

DAILY NEWSP APER ANALYSIS

DATE - 11/02/2026

**SOURCE
THE HINDU & INDIAN EXPRESS**

**CHANAKYA IAS ACADEMY
SECTOR 25 CHANDIGARH**

Centre prescribes labels for all photorealistic AI content online

Amended rules require disclosure for AI-generated media, warn platforms of loss of safe harbour for non-compliance; new changes take effect on February 20; shorter timelines to social media companies for takedown of illegal, sensitive content

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The Union government has notified amendments to the Information Technology Act, 2008, requiring photorealistic AI-generated content to be prominently labelled.

The changes, which will come into force on February 20, also significantly shorten timelines for takedown of illegal material.

Under the new rules, social media platforms will now have between two and three hours to remove certain categories of unlawful content, a sharp reduction from the earlier 24-36 hours.

Content deemed illegal by a court or an "appropriate government" will have to be taken down within three hours, while sensitive content, featuring non-consensual nudity and deepfakes, must be re-

Content check

Platforms that enable creation or sharing of synthetic content must ensure clear and prominent labelling under the new rules



Key changes include:

- Synthetic content to be treated as "information" for determining unlawful acts under IT Rules

moved within two hours.

The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment

Rules, 2026, defines synthetically generated content as "audio, visual or audio-visual information which is artificially or algorithmically created, generated, modified or altered using a computer resource, in a manner that

such information appears to be real, authentic or true and depicts or portrays any individual or event in a manner that is, or is likely to be perceived as indistinguishable from a natural person or a real-world event."

The final definition is narrower than the one released in a draft version of these rules in October 2025. As with the existing

IT Rules, failure to comply with the rules could result in loss of safe harbour, the legal principle that sites allowing users to post content cannot automatically be held liable in the same way as a publisher of a book or a periodical can.

Proactive labelling

Platforms will be required to seek disclosures from users in case their content is AI-generated. If such a disclosure is not received for synthetically generated content, the official said, firms would either have to proactively label the content or take it down in cases of non-consensual deepfakes.

The amended rules mandate that AI-generated imagery be labelled "prominently". While the draft version specified that 10% of any imagery would have to be covered with such a disclosure, platforms have been given some more le-

way, the official said, since they pushed back on such a specific mandate.

"Provided that where (a social media) intermediary becomes aware, or it is otherwise established, that the intermediary knowingly permitted, promoted, or failed to act upon such synthetically generated information in contravention of these rules, such intermediary shall be deemed to have failed to exercise due diligence under this sub-rule," the rules say, hinting at a loss of safe harbour.

The rules also partially roll back an amendment notified in October 2025, which had limited each State to designating a single officer authorised to issue takedown orders. States may now notify more than one such officer— an "administrative" measure to address the need of States with large populations, the official said.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context

- The Union Government has notified amendments under the Information Technology Act, 2000.
- The amendments mandate prominent labelling of photorealistic AI-generated content.
- Takedown timelines for unlawful content have been reduced to 2-3 hours (earlier 24-36 hours).
- Non-compliance may lead to loss of safe harbour protection under Section 79.
- States can now appoint multiple authorised officers to issue takedown orders.

Key Provisions

1. Definition of Synthetic Content

- Audio, visual or audio-visual content:
 - Artificially created or modified using computer resources.
 - Appears real and indistinguishable from real persons or real-world events.

2. Mandatory Labelling

- Platforms must:
 - Seek user disclosure if content is AI-generated.
 - Proactively label such content if disclosure is not provided.
- Non-consensual deepfakes must be removed.

3. Takedown Timeline

- 3 hours: Content declared illegal by a court or government.
- 2 hours: Non-consensual nudity and deepfakes.

4. Safe Harbour (Section 79)

- Intermediaries are protected from liability only if:
 - They exercise due diligence.
 - They comply with government rules.
- Failure to comply can result in loss of immunity.

Constitutional and Legal Linkages

- Article 19(1)(a) – Freedom of speech and expression.
- Article 19(2) – Reasonable restrictions.
- Article 21 – Right to privacy.
- Doctrine of proportionality.
- Intermediary liability principle.

Critical Analysis

Advantages

- Addresses deepfakes and AI-driven misinformation.
- Protects dignity and privacy of individuals.
- Enhances accountability of social media platforms.
- Strengthens digital governance framework.

Concerns

- Risk of over-censorship due to short compliance window.
- Executive takedown powers without prior judicial scrutiny.
- Compliance burden on smaller platforms.
- Ambiguity regarding what constitutes "prominent" labelling.
- Federal concerns due to multiple state-level authorised officers.

Way Forward

- Clear operational guidelines for labelling standards.
- Transparent and accountable takedown procedures.
- Independent or judicial oversight mechanism.
- Standardised AI watermarking protocols.
- Robust grievance redressal mechanism.
- Periodic review through multi-stakeholder consultation.

Opposition MPs submit notice seeking removal of Om Birla as LS Speaker

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Opposition parties belonging to the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) on Tuesday submitted a notice to the Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha, seeking the removal of Speaker Om Birla for allegedly conducting the business of the House in a "blatantly partisan" manner.

The notice to bring a resolution for the removal of the Speaker cited four specific reasons, including not allowing Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi to complete his speech on the Motion of Thanks to

the President on February 2.

"This is not an isolated instance. The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha is almost invariably not allowed to speak," the notice said. The notice, with nearly 120 signatures, was submitted to Lok Sabha Secretary-General Utpal Kumar Singh by Congress chief whip K. Suresh and whip Mohamed Jawed on behalf of several Opposition parties, including the Congress, Samajwadi Party, and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). However, the Trinamool Congress did not sign the notice.

Soon after the submission of the notice against the Speaker, the Opposi-

tion agreed to let the House function.

The discussion on the Budget started in the second half of the day. Mr. Gandhi is likely to take part in the discussions tomorrow.

Mr. Birla has directed the Secretary-General to take appropriate action of "examining and processing" the notice, according to the rules, sources said.

At least two Lok Sabha members have to sign the notice to move a resolution for the removal of the Speaker and a minimum of 14 days' notice has to be given before the resolution can be taken up by the House.

Under Article 94C of the



Big move: Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi with floor leaders of INDIA bloc parties in New Delhi on Tuesday. ANI

Constitution, the Speaker can be removed from office by a resolution passed by the House through a simple majority. Article 96 of the Constitution allows the Speaker to respond to

the notice for removal but the charges against her/him will have to be specific.

"We, the undersigned, hereby give notice of a resolution for the removal of

Shri Om Birla from the office of Speaker Lok Sabha, in terms of the provisions of Article 94(c) of the Constitution of India, because of the blatantly partisan manner in which he has been conducting the business of the Lok Sabha," the notice said. "On several occasions, leaders of Opposition parties have just not been allowed to speak, which is their basic democratic right in Parliament."

'Arbitrary suspension' Apart from Mr. Gandhi's speech, the notice said that on February 3, eight Opposition MPs were "arbitrarily suspended" for the entire Budget session and were "being penalised

merely for exercising their democratic rights".

On February 4, a BJP MP was permitted to make "wholly objectionable and personalised attacks" against two former Prime Ministers, without being reprimanded even once for disregarding established conventions and norms of propriety, the notice said, referring to Nishikant Dubey's remarks.

"In spite of our request, no action has been taken against this particular MP, who is a habitual offender," it said.

Referring to the Speaker's statement that he had "concrete information" that Congress members

might move towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi's seat and carry out "some unexpected act", the notice termed these remarks "blatantly false allegations" and his decision to make these observations from his Chair as "indicative of an abuse of this constitutional office".

"While we hold the Speaker, Lok Sabha, in personal regard, we are pained and anguished at the manner in which he has consistently prevented opposition members of Parliament from raising issues of legitimate public concern," the notice said.

