

DAILY NEWSP APER ANALYSIS

DATE - 21/02/2026

**SOURCE
THE HINDU & INDIAN EXPRESS**

**CHANAKYA IAS ACADEMY
SECTOR 25 CHANDIGARH**

Supreme Court steps in; judicial officers will now join Bengal SIR process

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday took an "extraordinary" decision to involve the judiciary in the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal, saying the persistent "trust deficit" between the Mamata Banerjee government and the Election Commission (EC) has led to a "stalemate", with time running out.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant requested the Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court to deploy a force of serving and retired judicial officers of West Bengal to take over the quasi-judicial task of Electoral Registration Officers/Assistant Electoral Registration Officers. They would hear lakhs of voters who had been dropped from the draft roll and had received hearing notices after the EC found them "unmapped" or detected "logical discrepancies" in their personal details.

Now, with hardly a week to go for the claims/objections phase to end on February 28, the court found the State government and the EC exchanging recriminations over the quality and rank of personnel the State had deputed to the EC for the SIR exercise.

The past hearings had seen the court try to intervene and bring the "running dispute" between the two to an amicable end. Friday saw the court compelled to move in.

"The foremost and urgent issue revolves around the completion of SIR in West Bengal... Allegations and counter-allegations are being traded between two constitutional functionaries, namely the State government and the Election Commission of India. The



People get their documents verified during hearings under the SIR of electoral rolls, in Nadia, West Bengal. PTI

EC dragged back to reality by SC order: Trinamool

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress on Friday described the Supreme Court's order on assigning judicial officers to complete the special intensive revision (SIR) of

electoral rolls in West Bengal a huge victory for the people of the State.

"Today marks a historic demolition of @ECISVEEP's bloated arrogance..." the Trinamool posted on social media. [PAGE 3](#)

SIR process is stuck," the top court said.

The Bench asked the High Court Chief Justice to hold a meeting on Saturday with the State Election Commissioner, the West Bengal Chief Secretary, the Director-General of Police and the Advocate-General of the State, to iron out a plan for the deployment of judicial officers, who should be in the rank of District or Additional District Judge. Their instructions would be deemed to be that of the apex court, and the State/district administration would have to comply without demur.

"Extraordinary state"
"The circumstances being extraordinary, the inclusion of judicial officers is extraordinary in nature. It may have some impact on the pending court cases," the court acknowledged.

The Bench proposed shifting urgent cases pending with the deployed judicial officers to other courts for a period of a week or 10 days "by which the entire process (SIR) is required to be completed".

The top court agreed with a suggestion from the EC that it should be allowed to publish the list of voters whose names have been cleared in the SIR process on February 28. The rest could be included in a supplementary roll.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for West Bengal, said such a publication may lead to a "law-and-order" situation. But the Chief Justice said the electoral roll of names published on February 28 would not be treated as a final one.

"It is an ongoing process," the court said.

It posted the case on March 10, 2026.

- Free and Fair Elections – Part of Basic Structure (Indira Nehru Gandhi case, 1975).

Institutional & Governance Dimensions

- Tension between two constitutional functionaries (State Executive & ECI).
- Judicial intervention to ensure timely electoral process.
- Questions regarding:
 - Separation of powers
 - Judicial overreach vs judicial review
 - Institutional trust deficit
 - Autonomy of constitutional bodies

Importance for Exam

Prelims

- Constitutional Articles related to elections.
- Difference between statutory and fundamental rights.
- Role and powers of ECI.
- Quasi-judicial authorities.

GS Paper 2

- Constitutional bodies: powers, functions and limitations.
- Government policies & interventions.
- Separation of powers.
- Electoral reforms.

GS Paper 4

- Constitutional morality.
- Institutional integrity.
- Ethical governance.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Safeguards free and fair elections.
- Ensures time-bound completion of electoral revision.
- Strengthens public confidence in electoral processes.

Concerns

- Possible blurring of separation of powers.
- Judicial officers diverted from regular judicial work.
- Precedent of judiciary entering administrative space.

Way Forward

- Strengthen ECI's independent secretariat.
- Clear statutory mechanism for dispute resolution in roll revision.
- Better coordination protocols between ECI and State governments.
- Greater digitization and verification safeguards.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context

- The Supreme Court of India intervened in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal.
- The dispute arose between the State government and the Election Commission of India (ECI) over personnel deployment and procedural issues.
- The Court directed the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court to deploy serving/retired District Judges to perform quasi-judicial functions of Electoral Registration Officers (EROs).
- The intervention was termed "extraordinary" due to a stalemate affecting the timely completion of electoral roll revision.

Key Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- Article 324 – Superintendence, direction and control of elections vested in ECI.
- Articles 325–326 – No exclusion from electoral roll on discriminatory grounds; universal adult suffrage.
- Representation of the People Act, 1950 – Preparation and revision of electoral rolls.
- Representation of the People Act, 1951 – Conduct of elections.
- Right to Vote – Statutory right (not a Fundamental Right).

India joins U.S.-led tech alliance to build supply chains for electronics and critical minerals

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

India joined the Pax Silica group on Friday, teaming up with the United States and other countries that have sought to build a common supply chain for electronics and critical minerals.

At an event during the AI Impact Summit, Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw signed a document formally including India in the group, along with U.S. Undersecretary of State for economic growth, energy, and the environment Jacob Helberg.

Mr. Helberg has been a major force in creating the group, which had its inaugural summit at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C. last December. In a brief impassioned



New bond: IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw (second from right) with U.S. envoy Sergio Gor (centre) and others at an event to mark India's entry into the Pax Silica initiative in New Delhi on Friday. (PI)

address on Friday, Mr. Helberg asserted that "we have allowed the foundations of our economic security to drift", adding that it was important for countries like India and the U.S., who had both rejected "a king oceans away", to reclaim sovereignty over

their supply chains. Pax Silica's other signatories include Canada, Japan, South Korea, and the European Union. They have sought to make their supply chains more resilient to shocks from China, which has exercised its leverage over

the last year as the sole source of refined rare earth elements, to gain an upper hand in trade negotiations with the U.S.

"We have a very large talent pool, and we have conducted our foreign policy in a manner that builds trust," Mr. Vaishnaw said on the sidelines of the summit.

'Say no to blackmail'

"We find ourselves grappling with a global supply chain that is massively over concentrated," Mr. Helberg said.

"We watch as our friends and allies face daily threats of economic coercion and blackmail, forced to choose between their sovereignty and their prosperity. We have seen the lights of a great Indian city extinguished by a keystroke from across the border," he added, in an appa-

rent reference to alleged sabotage that caused a blackout in Mumbai in October 2020.

