Using AI in Elections

For Prelims: Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI), Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) Deep fake, World Economic Forum's (WEF's), Artificial General Intelligence (AGI).

For Mains: Concerns For Using AI for Elections, Generative AI – Benefits, Threats and Way Forward.

Source: TH

Why in News?

As AI evolves towards mimicking human capabilities evolving from **Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI)** to **Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)**, its impact on elections, exemplified by India's upcoming polls, underscores the **imperative of addressing its potential influence.**

- AGI refers to the hypothetical ability of an AI to understand, learn, and apply knowledge in a manner **similar to human intelligence across** a wide range of tasks and domains.
- AGI aims to **replicate the cognitive abilities of humans,** such as reasoning, problem-solving, perception, and understanding natural language.

How is AI Linked with the Electoral Landscape?

- **Campaign Strategy and Targeting:**
  - Political parties and candidates can use **AI algorithms to analyse vast amounts of data about voters**, including demographics, social media activity, and past voting behaviour, to tailor their campaign messages and target specific voter groups more effectively.
- **Predictive Analytics:**
  - AI-powered predictive analytics **can forecast election outcomes** by analysing various factors such as polling data, economic indicators, and sentiment analysis from social media.
  - This can help **parties allocate resources strategically** and focus on key battleground areas.
- **Voter Engagement:**
  - AI chatbots and virtual assistants can engage with voters on social media platforms, answering questions, providing information about candidates and policies, and even encouraging voter turnout.
  - This can enhance voter engagement and participation in the electoral process.
- **Security and Integrity:**
  - AI-powered tools can be employed to detect and prevent election fraud, including voter suppression, tampering with electronic voting systems, and the spread of disinformation. By analysing patterns and anomalies in data, AI algorithms can help ensure the integrity of the electoral process.
- **Regulation and Oversight:**
  - Governments and election authorities can use AI to monitor and regulate political

advertising, identify violations of campaign finance laws, and ensure compliance with electoral regulations. AI-powered tools can help enforce transparency and accountability in the electoral process.

- In 2021, the **Bihar Election Commission tied** up with AI firm **Staqu to use video analytics** with **optical character recognition (OCR)** to analyse CCTV footage from counting booths during the panchayat elections.
- The system enabled the Bihar Election Commission to achieve **complete transparency and eliminate any chances** of manipulation.

What are the Concerns of Deploying AI for Electoral Purpose?

- **Manipulation of Electoral Behavior:**
  - AI models, particularly **Generative AI and AGI** can be used to **spread disinformation, create deep fake elections,** and inundate voters with highly personalised propaganda, leading to confusion and manipulation of democratic processes.
  - Using AI, Deepfake Videos of opponents **can be created to tarnish their image.**
    - The term "Deep Fake Elections" refers to the use of AI software to create convincing fake videos, audios, and other content that can deceive voters and influence their decisions.
    - This phenomenon poses a serious threat to the **integrity of elections and undermines public trust in the electoral process.**
  - One prominent example highlighting the potential dangers of **such manipulation is the Cambridge Analytica scandal.**
    - Cambridge Analytica, a now-defunct political consulting firm, notoriously **exploited Facebook data to create targeted political advertisements** and influence **voter behavior during the 2016 United States presidential election** and other campaigns globally.
- **Messaging and Propaganda:**
  - AI tools can be **trained to translate in regional languages** which can be used by the candidates for Microtargetting in their campaign.
    - Microtargeting is a marketing strategy that uses recent technological developments and reaching out to specific segments of a larger audience based on **detailed demographic, psychographic, behavioral, or other data.**
  - AI can also be used for the **customisation of political campaigns** based on the local dialect and demography of the voter base.
- **Spreading Disinformation:**
  - The World Economic Forum's (WEF's) **Global Risks Perception Survey,** ranks misinformation and disinformation among the top 10 risks, with easy-to-use interfaces of large-scale AI models enabling a boom in false information and "synthetic" content - from sophisticated voice cloning to fake websites.
    - AI can be used to inundate voters with highly personalised propaganda on a scale that could make the Cambridge Analytica scandal appear microscopic, as the persuasive ability of AI models would be far superior to the bots and automated social media accounts that are now baseline tools for spreading disinformation.
    - The risks are compounded by social media companies such as Facebook and Twitter significantly cutting their fact-checking and election integrity teams.
- **Inaccuracies and Unreliability:**
  - AI models, including AGI, are not infallible and can produce inaccuracies and inconsistencies.
  - There has been public wrath worldwide over Google AI models, including in India, for their portrayal of persons and personalities in a malefic manner, mistakenly or otherwise. These reflect well **the dangers of 'runaway' AI.**
    - Inconsistencies and undependability stalk many AI models and pose inherent dangers to society. As its potential and usage increases in geometric proportion, threat levels are bound to go up.
- **Ethical Concerns:**
  - The use of AI in elections raises ethical questions about privacy, transparency, and fairness.
  - AI algorithms may inadvertently **perpetuate biases present in training data,** leading

