

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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The World Bank has revised India's growth forecast to 7%, reflecting the country's economic resilience amid global challenges.

- This positive outlook is driven by strong performance in manufacturing and significant public investment. The revised forecast aligns with projections from the IMF and ADB for FY 24/25.

World Bank hikes India's economic growth forecast to 7% for 2024-25

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The World Bank has forecast a growth of 7% for the Indian economy for the current fiscal year, upping its earlier estimate of 6.6%.

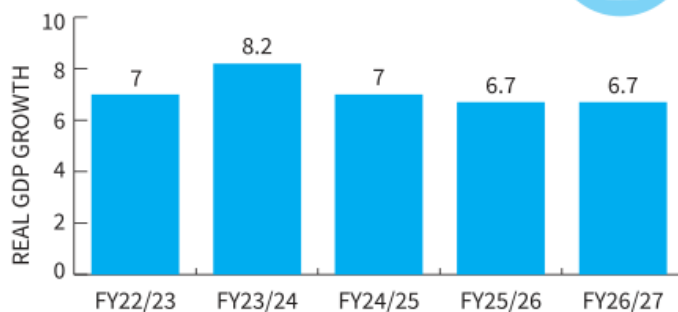
In its report, 'India Development Update: India's Trade Opportunities in a Changing Global Context', released on Tuesday, the World Bank said India's growth continued to be strong despite a challenging global environment.

The World Bank growth projection is in line with those of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Asian Development Bank (ADB). Both institutions have raised their forecast to 7% for the financial year ending March 2025.

"The India Develop-

Growth forecast

World Bank forecasts India's GDP growth will quicken to 7% in FY25 and remain strong in FY26 and FY27



ment Update [IDU] observes that India remained the fastest-growing major economy and grew at a rapid clip of 8.2% in FY 23/24. Growth was boosted by public infrastructure investment and an upswing in household investments in real estate.

On the supply side, it was supported by a bu-

oyant manufacturing sector, which grew by 9.9%, and resilient services activity, which compensated for underperformance in agriculture," the World Bank said in a statement.

Urban unemployment

Reflecting these trends, urban unemployment has improved gradually since

the pandemic, especially for female workers, it said. While female urban unemployment fell to 8.5 % in early FY24/25, urban youth unemployment remained elevated at 17%.

India's robust growth prospects, along with declining inflation rate will help to reduce extreme poverty, World Bank's country director in India Augustine Tano Kouame said at a press conference here.

"India can boost its growth further by harnessing its global trade potential. In addition to IT, business services and pharma where it excels, India can diversify its export basket with increased exports in textiles, apparel, and footwear sectors, as well as electronics and green technology products," he said.

Analysis of the news:

- World Bank has revised India's GDP growth forecast to 7% for FY 24/25, up from 6.6%.
- The report titled "India Development Update: India's Trade Opportunities in a Changing Global Context" highlighted India's resilience in a challenging global environment.
- Everything You Need To Know About
- India's growth rate aligns with projections by IMF and ADB, both forecasting 7%.

Daily News Analysis

- ➡ The Indian economy grew by 8.2% in FY 23/24, driven by public infrastructure investment and rising household real estate investment.
- ➡ The manufacturing sector grew by 9.9%, with strong performance in services but underperformance in agriculture.
- ➡ Urban unemployment has improved, especially for women, with female unemployment at 8.5% early in FY 24/25.
- ➡ However, youth unemployment remains high at 17%.
- ➡ The World Bank suggests India can further boost growth by diversifying exports, focusing on textiles, apparel, footwear, electronics, and green technology.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2016

Ques: India's ranking in the 'Ease of Doing Business Index' is sometimes seen in the news. Which of the following has declared that ranking?

- (a) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- (b) World Economic Forum
- (c) World Bank
- (d) World Trade Organization (WTO)

Ans: c)

Page 11 : GS 4 : Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude

John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* introduces the harm principle, arguing that individual freedoms should only be restricted to prevent harm to others.



GETTY IMAGES

The harm principle: how John Mill's theory defines the extent of liberty

John Mill states that liberties can be restricted only when our actions cause harm. If any act that you do injures another person, you can be punished for it. But that brings us back to the fundamental question: what really constitutes harm?