"And we've seen our friends denied essential minerals simply because a leader dared to speak her mind," he said, in an apparent reference to China's recent restrictions on rare earth element exports as a response to Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's remarks on Taiwan.

"So today, as we signed the Pax Silica Declaration, we say no to weaponised dependency, and we say no to blackmail," Mr. Helberg said.

India was not a signatory at the initial summit for reasons that remain unconfirmed. However, the U.S., as the convening party of the group, had said for weeks that it is open to India joining.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context

- India joined the Pax Silica group during the AI Impact Summit.
- The declaration was signed by Union Minister for Electronics and IT and the U.S. Undersecretary of State.
- Pax Silica includes the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, and the European Union.
- Objective: Build resilient supply chains for electronics, semiconductors, and critical minerals.
- Background: Growing global concern over excessive dependence on China for rare earth processing and electronics value chains.

Key Points

- Focus areas:
 - Semiconductor manufacturing
 - Rare earth elements (REEs)
 - Critical minerals
 - Trusted electronics ecosystem
- China accounts for:
 - ~60–70% of global rare earth processing (USGS data).
 - Dominant share in battery-grade lithium refining (IEA estimates).
- India initiatives linked:
 - India Semiconductor Mission (₹76,000 crore package).
 - Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for electronics.
 - National Mineral Policy, 2019.
 - Critical Minerals List (2023).

Static Linkages

- Union List Entry 41: Trade and commerce with foreign countries.
- National Mineral Policy, 2019 – Strategic and critical minerals.

- Atmanirbhar Bharat – Supply chain resilience.
- Make in India – Electronics manufacturing push.
- Rare Earth Elements:
 - Used in defence systems, EVs, wind turbines, semiconductors.
 - Found in monazite sands (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Odisha).

Critical Analysis

Significance

- Reduces "weaponised interdependence".
- Enhances India's semiconductor and electronics ecosystem.
- Strengthens strategic alignment with democratic economies.
- Supports supply chain diversification ("friendshoring").

Concerns

- India lacks advanced semiconductor fabrication capacity.
- Environmental risks from mineral extraction.
- High capital and technological barriers.
- Possible geopolitical tensions with China.

Way Forward

- Accelerate semiconductor fab implementation.
- Promote rare earth recycling and processing capacity.
- Increase R&D investment in chip design and materials science.
- Integrate Pax Silica strategy with Indo-Pacific policy.
- Ensure sustainable mining practices.

Gen Z and the dynamics of democratic engagement

Democracies across the globe have been witnessing backsliding and counter narratives have not been too successful in arresting the malaise. In this context, Generation Z, or Gen Z (those born roughly between 1997 and 2012), has emerged as a renewed source of hope at a time when many people had begun to resign themselves to authoritarian regimes and their unresponsive governance.

In Bangladesh (2024) and Nepal (2025), Gen Z has spearheaded regime-challenging protests, mobilising around issues of corruption, transparency and institutional accountability. These sporadic protests proved to be more effective than the earlier round of such mass protests, examples being the Occupy Wall Street in the United States (2011), the Arab Spring (the early 2010s), and the Brazilian Spring (2013). Some of these protests hit the headlines but did not make effective policy changes, leave some regime change. So, how do we make sense of such sudden eruptions?

Every generation recalibrates ethics, values and social practices in a manner that is distinct from the previous generations. Therefore, it takes time to make sense of what the new generations think and say – the ingredients of old practices and imagination melt into a new recipe. The old has an 'absent presence' in the way the new gets articulated. The new looks like a distorted version of the old, and the older generation understandably, feel disappointed and disturbed.

The essence, its worldview
Long dismissed as preoccupied, politically disengaged, and lost in the virtual world, Gen Z defied expectations by expressing anguish in such an 'organised way'. Observers continue to interpret such movements as flash-in-the-pan political mobilisations – characterised by politicised think and say – the ingredients of old practices and imagination melt into a new recipe. The old has an 'absent presence' in the way the new gets articulated. The new looks like a distorted version of the old, and the older generation understandably, feel disappointed and disturbed.



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jaundiced view of the world. It is too removed to be myopic, too nonchalant to be emotional, and too indifferent to be prejudiced and discriminatory. Gen Z seems to believe in a worldview that the 'personal is political' but political is not personal. It is not involved in worldly affairs but that does not mean it lacks a worldview.

Being political seems to matter the most in its personal conduct and the way it is treated. In essence, it operates primarily as exemplars rather than as emissaries. It believes in living rather than making propositions – and, therefore, not ideologically motivated – and in making practical sense of the world. It resists being preached to and is sensitive about not preaching to others, which makes forging collective struggles that much more difficult. It responds readily to lived hierarchies but that does not necessarily reflect a structural understanding of those hierarchies.

Gen Z avoids making moral judgments about the world. It also makes people within this generation more active in the virtual world than the real one. They find it more agreeable to work and express their views on virtual platforms than attend physical meets to interact. This instinct to avoid thick face-to-face interaction has an impact on the nature of protest and in imagining democratic futures. It is for this reason that Gen Z is more at home with sporadic and episodic protests than organised movements; their protests are leaderless and without pronounced ideological frames.

A comparison of protests
The difference becomes clear when one compares the farmers' movement (2020-24) with the Gen Z protests. The farmers were formally organised, had a sustained leadership and pronounced demands. They could sustain a movement for years. In comparison, Gen Z protests flake out and disappear without a trace but nevertheless leave a great impact behind.

The changing modes of protest also have something to do with again an uncanny combination of confidence and anxiety. Gen Z is the first self-confident generation in post-independent India but also the most anxious one. Gen Z is a result of both sustained social democratisation and fast disappearing economic opportunities. Sustained democratisation has allowed Gen Z to be more open about 'self introspection' and 'self reflection'.
The people of this generation are at ease with

counselling and therapy; therefore, mental health related issues are pronounced.

Previous generations were less comfortable in accepting emotional trauma and seem to have passed on a lot of the toxic and masculine stuff to the next generation. Gen Z is more conscious and wants to overcome the battles of 'mental despair'. The New York Times reported a sense of 'mental despair' not only among unemployed youth but also among those employed, many of whom find their workplaces toxic and experience routine anomie. Much of this is reflected in their attitudes to politics and democracy. They are assertive but suffer from insecurity. The precarity of Gen Z gets reflected in its fragmented and fleeting involvement with democratic events and issues. It can assert ancient values because it demands confidence to claim one's own culture and reject radical transformation because it is clichéd.

Unpredictable impact
Finally, one unmistakable feature of Gen Z is the connect between its self-representation or identity and pronounced consumption patterns. Market is integral to its self-making and social imaginaries that challenge/distrust the ascriptive identities of caste and religion. With a greater reach of market, technology and education, Gen Z follows global fashion trends, technological innovations and looks for newer educational opportunities.