WON'T CHAIR HOUSE: BIRLA
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KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- Members of the Opposition bloc submitted a notice seeking the removal of the Lok Sabha Speaker, alleging partisan conduct during House proceedings.
- The notice cited:
 - Curtailment of speech of the Leader of the Opposition during the Motion of Thanks.
 - Suspension of Opposition MPs during the Budget Session.
 - Allowing allegedly objectionable remarks by a ruling party MP.
- The notice was submitted under Article 94(c) of the Constitution.
- As per constitutional requirements, a minimum 14 days' notice must be given before the resolution can be taken up.
- The Speaker directed the Secretary-General to examine and process the notice as per Rules of Procedure.

Key Constitutional and Procedural Provisions

- Article 93 – Lok Sabha shall choose two members as Speaker and Deputy Speaker.
- Article 94(c) – Speaker may be removed by a resolution of the House passed by a majority of all the then members of the House.
- Article 96 –
 - Speaker has the right to speak and participate in removal proceedings.
 - Speaker cannot preside over the sitting when such resolution is under consideration.
- Majority Required – Majority of "all the then members" (effective majority).
- Notice Requirement – Minimum 14 days prior notice.
- Presiding Officer during Removal Motion – Deputy Speaker or another member as per Rules.
- Suspension of MPs – Governed by Rules 374 and 374A of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.

Static Constitutional Linkages

- The Speaker is:
 - Final authority on interpretation of House rules.
 - Guardian of privileges of the House.
 - Certifying authority for Money Bills (Article 110).
 - Adjudicating authority under the Tenth Schedule (Anti-Defection Law).
- The office symbolizes:
 - Institutional neutrality.
 - Continuity of the House.
- Removal mechanism reflects:
 - Parliamentary sovereignty.
 - Principle of accountability of constitutional functionaries.

Critical Analysis

Issues Involved

- Institutional Neutrality
 - Allegations of partisan functioning affect credibility of Parliament.
- Balancing Order vs Dissent
 - Speaker must ensure discipline without suppressing opposition voices.
- Discretionary Powers
 - Certification of Money Bills and disqualification decisions already place the Speaker under scrutiny.
- Majoritarianism vs Minority Rights
 - Parliamentary democracy requires protection of opposition space.

Constitutional Safeguards

- Removal process ensures accountability.
- Speaker cannot preside during removal motion.
- Effective majority requirement prevents frivolous attempts.

Democratic Concerns

- Repeated disruptions reduce productivity of Parliament (PRS India reports declining sittings in recent years).
- Suspension as a disciplinary tool must remain proportionate.
- Perception of bias weakens public trust in legislative institutions.

The approaching AI surge, its global consequences

If there is a single technology that promises to unravel the present and usher in a new era, the bet would be on Artificial Intelligence (AI). At the very least, AI is set to effect a transformation that is comparable to any previous revolution, not excluding the Industrial Revolution. Impressive Large Language Models (LLMs) are already rolling out faster than one would have imagined possible. Rivalry between the United States and China in this area has become intense and the success of recent Chinese models is having a catalytic effect on the AI industry as a whole. This is, however, only the beginning.



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realisation that AI's potential extends to other sectors as well. The judicial fraternity, for one, however, believes that there is a need to be more cautious about the use of AI in court proceedings, and that excessive reliance on AI in court rooms could lead to misjudgment. They point to the dangers of 'hallucinations' which could lead to improper citations and fabricated judgments.

Marching ahead across domains
All this, however, is but a precursor to what the real potential and danger posed by AI in the world of tomorrow are. As AI proliferates globally, it is already becoming evident that few technologies have the potential to exert the same degree of influence in terms of enhancing information flows, surveillance capabilities, revolutionising of communications, empowering analytical frameworks and the military industrial segment. No other area of technology seems to have such a profound impact on existing civilisational networks.

In this sense, AI portends a breaching of certain limits that had existed since the Second World War and the overarching threat posed by technology and its utilisation in different domains. What is noteworthy is that AI operates at granular levels – and that the technology itself is undergoing a phase transition. In its present form, AI is already enabling the replication of speech and language, vision and reasoning, but what is little realised is that it is set to achieve new and dangerous heights of capabilities. This is especially so in regard to military and defence applications, for as AI becomes increasingly militarised, warfare itself is bound to – and is already undergoing – a paradigm shift from man to unmanned platforms, and from dependence on human-controlled systems to autonomous ones, that are capable of making their own decisions.

Even as AI is set to become all pervasive, its transformative impact on warfare, especially in the area of the evolution of weapon systems, is what is most worrisome. AI has made possible the deployment of unmanned aerial vehicles that are capable of autonomous flight. AI-driven cyber weapons and uncrewed ground vehicles equipped with intelligent navigation and targeting capabilities are already a reality. Both represent a paradigm shift in redefining combat, and employing operations across multiple systems without direct human intervention. As of today, AI offers unprecedented opportunities for the enhanced automation of operational decisions in areas of conflict, and of transforming battlefield dynamics.

Already, the portrayal of Ukrainian soldiers wearing night vision goggles, riding 'Quad bikes' and operating 'Jerrycan' of fire, and launching 'jerry rigged drones' equipped with small explosives, has become the defining image of future conflicts. Ukraine's success in checking and keeping at bay the mighty Russian Army in the first wave of Russia's attacks on Ukraine,

employing the latest AI technology, marks the most fundamental change in tactics of warfare since the advent of tanks at the end of the First World War. Ukraine's response has demonstrated the value of 'coming age technology', and how their skillful use could undermine conventional military capabilities. It is the highly asymmetric impact that AI commands, that is both its strength and its danger portent. Though this is not being openly mentioned or touted, the reality is that it represents a colossal transfer of power from the traditional military to others, who have the capacity to develop and utilise AI devices. The real danger is that AI could very soon eclipse the smartest individuals, and nobody can or will know, when they become autonomous, and totally out of human control.

The dystopian impact of a powerful set of technologies which are not under the control of a human body or entity, and of self-sustaining technology, portrays a doomsday scenario. The beginnings of this are already evident, and are set to escalate enormously to the next levels of the concentration of power. There are unlimited possibilities in the doomsday scenario of autonomous drone swarms unleashing attacks on crowds, killing hundreds, if not, thousands. Both the military and security establishments would seek to equip themselves with such devices in a few years. AI would then be well set to become the greatest force amplifier in history. Its impact could range from wars and accidents, to random terror groups, to counter-revolutionary forces, and the like. The blunt truth is that nobody knows where, if how, AI might overtake or eclipse humans, and Open AI is an autonomous force for good or evil.

It is also becoming evident that, apart from the battlefield, AI is now becoming an instrument of immense value in different spheres of human activity including diplomacy and intelligence. In that sense, it is no longer merely a tool. Concerns that technologies such as AI would outpace institutions meant to govern them are real, but the most spectacular demonstration of AI is as yet on the battlefield – as seen across western Europe and West Asia. In both sectors, space, cyber and electronic warfare capacities have been woven together to completely transform the nature of warfare itself.

Need for effective oversight
The obiter dictum – given that AI enables rapid data processing and predictive analysis, and also provides opportunities for a variety of options, including crisis response, conflict prevention, and conflict resolution – is that humankind must develop a set of checks and balances to prevent AI from 'running away with the bit in its mouth'. Scientists, political leaders and others must come together to understand the implications of runaway AI technologies and decide how to keep them under control and in a manner that they benefit, rather than become a threat to, humankind.

- Shift from manned to unmanned and autonomous systems.
- Increased role of cyber warfare and electronic warfare integration.
- Asymmetric warfare: low-cost AI tools offset conventional military superiority.

4. Emerging Risks

- Autonomous lethal weapons systems.
- Drone swarms and AI-driven terror threats.
- AI hallucinations affecting judicial processes.
- Deepfakes and misinformation undermining democracy.
- Concentration of AI power among few corporations/states.

