifically for low-water cooling. The pattern: efficiency is becoming a saleable differentiator and a policy-rewarded one — not just an internal cost saving.

 ZOOM

CASE STUDY — THE INNOVATION LENS

What This Means for CXOs

CIO: Whoever you buy compute from is now part of your sustainability story. Audit your cloud and colocation partners' PUE, WUE, and renewable mix as rigorously as you audit price and uptime.

CFO: A renewable PPA is a financial hedge, not just a green gesture — it fixes your largest variable input against price volatility. Model it as risk management.

CSO/BOARD: Your AI footprint is now a BRSR/ESG line and a sales credential at once. Report it with confidence and use it where global clients audit their supply chain.

Sources:

<https://www.mercomindia.com/data-centers-drive-demand-for-renewable-energy>

<https://www.resiindia.org/post/sustainability-in-indian-data-centers>

<https://www.india-briefing.com/news/india-data-center-cooling-market-investment-opportunities-45352.html>



THE PROCUREMENT SCORECARD

SCORE YOUR CLOUD / COLOCATION PARTNER ON SUSTAINABILITY

Six questions to score any compute provider before you sign or renew. Score each 0 (poor) to 2 (strong). Below 8 of 12, your AI is running on someone else's unmanaged footprint — which is now your reported risk.

EVALUATION QUESTION	WHAT 'STRONG' LOOKS LIKE
Will they disclose site-level PUE for the facility our workloads run on?	Published PUE at or below 1.4, per site
Will they disclose WUE — and is the site in a water-stressed zone?	WUE below 2.2 L/kWh; low-water cooling in stressed areas
What share of the facility's power is renewable, and on what trajectory?	High renewable %, credible PPA, 100%-by-2030 path
Is the cooling liquid/closed-loop, or legacy evaporative?	Direct-to-chip or immersion; closed-loop in dry regions
What is the backup power source — battery/clean, or diesel?	Battery/BESS or clean backup, not diesel-dependent
Will these metrics be contractually committed and reported to us?	Written into the SLA with periodic reporting



Dr Shriram Vasudevan

Regional Mentor of Change, Atal Innovation Mission Official
Mentor, at RACE

Q1

Most enterprises can read their cloud bill but cannot state the power, water, or carbon behind their AI. In your experience, why has that cost stayed invisible for so long - and what finally forces a leadership team to confront it?

A

Cloud bills are itemised by vendors because that's what gets monetised; power, water, and carbon are externalities nobody invoiced for, so they never showed up on a P&L that leadership actually reads. What finally breaks the silence is rarely a sustainability mandate; it's a capacity constraint: a data centre can't get grid allocation, a region hits water-use restrictions, or a GPU cluster's cooling costs suddenly rival the compute spend itself. The moment infrastructure becomes the bottleneck instead of budget, the invisible cost becomes a board-level conversation overnight.

Q2

Efficiency and sustainability are often framed as a cost. Where have you actually seen going greener — better cooling, renewable sourcing, water recycling - also make clear business or financial sense?

A

The clearest case I've seen is liquid and immersion cooling replacing traditional CRAC systems in dense GPU clusters, it cuts energy draw enough to directly lower the compute cost per training run, not just the facility's carbon footprint. Renewable power purchase agreements have also become a hedge against grid price volatility, not just an ESG checkbox, especially for enterprises running always-on inference workloads. The pattern is consistent: wherever sustainability and efficiency point at the same lever, like cooling, scheduling AI workloads for off-peak renewable availability, or right-sizing models instead of defaulting to the largest one, the business case usually wins on its own even before sustainability gets mentioned.

Q3

If a board asked you for one practical step this quarter to get ahead of the energy-and-water cost of their AI, what would you tell them to do first - and what should they stop assuming?

A

Start by metering: instrument actual power and water draw per workload, not estimated averages, because most enterprises are making AI infrastructure decisions on numbers that are directionally wrong. The assumption to drop is that model accuracy and model size must scale together; a huge share of enterprise AI spend, and its environmental cost, comes from defaulting to the biggest available model when a smaller, fine-tuned one would do the job at a fraction of the energy footprint. Measure first, then right-size; that order matters more than any cooling or sourcing initiative that follows.

Note: CANDID features direct contributions from CXO leaders. To contribute, contact: retina@reva.edu.in



FUN FACT

NEW · SOMETHING TO REPEAT AT DINNER

If the world's data centres were a country, their projected 2026 electricity use (~1,050 TWh by one estimate) would rank them around the fifth-largest electricity consumer on Earth - sitting between Japan and Russia.

Meta's Hyperion data-centre campus in Louisiana covers about 3,650 acres - roughly four times the size of New York City's Central Park.

Source:

<https://www.india-briefing.com/news/india-data-center-cooling-market-investment-opportunities-45352.html>
2026



RESEARCH RADAR

RACE PUBLICATIONS THIS WEEK

RACE Research Radar highlights the latest publications by RACE learners, mentors, and faculty across AI, Cybersecurity, Cloud, and Analytics — applied research moving from academic inquiry to enterprise impact. This week's papers share an unexpected thread for an energy-and-sustainability issue: AI applied to waste, culture, and community.