Radhika Santhanam

A few days ago, a minor girl was gang-raped in the Dhing area of Nagaon district, Assam, allegedly by three Muslim men. As anger over the horrific incident and against the community escalated, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who has called Muslims a "communal organisation" in the past, said he would not allow "Miya Muslims" to "take over all of Assam" ("Miya Muslim" is a derogatory term used against the minority Bengali Muslim community.) Mr. Sarma has made such remarks in the past, which have been slammed by the Opposition and termed by some people as hate speech.

The objection to Mr. Sarma's statements is twofold. First, he is a Chief Minister who took an oath saying he will bear true faith and allegiance to India's secular Constitution. Second, by making such remarks, he is denigrating an entire community and furthering an already deeply rooted bias against them, in a State which has suffered ethnic violence.

Some may argue that Mr. Sarma is exercising his right to free speech. While free speech is a fundamental right, the Constitution allows for certain "reasonable restrictions" to it. Others may argue that this is hate speech. There are many provisions in Indian law that criminalise offences characterised as hate speech. However, hate speech is not defined in the Indian legal framework.

The harm principle

In order to understand free speech and the extent to which it can be restricted or controlled either by society or government, it is worth revisiting the 19th century philosopher John Stuart Mill's seminal work, *On Liberty*. Mill's work is the bedrock of what we refer to today as libertarianism. Mill believed that true societal happiness (utilitarianism) can be achieved only when people are free to exercise their choices. He urged for

minimal state intervention in the exercise of liberties, arguing that "the only power that can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others". This is called the 'harm principle'.

His point was seemingly simple and straightforward: if any act that you do physically injures another person, you can be punished for it. For example, if you walk around with a cane, you do not hurt anyone, but if you slam that cane against a person's head, that constitutes harm or assault, which can call for state intervention. To put it theoretically, Mill separated our actions into two categories: 'self-regarding actions' and 'other-regarding actions'. Self-regarding actions affect only the individual and not others, while other-regarding actions affect others or society.

However, this distinction is not always clear. We can argue that all our actions affect the people around us or society at large. For instance, if a person develops a drinking problem, he may not be harming anyone else, but his excessive drinking may be causing immense stress to his family and he could be turning emotionally and physically abusive.

Mill believed that the state or society do not have any justification in restricting self-regarding actions. However, the state or society can control other-regarding actions. While society can control actions which may hurt others but do not violate any legal rights (by, say, ostracising an individual), the state can control other-regarding actions when there is a violation of legal rights (by imposing a punishment). In *Navtej Singh Johar vs. Union of India*, the Supreme Court of India buttressed its conclusion that the state cannot criminalise homosexuality by recalling Mill's theory.

Freedom of speech and expression

In short, Mill said liberties can be restricted only when our actions cause harm. But that brings us back to the

question: what really constitutes harm?

We could define harm as an act that makes a person worse off because of another person's actions. But this is still tricky terrain. If a family or a doctor decides that a terminally ill patient, who has been bedridden for 40 years, is better off dead, will their decision constitute a harm or will it help the patient by putting an end to her suffering and indignity?

Is harm also only physical? Nowadays, we have many debates on the harms caused by disinformation and misinformation. Mill, being a libertarian, believed that there must be complete freedom of thought and expression. He argued, "If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had power, would be justified in silencing mankind..."

"The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: If wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error." Here, Mill essentially says that if we disregard an opinion as false, we will not have any challenge to our views and we may even be wrong (he cites the example of Socrates). False beliefs provide us with the opportunity to constantly defend our beliefs, making sure that they remain a living truth rather than dead dogma. It is only when our beliefs are constantly challenged that they are strengthened. And if we disregard an opinion which is actually true, then we would be deprived of knowing the truth and correcting our false views. Therefore, all opinions must be allowed to flourish.

However, Mill does acknowledge that freedom of expression could be limited

under some cases. He cites an example: "An opinion that corn-dealers are starvers of the poor, or that private property is robbery, ought to be unmolested when simply circulated through the press, but may justly incur punishment when delivered orally to an excited mob assembled before the house of a corn-dealer, or when handed about among the same mob in the form of a placard..." The liberty of the individual must be thus far limited; he must not make himself a nuisance to other people."