All of this makes Gen Z more secularised but inward-looking, and giving undue importance to personal choices. Possessing the latest iPhone is seen as a great equaliser, transcending the complex debates surrounding class inequality. Access to information is a greater source of dignity than the caste and religion one is born into.

However, engagement with fast changing technologies and information may contribute to hyper-nationalism and the propagation of empty rhetoric of the glorious past. The rise of hyper-nationalism today is less concerned with the chauvinistic superiority that Tagore worried about and more focused on projecting ambitious claims about future possibilities. India might be a poor country yet has launched space missions; despite grave inequalities, it also maintains a notable presence in Silicon Valley. Gen Z will continue to disappoint us with responses we expect, yet surprise us with responses we have not yet thought about.

• Reflect:

- Economic precarity (high youth unemployment – Periodic Labour Force Survey data)
- Rising mental health concerns (National Mental Health Survey)
- Frustration with toxic institutional cultures

• Market and technology act as:

- Social equalisers
- Identity shapers

• Risk:

- Digital echo chambers
- Hyper-nationalism
- Fragmented civic engagement

Static Linkages

- Democracy: Defined in NCERT as government by consent and participation.
- Article 19(1)(a) & 19(1)(b) – Freedom of speech and peaceful assembly.
- Basic Structure Doctrine – Democracy and rule of law are part of basic structure.
- Directive Principles (Art. 38, 39) – Promote social justice and reduce inequality.
- 73rd & 74th Amendments – Grassroots democratic participation.
- Economic Survey – Youth demographic dividend.
- Second ARC Report on Ethics in Governance – Transparency and accountability.
- Right to Information Act, 2005 – Institutional accountability mechanism.
- Digital India Mission – Technology-enabled governance.

Critical Analysis

Positive Dimensions

- Revitalisation of democratic participation.
- Greater demand for transparency and accountability.
- Reduced caste/religious prejudice.
- Digital literacy enhancing information access.
- Assertion of dignity and rights.

Concerns

- Lack of sustained leadership.
- Episodic and short-lived mobilisation.
- Weak structural understanding of systemic inequality.
- Susceptibility to misinformation.
- Hyper-nationalistic digital mobilisation.
- Economic insecurity leading to political volatility.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- Recent regime-challenging youth-led protests in Bangladesh (2024) and Nepal (2025) have drawn global attention.
- These protests were largely spearheaded by Generation Z (born 1997–2012).
- Issues mobilised around:
 - Corruption
 - Institutional accountability
 - Transparency in governance
- Globally, democracies have been witnessing signs of democratic backsliding (as noted in reports such as Freedom House and V-Dem indices).
- Compared with earlier mass movements like:
 - Occupy Wall Street (2011)
 - Arab Spring (2010–12)
 - Brazilian Spring (2013)
- The new protests are:
 - More decentralised
 - Leaderless
 - Digitally mobilised
 - Episodic but high-impact

Key Points

- Gen Z protests are:
 - Technology-driven
 - Platform-centric (social media mobilisation)
 - Less ideologically structured
 - Leaderless and decentralised
- Characterised by:
 - Radical individualism
 - Reduced prejudice (caste/religion)
 - Strong assertion of personal dignity
 - Episodic mobilisation rather than sustained agitation

Stakeholders

- Youth population (India: ~65% below 35 years – Census/Economic Survey).
- Governments and policymakers.
- Civil society organisations.
- Digital platforms.
- Judiciary (protector of civil liberties).

Way Forward

- Strengthen civic education in schools and universities.
- Promote institutionalised youth participation (e.g., youth councils).
- Improve employment generation (Skill India, Startup India).
- Enhance digital literacy to counter misinformation.
- Strengthen mental health support systems.
- Encourage structured dialogue platforms between youth and government.
- Reform political party internal democracy to attract youth leadership.
- Strengthen local self-governance participation mechanisms.

'Bhasha' matters in India's multilingual moment

India stands at an extraordinary crossroads, with a linguistic landscape unmatched in scale and richness. According to the 2011 Census, India is home to more than 1,300 mother tongues and 121 constitutionally recognised languages. This diversity is not merely a statistic. It is a national strength, central to how children learn, grow and understand the world.

When a language disappears, we lose more than words. We lose a way of understanding the world built over generations. Safeguarding languages is, therefore, not only a cultural imperative. It is fundamentally a question of holding on to humanity's accumulated knowledge, which in turn makes it an educational issue. This is why mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) is critical.

Basis for quality education

As we mark International Mother Language Day (February 21), under the theme "Youth voices on multilingual education", the message is clear: young people thrive when their languages – and, therefore, their identities – are recognised and valued in the classroom. When this happens, schools become spaces where children learn about themselves, others, and the world in all its diversity. UNESCO has long championed multilingual teaching, based on the language best understood and spoken, as a condition for quality education.

Each year, UNESCO publishes the State of the Education Report for India, focusing on a specific theme. This year, which is the seventh edition (2025), Bhasha Matters: Mother Tongue and Multilingual Education, brought together global research, new national evidence and practical lessons to explore the state of Mother Tongue and Multilingual Education in India. The report demonstrates that MTB-MLE is not only pedagogically sound but also transformative. It outlines 10 policy recommendations to guide India towards a more inclusive and equitable education system that treats linguistic diversity as



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an asset rather than a challenge. It also highlights what is working – from bilingual learning materials and teacher preparation to innovative digital solutions that bring multilingual resources to classrooms and communities

A barrier of language

Globally, over a quarter of a billion learners lack access to education in a language they fully understand. In India, nearly 44% of children enter school speaking a language that is different from the medium of instruction, according to the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in 2022. For these children, learning begins with the added burden of decoding an unfamiliar language before grasping academic concepts. Weak foundational literacy and numeracy can lead to cumulative learning gaps, reduced confidence and, ultimately, a higher risk of dropout.

India has taken decisive steps to address this challenge. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, followed by the National Curriculum Frameworks of 2022 and 2023, places the child's home or mother tongue at the centre of early education.

The Bhasha Matters report highlights promising examples. In Odisha, a long-standing multilingual education programme spans 21 tribal languages across 17 districts, supporting nearly 50,000 children. In Telangana, the use of Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA)-enabled multilingual resources demonstrates how digital tools can expand access to learning materials in local languages. National initiatives such as PM eVIDYA, Adi Vaani (developed by a national consortium), BHASHINI (BHash-based AND Intelligent Node for Inclusion in India) and A4Bharat's community-developed language technologies show how digital platforms and artificial intelligence can help document endangered languages, create local-language content and support teachers with multilingual resources.