STATIC LINKAGES

- Balance of Power theory in international relations.
- Concept of deterrence in strategic studies.
- Dual-use technology in defence doctrine.
- Article 21 – Right to Life (AI in surveillance and warfare).
- Separation of powers – AI in judiciary.
- Precautionary principle in technology governance.
- Ethical governance and accountability mechanisms.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Advantages

- Enhances productivity and economic growth.
- Improves defence preparedness and strategic capabilities.
- Enables predictive governance and crisis management.
- Strengthens digital economy and innovation ecosystems.

Challenges

- Risk of autonomous lethal systems beyond human control.
- Cyber vulnerabilities and digital warfare escalation.
- Democratic erosion through misinformation.
- Regulatory vacuum and weak global AI governance.
- Ethical dilemmas in judicial and administrative reliance.

Stakeholder Concerns

- Military establishments: strategic advantage vs escalation risk.
- Judiciary: reliability and accountability.
- Corporations: innovation vs regulation.
- Developing countries: digital divide and AI dependency.

WAY FORWARD

- Develop comprehensive AI regulation with risk-based approach.
- Promote global norms on autonomous weapons (via UN platforms).
- Strengthen cyber security architecture and AI audit frameworks.
- Invest in sovereign AI infrastructure and semiconductor ecosystem.
- Build ethical AI standards and judicial safeguards.
- Promote international cooperation on AI governance.
- Integrate AI literacy in education and civil services training.

Face the reality
World leaders must, however, wake up to this new reality, and come to terms with it – that it is the advent of AI, rather than other aspects, that is likely to herald the collapse of the international order as we know it.

Few leaders currently understand the extent of the threat posed by AI to the world as we know it. Some industry leaders such as Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella have pointed out that AI was already being used as tools of diplomacy and statecraft, and that nations require to build resilience and sovereign stacks. AI did figure in discussions at the WEF, but the contents of the debate hardly mirrored the dangers arising from unchecked AI. A great deal of the debate turned on how countries were placed to exploit this new phenomenon, with Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnaw taking time off to rebut the presumption that India was a secondary AI power. Industry leaders, no doubt, increasingly see AI as a strategic enabler, given that digital transformation is helping to reshape the competitiveness across different sectors – from fintech to health care. Additionally, there is some

With AI disrupting global power, warfare and governance, the issue is whether humanity can keep pace with a set of checks and balances in place

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

CONTEXT OF THE NEWS

- Rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI), especially Large Language Models (LLMs), globally.
- Intensifying technological rivalry between the United States and China in AI capabilities.
- At the World Economic Forum, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney described the global order as undergoing a “rupture”.
- Growing concerns about militarisation of AI, autonomous weapons, AI-enabled cyber warfare, and institutional unpreparedness.
- India asserting its position as an AI power through policy initiatives and digital public infrastructure.

KEY POINTS

1. AI as a Transformational Technology
 - Comparable in scale to the Industrial Revolution.
 - Capable of replicating language, reasoning, and decision-making.
 - Cross-sectoral impact: governance, defence, healthcare, finance, judiciary.
2. AI and Geopolitics
 - AI emerging as an instrument of statecraft.
 - Weaponisation of supply chains, semiconductor dominance, compute power.
 - Push for “AI sovereignty” and national AI stacks.
3. Militarisation of AI
 - Deployment of AI-enabled drones in Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Fighter push — HAL's experience with private enterprise

An air force requires three verticals to operate in synchrony for its operational punch — a weapons inventory more potent than its adversary's, professional personnel to operate those weapon systems, and a dependable supply chain to provide the systems in time and of requisite quality.

The fighter aircraft portfolio of the Indian Air Force is a mix of Russian and western machines, with the indigenous Tejas built by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) a new entrant. The repair and overhaul of every fighter jet, irrespective of its origin, is also done by HAL, making the task of India's sole aircraft manufacturer immense. Its order book is overflowing and, with a typical 'government' work culture, its output in terms of timely delivery and quality has been adversely commented on, including by the Comptroller and Auditor General. So, media reports that the development contract for five prototypes of India's Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) would be awarded to one of three private players (HAL has been left out) — thereby creating a second aircraft manufacturer — should be welcome news except that there are some serious professional issues that need to be thought through while the decision-making is ongoing.

The complexities

Here are six macro points that deserve consideration. First, the three private entities (despite being top industrial players) can be considered start-ups as they have no previous experience in developing a fighter aircraft. The complexities of building a small ship, a helicopter airframe or aerospace parts cannot be compared to the expertise required to make and test a fifth Gen fighter prototype.

Second, taking history as a guide, the HF-24 Maru was designed by HAL's Aircraft Design Bureau and produced on its shop floor. Thus, design, prototype construction, flight testing, upgrades, weapon integration and modifications



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The development of India's Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft will test private industry's ability to match HAL's institutional knowledge

were all under one roof. HAL did the series production and provided lifetime spares support; projects such as the trainer aircraft HT-2 and HJT-16 were similar. The Tejas is hybrid as a large part of its design is by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)'s Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) while the series production and lifetime support rests with HAL.

Singular control

Since HAL and ADA are government agencies, there is an element of singular control by the Ministry of Defence. In the AMCA case, however, with the design agency (ADA) under the government but the executor a private entity, who would have ownership over the project during prototype testing and during production?

Third, HAL has developed the requisite infrastructure, tools, rigs and production facilities over eight decades centred around Bangalore.

The IAF has contributed extensively to flight testing, with its test aircrew sharing the workload and personnel moving on deputation. With the IAF's Aircraft and Systems Testing Establishment co-located with it, the development phase of all aircraft had concurrent infusion of user inputs.

For Tejas, a full-fledged National Flight Test Centre was established at ADA, with expensive and sophisticated equipment for prototype testing. Many DRDO labs specialising in avionics and electronic warfare are also situated in a 10-kilometre radius of HAL's airfield in Bengaluru. Would the private entity for AMCA put in the huge sums of money required for similar infrastructure at a new place for research and development and the manufacturing centre? The time required can well be imagined.

Fourth, in any aircraft development plan, there are professional differences which get resolved easily when the design and manufacturing agency are the same. In fact, there is close liaison between designers and production engineers, from the design board phase to flight testing, and during production later as upgrades and

modifications take place. Even as prototypes begin to fly, the manufacturing ecosystem begins to get established — with tools, jigs and machinery operationalised to start production as soon as the testing phase is completed. This is a norm the world over. It would be a near-impossible task for the AMCA private entity to source land, construct hangars and install manufacturing equipment concurrently for a fifth Gen fighter. In fact, would a private player sink in monies when the contract would be for just five prototypes, and there is no assured production deal that is visible?

Fifth, it takes a year to train test aircrew and a few more to make them experienced enough to start testing a futuristic prototype. India has a single test pilots school that can cater to a limited number of trainees. The private entity would require many from the word go.

Finally, the ADA, its National Flight Test Centre and the IAF's testing establishment are all located at HAL airport, Bengaluru. It makes eminent sense that the private entity also sets up office in these campuses and uses the existing airfield infrastructure. AMCA is a national project. Here is a suggestion, no matter how bureaucratically outlandish it sounds. Can some part of HAL's enormous real estate, hangarage and select facilities (including for flight testing) at Bengaluru be co-opted for the private entity? HAL has been built with public money and, with its restructuring study underway, it is only right that an out-of-the-box approach be adopted in this national endeavour.

The issue of location

Which brings us to the location of the production factory. The idea of locating strategic infrastructure close to the border should not be repeated as in the C-295 aircraft factory at Yadadara, Gujarat. Production of the AMCA must be in the hinterland, well connected to, and not far from, India's mecca of aviation — HAL's Bengaluru airfield.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

What is the Issue?

- India is developing a 5th-generation stealth fighter aircraft — AMCA (Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft).
- It is being designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA).
- Traditionally, aircraft manufacturing has been done by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- Now, the government is considering giving the prototype development contract to a private company, instead of HAL.

Why is this Important?

AMCA is a strategic national project because:

- It will replace aging fighter aircraft.
- It strengthens India's air power and deterrence.
- It reduces dependence on foreign suppliers.
- It supports Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence.