This seems logical when the potential harm is apparent. But what happens when Bengali Muslims are referred to as 'Miya Muslims' and consistently dehumanised with the potential harm not immediately clear? According to Mill's theory, it could always be argued that it is not right to completely ban it since we could be deprived of that shade of opinion. At the same time, allowing hate speech could psychologically harm a group and could even incite other groups to violence. In Rwanda, for instance, the radio station RTLM, which had allied with leaders of the government, had been inciting the ethnic majority called Hutus against the Tutsi minority, by repeatedly describing them as *inyenzi* ("cockroaches") and *inzoka* ("snakes"). The constant hate-mongering over time culminated in a genocide.

What happens when state actors themselves promote speech that could cause harm and agencies that are meant to keep them in check fail to do so?

Mill's case for free speech is not built on a foundation of universal rights. Rather, it is based on the belief that free discussions will correct our errors and benefit humanity in the long term. Such unhindered discussions, as we know, are often threatened by both societal and state power.

While Mill's vision of a liberal-minded world is not what we see today, his 'harm principle' continues to be discussed and impacts law even today.

Daily News Analysis

- His theory advocates for minimal state intervention in personal liberties while recognizing that some limitations on free speech may be justified to prevent societal harm.

Philosophical Foundation

- John Stuart Mill, a 19th-century philosopher, is known for his influential work, *On Liberty*.
- Mill's theory is a cornerstone of libertarianism and utilitarianism.

Harm Principle

- Mill proposed that the only justification for exercising power over an individual, against their will, is to prevent harm to others.
- He distinguished between 'self-regarding actions' (affecting only the individual) and 'other-regarding actions' (affecting others or society).

Libertarian View on Freedom

- Mill argued for minimal state intervention in individual liberties.
- He believed that individual actions should not be restricted unless they cause harm to others.

Free Speech

- Mill supported complete freedom of thought and expression, arguing it is essential for societal progress.
- He believed that suppressing opinions, even if they are false, deprives society of the opportunity to test and strengthen its beliefs.

Limits of Free Speech

- While advocating for freedom, Mill acknowledged that speech could be limited if it incites harm or causes societal disruption.
- He cited examples where speech could justifiably be restricted, such as inciting violence against a specific group.

Relevance Today

- Mill's theory continues to influence contemporary discussions on free speech and its limits.
- His harm principle is used to evaluate the balance between individual liberties and societal protection.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Discuss John Stuart Mill's harm principle as presented in *On Liberty*. How does this principle justify limitations on free speech, and what relevance does it hold in contemporary legal and ethical discussions on individual freedoms?

Page 12 : GS 3 : Indian Economy – Infrastructure – Railways

Indian Railways has initiated tenders worth over ₹2,200 crore for the installation of the indigenous Kavach automatic train protection system across 7,228 route kilometres.

- ➔ The move aims to enhance safety by preventing collisions on high-density routes.

Kavach System – Overview

- ➔ **Indigenous Automatic Train Protection System:** Developed by Indian Railways to prevent collisions and enhance safety.

Key Components:

- ➔ **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID):** Installed on tracks and wireless devices to ensure real-time communication.
- ➔ **RFID Readers:** Located in the locomotive's cabin, assisting in train control.
- ➔ **Radio Infrastructure:** Includes towers and modems placed at railway stations.
- ➔ **Cabin Instrument Panels:** Displays signal aspects and speed limits to drivers for safer operation.

Features:

- ➔ **Automatic Brakes:** Applied when red signals are ignored, preventing collisions.
- ➔ **Onboard Display:** Provides signal aspects and safety information, aiding operation in low visibility.

Deployment:

- ➔ **Coverage:** Set to cover 7,228 route kilometres, with tenders floated for ₹2,200 crore.
- ➔ **Current Progress:** Installation ongoing across 3,000 route kilometres, with plans for 9,000 kilometres by year-end.