Building on these examples, Bhasha Matters sets out a practical road map. It calls for clear state-level language-in-education policies grounded in MTB-MLE, stronger teacher recruitment and professional standards for multilingual classrooms, and reforms in pre-service and in-service training to embed multilingual pedagogy. It emphasises high-quality multilingual materials and assessments, community participation and indigenous knowledge, gender-responsive approaches, responsible investment in language technologies, and sustainable financing. Crucially, it proposes a National Mission for Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education to coordinate action across ministries, research institutions, civil society and technology partners, ensuring that promising pilots become systemic reform.

Linguistic diversity is a driver

India's linguistic diversity is not a barrier to development; it is a powerful driver of equity, identity and social cohesion. With States already demonstrating what is possible, and with clear policy frameworks in place, the country stands at the threshold of transformative educational change. This shift reflects a growing body of evidence: children learn best when taught in a language they understand.

On International Mother Language Day, the call is clear. Education systems must recognise and value every learner's language, not only to improve learning outcomes but also to affirm identity, well-being and meaningful participation in society.

When young people's voices are heard, multilingual education becomes more than a policy aspiration. It becomes a shared national movement. India's multilingual moment has arrived – and its youth are helping to shape its future.

Policy Framework:

- NEP 2020 – Multilingualism as pedagogical principle.
- National Curriculum Framework (2022, 2023) aligns with multilingual education.

Digital Initiatives:

- DIKSHA
- BHASHINI
- PM eVIDYA
- AI-based language tools (AI4Bharat etc.)

State Example:

- Odisha's MLE programme covers 21 tribal languages across 17 districts (~90,000 students).

Static Linkages

- Fundamental Rights – Articles 14, 21A (Right to Education).
- Directive Principles – Article 46 (Promotion of educational interests of weaker sections).
- Three-Language Formula (1968, revised in NEP 2020).
- Census methodology for linguistic classification.
- Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat Mission).
- Cultural pluralism and unity in diversity (Indian Society).

Critical Analysis

Advantages

- Improves learning outcomes in early grades.
- Reduces dropout rates.
- Protects linguistic diversity and indigenous knowledge.
- Promotes equity and inclusion.
- Strengthens national integration through respect for diversity.

Challenges

- Shortage of trained multilingual teachers.
- Lack of standardized multilingual textbooks.
- Political sensitivities around language.
- Financial constraints in resource-poor states.
- Balancing global competitiveness (English proficiency) with local language promotion.

Way Forward

- Formulate clear State-level Language-in-Education Policies.
- Establish National Mission for MTB-MLE.
- Strengthen teacher recruitment & multilingual pedagogy training.
- Invest in AI-driven translation and content creation (BASHASHINI).
- Community participation in preserving tribal/indigenous languages.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- 21 February observed as International Mother Language Day by UNESCO.
- UNESCO's State of the Education Report for India 2025 (7th Edition) titled "Bhasha Matters: Mother Tongue and Multilingual Education" highlights status and roadmap for MTB-MLE in India.
- Census 2011:
 - 1,300+ mother tongues reported.
 - 121 languages spoken by more than 10,000 persons.
 - 22 languages in the Eighth Schedule.
- NCERT (2022): ~44% of children begin schooling in a language different from their home language.
- National Education Policy (NEP 2020) recommends mother tongue/local language as medium of instruction at least till Grade 5 (preferably Grade 8).

Key Points

- Global Data (UNESCO):
 - Over 250 million learners lack access to education in a language they fully understand.
- Educational Implications:
 - Language mismatch → weak foundational literacy & numeracy (FLN).
 - Higher dropout rates and learning poverty.
- Constitutional Backing:
 - Article 350A – Facilities for instruction in mother tongue at primary stage for linguistic minorities.
 - Articles 29 & 30 – Cultural and educational rights of minorities.
 - Eighth Schedule – 22 recognized languages.

Treatise for federalism

The Kurian Joseph report must provoke a debate on reversing centralisation

A high-level committee on Union-State relations appointed by the Government of Tamil Nadu has mapped the pattern of centralisation of power and the weakening of federal democracy in India over the decades, and suggested comprehensive corrective measures. The three-member Committee, chaired by a former Supreme Court judge, Justice Kurian Joseph, has drawn on scholarship across various disciplines, Constituent Assembly debates, and the findings of three other committees on Centre-State relations, while also critiquing recent governance trends that weaken the authority of States. It concludes that centralisation is increasing – which it notes is not healthy – and calls for urgent remedial measures. The report is an expansive critique of the dilapidation of federalism, threatening India's progress, and calls for changes to reverse the dangerous course, stating that "Indian federalism now requires a structural reset comparable in ambition to the economic reforms of 1991". India's constitutional framework took shape against the backdrop of Partition, and the consolidation of princely States. The context encouraged the founders to tilt towards a centralising constitutional scheme; legislative, administrative, and judicial measures in the ensuing decades further reinforced this line of thinking. The report convincingly takes down the arguments for centralisation, and argues that federalised governance is essential for a country of India's size and diversity, and that it would in fact be dangerous to overlook this imperative.

The Kurian Joseph Committee report comes amid repeated and deliberate moves by the Union to centralise power. The Constitution can be amended far too easily for a federal polity, and this creates a self-perpetuating cycle of centralisation. The territorial integrity of States is at the mercy of the Centre, most blatantly illustrated by the dismantling of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories in 2019. The misplaced idea that the country needs one national language is being pursued by the Union government, which is particularly assertive on the question. Governors have become instruments of the Centre's overreach in all areas of governance. The impending inter-State delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies is causing anxiety among States that have stabilised their populations and stand to lose their relative weight in national governance. The Union has overt power in the conduct of elections, and key sectors such as education and health are being increasingly centralised. The GST regime has restructured India's fiscal landscape in favour of the Union and at States' expense. This report lays out the logic, facts and common sense about why federated governance should be the path to progress. This report must form the basis for a new national conversation.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- The Government of Tamil Nadu constituted a High-Level Committee on Union-State relations.
- Chaired by former Supreme Court Judge Justice Kurian Joseph.
- The Committee examined:
 - Increasing centralisation of powers.
 - Weakening of federal democracy.
 - Need for a "structural reset" in Indian federalism.
- The report draws upon:
 - Constituent Assembly Debates.
 - Reports of:
 - Sarkaria Commission
 - Punchhi Commission
 - Rajamannar Committee
- It critiques recent governance trends that allegedly reduce the autonomy of States.

Key Constitutional and Governance Issues

1. Tilt Towards Centralisation in the Constitution
 - Article 1: India described as "Union of States".
 - Residuary powers vested in Union (Article 248).
 - Article 3: Parliament can alter State boundaries.
 - Strong emergency provisions (Part XVIII).
 - Many constitutional amendments do not require State ratification (Article 368).