FOOD-WASTE REDUCTION · COMPUTER VISION · TRANSFER LEARNING

Leafy Vegetable Freshness Classification Using Transfer Learning

Prakash Koneti, J. B. Simha, Dr. Rashmi Agarwal · CSCT 2024, Springer (Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies, 2025)

A DenseNet201 transfer-learning model that classifies leafy-vegetable freshness across Day-01 to Day-03 with 96.46% test accuracy, fine-tuned by unfreezing the deeper dense blocks. Beyond the technique, the enterprise relevance is direct: post-harvest spoilage is a major source of food waste and lost margin for retailers, exporters, and restaurants. An accurate freshness classifier enables smarter inventory rotation and buying decisions — a tidy fit for a sustainability-themed issue, since cutting spoilage is cutting waste.

https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-96-6254-8_49

AUDIO ANALYTICS · CULTURAL AI · RECOMMENDER SYSTEMS

Kannada Music Genre Classification Using Audio Analytics, Machine Learning and Deep Learning

B. S. Mallikarjuna, Jay B. Simha, Dr. Shinu Abhi · ICDSA 2024, Springer (Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems, 2025)

The team built a first-of-its-kind 1,500-clip Kannada soft-music dataset (Janapada, Bhavageethe, Classical) and trained ML and DL models to classify genres mainstream recommenders miss, reaching 96.05% accuracy. The enterprise signal: the global recommendation engines inside Spotify, YouTube Music, and Apple Music underserve regional and vernacular catalogues — and India's linguistic diversity is a commercial opportunity for anyone who can build culture-aware AI rather than importing one-size-fits-all models.

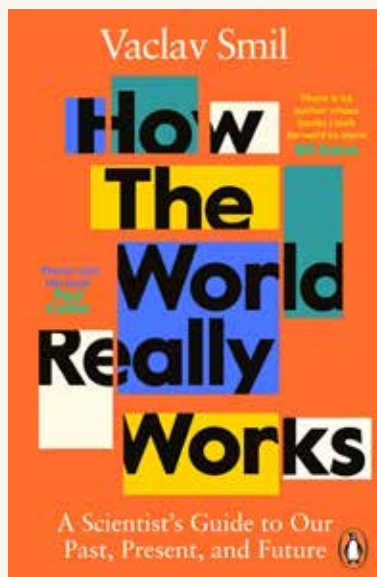
https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-96-2724-0_38

**RETINA
TAKE**

Two new papers show AI doing quietly useful work — cutting food waste at the shelf and bringing vernacular culture into systems that overlook it. Both are reminders that applied AI's value often lies in narrow, real-world problems, not headline models. Explore the full archive at <https://research.race.reva.edu.in>

BOOK SHELF

RETINA'S READ OF THE WEEK



RETINA RECOMMENDS · THIS WEEK'S THEME

How the World Really Works: A Scientist's Guide to Our Past, Present and Future

Vaclav Smil · Viking, 2022

Bill Gates calls Vaclav Smil his favourite author, and this is the book for any leader who wants to think clearly about energy rather than sentimentally. Smil – the world's foremost analyst of how civilisation actually runs on power – strips away the comfortable abstractions and shows the hard physical realities behind every digital convenience: the energy density of fuels, the true cost of materials, the gap between aspiration and thermodynamics. For a CXO standing up an AI strategy, it is the perfect antidote to the idea that compute is weightless. Every prompt has a power bill; every model has a material footprint. Smil will not tell you to stop – he will teach you to

count. Read it before your next data-centre or cloud decision, and you will ask sharper questions about where your electrons and your water actually come from.

RACE PULSE

EVENTS · COMMUNITY · WHAT'S COMING

UPCOMING · JUNE 2026

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<https://race.reva.edu.in/race360>

<https://race.reva.edu.in/top-10-women-tech-leaders-india-awards>

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#5 IN INDIA · ANALYTICS INDIA MAGAZINE CYBERSECURITY M.Tech. in CYBERSECURITY EC-Council · Microsoft Azure · Terralogic Inc. 24 Months	#5 IN INDIA · ANALYTICS INDIA MAGAZINE CYBERSECURITY PG Diploma / M.Sc. in CYBERSECURITY EC-Council · Microsoft Azure · Terralogic Inc. 12–24 Months	CLOUD PG Diploma / M.Sc. in CLOUD ARCHITECTURE & SECURITY AWS Academy · Microsoft Azure 12–24 Months

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AGENTIC AI 4–6 weeks AGENTIC AI SYSTEMS DESIGN Multi-agent systems using LangChain, LangGraph, CrewAI. Capstone: deployed autonomous agent.	DATA & AI 12 weeks DATA SCIENCE & BUSINESS ANALYTICS Statistics to ML to BI. Python, SQL, Power BI, Tableau on real business datasets.

Enroll with us · race@reva.edu · race.reva.edu.in

THIS WEEK, ASK YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

“Can we state the PUE, the water use, and the renewable mix behind the AI we run - and is that number getting better or worse each quarter?”

RETINA PUBLISHES EVERY SUNDAY · FORWARD TO A CXO YOU RESPECT