Kavach expansion: Railways floats tenders worth over ₹2,200 crore

Abhishek Law
NEW DELHI

Indian Railways has floated tenders worth more than ₹2,200 crore for Kavach, the indigenous automatic train protection system, across multiple States, including West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh, covering almost 7,228 route km (rkm).

Tenders include various components for Kavach such as towers, optical fibres, dashboards alongside contracting system integrators.

System components

The Kavach train collision avoidance system (TCAS) has three-to-four main components: radio frequency identification (RFID) technology – integrated into the tracks and wireless devices; RFID readers – equipped in the driver's cabin (locomotive); radio infrastructure – that includes towers and modems at railway stations; and cabin instrument panels that display signals and speed limits.

The protection system alerts the pilot to red signals and applies automatic brakes if necessary.

It also provides an onboard display of signal aspects to enable safer operation in adverse visibility.

Sept.-Nov. deadline

According to documents seen by *businessline*, most tenders floated have a deadline between September and November. Tenders have a value of more than ₹100 crore, with some as high as ₹340 crore.

Work is already on for



Safe and sound: The protection system alerts the pilot to red signals and applies automatic brakes if necessary. THE HINDU

Total coverage of Indian Railways is more than 68,000 rkm and Kavach coverage 1,465 rkm

installation of Kavach across 3,000 rkm, according to officials.

System integrators

"Tenders for installation of Kavach, including various components, and for system integrators, have already been floated.

This phase will cover close to 7,228 rkm along high density routes, apart from 3,000 rkm where work is underway," a senior Railways official said.

The total coverage of Indian Railways is to the tune of more than 68,000 rkm; and Kavach coverage that is to tune of 1,465 rkm.

The collision avoidance system will also be installed on 10,000 locomotives, work for which is already underway.

As per Tender Detail, a website that lists various government tenders, in

2024, there are 635 Kavach tenders which have been published by various tendering authorities and private companies.

Some of the open tenders that have been floated pertain to supply and installation, testing and commissioning of Kavach on 668 rkm (including associated works) on Kharagpur-Chakradharpur division of South Eastern Railway (SER) valued at nearly ₹200 crore.

Another such open tender includes installation of Kavach, "along with tower and fibre optic cable installation as backbone network in Jhansi of the North Central Railway, valued at ₹207 crore.

"The next phase of Kavach tenders will be floated in October covering less than 2,000 rkm. Our plan was to float 9,000 rkm of Kavach installation tenders within this year. And we are on track. Installation time is about 12-18 months," the official said.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2023

Ques: Consider the following infrastructure sectors:

1. Affordable housing
2. Mass rapid transport
3. Healthcare
4. Renewable energy

On how many of the above do UNOPS Sustainable Investments in Infrastructure and Innovation (S3i) initiative focus for its investments?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) Only three
- d) All four

Ans : c)

The Iran's missile programme, long seen as a key element of its defence, faced scrutiny after a largely unsuccessful April 2024 assault on Israel.

- Despite launching hundreds of projectiles, many failed or were intercepted, raising questions about their reliability as effective military tools, especially amid escalating tensions with Israel.

Iran's Missile Programme: Key Points:

- **Origins:** Iran's missile programme began in the 1980s during the Iran-Iraq War. Over time, it has become a core element of the country's defence strategy.
- **Capabilities:** Iran possesses a range of missile types, including short-, medium-, and long-range ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones. Key missile classes include Shahab, Sejil, and Ghadr missiles.
- **Ballistic Missiles:** Iran's long-range missiles, like the Shahab-3, can reach up to 2,000 km, putting Israel and U.S. bases in the Gulf within range. The missiles' accuracy, however, remains questionable.
- **Missile Production:** The country claims to produce its missiles domestically, though some reports suggest outside technological support from countries like North Korea.
- **April 2024 Attack:** Iran launched 120 ballistic missiles, 30 cruise missiles, and 170 drones at Israel. Many failed to reach targets, raising concerns about missile reliability.
- **Strategic Importance:** Iran's missile programme is seen as a deterrent to regional rivals like Israel and Saudi Arabia. It serves as a key tool in asymmetric warfare, where Iran cannot match conventional military power.
- **Proxy Use:** Iran's missiles have been used by regional proxies like Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen.

