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Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai – 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

Page 07 : GS III : Environment/ Prelims Exam

The loggerhead sea turtle (Caretta caretta), a species known for its migratory prowess and ecological importance, is increasingly becoming a biological indicator of the detrimental impacts of climate change. A landmark 17-year study conducted in Cabo Verde (one of the world's largest nesting sites) and published in the journal Animals, reveals that global warming is not just altering the habitat of these reptiles but is fundamentally reshaping their biology and reproductive cycles.

Scientists have noticed that loggerhead turtles are getting smaller in size, reducing their reproductive output. BRIAN GRATWICKE (CC BY)

Loggerhead turtles facing threats from climate change

Divya Gandhi
BENGALURU

The spectre of climate change has come to haunt one of the ocean's most ubiquitous – yet vulnerable – turtles: the strong-jawed loggerhead, named after its exceptionally large head. These omnivorous marine reptiles have been impacted in at least four ways by global warming. As the ocean warms and marine produce dwindle, these turtles are nesting earlier in the year, and more worryingly, they are producing fewer eggs and less often, said a new paper published in the journal *Animals*. And if that wasn't enough, this sea creature is getting smaller in size too.

The study of the reptile spanned 17

The omnivorous marine reptiles have been impacted in at least four ways as the ocean warms and produce dwindle

years, and was conducted in Cabo Verde, an island country off the coast of West Africa where tens of thousands of female loggerhead turtles lay eggs every year. While these new phenomena in the turtle's behaviour could be "adaptive," scientists fear that this might portend long-term consequences for the species.

"Sea turtles are adjusting their timing to warmer temperatures, which shows a remarkable capacity for flexibility," Fitra Nugraha, a co-author of the study, and researcher at the Queen Mary University of London, said in a release. Mr. Nugraha added, however, that the part of the Atlantic ocean that provides them food are "becoming less productive – and that is quietly eroding their reproductive output." Female loggerheads have now begun breeding less frequently: from every two years to a four-year gap today.

"The turtles are working harder for less return," said Kirsten Fairweather, co-author and scientific coordinator at Associação Projeto Biodiversidade.

'Capital breeders'

Satellite estimates of chlorophyll found that food supply is dwindling in the ocean. And these turtles being "capital breeders", draw from energy stored from foraging at sea, over years, in order to reproduce. The authors noticed a trend in their declining size which "further reduces reproductive output, as smaller females produce smaller clutch sizes," said the paper.

To safeguard sea turtles in a warming world, Ms. Fairweather said we need conservation strategies that extend beyond the shoreline, "and recognising that climate change can undermine reproduction even in populations that appear to be thriving."

Climate change is impacting turtles in multiple ways, Naveen Namboothri, a founder trustee at Dakshin Foundation, told *The Hindu*. "The rising sea levels erode or inundate beaches, reducing the availability of ideal nesting beaches," he said.

Climate change has indeed been proven to be devastating for marine and terrestrial fauna, And loggerhead turtles like many other wild fauna, are adapting, and this reptile does so by breeding earlier in the year as temperatures rise.

"Sea turtle conservation efforts now need to look beyond conserving nesting sites end extend to their feeding and foraging grounds that could be degrading rapidly," said Dr. Namboothri.

1. The Four-Pronged Impact of Climate Change

The study identifies four critical shifts in loggerhead biology and behavior:

- **Phenological Shift (Earlier Nesting):** Turtles are nesting earlier in the year as a response to warming sea surface temperatures (SST). While this shows "phenological flexibility," it may lead to a mismatch with other environmental factors.
- **Reduced Reproductive Output:** There is a decline in the number of eggs produced. Warmer waters are linked to lower ocean productivity, meaning females have less energy to allocate to egg production.
- **Increased Remigration Intervals:** Traditionally breeding every two years, female loggerheads now wait up to **four years** between nesting seasons. This is due to the increased time required to accumulate energy in nutrient-depleted foraging grounds.
- **Body Size Reduction:** Scientists have observed a trend of turtles getting smaller. In sea turtles, smaller body size directly correlates to smaller clutch sizes (fewer eggs per nest), creating a cycle of declining population recruitment.

2. The Concept of 'Capital Breeders'

To understand why climate change is so devastating, one must understand the loggerhead's reproductive strategy:

- **Definition:** Loggerheads are "Capital Breeders," meaning they rely on stored energy reserves (fat) gathered from foraging grounds over several years to fuel their migration and nesting.
- **The Problem:** Satellite data shows a decline in chlorophyll-a levels (an indicator of phytoplankton and overall marine productivity). Dwindling food supply means turtles "work harder for less return," taking longer to reach the energy threshold required for breeding.

3. Broader Conservation Challenges

Beyond the Cabo Verde study, climate change presents additional systemic risks:

Sex Ratio Skew: Sea turtles have Temperature-dependent Sex Determination (TSD). Rising sand temperatures lead to "feminization" (more females, fewer males), threatening genetic diversity.

Habitat Loss: Rising sea levels and increased storm intensity cause beach erosion, inundating and destroying prime nesting sites.

Foraging Ground Degradation: Conservation has traditionally focused on nesting beaches (shoreline), but this study highlights the urgent need to protect foraging and feeding grounds in the open ocean.