2. Reorganisation of States

- 2019 reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories.
- Raised questions about:
 - Extent of Parliament's power under Article 3.
 - Consent vs consultation of State Legislature.

3. Fiscal Federalism Concerns

- 101st Constitutional Amendment introduced GST.
- Created GST Council (Article 279A).
- Implementation of Goods and Services Tax:
 - Subsumed several State taxes.
 - Increased indirect tax harmonisation.
- Vertical fiscal imbalance persists (Finance Commission reports).
- GST compensation issue during COVID period highlighted dependency concerns.

4. Role of Governor

- Article 163 & 200:
 - Discretionary powers.
 - Power to reserve Bills for President.
- Allegations of:
 - Delay in assent to State Bills.
 - Political interference in State governance.

5. Delimitation Debate

- Freeze on delimitation extended till 2026 (84th Constitutional Amendment).
- Post-2026 delimitation may:
 - Alter Lok Sabha seat distribution.
 - Impact States that achieved population control.

6. Sectoral Centralisation

- 42nd Constitutional Amendment shifted education to Concurrent List.
- Expansion of Centrally Sponsored Schemes in:
 - Health
 - Education
 - Social welfare sectors

Static Constitutional Linkages

- Article 246 – Distribution of legislative powers.
- Seventh Schedule – Union, State & Concurrent Lists.
- Article 249 – Parliament's power in national interest.
- Article 356 – President's Rule.
- Article 263 – Inter-State Council.
- Article 280 – Finance Commission.
- Basic Structure Doctrine – Federalism recognised in Kesavananda Bharati (1973).
- S.R. Bommai (1994) – Judicial limits on Article 356 misuse.

Analytical Dimensions for Mains

Why India Adopted a Strong Centre

- Partition and national integration.
- Integration of princely States.
- Security and territorial integrity concerns.
- Centralised economic planning model post-independence.

Concerns About Excessive Centralisation

- Reduced fiscal autonomy of States.
- Weakening of cooperative federalism.
- Political misuse of Governor's office.
- Demographic imbalance in representation.
- Overuse of Concurrent List for Union expansion.

Arguments Supporting Centralisation

- National market integration (GST).
- Uniform regulatory standards.
- Coordinated disaster response (e.g., pandemic).
- National security imperatives.

Governance & Constitutional Implications

- Balance between:
 - Cooperative federalism.
 - Competitive federalism.
- Need to:
 - Strengthen Inter-State Council.
 - Reform GST Council voting dynamics.
 - Clarify Governor's discretionary powers.
 - Ensure equitable delimitation formula.
- Judicial oversight remains critical to preserving federal balance.

Safety first

Manipur needs a healing touch that cuts the cycle of violence

If a bruised and bleeding Manipur wants to heal, the words of its first woman Deputy Chief Minister, Nemcha Kipgen, must be heard. She wants the buffer zones between the Meiteis and the Kuki-Zo communities to remain for now, particularly in areas where the scars run deep, because safety comes first. Hailing from the Kuki-Zo community, Ms. Kipgen had to take oath virtually from New Delhi when a new government was installed in the State capital, Imphal, on February 4, after two years of violence and a long stint of President's Rule. While Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh is a Meitei, in an attempt to represent the three major communities in the government, Ms. Kipgen and Lolsii Dikho, a Naga, were named Deputy Chief Ministers. But the complexity of the ground situation is such that Ms. Kipgen is stationed in Kuki-dominated Kangpokpi, and unable to attend the Assembly session in Imphal due to security concerns. In an interview to *The Hindu*, she described approaching the road to peace like a mother, with empathy and care. Her work is cut out because, at this juncture, there is an acute deficit of trust in the BJP government, and between the majority Meiteis, who dominate Imphal Valley, and the tribals, particularly the Kuki-Zo communities, of the hill districts.

More than 250 people have been killed and around 60,000 people were displaced after ethnic violence between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei people erupted in the northeastern State on May 3, 2023. What is worrying is that skirmishes have begun between the Kuki-Zo and Nagas as well, with the Manipur police having to evacuate Kuki students from a school in Naga-dominated Ukhrul district after a recent flare-up between the communities. Manipur is no stranger to violence, having witnessed waves of insurgencies ever since it attained full Statehood in 1972, and the three main communities must find a way to peaceful coexistence in the geographical space they live in. Ms. Kipgen wants to hear each community's pain on their terms but she also drives home the point that every one must recognise the common ground that binds Manipuris – "our shared spaces, tribal heritage, cultural values, languages, faith traditions, social institutions, and our future, especially the future of our children". Harmony, she says, does not mean sameness; "it means respecting distinct identities while strengthening the bonds that allow us to live together". Her political masters too will do well to hear these words because the cycle of violence has to be broken. A rhetoric of hate has no winners. But first, Ms. Kipgen has to feel confident to travel to Imphal.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- Ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities erupted on 3 May 2023 in Manipur.
- Over 250 deaths and approximately 60,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) reported (as per official and government data cited in Parliament).
- Prolonged instability led to imposition of President's Rule under Article 356.
- New State government formed in February 2026 with attempt at ethnic representation:
 - Meitei Chief Minister
 - Deputy CMs from Kuki-Zo and Naga communities
- Buffer zones continue between valley and hill districts for security management.
- Emerging tensions also reported between Kuki-Zo and Naga communities, widening conflict dynamics.

Key Exam-Relevant Points

- Trigger of Conflict (2023):
 - Demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for Meiteis following High Court direction to consider the matter.
- Demographic-Geographic Divide:
 - Valley (~10% area) houses majority population.

- Hills (~90% area) largely inhabited by Scheduled Tribes.
- Legal-Administrative Framework:
 - Hill Areas Committee under Article 371C.
 - Separate land protection laws restricting transfer of tribal land to non-tribals.
- Security Measures:
 - Deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs).
 - Establishment of inter-community buffer zones.
- Governance Issues:
 - Trust deficit in state machinery.
 - Internally displaced population rehabilitation challenge.
 - Centre-State coordination in internal disturbance situations.

Static Constitutional & Governance Linkages

- Article 355 – Duty of Union to protect States against external aggression and internal disturbance.
- Article 356 – President's Rule.
- Article 371C – Special provisions for Manipur (Hill Areas Committee).
- Fifth Schedule – Protection of tribal interests in Scheduled Areas.
- Article 338A – National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.
- Sarkaria & Punchhi Commission – Safeguards against misuse of Article 356.
- Basic Structure Doctrine – Federalism as part of basic structure (S.R. Bommai case).

Critical Analysis

Constitutional Dimension

- Article 356 justified only in case of breakdown of constitutional machinery.
- Judicial scrutiny mandated (S.R. Bommai judgment).