Amid high tensions with Israel, Iran's missile programme comes into focus

Iran's air force has an ageing fleet led by F-14 Tomcats and Mikoyan MiG-29 fighter jets from the Cold War, but they would be no match for Israel's F-35s and its air defences; this means Iran, if it attacks Israel again, would need to rely on missiles and drones or use proxies such as Hezbollah

Associated Press
DUBAI

As Iran threatens to attack Israel over the assassination of a Hamas leader in the Iranian capital, its long-vaunted missile programme offers one of the few ways for Tehran to strike back directly, but questions loom over just how much of a danger it poses.

The programme was behind Iran's unprecedented drone-and-missile assault on Israel in April, when Iran became the first nation to launch such a barrage since Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein lobbed Scud missiles at Israel in the 1991 Gulf War.

But few of the Iranian projectiles reached their targets. Many were shot down by a U.S.-led coalition, while others apparently failed at launch or crashed while in flight. Even those that reached Israel appeared to miss their marks.

Now a new report by experts suggests one of Tehran's most advanced missiles is far less accurate than previously thought.

The April assault showed "some ability to strike Israel," said Sam Lair, a research associate at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies who worked on the analysis. But "if I were the Supreme Leader, I would



Defence mechanisms: Israel's Iron Dome air defence system launches projectiles to intercept missiles fired from Iran, in central Israel, on April 14, 2024. AP

probably be a little disappointed."

'Just terror weapons'

If Iranian missiles are not able to hit targets precisely "that recasts their role," Mr. Lair added. "They're no longer as valuable for conducting conventional military operations. They may be more valuable simply as terror weapons."

Iran has repeatedly said it will retaliate for the killing of Ismail Haniyeh. Israel is widely suspected of carrying out the assassination, though it has not claimed it.

But Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei tacitly acknowledged the country's failure to strike anything of importance in Israel. "Debates by the other party about how many missiles were fired, how many of them hit the target and how many didn't, these are of secondary importance," Mr. Khamenei said.

"The main issue is the emergence of the Iranian nation" and the Iranian military "in an important international arena. This is what matters."

Retaliation had been expected for days after a suspected Israeli strike on April 1 hit an Iranian diplomatic compound in Damascus, Syria, killing two Iranian generals and five officers, as well as a member of the Lebanese Shia militia Hezbollah.

Footage aired on state

television showed that Iran's April 13 assault began with Revolutionary Guard commander Gen. Hossein Salami speaking by telephone with Brig. Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the commander of the Guard's aerospace division.

"Start the 'True Promise' operation against Zionist regime's bases," he ordered.

Grainy footage later released showed missiles thundering off truck-based mobile launchers. Iran's bomb-carrying Shahed drones leaped off metal stands, their engines whirling like lawnmowers through the night sky.

Drones and missiles also came from Yemen, likely

fired by the Iranian-backed Houthis rebels.

Israeli officials estimated that Iran launched 170 drones, 30 cruise missiles and 120 ballistic missiles.

The U.S., the U.K., France and Jordan all shot down incoming fire. The Americans claimed to have downed 80 bomb-carrying drones and at least six ballistic missiles. Israeli missile defences were also activated, though their initial claim of intercepting 99% of the projectiles appeared to be an exaggeration.

The attack "was very clearly not something symbolic and not something trying to avoid damage," said Fabian Hinz, a missile expert. It was "a major attempt to overcome Israeli defences."

U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said they assessed that 50% of the Iranian missiles failed at launch or crashed before reaching their target. The poor performance may be attributable to electronic warfare measures designed to confuse the missile's guidance system, as well as potential sabotage, poor missile design and the distances involved in the attack.

Threat patterns

In the past, Iran has threatened to retaliate against Israel generally took the form of either attacks by Iranian-backed forces in West Asia

or assaults aimed at Israeli targets elsewhere, such as embassies or tourists aboard.

Geography limits the options for a direct Iranian military attack. Iran shares no border with Israel, and the two countries are some 1,000 km apart at the shortest distance.

Iran's air force has an ageing fleet led by F-4 Tomcats and Mikoyan MiG-29 fighter jets from the Cold War, but they would be no match for Israel's F-35s and its air defences. That means Iran again would need to rely on missiles and long-range drones.