Conclusion

The plight of the loggerhead turtle underscores that even "successful" conservation on land can be undermined by environmental degradation at sea. For UPSC aspirants, this highlights a shift in conservation philosophy: we must move from site-specific protection to ecosystem-based management that encompasses the entire migratory range of a species. As climate change erodes the reproductive resilience of marine life, international cooperation in managing "Blue Carbon" and marine productivity becomes a matter of biological survival.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: The term "capital breeder", sometimes seen in ecological studies, refers to:

A) Species that reproduce throughout the year

B) Species that rely on stored energy reserves for reproduction

C) Species that migrate to capital cities for breeding

D) Species that produce large number of offspring

Ans : B)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: Climate change is not only reducing biodiversity but also subtly altering reproductive strategies of marine fauna. Discuss with reference to sea turtles. **(250 words)**

Page 08 : GS III : Science & Tech / Prelims Exam

As India hosts the **India-AI Impact Summit 2026**, the debate surrounding Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) has shifted from traditional protection to "copyright maximalism." The core tension lies between the rigid monopoly of copyright holders and the data requirements of transformative technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI). This analysis explores the need for a "Right to Read" and "Right to Mine" to ensure that laws foster innovation rather than obstructing it.

India's moment to restoring balance to copyright

Pranesh Prakash
is a tech law and policy consultant, working with think tanks, tech companies and universities

Rigid copyright laws are undermining access, creativity and technological progress

The India-AI Impact Summit 2026 is on in New Delhi and I am reminded of a story. A former colleague, Nirmita, who is visually impaired, once found herself in an absurd legal position. She could not legally purchase a book from the United States in a disability-friendly format called DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System), even though I, as a sighted reader, was able to purchase any print or e-books I wished. This was because of the vagaries of copyright law.

To address this issue, our non-governmental organisation, together with international coalitions of disability rights organisations, engaged in years of advocacy at the international level. These efforts ultimately led to the creation of the Marrakesh Treaty, which enables the cross-border exchange of accessible-format books as well as national exceptions for visually impaired persons to use technology to convert books into accessible formats when publishers do not make them available. The copyright industry – from book publishers to the movie industry – strongly opposed the treaty, which sought to establish a 'right to read' for visually impaired persons as any exception to copyright law was viewed as fundamentally unacceptable, even if it was at the expense of denying access to the visually impaired.

It is now copyright maximalism

The struggle of visually impaired persons against overly rigid copyright laws highlights a fundamental problem: copyright has expanded far beyond its original purpose, and copyright maximalism now actively obstructs the creation of and access to knowledge. This debate has taken on a renewed vigour thanks to Artificial Intelligence (AI) models, many of which turn out to be useful only when they have large quantities of training data (which, for language models, inevitably means copyrighted works). But before looking at AI, copyright needs to be understood in a historical perspective.

We have had art for far longer than we have had copyright. The Statute of Anne, widely seen as the first copyright law, was passed in Britain in 1710, after the era of Shakespeare and Milton. The British brought copyright law to India in 1847. The current Copyright Act is from 1957. In 1710, the law granted authors a limited monopoly of 14 years, with the possibility of one renewal. The monopoly right would only vest if it was specifically registered and multiple copies of the book deposited for distribution among libraries and universities.

Under the current law, the monopoly right goes well beyond the act of publishing, vests automatically the moment 'a work' is created, and lasts for the author's entire lifetime plus 70 years posthumously. So, the thousands of random Instagram posts and notebook doodles that you have made are all protected under copyright law for centuries. While the public domain was once the default, now a nearly-perpetual copyright monopoly is the default, regardless of the commercial potential of the work or ambitions of the creator. This fundamental change in the nature of the law has deleterious consequences.

Findings from a study

As part of a research project by LIRNEasia, a Sri Lankan think tank, we studied the data governance regimes of seven countries in South and Southeast Asia. With respect to copyright, we found that in four out of seven, the law made web search engines and AI training illegal. Web search engines need to copy as much of the Web as they can (a process called 'crawling'), effectively creating a mirror copy of all that is reachable on the web through links, but permissionless copying is prohibited by copyright law. Except in the Philippines and Sri Lanka (which have a flexible 'fair use' exception) and India (which, in 2012, introduced a specific exception for 'the transient or incidental storage' for 'providing electronic links, access or integration'), no other country in our study provided an exception, meaning AI training is effectively illegal in most countries we surveyed.

This does not make sense. Web search engines and AI models do not view copyrighted materials as scribblings or poems or art the way humans do; for programs, it is merely 'data' for statistical purposes. Recognising this, many jurisdictions such as the European Union, Japan and Singapore have adopted 'text and data mining' exceptions in their copyright regimes, while others such as Hong Kong and South Korea are in the process of doing so. Japan's law allows for an exemption for "Exploitations not for enjoying the ideas or emotions expressed in a work" (i.e., use by machines), and permits "using the work in data analysis". This is sensible: copyright was never meant to cover mechanistic uses.

By not allowing for a broad text and data-mining exception, India has created a pall of legal uncertainty over the collection of the training data for many forms of AI. And by not having a flexible, general and open-ended exception (as countries such as Singapore and the United States do), India ensures that copyright law will always hamper technological developments.

There are separate concerns around the outputs of generative AI substituting creative labour. But copyright is meant to be about encouraging creativity, not about protecting jobs. Further, copyright law has never prohibited learning from examples and imitating – every artist studies predecessors, and every writer reads widely. Technology has always displaced jobs – we have far fewer rickshaw pullers, telegraphists, *pankhaawallahs*, stenographers, lift operators, bank tellers, typesetters, darkroom technicians and draughtsmen – yet, it has created new jobs as well. The advent of photography reduced the demand for portraitists, but enabled new forms of creativity and access to knowledge. We do not know what the impact of generative AI will be: we might, in the future, need greater government grants for arts and culture, or to strengthen the cooperative movement, potentially funded by taxes from large AI companies. But these ought not be dealt with in copyright law.