to unfair treatment or discrimination against certain groups of voters.
    - Moreover, the lack of transparency in AI decision-making processes can **erode public trust and confidence in electoral outcomes.**
    - Parties having better **resources can have better utilisation of AI** in comparison to the small and regional parties with lesser resources, which may disrupt the **level playing field in the elections.**
- **Regulatory Challenges:**
    - Regulating the use of AI in electoral campaigns presents significant challenges due to the rapid pace of technological advancements and the global nature of online platforms.
    - Governments and election authorities struggle to keep pace with evolving AI techniques and may lack the necessary expertise to effectively regulate AI-driven electoral activities.
    - The primary statutes that could potentially trigger if fake news is spread using deepfakes are, The **India Penal Code, 1860** (or the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 in due course) **Information Technology Act, 2000**; and the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.**
        - However, there doesn't exist a specific law **that addresses just AI and deepfake technology** and targeting the individual who creates it.

How to Deal With the Impacts of AI on Elections?

- **Issuing MCC-like Guidelines to Address the Misuse of AI:**
    - The menace of **misinformation has existed for a longer period,** and the advent of **AI technology has turbocharged** the spread of fake news.
        - In the context of Lok Sabha elections 2024, one possible solution to AI-fueled misinformation would be **guidelines issued by the** Election Commission of India.
    - There is a need to Implement regulations that **require transparency in the use of AI algorithms** for political purposes.
        - This includes **disclosing sources of funding for political advertisements** and requiring platforms to disclose how algorithms determine the content users see.
- **Education and Media Literacy:**
    - Invest in educational programs to teach citizens how to **critically evaluate information online and identify disinformation** and deep fakes.
    - Promote media literacy to help **voters distinguish between credible and unreliable sources** of information.
- **Enhanced Fact-Checking:**
    - Establishing a **Rapid Response Team to address the dissemination** of fake news, deep fakes, and other forms of misinformation during elections is crucial.
        - While it's inevitable that fake videos and misinformation will arise, the key lies in swiftly addressing them before they **escalate and spread widely.**
    - Strengthen fact-checking efforts by providing resources to independent organisations and journalists to verify the accuracy of information circulating online.
    - Develop AI-powered tools to **identify and flag misleading content.**
- **Counter-Narratives and Debunking Campaigns:**
    - Launch public awareness campaigns that debunk false information and provide accurate counter-narratives.
    - Utilise AI to identify trending **misinformation and target counter-messages** effectively.
- **Ethical AI Development:**
    - Encourage the development of AI technologies with ethical considerations in mind, such as minimising bias, protecting privacy, and promoting transparency.
    - Establish standards and guidelines **for the responsible use of AI in political contexts.**
- **International Cooperation:**
    - Foster collaboration between governments, tech companies, and international organisations to address the global challenges posed by AI-driven disinformation campaigns. Share best practices and coordinate efforts to combat election interference across borders.

What are India's Initiatives Related to Artificial Intelligence?

- **INDIAai.**

- **Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI).**
- **US India Artificial Intelligence Initiative.**
- **Responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Youth.**
- **Artificial Intelligence Research, Analytics and Knowledge Assimilation Platform.**
- **Artificial Intelligence Mission.**

Conclusion

- Elections apart, **India being one of the most advanced countries** in the digital arena, again needs to treat AI as an unproven entity.
- While AI brings benefits, the nation and its **leaders should be fully aware of its disruptive potential.**
- This is especially true of AGI, and they should act with due caution. India's lead in digital public goods could be both a benefit as well as a bane, given that while AGI provides many benefits, it can be malefic as well.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims:

Q. With the present state of development, Artificial Intelligence can effectively do which of the following? (2020)

1. Bring down electricity consumption in industrial units
2. Create meaningful short stories and songs
3. Disease diagnosis
4. Text-to-Speech Conversion
5. Wireless transmission of electrical energy

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
(b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2, 4 and 5 only
(d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans: (b)

Mains:

Q. What are the main socio-economic implications arising out of the development of IT industries in major cities of India? **(2021)**