Federal Concerns

- Frequent central intervention may weaken cooperative federalism.
- Need for balancing national security and state autonomy.

Tribal Safeguards vs Inclusion Debate

- Grant of ST status to Meiteis may dilute existing tribal protections.
- Hill communities fear land and political marginalisation.

Internal Security

- Ethnic segregation deepens fault lines.
- Emergence of multi-community tensions complicates peace process.

Governance Deficit

- Prolonged displacement affects education, livelihood, and human development.
- Institutional trust erosion impacts long-term stability.

Way Forward

- Independent reconciliation commission with tribal representation.
- Time-bound rehabilitation of displaced persons (housing, livelihood, schooling).
- Transparent review mechanism for ST status demands.
- Strengthening Hill Areas Committee functioning under Article 371C.
- Confidence-building measures and phased removal of buffer zones.
- Community-led peace dialogues with civil society participation.
- Enhanced Centre–State coordination under Article 355 framework.

Net FDI into India negative for fourth straight month

Reserve Bank of India data show gross foreign direct investment into India stood at a five-month high, but was overshadowed by outflows

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Net foreign direct investment (FDI) remained negative for the fourth consecutive month in December 2025, coming in at -\$1.6 billion, due to repatriation by foreign companies in India and outward investments by Indian companies exceeding the amount of direct investment entering the country, an analysis of the latest data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) show.

According to the RBI data, gross inflows of direct investment stood at a five-month high of \$8.6 billion in December 2025, which was also 17.2% higher than in December 2024.

"Gross inward FDI remained robust in December, with Singapore, the Netherlands and Mauritius accounting for more than 80% of total inflows," the RBI noted in its monthly bulletin report. "The major recipient sectors were transport, manufacturing, computer services, and electricity and other energy generation, distribution and transmission."

However, while inflows witnessed relatively robust growth, outflows exceeded them. Repatriation and disinvestments by foreign companies operating in India increased to nearly \$7.5

Red streak

Net FDI into India was negative for the fourth consecutive month in Dec. 2025 due to record levels of repatriation by foreign companies in India



billion in December 2025, the highest since at least January 2021, the earlier period for which data is readily available.

Outward investments by Indian companies increased to \$2.7 billion in December 2025, up 30.5% over December 2024 and 78% higher than in November 2025.

"For outward FDI, key destinations were Singapore, the U.S., the UAE, the U.K. and the Netherlands and the major sectors included financial, insurance and business services, and wholesale/retail trade, restaurants, and hotels," the report noted.

In earlier editions of the report, the RBI had said that uncertainty over the

India-U.S. trade agreement and the 50% tariffs had led to investor hesitation. The data for December 2025 comes before the announcement of the Interim Agreement with the U.S. and the Free Trade Agreement with the European Union, and so likely also reflects this sentiment.

In this edition, the RBI noted that the announcement of both deals had led to portfolio investors returning to India.

"Foreign portfolio investments (FPIs) staged a comeback in February with investor sentiments turning around following the India-EU free trade agreement and the interim India-U.S. trade deal," the report said.

Static Linkages

Balance of Payments (BoP)

Current Account

- Trade in goods and services
- Remittances
- Primary income (includes profit repatriation)

Capital Account

- FDI
- FPI
- External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs)
- NRI deposits

Outward FDI → Capital Account

Repatriation of profits → Current Account

Regulatory Framework

- Governed under FEMA, 1999
- FDI policy framed by DPIIT (Ministry of Commerce & Industry)
- RBI monitors capital flows and external stability.

Why This is Important for Exam?

- Tests conceptual clarity on:
 - Net vs Gross FDI
 - BoP accounting
 - Capital vs Current account entries
- Relevant for GS 3 answers on:
 - External sector stability
 - Investment climate
 - Impact of trade agreements
- Important for Prelims elimination techniques.

Critical Analysis

Positive Indicators

- Gross inflows remain strong.
- Manufacturing & infrastructure sectors attracting capital.
- Indian firms expanding globally (maturing economy).
- Trade agreements improving investor confidence.

Concerns

- Persistent negative net FDI may:
 - Increase external vulnerability.
 - Put pressure on exchange rate.
- High repatriation suggests profit booking or uncertainty.
- Concentration of inflows from few countries.

Way Forward

- Provide tax certainty and policy stability.
- Strengthen dispute resolution mechanisms.
- Encourage reinvestment of earnings.
- Diversify FDI sources.
- Accelerate manufacturing reforms.
- Maintain macroeconomic stability (inflation control, fiscal prudence).

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context of the News

- According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), India's Net Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) stood at -\$1.6 billion in December 2025.
- This marks the fourth consecutive month of negative net FDI.
- Although gross inward FDI remained strong at \$8.6 billion, total outflows (repatriation + outward FDI) exceeded inflows.
- Investor sentiment was impacted earlier due to trade uncertainties.
- Following India-US Interim Agreement and India-EU FTA announcements, Foreign Portfolio Investments (FPI) witnessed improvement.

Key Facts

- Net FDI (Dec 2025): -\$1.6 billion
- Gross Inward FDI: \$8.6 billion (17.2% higher YoY)
- Repatriation/Disinvestment: ~\$7.5 billion
- Outward FDI by Indian firms: \$2.7 billion

Major Source Countries (Inward FDI)

- Singapore
- Netherlands
- Mauritius

Major Recipient Sectors

- Transport
- Manufacturing
- Computer services
- Electricity & energy

AI is wreaking enduring transformations in state-capital relations

THESE ARE two broad theories about the economic roots of the backlash against globalisation. The first, and familiar one, emphasises distributional conflict. Loss of manufacturing jobs, rising inequality, wage stagnation, and fears of cultural displacement. Globalisation produced aggregate gains, but it did not compensate its losers. The task, therefore, was political management and redistribution. Behind welfare states, cushion shocks and restore legitimacy. There is no fundamental transformation in state-capital relations; rather, the system failed to keep markets socially embedded.

The second theory, more conspiratorial and likely a competitor rather than a complement, argues that the backlash reflects a structural transformation in capitalism itself. Technological change, substituting artificial intelligence, has altered the interests of capital in ways that make the old globalisation model less attractive. The open liberal order has not primarily collapsed because of cultural resentment or even inequality. These have always been longstanding features of capitalism. It is, rather, that AI requires reconfiguration of the strategic alignment between states and capital.

The technological effects of AI, its implications for jobs, are much discussed. But what is palpable already is the way it is altering institutional possibilities globally. In the era of manufacturing, capital benefited from distribution across geographies. Firms arranged wage differentials, fragmented supply chains, and used the credible threat of exit to discipline both labour and governments. As Karl Polanyi once suggested, states were increasingly embedded in markets. Capital mobility constrained public power. Globalisation was not merely an ideology; it was grounded in a vision of production.