Creativity, access should be promoted

What copyright law should protect, however, are contributions to the commons. Open-licensed AI models and datasets exemplify this – developers and researchers absorbing massive computational costs to create what enables others to be creative. These models add to the common heritage of mankind rather than subtracting from it. Copyright law should encourage such contributions, not hinder them with the same restrictions designed to prevent commercial exploitation.

AI IN FOCUS

Governments are also uniquely positioned to curate high-quality locally-relevant datasets for public benefit, they should establish safe harbour provisions that protect such datasets from copyright claims, at least when used for training open-source models.

We have seen copyright law repeatedly being weaponised to block beneficial technologies under the guise of protecting creators. The Authors Guild in the U.S. used copyright to block Amazon Kindle's "Read Aloud" function, despite it being assistive technology that enabled visually impaired persons to listen to books they had legally purchased. Current copyright law blocks technologies that could democratise access to knowledge, unleash creativity, and drive innovation – the very things that copyright was meant to foster. India's hosting of the AI Summit is the moment to act: it must lead efforts for all nations to adopt flexible exceptions that serve creators and the public, rather than the copyright industry. We need to bring copyright law into the 21st century by returning to its roots.

This article is based on research funded by LIRNEasia, based on a grant from IDRC, a Canadian taxpayer-funded research donor. The views expressed are personal

1. The Evolution: From Authors' Rights to "Maximalism"

The author traces the history of copyright to highlight how it has strayed from its original intent:

The Statute of Anne (1710): Granted a limited 14-year monopoly, requiring registration and library deposits.

Current Framework: Monopoly vests automatically upon creation and lasts for **Life + 70 years** (posthumously).

The Consequence: Most digital footprints (social media posts, doodles) are locked under "perpetual" monopoly, shrinking the **Public Domain**—the reservoir of collective human knowledge.

2. AI Training and the "Text and Data Mining" (TDM) Gap

AI models require massive datasets to function. However, current laws often treat "machine reading" as "copyright infringement."

Feature	The AI Reality	The Legal Hurdle
Nature of Use	Machines use works as **data** (statistical patterns), not for "enjoying ideas/emotions."	Copyright laws generally prohibit any unauthorized copying or "crawling."
Global Precedents	EU, Japan, and Singapore have adopted **TDM exceptions**.	India lacks a specific, broad TDM exception, creating legal uncertainty.
Search Engines	Depend on "crawling" (copying the web).	Illegal in many South Asian countries without specific "fair use" exceptions.

3. Case Study: The Marrakesh Treaty & Accessibility

The struggle for the **Marrakesh Treaty** serves as a cautionary tale:

The Conflict: Disability rights groups fought for years to allow the conversion of books into accessible formats (like DAISY).

The Opposition: The copyright industry opposed it, viewing any exception as a threat to their monopoly, even at the cost of denying the visually impaired the "right to read."

Lesson: Copyright is frequently weaponized to block beneficial technologies (e.g., the U.S. Authors Guild trying to block the Kindle "Read Aloud" function).

4. AI and the Labor Market: A Misplaced Concern?

The author argues that copyright law is an inappropriate tool for addressing AI's impact on jobs:

Creativity vs. Jobs: Copyright is meant to encourage creativity, not act as a labor protection policy.

Historical Precedent: Technologies like photography and telegraphy displaced jobs but created new avenues for knowledge and art.

Solution: Economic displacement should be handled via **government grants** or **taxes on AI companies**, not by restricting the flow of information through IPR laws.

5. The Way Forward: India's Leadership Role

As a leader in the Global South, India has the opportunity to redefine IPR for the 21st century:

Adopt Flexible Exceptions: Move toward "Fair Use" models (like the US or Singapore) that can adapt to new technologies.

Safe Harbor Provisions: Protect public-benefit datasets (used for training open-source models) from copyright claims.

Focus on the Commons: Encourage "Open-licensed" AI models that contribute to the common heritage of mankind.

Conclusion

The current copyright regime, characterized by "maximalism," risks becoming a bottleneck for the AI revolution. For India to truly harness AI for public good, it must lead a global shift back to the roots of copyright: balancing the private interests of creators with the public's right to access knowledge and innovate. Restoring this balance is not just a legal necessity but a moral imperative to ensure technology remains a tool for democratization.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: "Text and Data Mining (TDM) exception" in copyright law is relevant for:

A) Archiving historical manuscripts

B) Translation of literary works

C) AI training and web crawling

D) Protecting traditional knowledge

Ans: c)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: Copyright maximalism in the age of Artificial Intelligence may hinder innovation and access to knowledge. Discuss in the Indian context. (**150 Words)**

Page 08 : GS III : Internal Security / Prelims Exam

The "Kashmir Revival" narrative has reached a critical juncture. While tourism has historically been the backbone of J&K's economy, the April 2025 Pahalgam attack—which resulted in 26 civilian deaths—reignited concerns over safety and the fragility of the peace dividend. However, the subsequent phased reopening of 48 sites (with 14 reopened as recently as February 16, 2026) and specific allocations in the Union Budget 2026-27 signal a shift toward a more institutionalized, community-centric tourism model. This approach seeks to use tourism not just as a revenue generator, but as a "weapon against terrorism" by integrating local communities into the security and economic fabric of the region.