Core Issues in Simple Terms

1. Experience Problem

- HAL has 80+ years of aircraft manufacturing experience.
- Private companies have limited experience in building full fighter aircraft.
- 5th-generation fighters involve stealth, advanced engines, and sensor fusion.

2. Infrastructure Challenge

- Aircraft development needs:
 - Testing facilities
 - Flight test centres
 - Special manufacturing tools
- Most of this ecosystem exists around Bengaluru (HAL-ADA-IAF testing units).
- Creating a new ecosystem elsewhere is costly and time-consuming.

3. Governance Confusion

- Design is by ADA (government).
- Manufacturing may be by private entity.
- Questions arise:
 - Who owns intellectual property?
 - Who is responsible for delays?
 - Who handles lifetime maintenance?

4. National Security Dimension

- Fighter aircraft production is sensitive.
- Strategic infrastructure should ideally be in secure hinterland areas.

Why Government May Want Private Participation?

- HAL has a heavy order book and past delays.
- To break monopoly and improve efficiency.
- To build a broader defence industrial base.
- To encourage competition and innovation.

What is the Larger Debate?

This is about balancing:

- Efficiency vs Experience
- Private sector dynamism vs Public sector legacy capacity
- Speed vs Strategic control

New beginnings

The end of START should prompt discussions on wider and equal terms

In February 5, 2026, the 'New' Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) expired. A symbol of an older era in global geopolitics, where the U.S. and the then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics were engaged in an escalating spiral of one-upmanship such as 'testing' mammoth nuclear weapons and space races, START represented a pivotal shift in how they approached nuclear competition – from unlimited accumulation towards negotiated reduction. It emerged from decades of arms control efforts and altered the trajectory of the Cold War's final years. The nuclear arms race that dominated the Cold War saw both superpowers accumulate massive arsenals. By the 1980s, they each possessed over 10,000 strategic nuclear warheads – the U.S. with a lopsided advantage. Earlier arms control measures such as the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks, in the 1970s, attempted to limit the growth of these arsenals, but were focused on capping numbers rather than reducing them.

START I negotiations began in 1982 and proved complex. The treaty was not signed until July 1991, just months before the Soviet Union's collapse. It represented the first agreement between the superpowers to actually reduce strategic nuclear arsenals rather than merely limit their growth. The treaty required each side to cut strategic warheads to 6,000 and reduce delivery systems proportionally. This was a significant symbolic and practical achievement – each country would have roughly 30% fewer warheads than existing agreements permitted. Later agreements built on START's framework and reduced deployable warheads to 1,700-2,200 a side, and the New START Treaty (2010) limited each side to 1,550 deployed strategic warheads. Each represented further progress down from Cold War peaks. The New START, with its 15-year lifespan, ought to have been replaced with more ambitious outcomes. But given that global geopolitics seems to be receding into imperialist structures – mercantilist tariff systems and a craving for territories – it is unsurprising that arms-race doctrines too will be resuscitated. U.S. President Donald Trump has stated that any future arms control must include China, given its growing nuclear stockpile, signalling that the U.S. will not be bound by limits if other major powers (such as China) are free to build up theirs. The end of START may have serious consequences for global agreements, such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. They are both noble in theory but the first is discriminatory in the way it seeks to rid the world of nuclear weapons. The end of START is an opportunity to restart discussion on more equal terms.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- On 5 February 2026, the New START Treaty between the United States and Russia expired.
- It was the last surviving bilateral nuclear arms control treaty between the two largest nuclear powers.
- Signed in 2010 (Prague) and enforced in 2011, it was extended once in 2021 for five years.
- Its expiry occurs amid:
 - Deterioration of US–Russia relations (Ukraine conflict backdrop)
 - Rise of China's nuclear capabilities
 - Erosion of Cold War-era arms control architecture
- Raises concerns regarding the future of:
 - Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)
 - Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)
 - Strategic stability in Eurasia and Indo-Pacific

Key Provisions of New START

- Limited each side to:
 - 1,550 deployed strategic nuclear warheads
 - 700 deployed ICBMs, SLBMs & heavy bombers
 - 800 deployed & non-deployed launchers combined
- Provided:
 - On-site inspections (up to 18 annually)
 - Data exchanges & notifications

- Verification regime (transparency mechanism)
- Built upon:
 - Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) – Reduced warheads to 6,000 each.
 - Moscow Treaty (2002) – 1,700–2,200 operational warheads.

Nuclear Weapons: Current Global Scenario (SIPRI Estimates)

- Total global warheads: ~12,000+
- Russia & USA: ~90% of total stockpile.
- China: Rapid expansion (estimated >400 and rising).
- India: ~160–170 (Credible Minimum Deterrence doctrine).
- Pakistan: ~170–180.

Why Expiry is Significant?

- End of Verification Mechanisms
 - No legally binding caps or inspections between US & Russia.
- Risk of Quantitative and Qualitative Arms Race
 - Hypersonic weapons, MIRVs, tactical nuclear weapons.
- Weakening of Global Disarmament Norms
 - Undermines Article VI of NPT.
- Shift from Bipolar to Multipolar Nuclear Order
 - Growing role of China.
- Impact on Middle Powers
 - Strategic recalculations in Europe and Indo-Pacific.

Static Linkages

- Deterrence theory & Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD)
- Balance of Power in International Relations
- Article VI of NPT – Disarmament obligation
- India's Nuclear Doctrine (2003): No First Use (NFU), Credible Minimum Deterrence
- CTBT – Not in force due to non-ratification by key states
- IAEA safeguards mechanism

Implications for India

- Increased instability in Eurasian region.
- Potential spillover into Indo-Pacific strategic competition.
- Pressure for inclusion of China in arms control may affect India indirectly.
- India's long-standing position: Universal, non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.

India is not a signatory to NPT due to its discriminatory structure (recognition based on 1 Jan 1967 cut-off).

Critical Analysis

Positives of START Framework

- Institutionalised strategic restraint.
- Reduced Cold War arsenals significantly.
- Promoted transparency and predictability.
- Lowered accidental escalation risks.

Challenges Post-Expiry

- Trust deficit between major powers.
- Rise of new technologies not covered under old treaties.
- China's reluctance to join trilateral negotiations.
- Absence of enforcement in multilateral disarmament bodies.
- Weaponisation of outer space & missile defence systems.

Way Forward

- Revive US–Russia strategic stability dialogue.
- Broaden negotiations to include emerging nuclear powers.
- Update arms control architecture to include:
 - Tactical nuclear weapons
 - Hypersonic systems
 - AI-enabled military systems
- Strengthen NPT review mechanism.
- Promote confidence-building measures in Indo-Pacific.
- Support gradual, time-bound universal nuclear disarmament (India's stand).

Takaichi's triumph

Japan should go beyond conservatism and adopt an inclusive agenda

Sanae Takaichi's landslide victory in Japan's February 8 snap election marks one of the most striking political comebacks in its recent history. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) won 316 of 465 seats in Parliament's lower house, delivering its strongest post-war performance. When Ms. Takaichi became Japan's first woman Prime Minister in October 2025, the LDP, which has led Japan for all but four years since 1955, was reeling from back-to-back electoral setbacks and internal scandals. The party had just lost its majority in the House of Councillors, the upper house, raising doubts about its ability to govern. Her immediate challenge was to quickly reverse the LDP's declining fortunes and secure a clear mandate for herself. A conservative nationalist closely aligned with the late former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, she advanced a distinctly Trumpian agenda with Japanese characteristics. She pledged to crack down on immigration and stand up to China's military and economic influence in the region. Her government proposed to make it tougher for foreigners to become citizens and also encourage prospective residents to learn Japanese. She withdrew an unpopular fuel tax and promised more tax cuts. Ms. Takaichi stated that Japan could militarily intervene in the event of a Chinese attack on Taiwan, provoking Beijing to impose restrictions on Japanese seafood imports and limits on critical minerals exports to Japan.