It looks like AI may shift this calculation.

First, as is obvious, frontier AI is extraordinarily capital-intensive and infrastructure-dependent. It requires massive computing power, advanced semiconductors, energy supply, and highly specialised talent pools. The firms leading this transformation — Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, and Google — are globalised. Vertically integrated, asset-heavy, and territorially anchored. Data centres, chip fabrication plants, and energy grids are not footloose as firms. The language differs — innovation, competitiveness, resilience — but the structural logic is similar. Frontier technology requires state capacity, and states seek dominance through alignment with big capital. Big capital, in turn, is happy with helping states gain social control. In short, it is happy to align with authoritarianism.

Two indirect pieces of evidence support this thesis. One, in populist movements, nationalism is less a redistributive programme and more an ideological veneer for elite state-capital coordination. Two, the libertarian utopianism that once animated the tech sector, cryptocurrencies beyond state control, spontaneous networked publics, the withering of hierarchy, has faded. Emerging, instead, is a techno-nationalist order comfortable with control, concentration, surveillance and strategic rivalry. This isn't a re-embedding of markets in society, as many had hoped it is a re-embedding of capital in the state.

For countries like India and much of Europe, the challenge is less regulatory architecture or redistributive correction. It is whether domestic capital and state capacity can combine at a sufficient scale to compete within this new



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

tech-nationalist complex. The axis of global competition is no longer light versus heavy regulation, nor open versus closed markets. It is the degree to which states and large firms can fuse around infrastructure, data, energy, and defence.

This also means that it is very likely that techno-nationalists, on its own, will not resolve the legitimacy crises facing society. It does not begin to address inequalities of power; indeed, it may well exacerbate them. If capital concentration increases, and with it the risks of financial instability, the potential for an even deeper backlash remains. And while this complex seeks to answer the problem of meaning by giving technology the grand veneer of saving national civilisation, the social ramifications of AI are far too uncertain to suggest that it can remotely address the crisis of meaning that supposedly animated the populist backlash.

This interpretation certainly overstates the coherence of the transformation. Traditional institutions and markets will continue to exist; labour still matters; global interdependence has not vanished. Yet it is difficult to ignore the signs: The return of territorial nationalism, the erosion of the public-private distinction, the convergence of civilian and military technologies, and the declining relevance of exit as a source of discipline.

The backlash, on this view, is less a populist revolt from below than a technology-driven realignment from above. We will soon find out which interpretation of the backlash against globalisation has more staying power. But even as we contemplate the possibilities of AI, let us not forget the transformation in state-capital relations it has already brought about.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

The firms leading this transformation — Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, and Google — no longer resemble 'light' digital platforms. They look more like early 20th-century infrastructure monopolies

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context

- Global backlash against globalisation amid:
 - Rising protectionism and populism.
 - US-China tech rivalry (AI, semiconductors).
- AI-driven capitalism altering state-market relations.
- India advancing:
 - Semiconductor Mission
 - IndiaAI Mission
 - PLI schemes
 - Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).

Key Points

1. Two Explanations for Backlash

(A) Distributional Conflict

- Job losses, wage stagnation, inequality.
- Weak welfare response.

(B) Structural Shift (AI-led Capitalism)

- AI is capital-intensive and infrastructure-heavy.
- Firms rely on chips, data centres, energy.
- Growing state-big tech alignment.
- Rise of techno-nationalism.

2. AI and State-Capital Realignment

- Territorial embedding: Data centres, chip fabs are location-bound → weaker capital mobility.
- Industrial policy revival: US CHIPS Act, EU subsidies.
- Security focus: Control over semiconductors, rare earths, cloud.
- Surveillance risks: Convergence of governance and commercial data systems.

Static Linkages

- Article 39(b), 39(c) – Prevent concentration of wealth.
- Competition Act, 2002 – Anti-monopoly framework.

- 1991 reforms – Capital mobility.
- National security exception under WTO.
- Data governance (B.N. Srikrishna Committee).
- 2nd ARC – e-Governance and accountability.
- Economic Survey – Digital Public Infrastructure.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Strategic autonomy.
- Stronger domestic tech base.
- Resilient supply chains.
- High-skill employment.

Concerns

- Big tech monopolies.
- Privacy erosion.
- Techno-authoritarianism risk.
- Rising inequality.
- Reduced democratic oversight.

India: Opportunities & Gaps

- Leverage DPI (Aadhaar, UPI).
- Build chip ecosystem.
- R&D low (~0.7% of GDP).
- Skill and infrastructure gaps.

Way Forward

- Increase R&D to ~2% GDP.
- Strong competition enforcement.
- Effective data protection.
- AI skilling push.
- Ethical AI framework.
- Balance innovation & rights.
- Multilateral AI cooperation.

Medical AI should be as much about equity as algorithms



SHASHANK JOSHI AND SHAMBO SAMRAT SAMAJDAR

NEW MEDICAL technologies are often described in terms of innovation — faster diagnoses, smarter predictions, streamlined workflows. But history tells us that technology does not *ipso facto* transform health systems. That requires governance, design, and intent. India's recently released national strategy for the use of advanced computational systems in healthcare invites a deeper conversation. Rather than presenting these systems as tools to be added onto clinical practice, the strategy treats them as part of the architecture of the health system.

In most countries regulation has followed innovation, not guided it. The result has been uneven standards and unclear accountability. India's approach signals a different philosophy. It begins with interoperable health records, consent-based data exchange, and nationally aligned norms. It acknowledges that computational systems reflect the data and institutions that sustain them. If such foundations are fragmented or unequal, technology will reproduce such weaknesses at scale.

Equally significant is the insistence that oversight cannot be one-time approval. Performance can shift as contexts change. A model that works in a tertiary urban hospital may falter in a rural clinic. A prediction that appears accurate at launch may degrade over time. Governance, must, therefore, be about monitoring, reassessment, and, when necessary, withdrawal.

The strategy's most compelling feature is its treatment of fairness. In diverse societies, data rarely represent all communities equally. Without safeguards, systems trained on such data risk reinforcing inequities. By emphasising representativeness and equity impact assessment, the strategy confronts this risk. It also recognises that safe use depends on human capacity. It calls for structured training, institutional units dedicated to oversight, and integration of digital literacy into professional education.

There is also a political economy argument. Public procurement, interoperability requirements, and clear pathways from pilot to scale are treated as instruments of stewardship. By positioning the state as an active shaper of standards and incentives, the strategy suggests that public value must guide adoption.