Key Pillars of the 2026 Tourism Strategy

A. The Two-Pronged Budgetary Approach

In the Union Budget 2026-27, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman outlined two primary focus areas for the region:

- **Institutional Capacity Building:** Moving beyond ad-hoc tourism to a structured framework that includes skilling 10,000 guides and upgrading hospitality institutes.
- **Ecologically Sustainable Mountain Trails:** Developing managed trails in J&K (similar to those in Himachal and Uttarakhand). These trails allow for:
  - **Management:** Ticketing, permits, and ranger deployment.
  - **Safety:** Better medical and emergency response facilities.
  - **Diversification:** Reducing pressure on "over-tourism" hubs like Gulmarg by opening virgin locales like Bangus Valley and Gurez.

B. The "Third Prong": Shared Environmental Governance

The analysis suggests a vital third element: **Environmental Governance.** Since J&K is a biodiverse but militarized zone, involving locals in "Paid Civic Roles" (rather than just volunteer work) can build trust.

- **Roles:** Trail maintenance, waste management, fire watch, and wildlife conflict mitigation.
- **Precedent:** Using protocols from **Forest Protection Committees** to give locals a sense of ownership over their natural assets.

Strategic Significance: Countering the Terrorist Ecosystem

Kashmir revival

Tourism that benefits locals can help counter the terrorist ecosystem

The April 2025 Pahalgam attack forced India to confront the fact that tourism recovers only when visitors can predict what will happen to them and local communities see credible benefits from keeping the sites open. Following the attack, the local administration closed 48 government-approved tourist sites, later reopening them in phases, including 14 on February 16. Tourists have rated the Kashmir Valley as relatively safe overall while still differentiating types of risk, which means that tourism policy in the region needs to focus on what visitors can be certain about and whether the state has a fixed and lucid rationale for closing or reopening sites. In the Union Budget 2026-27 announcement, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman described a two-pronged plan to enhance tourism: institutional capacity building and developing trails and heritage sites. She also singled out the development of ecologically sustainable mountain trails in Jammu and Kashmir, which is good because formal trails admit better management, including ticketing, permits, deployment of rangers, and medical facilities, and reduce fragility by diversifying the 'Kashmir experience'. Kashmir could also do with a third prong: it is a biodiverse region that has become heavily militarised and shared environmental governance can help build trust.

The central government should consider paid civic roles rather than relying only on volunteer awareness campaigns, using protocols that forest protection committees already implement around protected areas. These can include trail maintenance, waste management, guiding, fire watch, and (wildlife) conflict mitigation. An influx of tourists can jolt the local economy to provide more and better services, so that over time, more families are incentivised to speak out against terrorism that suppresses tourism. Functional sites also need clear rules, reliable permits, fast help during emergencies, working roads, clean public spaces, and good communication, and the lower disruption is the state's incentive to solve these problems. Tourism can also help reduce fear and isolation by bringing people from across India into local contact and fostering business ties. Tourism and allied services can give young people a real path into the economy by skilling or reskilling them. The people of the region deserve more civilian ownership of social stability and more negotiating power, especially one that outstrips their cause for resentment.

Tourism serves as a counter-insurgency tool through several mechanisms:

Economic Incentive: When local families see "credible benefits" from tourism, they are more likely to protect the industry and speak out against activities (terrorism) that suppress it.

Youth Engagement: Skilling and reskilling provide the youth with a viable path into the formal economy, reducing the "fertile ground" for radicalization.

Breaking Isolation: Direct contact between people from across India and local Kashmiris fosters business ties and reduces the "fear psychosis" often weaponized by insurgent groups.

Challenges to Recovery

Despite the optimism, significant hurdles remain:

Predictability Risk: Tourism recovery is contingent on visitors being able to predict safety. Ad-hoc closures of sites create uncertainty.

Infrastructure Deficit: "Last-mile" connectivity to remote heritage sites remains a bottleneck.

The "Militarized" Perception: Balancing necessary security grids with a welcoming tourist environment remains a delicate task for the administration.

Conclusion

The revival of Kashmir's tourism is no longer just about "footfall numbers" but about structural realignment. By shifting from an extractive model to one based on community ownership and sustainable governance, the state can create a "virtuous cycle" of peace and prosperity. The success of the 2026-27 policy will depend on whether the government can provide a "lucid rationale" for security measures while ensuring that the economic gains outstrip the cause for local resentment. For J&K, tourism is not optional; it is a "survival economy" that, if managed well, can drown out the rhetoric of hate with the "laughter of tourists."

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: With reference to counter-insurgency strategy, which of the following can be considered "non-kinetic tools"?

1. Community-based tourism

2. Skill development of local youth

3. Ranger-led eco-trail monitoring

4. Deployment of additional paramilitary battalions

Select the correct answer:

A) 1, 2 and 3 only

B) 2 and 4 only

C) 1 and 4 only

D) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: A)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: Examine how sustainable tourism can function as a counter-insurgency tool in conflict-prone regions like Jammu & Kashmir. Highlight challenges. **(150 Words)**

Page 09 : GS II : Governance / Prelims Exam

As the AI Impact Summit unfolds in Delhi, India is carving out a unique regulatory identity. Amidst a global "tri-polar" governance struggle—the EU's rights-based regulation, the US's market-led innovation, and China's state-centric control—India has proposed a "Third Way." This model, codified in the November 2025 AI Governance Guidelines, seeks to balance aggressive technological diffusion with agile, context-specific safeguards tailored for the Global South.