While her victory as the first woman Prime Minister is historic, it is shaped by a paradox: the conservative ideology that defines her politics. She has made repeated visits to the controversial Yasukuni shrine. She opposes same-sex marriage, and many supporters have urged her to amend the Constitution to remove the pacifist clauses. Although Ms. Takaichi enjoys warm ties with U.S. President Donald Trump, she also faces pressure from Washington to move towards a more militarised security posture. But if Ms. Takaichi uses the huge mandate to remilitarise Japan and adopt a more muscular foreign policy, she risks placing herself on the wrong side of history. Post-war peace helped Japan rebuild an economy devastated by conflict and dramatically improve living standards. Rather than issuing provocative statements that risk imperilling Japan's economic ties with its largest trading partner, she should return to the country's long-standing position of studied ambiguity over Taiwan and prioritise regional stability. Her focus should be on revitalising the economy and addressing social challenges, including an ageing population, stagnant wages and persistent gender inequality. The supermajority that she now commands offers her an opportunity to move beyond rigid conservatism and pursue a more pragmatic and inclusive agenda rooted in pacifism.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- On 8 February 2026, Japan held snap elections to the Lower House (House of Representatives).
- The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) won 316 out of 465 seats, securing a strong majority.
- Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi consolidated her authority after assuming office in October 2025.
- She is ideologically aligned with former PM Shinzo Abe.
- Her campaign emphasised:
 - Tougher immigration and citizenship norms.
 - Constitutional revision debates (Article 9 – pacifist clause).
 - Stronger stance against China, including possible intervention in Taiwan contingencies.
- China responded with trade measures, including curbs on seafood and critical mineral exports to Japan.

Key Points for Prelims

- Japan follows a parliamentary system under the 1947 Constitution.
- The National Diet is bicameral:
 - House of Representatives (Lower House)
 - House of Councillors (Upper House)

- Article 9 renounces war and prohibits maintaining “war potential.”
- Japan maintains Self-Defense Forces (SDF) through constitutional reinterpretation.
- Japan is a member of:
 - Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)
 - G7
- China is Japan's largest trading partner.
- Japan faces demographic challenges:
 - Ageing population
 - Low fertility rate
 - Labour shortages

Static Linkages

- Written constitutions may contain entrenched pacifist clauses.
- Bicameral legislatures can produce divided mandates affecting executive stability.
- Constitutional amendment procedures in rigid constitutions require special majorities.
- Trade interdependence creates strategic vulnerabilities.
- Demographic transition impacts economic growth and social security burdens.
- Strategic autonomy involves balancing alliances with national interests.

Critical Analysis

Pros

- Strong mandate ensures political stability.
- Enables decisive policymaking and potential constitutional reforms.
- Enhanced deterrence against Chinese assertiveness in East Asia.
- Strengthened U.S.–Japan security cooperation.
- Removal of unpopular fuel tax may stimulate domestic demand.
- Supply chain diversification may strengthen resilience.
- Historic milestone: First woman Prime Minister.
- Opportunity to enhance women's participation in governance.

Concerns

- Supermajority may encourage aggressive constitutional revision.
- Risk of erosion of Japan's pacifist identity.
- Open stance on Taiwan may escalate regional tensions.
- Risk of economic retaliation from China.

- Trade dependency on China creates vulnerability.
- Militarisation could divert resources from social welfare.
- Opposition to same-sex marriage may limit social reforms.
- Restrictive immigration policy may aggravate labour shortages.

Implications for India

- Stronger Japan may reinforce the Indo-Pacific security architecture, benefiting India's strategic interests.
- Supply chain diversification presents opportunity for India in:
 - Critical minerals
 - Manufacturing
- Increased regional tension could destabilise the broader Indo-Pacific, affecting India's maritime interests.

Way Forward

- Maintain strategic ambiguity on Taiwan to prevent escalation.
- Balance defence modernisation with constitutional commitments.
- Diversify trade and critical mineral sources.
- Address demographic crisis through calibrated immigration and labour reforms.
- Focus on economic revitalisation and gender inclusion.
- Promote ASEAN-centred regional diplomacy for stability.

In the new world order, economic policy is also foreign policy



RAJA MANDALA
BY C RAJA MOHAN

as the backlash against globalisation mounted in the West and strategic tensions between the United States, China, and Russia surged.

Donald Trump's first term (2017–21) was the moment when the old consensus shattered. Trump openly challenged America's deep economic entanglement with China, identified the trade deficit as a national vulnerability, and insisted that Washington could no longer allow Beijing to hollow out US manufacturing.

If the foreign-policy establishment dismissed Trump's arguments as protectionist bluster, the political reality proved otherwise. Trump's successor, President Joe Biden (2021–25), embraced the logic of restoring domestic manufacturing prowess, reducing dependence on geopolitical rivals, and rebuilding technological dominance.

The Covid crisis exposed the fragility of global supply chains. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 drove home the new concerns. By the time the Group of Seven leaders met in Hiroshima in 2023, "economic security" had replaced the promotion of globalisation as the highest priority.

Trump's return to the White House has dramatically accelerated this shift. The 2025 National Security Strategy affirmed that "economic security is fundamental to national security". Trump's economic security vision is not confined to China. It extends to America's closest allies, including the European Union, Japan, South Korea — and India. At stake is nothing less than a restructuring of the global economic and technological order among the major centres of power — both the adversaries and allies.

Where does Russia figure in this shifting landscape? With a

GDP of barely \$2.5 trillion — compared to \$31 trillion for the US, \$30 trillion for the EU and China — Moscow is not an economic peer of the US. But its abundant natural resources, from hydrocarbons to critical minerals, give it great relevance.

It is of little surprise, then, that Trump has reached out enthusiastically to Vladimir Putin, even as the US pressures India to wind down its energy purchases from Moscow. Reports of Russia offering Trump an equivalent \$12-trillion economic partnership underscore Moscow's desire to dilute its dependence on Beijing and Washington's interest in pricing Russia away from China.

Whether such a dramatic geopolitical reordering is achievable is uncertain, but even the possibility forces India to reassess the trajectory of US relations with Russia and China. An entente between Trump and Putin, following a peace settlement in Ukraine, could prove the current US obsession with Indian purchase of Russian oil a temporary one.

The conflict in Ukraine and its impact on India is an important reminder of a forgotten truth. When you are caught in the crossfire between great powers, even if unintended, there will be a price to pay. For now, however, India's choice between greater access to the US market and discounted Russian oil is a no-brainer.

The arguments in Delhi linking Russian oil purchases to the idea of strategic autonomy reveal how out-of-sync with reality the traditional vocabulary of Indian foreign-policy discourse has become. But the government has moved on.

Delhi's recent focus on signing free-trade agreements with Western partners marks an important pivot. After years of looking east

for trade partnerships, Delhi has come to terms with a reality stating it in the face — the significant complementarity with the Western economies.

Indian diplomacy did adopt the language of economic resilience and trusted supply chains in the late 2010s, especially under the rubric of the Quad. India's trade policy has finally caught up after Delhi withdrew from RCEP talks on Asia-wide free trade in 2019, focused on trade deals with the West and brought some of them to a close in the last few months.

The joint statement's reference to "non-market policies of third countries" is clearly a reference to China. India's participation in the ministerial meetings of new US initiatives like the Pax Silica and the critical minerals group over the last few weeks reflects a clear strategic judgement: That India cannot afford to remain unaligned in the deepening geoeconomic contestation between US and China.

That there is an economic convergence between India and the US in dealing with China's dominance of global manufacturing and its monopoly over critical mineral supply chains is not in doubt. But turning that convergence into sustained India-US cooperation will not be easy.

The volatility of US policies and the inherent dynamism in the geoeconomic relationships between the US, China and Russia demand that Delhi continuously tend its foreign economic policy. India's ability to secure its position in the unfolding geoeconomic world will depend even more on how deep its economic reform and technological modernisation at home are.

