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● RESEARCH

GRASSROOTS SOLUTIONS

AFTER over a decade in India, Hewlett-Packard is finally setting up a research facility in Bangalore — its seventh global research lab. (It will start operations in January 2002.) At present, it has two people on board: Srinivasan Ramani, director, HP Labs India, and Warren Griving, director, sustainable solutions department HP Lab India. Over the next two years Ramani plans to expand the team of researchers to 40. Not all will necessarily be techies. Apart from software professionals, the team that HP labs India envisages will include sociologists, anthropologists, economists and designers. Says Ramani: "This lab is different. The focus is on developing products and solutions



specifically for emerging markets. The idea is to innovate for local markets with a goal to bridge the digital divide. For instance, developing tools in local languages would be one area of research. We will also look at solutions for different demographic groups — the middle class and rural India."

The overall strategy is to focus on different levels of research. These include foundational research in languages and application of that research. Top-level research will focus on building whole systems. Explains Griving: "India has a very diverse and multi-tiered levels of distribution. This has an impact on how you deliver products. We will develop retail solutions catering to various needs of the distribution networks." The Bangalore facility will be coming out with a few prototypes every year. ■