A 'Third Way' for AI governance

With the AI Impact Summit underway, world leaders and technology experts are gathering in Delhi to discuss innovation and governance directions for artificial intelligence (AI). This is happening at a moment of profound contradiction – and frankly, confusion – about what is the "right" way to govern AI that encourages strategic creation while acknowledging both the known and unknown risks it poses.

As the host of the Summit, India has uniquely positioned itself as offering a "Third Way" for AI governance, one that recognises opportunities for countries to enter AI markets while acknowledging that existing governance strategies do not transfer neatly to the global majority. Case in point: the EU's compliance-heavy regime, the U.S.'s hands-off approach, and China's centralised state model were each designed for different economic contexts and policy traditions. India needs something different.

In November 2025, the Indian government released its AI governance guidelines. As Amlan Mohanty, one of the framework's architects, reflected in a recent *Techlawtopia* essay, the guidelines represent a distinctive approach: not merely a regulatory framework, but a governance framework encompassing adoption, diffusion, diplomacy, and capacity-building. It prioritises scaling AI for inclusive development – in healthcare, agriculture, education, and public administration – while working through existing legal structures. It is designed to be agile and forward-looking, translating high-level principles into practical guidelines while allowing room for evolution as the technology matures.

This approach is already taking shape. On February 10, the government announced amendments to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, which make it mandatory for intermediary tools and platforms to label AI-generated information and impose a three-hour takedown window for harmful content. This is the first instance of a government mandating AI-generation disclosure. But implementation and enforcement at scale, against tech behemoths and in a way that respects human rights and democratic norms, will be tough without international coordination.

For the Global South, this matters enormously. The concentration of AI investment creates an uneven landscape for AI diffusion and governance. Dependence on external or proprietary AI systems brings forth existing and new contextually-rooted risks.

India's approach – emphasising strategic autonomy, public-private partnerships, and governance tailored to the local context – offers an alternative path. It recognises the need for research infrastructure across middle powers, including but not limited to shared safety evaluation frameworks, collaborative research networks, and mechanisms to pool expertise on risks that no single country can assess alone. Given its size, scale, and leading role in AI infrastructure, India is uniquely positioned to convene this coordination.

Critical gap

Yet governance coordination means little if the framework itself has gaps. A governance approach that accelerates AI adoption while providing no protection for workers being displaced is not a balanced model for others to follow. Without a shared understanding of the minimum measures to mandate transparency and accountability from AI developers, protect whistleblowers and vulnerable populations from adverse harms, and encourage public awareness and agency, even well-meaning coordination is likely to fall flat. In short, what is required is a corresponding framework for the people on whom that innovation depends.

The AI Impact Summit represents a genuine opportunity to shape what inclusive AI governance coordination could look like: robust public-private partnerships across the technology stack that distribute gains more equitably, and positioning India as a hub for agile collective governance among middle powers. For nations seeking development pathways compatible with their strategic interests and institutional capacities, India's model holds real appeal.

The next 12 months will determine whether India's model can successfully integrate innovation, security, and human welfare or whether the gaps create the very instability that governance is meant to prevent. The choices India makes now will determine whether the "Third Way" becomes a model worth following.

Uma Kalkar
is an AI governance and policy strategist specialising in international AI governance coordination and diplomacy; she is Strategy Lead at AI Safety Connect

IN FOCUS

For nations seeking development pathways compatible with their strategic interests and institutional capacities, India's model holds real appeal

The Global Governance Landscape

The "Third Way" is defined primarily by what it is not. It rejects the "one-size-fits-all" approach of Western powers:

Model	Primary Focus	Characterized By
European Union (EU)	Compliance	Rigid, heavy regulation; high entry barriers.
United States	Innovation	"Hands-off" approach; market-driven evolution.
China	Sovereignty	Centralized state control and surveillance.
India (The Third Way)	Inclusive Development	Agile, sectoral guidelines; focus on Agri, Health, and Ed.

Key Pillars of the Indian Framework

A. Strategic Autonomy & Diffusion

Unlike models that focus solely on restricting "bad" AI, India's framework emphasizes diffusion—getting AI into the hands of the public sector. The goal is to scale AI for:

Public Administration: Streamlining citizen services.

Agriculture & Healthcare: Using AI for crop prediction and remote diagnostics.

B. Pioneering Regulation: The Feb 10 Amendments

India recently became the first nation to mandate AI-generation disclosure. Under the amended IT Rules:

Platforms must label all AI-generated content.

A strict three-hour takedown window is imposed for harmful/misinformation content.

C. International Coordination & Middle Powers

India is positioning itself as a leader for the "Global Majority." By advocating for shared safety evaluation frameworks and pooled research networks, India aims to prevent a "tech-monopoly" where the Global South is merely a consumer of proprietary Western/Chinese AI.

Critical Gaps: The "Human" Element

The analysis identifies a significant "missing prong" in the current strategy:

Labor Displacement: The framework currently lacks robust protections for workers replaced by automation.

Whistleblower Protection: There is a need for clearer mandates to protect those who report AI harms.

Implementation Scale: Enforcing a 3-hour takedown window against global tech giants requires a level of state capacity and international diplomacy that is still being tested.