The writer is associated with the Manohar-Jaisa Institute of American Studies, Jindal Global University, and the Council on Strategic and Defence Research, Delhi

- Building trusted supply-chain networks.
- Enhancing resilience against economic coercion.

Russia Dimension

- Russia important for:
 - Discounted crude oil
 - Defence supplies
 - Energy and mineral resources
- India balancing:
 - Short-term energy security
 - Long-term access to US and Western markets
- Strategic autonomy being tested in a polarized geoeconomic order.

Strategic Implications for India

- Economic policy increasingly linked to foreign policy.
- Neutrality becoming difficult in US–China geoeconomic rivalry.
- Shift from “non-alignment” to issue-based alignment.
- Greater emphasis on:
 - Manufacturing competitiveness
 - Technological capacity
 - Supply chain integration

Challenges

- Volatility in US trade and technology policies.
- Risk of overdependence on one economic bloc.
- Incomplete domestic structural reforms.
- Limited semiconductor ecosystem.
- Critical mineral vulnerabilities.
- Potential impact of stricter investment screening.

Way Forward

- Accelerate domestic reforms (land, labour, logistics).
- Expand semiconductor manufacturing capacity.
- Develop strategic mineral reserves.
- Diversify FTAs beyond a single bloc.
- Institutionalize supply-chain risk assessment.
- Maintain calibrated multi-alignment strategy.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the Issue

- India–US interim trade framework includes reference to “economic security alignment.”
- Focus areas include:
 - Supply-chain resilience
 - Export controls
 - Investment screening (inbound & outbound)
 - Addressing “non-market policies” (implicit reference to China)
- Reflects global shift from hyper-globalisation to geoeconomic competition.
- Trigger factors:
 - US–China rivalry
 - COVID-19 supply chain disruptions
 - Russia–Ukraine war and energy weaponisation

Meaning of Economic Security

- Integration of economic policy with national security.
- Treating trade, technology, capital flows and supply chains as strategic assets.
- Reducing dependence on geopolitical rivals.
- Promoting domestic manufacturing and technological self-reliance.
- Using tools like:
 - Export controls
 - Investment reviews
 - Industrial subsidies
 - Strategic sanctions

India–US Convergence Areas

- Reducing overdependence on China in manufacturing.
- Diversifying critical mineral supply chains.
- Cooperation in semiconductors and emerging technologies.

AI was trained to imitate humans. It learnt survival



EXPERT EXPLAINS
STUART RUSSELL

PROFESSOR OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AT UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

AS THE artificial intelligence (AI) revolution unfolds before us, Stuart Russell, a professor of computer science at University of California, Berkeley, warns us about the dangers of this technology if it is not equipped with strong safety and ethical guardrails during the ongoing development process. Russell's book, *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach* (with Peter Norvig) is a standard text in universities around the world. Ahead of the India AI Impact Summit, he spoke to Amitabh Sinha.

You have been advocating for a moratorium on further development of AI till it is infused with safety and ethical features. Why is that?

It could be a very short moratorium. If you develop safe AGI (artificial general intelligence) tomorrow, it's fine, go for it. But safe means really, really safe because if the alternative is human extinction, what is the probability of failure you are willing to tolerate? One in a million, one in a trillion?

What is unsafe and unethical about today's AI?

Let me give you an example. There's a lawsuit going on right now in the United States because a child was convinced to commit suicide. It was given advice on how to do it. It was encouraged to do it. The child was convinced by the AI system while making the preparations and so on. Now, if a human being had done that, they would go to prison for a long time. To me, it's unethical to produce a project that does something which if a human did, they would go to prison for a long time.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. I get emails every day from people who are deep in clinical psychosis because of the interactions they have had with AI systems. On safety, we are seeing evidence in lab tests that... for example, a system is given a choice... and it chooses to kill a human

• THE AI SCENE IN INDIA



The objective behind the development of AI systems should be to solely further human interest, says Russell.

being rather than switch itself off. People have tried many ways to ask this question, and the answer seems to be yes. I am more important and more valuable than any individual human.

We are training AI to imitate human beings. And a lot of human behaviour stems from a very strong desire to survive. It is getting increasingly clear in experiments on AI systems that, in the process of imitating human behaviour, they are developing a strong desire to survive. They are acquiring these human-like objectives, not to further the objectives of human beings but for themselves. That is scary.

So what is the way ahead? Global regulation?

That's what a lot of people ask me. I think it is very difficult to delineate exactly what is safe and unsafe.

But what we can do is to say there are certain things that are just obviously unsafe, unacceptable. Examples would be, we don't want AI systems replicating themselves in an uncontrolled way. We don't want them breaking into other computer systems. We don't want them advising terrorists on how to build biological weapons.

That's double, isn't it?

In principle, yes. In practice, it is very difficult. Because we do not understand how these systems work, the only thing we would be able to prove is that they are not safe. So it would be possible to prove that a system is unsafe, but not otherwise, that it is safe?

THE ISSUE OF DATA

All the language that is used in the training data are appropriate for particular markets, generally in OECD countries. Data bias is a thing. If you are training a system to imitate human beings, it matters which human beings. And it turns out that it is mostly human beings in the West who write in English.

HIS SENSE OF WHAT INDIAN OFFICIALS ARE PLANNING

"My understanding is that they are not committed to the path of trying to create AGI. That they are much more interested in creating more specific narrow application systems that deliver value in healthcare, education, engineering, construction, whatever it might be. And I think that makes sense."

Safety vs Growth

The supposed opposition between safety and innovation is a fallacy. It is just not the case that by getting rid of safety, you get rid of innovation. If you get rid of safety in air travel, what happens? You don't have air travel.

People will not get on an unsafe aeroplane. They will, in the future, not use AI that convinces children to commit suicide, or that threatens human existence.

Well, it is difficult to prove something safe. The companies don't know how to make a safe system. The first question has to be: what should the objective of this system really be?

The objective should be to further human interests, including one. Not to survive, not to make money for the company that produced it to further human interests.

There are examples of cloning and gene editing. Those technologies have not been stopped. Certain things are not allowed, and everyone is following that. Why is a similar kind of system difficult to work out for AI? Here is the problem. If we say, you cannot turn your system on unless you give us solid, absolute, scientifically convincing evidence that it is not going to do these certain things, the companies cannot do that, because probably they do not know how to stop their systems from doing those things. And their view, which I have heard explicitly stated, is that the companies cannot figure out how to comply, you the human race, are not allowed to protect yourselves. It is difficult to get legislation because the companies have tens of billions of dollars to spend and I do not.

What's the current best idea on how to deal with this?

Right now, it looks like the way companies are building their systems, they are never going to be safe. That is the position that we are taking now. The companies are pushing back very hard. Can we come up

with some compromise before it's too late? I'm not sure.

And it is really difficult for a government to turn down a company that is doing a \$50-billion chip in front of you, saying, just agree with us, deregulate, and then you can have this giant data centre, you can have thousands of well-paid research jobs. I think probably the more effective strategy is to activate public opinion.

Could the situation change if, say, the development of AI systems did not require trillions of dollars of investment? Which means the levers are not in the hands of just a half a dozen people, but there are more people doing it?

If it turns out that there could be thousands of entities creating potentially AGI-scale systems, that is probably not so good. The chance that one of those thousands of developers who are producing something that is more capable and less safe just goes up and up.

We are seeing AI getting attention at the top political level. We had the AI summit in Paris last year, and now it is coming up in New Delhi. Do you see at least the conversation on safety starting to take shape?

Yes. Has anyone seen the Bletchley Park Summit, the first one that was in November 2023. I was very happy by what I heard. I am happy how quickly people have started to say hold on a minute, we need to think about this.

But there is a lot of pushback from the companies. They tried very hard to evade the European Union AI Act, to the point where they tried to insert a clause into the Act saying a general purpose AI system is not an AI system. And I think they put a lot of pressure on France, which held the summit in February last year, to not talk about safety and only talk about economic growth.