Whether this vision succeeds will depend on implementation — transparent classification of risk, meaningful audit mechanisms, sustained investment in data quality, and coordination across federal bodies. Yet the conceptual shift is notable. Medicine has long regulated drugs and devices. It now faces the task of governing architectures that influence diagnosis, treatment pathways, resource allocation, and public health response. We can treat intelligent technologies as products, or as infrastructure to be stewarded. The latter demands humility, foresight, and institutional commitment. The true measure of progress will not be technological sophistication alone, but whether these systems strengthen trust, widen access, and protect the most vulnerable.

In that sense, the debate is not about technology. It is about the kind of health systems we choose to build.

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In most countries regulation has followed innovation, not guided it. The result has been uneven standards and unclear accountability. India's approach signals a different philosophy

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context

- Government of India has released a National Strategy for the use of Advanced Computational Systems (including AI) in Healthcare.
- The strategy treats digital and computational systems as part of health system architecture, not merely as clinical tools.
- It builds upon:
 - Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)
 - National Health Authority
 - AI governance frameworks of NITI Aayog
- Emphasis on interoperability, consent-based data exchange, equity safeguards, and continuous oversight.

Key Features

- Interoperable Digital Health Records under ABDM framework.
- Consent-based data sharing aligned with Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.
- Risk-based regulatory approach (continuous monitoring, not one-time approval).
- Equity and representativeness safeguards to prevent algorithmic bias.
- Institutional oversight mechanisms within health facilities.
- Public procurement as regulatory lever for standardization and scaling.
- Integration of digital literacy in medical education.

Static Linkages

- Article 21 – Right to Life (includes right to health as per judicial interpretation).
- Article 47 – Duty of State to improve public health.
- Seventh Schedule:
 - Entry 6, State List – Public Health.
 - Entry 31, Union List – Communication (relevant for digital infrastructure).
- Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 – Consent-based data processing.
- WHO Ethics & Governance of AI for Health (2021) – Transparency, accountability, inclusiveness.
- Economic Survey: Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) as growth enabler.

Critical Issues

Advantages

- Prevents regulatory vacuum.
- Promotes standardisation and interoperability.
- Addresses algorithmic bias.
- Aligns with Universal Health Coverage goals.

Challenges

- Data fragmentation at primary healthcare level.
- Capacity gaps in States.
- Risk of privacy breaches.
- Urban-rural digital divide.
- Need for inter-governmental coordination.

Way Forward

- Strengthen digital health regulatory oversight.
- Periodic algorithmic audits for bias and accuracy.
- Investment in primary-level data quality.
- Federal coordination mechanisms.
- Strengthen cybersecurity frameworks.
- Ensure inclusion of vulnerable communities in datasets.

Real AI challenge lies in the classrooms

THE FRACAS over Galgotias University's "robodog", a Chinese-manufactured product that the private institute displayed in its stall at the AI Impact Summit, was destined for glib memes and headlines. The incident, however, is neither the main takeaway from the summit nor does it flag the challenge that India faces due to the AI transformations. The challenge lies not in the stalls and halls of Bharat Mandapam but in lakhs of classrooms across the country. In 2024-25 alone, around 20 million children enrolled in Class I across the country. And total enrolment in higher education increased to nearly 4.33 crore in 2021-22 — up 26.5 per cent from 2014-15. Many of those coming into universities today are first-generation learners, often from historically marginalised communities. Yet even as the classrooms are asked to open their doors wider, the nature of pedagogy and assessment in schools and higher education institutions follows paradigms that came about in the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution, for an imperial power's needs, with mere tweaks along the way to suit the needs of a newly independent nation. To turn India's AI vision and ambition into reality, and to ensure that this massive cohort of young people is not left behind, an overhaul is needed.

Of course, the need to reform education predates the AI challenge. In 2020, the new National Education Policy suggested inter-disciplinarity and conceptual clarity over memorisation and rote learning, and a move from an emphasis on enrolment to outcomes and quality. It also suggested that at least 6 per cent of GDP be spent on education. Progress, however, has been slow, mired in institutional inertia and vexed issues of linguistic politics. None of this is to suggest that no gains have been made. Since Independence, islands of excellence, across disciplines and regions, have been created. The problem is that their success has not been scalable at the national level. The speed with which new technologies are altering the nature of learning, work and jobs leaves little room for piecemeal reform.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's formulation, MANAV (Moral and Ethical Systems, Accountable Governance, National Sovereignty, Accessible and Inclusive Technology, and Valid and Legitimate Systems), seeks to place the well-being of people as the guiding principle of AI development. To take that vision outside the summit hall and policy document requires enabling and catalysing reforms while, at the same time, ensuring institutional autonomy, especially in higher education. It means creating a classroom that nurtures excellence, and a campus that is free from fear and open to ideas and innovation.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Context

- At the AI Impact Summit, India reiterated its ambition to emerge as a global AI leader.
- Meanwhile, India's education system is witnessing:
 - ~2 crore enrolment in Class I (2024–25).
 - 4.33 crore students in higher education (AISHE 2021–22).
 - 26.5% rise in higher education enrolment since 2014–15.
- A large proportion of entrants are first-generation learners.
- However, pedagogy remains largely examination-oriented and rote-based.
- The issue: Whether India's education system is prepared for AI-driven transformation.

Key Data & Facts

- GER in Higher Education (AISHE 2021–22): 28.4%.
- Female GER higher than male GER (AISHE).
- NEP 2020 recommends:
 - 6% of GDP on education.
 - Multidisciplinary higher education.
 - Holistic, competency-based learning.
- Education in Concurrent List (42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976).
- Article 21A: Right to Education (6–14 years).
- SDG 4: Inclusive and equitable quality education.
- IndiaAI Mission: Strengthening AI ecosystem.

Static Linkages

- Human Capital Theory: Education enhances productivity and economic growth.
- Demographic Dividend: Requires skill development.
- 2nd ARC: Institutional autonomy and ethical governance.
- Foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) as base for higher-order skills.
- Digital divide impacts inclusive growth.

Critical Analysis

Positives

- Expansion of access to higher education.
- Increased female participation.
- Digital initiatives (DIKSHA, PM eVIDYA).
- Policy push via NEP 2020.

Challenges

- Poor learning outcomes (ASER findings).
- Public expenditure below 6% GDP target.
- Faculty shortages and low research output.
- Rigid assessment system focused on rote learning.
- Digital inequality.
- AI may widen skill inequality.

Way Forward

- Increase public expenditure to 6% GDP.
- Shift from rote learning to competency-based assessment.
- Strengthen foundational literacy (NIPUN Bharat).
- Enhance university autonomy and research funding.
- Integrate AI literacy in school curriculum.
- Promote public-private collaboration in skill training.
- Ensure ethical AI framework aligned with constitutional values.