Conclusion

The "Third Way" is an ambitious attempt to democratize AI benefits while managing its risks through "agile" governance rather than static law. However, for India to become a global blueprint, it must bridge the gap between technological acceleration and social stability. The success of this model over the next 12 months will determine if India can lead the Global South toward a future where innovation does not come at the cost of human welfare or democratic norms.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: The concept of "strategic autonomy" in emerging technologies implies:

A) Complete technological isolation

B) Dependence on one major power bloc

C) Domestic capability building with diversified global partnerships

D) Full state ownership of digital infrastructure

Ans: c)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: "India's AI governance framework represents a calibrated balance between innovation and regulation." Discuss. **(150 Words)**

Page 10 : GS II : Indian Polity / Prelims Exam

The Bill seeks to overhaul the appointment process and the physical structure of the Supreme Court (SC). Its primary objectives include:

The need for diversity in the judiciary

What does the private Bill by DMK party member P. Wilson constitute? Why was the collegium system introduced? Why did the Supreme Court strike down the National Judicial Appointments Commission? How will regional benches of the Supreme Court help with respect to access?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan. R

The story so far:

P. Wilson, senior advocate and Rajya Sabha MP of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party, has introduced a private member Bill to amend the Constitution in order to bring diversity in judicial appointments and set up regional benches of the Supreme Court.

What does the Constitution provide?

Article 124 of the Constitution provides that judges of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by the President after consulting the Chief Justice of India (CJI). Similarly, Article 217 provides that judges of a High Court shall be appointed by the President after consulting the CJI, the Chief Justice of the High Court and Governor of the State. Article 130 of the Constitution provides that the seat of the Supreme Court shall be in Delhi or such other place(s) as appointed by the CJI with the approval of central government.

What is the collegium system?

As per the process laid down in the Constitution, judges were appointed by the government after consultation with the judiciary till the 1980s. In the *First Judges* case (1981), the Supreme Court upheld the primacy of the executive in judicial appointments since it is accountable to the people. However, considering the need to maintain the independence of the judiciary and insulate it from political favouritism, the Supreme Court in the *Second Judges* case (1993) created the collegium system for the appointment of judges. This was reaffirmed by the Supreme Court's opinion in the *Third Judges* case (1998). The collegium consists of the CJI with four senior judges of the SC for appointments to the Supreme Court, and the CJI with two senior judges for appointment to the High Courts. The collegium initiates the proposal for appointment of judges to the higher judiciary and sends the recommendation to the Central government. The Centre may return a recommendation in case of any objection. However, if the collegium reiterates the recommendation, the appointment should be made.

GETTY IMAGES

The collegium system has ensured the independence of the judiciary from the executive, in the matter of appointments. Nevertheless, it has its own drawbacks like lack of transparency and accountability. There is also resentment on account of alleged nepotism in this process whereby kith and kin of sitting judges are favoured for appointments to higher judiciary. Parliament through the 99th constitutional amendment in 2014 had set up the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) to provide recommendations to the executive for appointment of judges. The NJAC was to consist of the CJI, two senior judges, the Union law minister and two eminent persons. This was however struck down by the Supreme Court in 2015 as it violated the basic structure of the independence of the judiciary. Hence, the collegium process continues till date for appointments.

What is this Bill?

The collegium process lays emphasis on merit in the selection of judges. However, it does not reflect the social diversity of our country. For instance, out of the judges appointed to higher judiciary between 2018 and 2024, only around 20% belonged to the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC). The proportion of women and religious minorities is less than 15% and 5% respectively. The Bill introduced by the private member mandates that due representation should be given to SC, ST, OBC, religious minorities and women in proportion to their population while appointing judges to the Supreme Court and High courts. It also sets a maximum timeline of 90 days for the Central government to notify the recommendations of the collegium.

Considering that the Supreme Court only sits in Delhi, access to the highest court for common citizens remains a challenge. There are also more than 90,000 cases pending in the Supreme Court as of January 2026. In order to address these issues, the Bill requires setting up of regional benches of the Supreme Court in New Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai. These regional benches shall exercise full jurisdiction of the Supreme Court except over cases of constitutional importance to be heard by the main Constitution bench in Delhi.

What can be the way forward?

The onus for ensuring social diversity in the appointment of judges primarily falls on the judiciary through the collegium process. The private member Bill is relevant as it would create a constitutional directive to achieve the desired objective. The long-term reform could be to revive the NJAC by broad basing its composition. It can include representatives from the legislature, bar council and academia like in South Africa and the U.K. This would make the consultation broad based and inclusive. Suitable representation for SC, ST, OBC, minorities and women should be ensured through this process.

As recommended by Parliamentary committees and Law Commission in the past, regional benches of the Supreme Court can be set up under existing provisions of the Constitution itself. The Court may even consider setting up a bench in one region initially and extend to other regions in a time bound manner.

Rangarajan R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Courseware on Polity Simplified.' He currently trains at Officers IAS academy. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

- Article 124 of the Constitution provides that judges of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by the President after consulting the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- Considering the need to maintain the independence of the judiciary and insulate it from political favouritism, the Supreme Court in the *Second Judges* case (1993) created the collegium system for the appointment of judges.
- Out of the judges appointed to higher judiciary between 2018 and 2024, only around 20% belonged to the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC).

Mandatory Diversity: Amendments to **Articles 124, 217, and 224** to ensure appointments of judges to the SC and High Courts (HCs) reflect the social composition of India. It mandates representation for **SC, ST, OBC, religious minorities, and women** in proportion to their population.

Time-bound Appointments: It sets a maximum timeline for the Central Government to process recommendations: **60 days** to notify a recommendation and **30 days** if the Collegium reiterates it.

Regional Benches: The Bill proposes a "Cassation" model by establishing **four permanent regional benches** (Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai, and Kolkata).