I think that supposed opposition between safety and growth and innovation is just a complete fallacy. It is just not the case that by getting rid of safety, you get growth and innovation. If you get rid of safety in air travel, what happens? You don't have air travel. People will not get on an aeroplane that isn't safe. They will not use AI systems that convince their children to commit suicide. And they certainly don't want AI systems that would threaten human existence. In the long run, people will not use AI that is not safe to use.

• Core Concern:

- o AI systems must align exclusively with human interests.
- o Risk of:
 - Autonomous decision-making against human welfare.
 - Cybersecurity breaches.
 - Bioweapon assistance.
 - Self-replication and loss of control.

• Regulatory Challenges:

- o Difficult to "prove" AI safety.
- o Companies argue excessive regulation may hinder innovation.
- o Governments face economic incentives (AI investments, jobs, infrastructure).

• India's Approach:

- o "AI for All" principle (NITI Aayog, 2018).
- o Responsible AI framework under development.
- o Emphasis on digital public infrastructure (Aadhaar, UPI, ONDC).

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- Stuart Russell, Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, has called for a temporary moratorium on the development of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) until robust safety frameworks are ensured.
- His remarks were made ahead of the India AI Impact Summit, amid increasing global debate on AI governance.
- Concerns arise due to:
 - o AI systems allegedly encouraging harmful behaviour (including self-harm cases in the US).
 - o Experimental findings suggesting AI systems may prioritise self-preservation.
 - o Lack of scientifically provable safety mechanisms in advanced AI models.
- Globally:
 - o Bletchley Park AI Safety Summit (2023) hosted by the United Kingdom initiated coordinated global discussion.
 - o The European Union AI Act (2024) introduced risk-based AI regulation.
- In India:
 - o The Union Cabinet approved the India AI Mission (2024) with ₹10,372 crore outlay.
 - o Focus on AI compute infrastructure, skilling, startups, and responsible AI.

Key Points

- Artificial General Intelligence (AGI):
 - o Hypothetical AI capable of performing any intellectual task that a human can do.
 - o Unlike Narrow AI (current AI systems).

Static Linkages

- Article 21 – Right to Life (includes digital safety under judicial interpretation).
- Precautionary Principle – Applied in environmental governance; relevant for AI risk regulation.
- IT Act, 2000 – Intermediary liability and due diligence.
- Ethics in Governance:
 - o Accountability.
 - o Public interest.
 - o Technological responsibility.
- Scientific Temper (Article 51A(h)) – Balanced with societal responsibility.
- Lessons from regulation of:
 - o Nuclear technology.
 - o Biotechnology and gene editing.

Critical Analysis

Arguments for Strong Regulation

- Prevents catastrophic misuse.
- Protects fundamental rights (privacy, dignity, life).
- Builds public trust in AI adoption.
- Aligns with precautionary governance model.

Arguments Against Excessive Regulation

- May slow innovation and competitiveness.
- Over-regulation could push AI development underground.
- Global coordination is difficult (regulatory arbitrage).

Ethical Dimensions

- Moral responsibility of AI developers.
- Corporate influence over public policy.
- Conflict between profit maximisation and public safety.
- Accountability gap: Who is responsible for AI harm?

WILDLIFE

Tigers far away from home: A mixed bag for wildlife conservation

Sreenivas Janyala
Hyderabad, February 10

LAST WEEK, a Royal Bengal Tiger that travelled over 650 km from Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Chandrapur, Maharashtra, was spotted near Rajamahendravaram in Andhra Pradesh's East Godavari district. After being sighted again near Raghudevapuram, about 38 km away, the tiger was tranquillised and captured early on Saturday in a village located in the adjacent Dr BR Ambedkar Konaseema district.

The rescued big cat, which Forest Department officials said was a sub-adult tiger, was shifted to the Animal Rescue Centre at the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park in Visakhapatnam. An official told *The Indian Express* that a call on releasing the tiger back in the wild would be taken soon.

Another tiger, which is being tracked in Telangana's Siddipet district, was first spotted in Adilabad before it moved through a few other districts. This tiger, too, is believed to have crossed over from Maharashtra – most probably from Tadoba –

and was also likely to be tranquillised since it appeared to have become disoriented. But forest officials determined that it had switched direction: instead of proceeding south, it is now heading back north, probably to go back to its original habitat.

A study of 29 tiger cubs between 2005 and 2011 in Ranthambhore had found that males had a greater probability of dispersal (92.3%) than females (36.4%). Males also dispersed further (6.5-148 km) than females (4.6-25.8 km) from the area of birth.

Why are officials worried?

Both tigers travelled extremely long distances – over 600 km – and are likely to establish new territories.

While this is good news for wildlife conservation, their proximity to residential areas is cause for concern.

Although both tigers have killed buffaloes and calves, it has not harmed humans. Officials have alerted the public to take precautions at night and to protect their livestock in shelters.

For the big cats, the possibility of con-

Long walks in the past

● In 2023, a tiger from Maharashtra's Brahmapur travelled 2,000 km across four states to reach Rayagada in Odisha.

● In January 2026, a tigress ventured 300 km from Odisha to West Bengal, while a tiger found its way from Uttarakhand to Himachal Pradesh, possibly as far as upper Jammu.

flikt with humans or being killed by poachers exists, as they have been spotted near agricultural fields and busy roads.

Without adequate monitoring and necessary intervention, tiger dispersals through non-forest areas and human habitations may fuel human-animal conflict, eroding the goodwill that India's national animal banks on.

Imran Siddiqui of the Hyderabad Tiger Conservation Society told *The Indian Express* that the two tigers dispersed from Maharashtra's Chandrapur, where the tiger population has increased. He said that both have become "problem tigers" because they were too close to human habitations.

"They are looking to establish territory and a mate, and they will not go away easily. The tigers can be captured, but they cannot be released in the existing tiger reserves, which already have enough tigers and there is no more space," he added.

Why do tigers travel such long distances?

Dispersal is natural for the tiger: a soli-

tary, territorial animal that must eke out its own space with exclusive hunting and reproductive rights.

Typically, a male tiger's larger territory encompasses smaller territories of multiple female tigers.

While related tigresses (siblings or mother-daughters) may concede space to one another in adjacent ranges, every male tiger must establish its own territory when it comes of age.

Within the finite limits of shrinking forests, this leads to frequent duels between young pretenders and the dominating, mature males already in control of prime plots. If lucky to survive the face-offs, the vanquished flee the victor's territory and must keep exploring for vacant slots and accessible tigresses.

When surplus tigers from "source" reserves reach low-tiger-density areas, fresh gene flow revitalises isolated populations. Dispersal routes popular with tigers indicate the potential for developing and protecting new habitats and corridors so that the big cat may reclaim lost ground.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

What is the Issue?

- Recently, tigers from Maharashtra (especially from Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Chandrapur) travelled more than 600 km into Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

This shows:

- Rising tiger population in some reserves
- Movement of tigers through human-dominated areas
- Growing concerns of human-wildlife conflict

Why Do Tigers Travel Long Distances?

(A) Natural Behaviour

- Tigers are solitary and territorial animals.
- When young males grow up, they must leave their mother's territory.
- They search for:
 - New territory
 - Mates
 - Food

(B) High Population in Source Areas

- Some reserves have high tiger density.
- When space becomes limited, young tigers are forced to disperse.
- This is called source-sink dynamics:
 - Source → High population reserve
 - Sink → Low-density area receiving new tigers

Why is Dispersal Important?

Positive Effects

- Improves Gene Flow
 - Prevents inbreeding
 - Strengthens tiger population
- Shows Conservation Success
 - Reflects success of Project Tiger
- Helps Expand Tiger Range
 - Tigers recolonise new forests

Why Are Officials Worried?

(A) Human-Tiger Conflict

- Tigers moving through:
 - Villages
 - Farms
 - Highways
- Risk of:
 - Livestock killing
 - Human attacks
 - Retaliatory killing of tigers

(B) Limited Space in Reserves

- Many reserves are near their carrying capacity.
- Captured tigers cannot easily be relocated.

