



Digital Governance Through AI

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This article is based on **Digital governance through AI** which was published in The Hindu BusinessLine on 12/08/2021. It talks about the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and what more can be done to enable the AI ecosystem in India.

In recent years there has been the proliferation of digital adoption across India, facilitated by the government's focus on the **JAM Trinity (Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile)** to create a digital identity for each citizen.

From an internet penetration of just 4% in 2007, India currently covers nearly 55% of the population, and is slated to reach one billion users by 2025.

While successfully narrowing down the **digital divide**, India now has an exceptional opportunity to harness the data being created to benefit citizens through adoption of **frontier technologies**.

As **artificial intelligence (AI)** becomes ubiquitous, India has the potential to leverage these massive datasets to build frameworks to empower people, create equity and race towards its goal of USD 1 trillion of economic value using digital technologies by 2025.

Potential of AI in India

- **National Strategy For AI:** A recent PwC report indicated that AI can provide a global economic value addition of up to USD 15.7 trillion by 2030.
 - Recognising this potential, the government released the **National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (NSAI)** in June 2018.
 - The strategy serves as a roadmap for the government to adopt artificial intelligence to increase efficiency in delivery of services, collaborate with the private sector to enhance public sector potential, and develop capacities to embrace and deploy innovation.

- **Deregulation of Geospatial Sector**: Recently, the government has deregulated the geospatial sector allowing private players to bring state-of-the-art solutions to the sector, and spur innovation in AI-enabled hotspot mapping and analytics.

In India this can lead to transformation of various sectors such as infrastructure, health, and help in designing climate change resilient cities

Geospatial: In simple terms, geospatial information is geography and mapping. It is “place based” or “locational” information. It is **data tied to and portrayed on a map**.

- **Reducing Energy Losses**: Energy is another key sector which can benefit from the wide scale adoption of AI.
 - By using AI in the energy sector, **renewable energy** generators and **Discoms** can cut losses and increase efficiencies by better predicting grid load management, and ultimately making the adoption of renewables cost-effective.
 - Currently, Delhi and Kolkata alone account for USD 36 million of annual loss in revenue from **renewable energy** losses; across the country, the number is significantly higher — in the billions of dollars.
- **Increased Governance**: With the use of AI, the Power Ministry’s **Renewable Energy Management Centres (REMCs)** will be able to provide enhanced renewable energy forecasting, scheduling, and monitoring capabilities by processing large datasets of past weather, generation output history, and electricity requirement in a region.
- **AI solutions to Emerging Trends**: Digital transformation through AI can help governments in being more responsive to emerging trends and act accordingly.

Within the government machinery, policymakers are moving forward with incorporating AI solutions for effective tax monitoring, data compliance etc.

Challenges With Wide Use of AI

- **Comprising Privacy**: AI systems learn by analyzing huge volumes of data and they keep adapting through continuous modelling of interaction data and user-feedback.

Thus, with the increasing use of AI, the **right to privacy** can be under threat due to unauthorized access to one’s activity data.
- **Disproportionate Power and Control**: Technology giants are investing heavily in regard to artificial intelligence, both at the scientific/engineering and also at the commercial and product development level.

These big players have an unmatched advantage when compared to any ambitious competitor out there which is a symptom of **data-oligarchic society**.
- **Technological Unemployment**: AI companies are building intelligent machines that perform tasks typically carried out by low-income workers.
 - For example self-service kiosks to replace cashiers, fruit-picking robots to replace field workers, etc.
 - Moreover, many desk jobs will also be edged out by AI, such as accountants, financial traders, and middle managers.

- **Exacerbating Inequalities:** Using artificial intelligence, a company can drastically cut down on relying on the human workforce, and this means that **revenues will go to fewer people.**

Consequently, individuals who have ownership in AI-driven companies will make all the money. Also, **AI could compound digital exclusion.**

Way Forward

- **Need For Sensitisation and Capacity-building:** In the scope of public sector adoption of AI, the critical need for sensitisation and capacity-building within the government cannot be discounted.

Initiatives like **RAISE 2020**, **Digital India Dialogue** and **AI Pe Charcha** have commenced a much-needed discourse on ‘**AI for good**’, covering aspects of evolving technologies and their policy implications.

- **Create Enabling Ecosystem:** we must create enabling environments in schools through multidisciplinary approaches with AI at their core to empower the next generation to play an essential role in designing practical AI solutions for India and in India.

MeitY’s ‘Responsible AI for Youth’ has incentivised youth participation through a platform for exposure on a tech mind-set, and digital readiness.

- **Public-Private Partnership (PPPs):** Recently, an initiative, **Future Skills Prime**, has exhibited the strength of public-private partnership by aggregating digital-ready courses for consumers across citizens, government employees and businesses.

Thus, such initiatives hold immense promise for the role of civil society and private sector in pursuing responsible AI through collaboration.

- **Uniform Standard Rules:** Standardising the rules of the game will help expand markets for positive AI-driven goods and services.
- The upcoming **National Programme for AI** is a step in this direction building upon existing partnerships and increasing governmental capacity in supporting AI innovations and research for public sector adoption.
- **Collaborate Every Stakeholder:** As AI continues to impact every facet of our daily lives, it is essential for all the stakeholders — innovators, policymakers, academicians, industry experts, philanthropic foundations, multilaterals and civil society — to collaborate to help steer AI’s future towards benevolent purposes.
- **Need Ethics in AI:** Need for multi-stakeholder efforts on global cooperation so AI is used in a manner that is “**trustworthy, human rights-based, safe and sustainable, and promotes peace**”.

UNESCO has developed a global, comprehensive standard-setting draft Recommendation on the **Ethics of Artificial Intelligence** to the Member States for deliberation and adoption.

Conclusion

The various stakeholders must join hands to ensure that AI is used for benevolent purposes.

Through its technological prowess and abundance of data, India can lead the way in thriving through Artificial Intelligence solutions, contributing to inclusive development and social empowerment.

Drishti Mains Question

India has the potential to leverage artificial intelligence technology to build frameworks to empower people, create equity and achieve economic development. Discuss.