Retirement Age: Proposes increasing the retirement age of High Court judges from **62 to 65 years**.

Caste Census Empowerment: Moving "Census" from the Union List to the **Concurrent List** to allow States to conduct their own headcounts for better data-driven reservation.

The Evolution of Judicial Appointments

Why was the Collegium System introduced?

Initially, the Executive had primacy in appointments (post-consultation). However, during the 1980s and 90s, concerns over political interference led to the **"Judges Cases"**:

Second Judges Case (1993): The SC ruled that "consultation" with the CJI meant **"concurrence."** This shifted the power of appointment from the Executive to the Judiciary to protect **judicial independence**.

Third Judges Case (1998): Expanded the Collegium to include the CJI and the four most senior judges.

The NJAC Controversy (2014-2015)

The Parliament passed the **National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC)** Act to replace the Collegium with a body comprising the CJI, senior judges, the Law Minister, and "eminent persons."

Why was it struck down? In 2015, the SC declared NJAC unconstitutional, citing that the presence of the Law Minister and "eminent persons" violated the **Basic Structure** of the Constitution—specifically, the **independence of the judiciary** and the **separation of powers**. The Court feared the Executive could veto or influence appointments through non-judicial members.

Diversity: The Current Status

The demand for diversity is rooted in statistics showing a significant gap between India's social fabric and its judicial bench:

Caste Representation: Between 2018 and 2024, approximately **78%** of High Court judges belonged to "Upper Castes." SC, ST, and OBC communities collectively accounted for only about **20%** of appointments.

Gender: As of late 2025, women comprise only about **14%** of High Court judges and a significantly lower percentage in the Supreme Court.

Minorities: Religious minorities represent roughly **5%** of the higher judiciary.

Regional Benches: Enhancing Access to Justice

Currently, the Supreme Court sits only in Delhi (per **Article 130**), creating a geographical and financial hurdle for litigants from distant states.

Benefit	Impact
Geographical Equity	Litigants from South or East India won't need to travel 2,000+ km to Delhi.
Cost Reduction	Drastically lowers expenses related to travel, stay, and the need for "premium" Delhi-based counsel.
Specialization	Regional benches can handle appellate work, while the Delhi bench focuses solely on **Constitutional Law**.
Reduced Pendency	Decentralizing the workload can help tackle the backlog of **90,000+ cases** (as of 2026).

Conclusion

While the Bill is a "Private Member Bill"—which rarely becomes law without government backing—it forces a critical dialogue on the **"Democratic Deficit"** in the judiciary. Balancing judicial independence with a representative bench remains the greatest challenge for Indian legal reform.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: Under Article 130 of the Constitution:

A) The Supreme Court must sit only in Delhi

B) Parliament can establish regional benches without constitutional amendment

C) The Chief Justice of India, with Presidential approval, can appoint other places for SC sitting

D) High Courts control SC benches

Ans: c)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: The Collegium system was designed to protect judicial independence but has resulted in concerns about transparency and representation. Discuss. **(250 words)**

Page : 08 : Editorial Analysis

AI for people, applying technology for social good

Mansukh Mandaviya

is Union Minister of Labour and Employment, Government of India

Gilbert F. Houngbo

is Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO)

Artificial intelligence must help advance social justice, inclusive work, and equitable growth

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming our lives, including how we work. The question is not whether AI will change jobs – it already does – but whether this transformation will be shaped in ways that advance social justice, decent work and shared prosperity. As India hosts the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi – the first of its kind in the Global South, coinciding with the World Day of Social Justice observed on February 20 – we take the opportunity to call for a human-centred AI that serves people and drives inclusive social development.

By its scale and impact, India's AI journey stands at a critical moment, offering a compelling laboratory for what lies ahead. The country now has the world's largest share of monthly active users of the ChatGPT mobile application and one of the largest user bases for advanced AI platforms. By 2030, AI could generate more than three million new technology jobs in India while reshaping over 10 million existing ones. India illustrates both the scale of transformation and the promise of responsible AI deployment for social justice, job creation, economic inclusion and growth.

Divided discourse

Globally, debates on AI are increasingly polarised. Some narratives emphasise the potential for surging productivity growth, while others focus on job losses, rising inequality and governance gaps. Yet, both perspectives overlook a fundamental truth: technology alone does not determine outcomes, human beings do. This is why the way AI is governed – through inclusive institutions, social dialogue and democratic participation – matters as much as the technology itself.

When deployed inclusively and responsibly, AI can help reduce inequalities, expand access to training, employment and social protection, and improve workplace safety and conditions – benefiting workers and enterprises alike. To support this agenda, the International Labour Organization (ILO) is working together with India and other partners of the Global Coalition for Social Justice, which includes a global network of AI observatories to strengthen evidence and support decision-making. Evidence from the ILO – the leading normative agency on labour standards – suggests that AI will profoundly reshape the world of work, not by replacing jobs wholesale, but by transforming roles in ways that can enhance productivity, drive innovation and improve organisational performance. Around one in four workers globally is employed in occupations with some level of exposure to generative AI, yet more roles are likely to be transformed rather than replaced. To maximise these opportunities, effective policy and governance frameworks are essential, along with meaningful worker participation and strong social dialogue to ensure that innovation promotes equitable and inclusive outcomes across the world of work.