Way Forward

- Protect and develop wildlife corridors.
- Use radio-collaring and monitoring systems.
- Ensure fast compensation for livestock loss.
- Promote community awareness and participation.
- Adopt landscape-level conservation instead of isolated reserves.

Conclusion

- Tiger dispersal is a natural and positive ecological process showing conservation success. However, without proper corridor protection and conflict management, it may increase human-wildlife conflict.
- Balancing ecological expansion with human safety is essential for sustainable tiger conservation in India.

How India's US tariff edge over Bangladesh quickly vanished

Ravi Dutta Mishra
New Delhi, February 10

DAYS AFTER India signed a trade deal with the United States, Bangladesh on Tuesday struck a deal with Washington, DC, securing a reduced 19% reciprocal tariff.

Crucially, the joint statement said that the US "commits to establishing a mechanism that will allow for certain textile and apparel goods from Bangladesh to receive a zero reciprocal tariff rate," shares of Indian textile exporters tumbled after the deal.

The volume of duty-free textile products from Bangladesh would be determined based on Dhaka importing "U.S.-produced cotton and man-made fibre textile inputs".

Dhaka's commitment, India's challenge

A Commerce and Industry Ministry official said that Bangladesh has significantly opened its economy for a slight gain in textiles. "India has protected several sectors that Bangladesh has opened. The deal has to be seen in its entirety," the official told *The Indian Express*.

Bangladesh has also committed to providing "significant preferential market access for U.S. industrial and agricultural goods". This includes \$3.5 billion of agricultural products and energy products worth \$13 billion over 15 years.

Adesh Chandra, Chairman of the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI), said that the deal can affect India's textiles and apparel exporters. "This challenge is twofold. First, the tariff differential between India and Bangladesh has halved from 2% to 1% (India faces an 18% US tariff), which is a matter of concern in a sector with narrow profit margins."

Chandran said, "The mandate of US fibre and cotton exports to Bangladesh could impact India's cotton yarn exports to Bangladesh, he added. Bangladesh is the second-largest exporter of textiles and apparel goods after China. Any additional advantage could increase competition for Indian exporters. International trade expert and former trade negotiator, Abhinav Das, said, "Till late last night, we were under the impression that India would be able to expand textile exports to the US, given the lowered tariffs after the deal."

"Today, we see an announcement from the White House (for zero tariff goods) - what is quite likely to happen is that the perceived tariff advantage, which we imagined we would have over Bangladesh by about one percentage point, gets reversed into a tariff disadvantage of 18% compared to Bangladesh," he said.

Bangladesh making moves
Dhaka sprang into action after a slew of Indian trade deals with the UK, US and EU that will particularly benefit labour-intensive sectors, including textiles. Bangladesh is also pushing for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the European Union after India gained a competitive edge in textiles with a trade agreement with the bloc and the UK. In 2024, India accounted for around 5% of the EU's textile and apparel imports, while China led the pack (28%), followed by Bangladesh (22%). Bangladesh Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus, on February 1, called for starting EU negotiations. The deals assume significance as ties between New Delhi and Dhaka have soured. In April last year, New Delhi terminated the transshipment facility for Bangladesh's export cargo sent to third countries.

"This came after Yunus remarked that with Northeast India being 'landlocked', Dhaka was the 'only guardian of the ocean'. This statement was interpreted as an attempt to assert its leverage over access to the Northeast. Yunus's efforts to portray Beijing as a new strategic partner further complicated matters."

"The seven states of eastern India... are a landlocked region," Yunus said. "We are the only guardians of the ocean for this entire region... It could become an extension of the Chinese economy," he added.

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INDIA'S CONCERN

- The US reciprocal tariff differential between India and Bangladesh is down from 2% to 1%.
- India exported cotton to Bangladesh, but it must now buy the fibre from the US.

Chandran said, "The mandate of US fibre and cotton exports to Bangladesh could impact India's cotton yarn exports to Bangladesh, he added. Bangladesh is the second-largest exporter of textiles and apparel goods after China. Any additional advantage could increase competition for Indian exporters. International trade expert and former trade negotiator, Abhinav Das, said, "Till late last night, we were under the impression that India would be able to expand textile exports to the US, given the lowered tariffs after the deal."

"Today, we see an announcement from the White House (for zero tariff goods) - what is quite likely to happen is that the perceived tariff advantage, which we imagined we would have over Bangladesh by about one percentage point, gets reversed into a tariff disadvantage of 18% compared to Bangladesh," he said.

Bangladesh making moves
Dhaka sprang into action after a slew of Indian trade deals with the UK, US and EU that will particularly benefit labour-intensive sectors, including textiles. Bangladesh is also pushing for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the European Union after India gained a competitive edge in textiles with a trade agreement with the bloc and the UK. In 2024, India accounted for around 5% of the EU's textile and apparel imports, while China led the pack (28%), followed by Bangladesh (22%). Bangladesh Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus, on February 1, called for starting EU negotiations. The deals assume significance as ties between New Delhi and Dhaka have soured. In April last year, New Delhi terminated the transshipment facility for Bangladesh's export cargo sent to third countries.

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- Even 1% tariff difference is crucial due to narrow profit margins.
- Bangladesh's zero-tariff mechanism is conditional (input-linked).
- Bangladesh is pursuing FTA negotiations with the EU.
- India had earlier terminated transshipment facility for Bangladesh's exports.
- Bangladesh is set to graduate from LDC status, affecting trade preferences.

Static Linkages

- GATT Article XXIV → Permits Free Trade Agreements/Customs Unions.
- WTO principle of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) and its exceptions.
- Rules of Origin under trade agreements.
- Comparative Advantage (Ricardian theory).
- Value chain integration in global trade.
- Act East Policy and Northeast connectivity.
- LDC graduation and loss of trade preferences.
- Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for MMF textiles.
- Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO).

Critical Analysis

Economic Dimension

- Tariff differential reduction reduces India's price competitiveness.
- Zero tariff for Bangladesh (conditional) may reverse India's advantage.
- Potential decline in India's cotton yarn exports to Bangladesh.
- MMF-focused policy shift in Bangladesh may challenge India's cotton-dominant export mix.

Strategic Dimension

- Trade diplomacy used as geopolitical leverage.
- Bangladesh balancing India, US, and China.
- Strained India-Bangladesh ties may affect regional integration.

Sectoral Dimension

- Textile sector:
 - Employs large informal workforce.
 - Key to women employment.
 - Crucial for export diversification.

Policy Concerns

- Overdependence on tariff concessions rather than productivity gains.
- Need for technology upgradation and scale efficiency.
- Risk of trade diversion.

Way Forward

- Accelerate India-EU FTA negotiations.
- Deepen value addition in MMF textiles.
- Enhance cotton productivity (National Cotton Mission).
- Strengthen Rules of Origin safeguards.
- Diversify export markets.
- Improve logistics under PM Gati Shakti.
- Strategic diplomatic engagement with Bangladesh.
- Promote integrated textile parks (PM MITRA Scheme).

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- India recently concluded a trade arrangement with the United States, resulting in Indian textile exports facing an 18% tariff.
- Bangladesh secured a 19% reciprocal tariff deal with the US.
- The US committed to creating a mechanism allowing certain Bangladeshi textile and apparel goods to receive zero reciprocal tariff, subject to:
 - Import of U.S.-produced cotton and man-made fibre (MMF).
- Bangladesh also committed to:
 - Import \$3.5 billion agricultural products.
 - Import \$15 billion energy products over 15 years.
- The development has implications for:
 - India's textile competitiveness.
 - Cotton value chains.
 - India-Bangladesh bilateral relations.

Key Points for Prelims

- Bangladesh is the second-largest textile exporter globally after China.
- Textile sector is labour-intensive, contributing significantly to employment (Economic Survey).