Tech for good, AI impact

There are compelling examples of how technologies, including AI, can strengthen social justice and decent work. For instance, India's e-Shram platform, which enables over 315 million informal workers to register for social protection schemes. With the ILO's technical collaboration on the inclusion of major central and states schemes, India has increased its social protection coverage from 19% in 2015 to 64.3% in 2025. Building on this success, major investments, such as Microsoft's $17.5 billion commitment to AI diffusion, are supporting the integration of AI into e-Shram and the National Career Service portal. This approach has the potential to benefit India's informal workers by improving access to jobs, skills development and social protection.

IN FOCUS

Aligned with the vision of leveraging AI for inclusive and human-centred development, the Government of India has been proactive in preparing the country for the future of work by advancing transformative technologies through initiatives such as the AI Mission, National Quantum Mission, Anusandhan National Research Fund and the Research, Development and Innovation Fund.

Recognising that technological progress must translate into inclusive growth and quality employment, the Union Budget 2026-27 has announced the formation of a High-Powered 'Education to Employment and Enterprise' Standing Committee to assess the impact of emerging technologies, including AI, on employment and skill requirements. It will also recommend targeted measures to embed AI education, from the school-level onwards, and enable AI-driven matching of workers with jobs and training opportunities. Through these forward-looking measures, India is positioning itself not only to harness AI for social good domestically but also to serve as a model for the Global South in building an inclusive, future-ready digital economy.

AI access remains unequal

AI exposure around the world is, however, uneven with persistent gaps in access to technology and skills across regions and within countries, genders, age groups and social categories. In low-income countries, only about 11.5% of employment is exposed to generative AI, compared with roughly one-third in high-income economies. These differences reflect variations in economic structures and underscore the need for tailored policy approaches rather than one-size-fits-all solutions. Targeted public investment in skills development, digital infrastructure and social protection, alongside international collaboration and solidarity, are essential to ensure that AI fosters greater inclusion and expands opportunity across all countries.

The convergence of the AI Impact Summit and the World Day of Social Justice is a reminder that technology should primarily serve workers and societies. AI is moving faster than our institutions, but it does not absolve us from our collective responsibility. The task ahead is to align technological ambition with social purpose so that innovation strengthens trust, inclusion and dignity at work. Through such an approach, AI will not only reaffirm why work matters but also its intrinsic value as a source of dignity and social cohesion, and its fundamental role in building peaceful and socially just societies.

GS Paper II : Governance & Social Justice

UPSC Mains Practice Question: "Technology is a tool, but its outcome is a human choice." In the light of the AI Impact Summit 2026, evaluate how India can leverage Artificial Intelligence to advance the cause of social justice and 'decent work' for its informal workforce. **(250 Words)**

Context :

Artificial Intelligence is no longer a futuristic concept but a present-day catalyst reshaping the global labor landscape. For a developing nation like India, the challenge lies in transitioning from a "tech-first" to a **"people-first"** approach. The core argument is that while AI will inevitably transform roles, its governance must ensure it serves as a tool for **social justice, economic inclusion, and decent work**, rather than a driver of inequality.

India's AI Landscape: The Laboratory of the World

India is uniquely positioned as a global AI hub due to its scale and digital penetration:

- **User Base:** India holds the world's largest share of monthly active ChatGPT users.
- **Employment Potential:** By 2030, AI is projected to create **3 million new tech jobs** while reshaping **10 million existing roles**.
- **Global South Leadership:** As the first host of an AI Impact Summit in the Global South, India is advocating for a development-focused AI narrative—shifting away from the "existential risk" focus of the West.

Key Pillars of Human-Centric AI

A. Social Justice & Decent Work

The International Labour Organization (ILO) suggests that AI is more likely to **augment** rather than replace jobs.

- **Exposure:** Roughly 1 in 4 workers globally is exposed to Generative AI.
- **Transformation over Replacement:** The goal is to use AI to improve workplace safety, enhance organizational performance, and reduce decision-making bias.

B. Tech for Social Good: The e-Shram Example

India's **e-Shram platform** serves as a global benchmark for using technology for the informal sector:

- **Registration:** Over 315 million informal workers registered.
- **Coverage Expansion:** India's social protection coverage jumped from **19% (2015) to 64.3% (2025)**.
- **AI Integration:** With investments like Microsoft's $17.5 billion, AI is being integrated into e-Shram and the National Career Service (NCS) to provide personalized job matching and skill recommendations.

C. Institutional & Budgetary Support (Budget 2026-27)

The government has introduced structural frameworks to manage the AI transition:

- **High-Powered Standing Committee:** The "Education to Employment and Enterprise" committee will assess AI's impact on jobs and recommend targeted skill interventions.
- **School-Level Integration:** Embedding AI education into the curriculum from the school level to ensure a future-ready workforce.
- **Indigenous Missions:** Continued support through the **IndiaAI Mission**, National Quantum Mission, and specialized R&D funds.

4. Challenges: The Digital & Global Divide

Uneven Exposure: Generative AI exposure is 34% in high-income countries but only 11.5% in low-income nations, risking a wider "digital chasm."

Governance Gaps: AI is moving faster than regulatory institutions. There is a need for **Social Dialogue** (collaboration between government, employers, and workers) to ensure innovation is democratic and inclusive.

Gendered Impact: ILO data indicates that clerical roles (often held by women) are most exposed to automation, necessitating gender-sensitive reskilling.

Conclusion

The future of AI is not a deterministic outcome of technology, but a result of human choice and governance. India's model—leveraging AI to bridge the social protection gap and empower the informal workforce—offers a blueprint for the Global South. By aligning technological ambition with social purpose, AI can be harnessed not just for productivity, but as a source of **dignity, inclusion, and social cohesion**.