It could also enlist help from allied militias such as Lebanon's Hezbollah and Yemen's Houthi rebels to overwhelm Israel's defences.

Always present in the background is the risk that Tehran could develop a nuclear weapon. While Iran insists its nuclear programme is peaceful, Western intelligence agencies say Tehran had an organised military nuclear programme until 2003.

U.S. agencies said in a report in July Iran has "undertaken activities that better position it to produce a nuclear device, if it chooses to do so." However, building a weapon and miniaturising it to put on a ballistic missile could take years.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2018

Ques: The term “two-state solution” is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of :

- (a) China
- (b) Israel
- (c) Iraq
- (d) Yemen

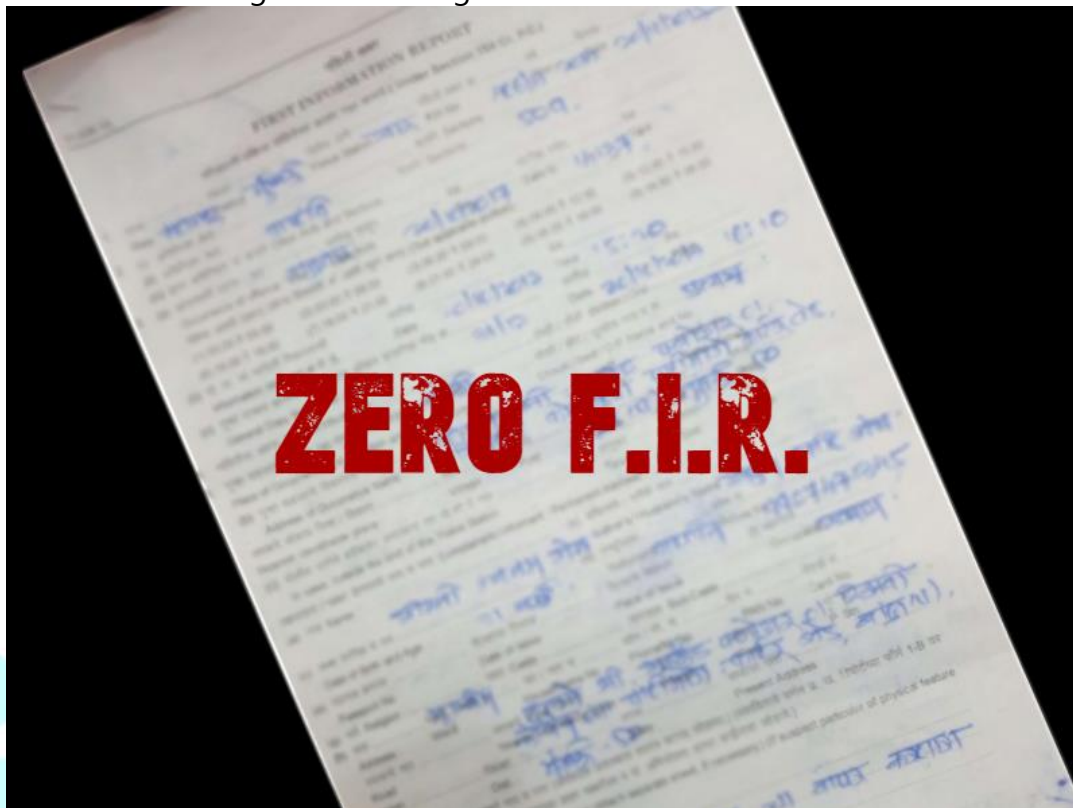
Ans: (b)



Term In News : Zero FIR

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has directed Union Territories (UTs) to ensure that 'zero FIRs' recorded in local languages are accompanied by a translated copy of the same when forwarded to states with different languages.

- ➡ This directive aims to preserve the legal value of FIRs. Complying, the UTs have started sending out the original zero FIRs along with their English translation.



Zero FIRs

➡ About FIRs

- The term first information report (FIR) is not defined in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) 1973 or in any other law.
- In police regulations or rules, information recorded under Section 154 of CrPC is known as FIR.
- Section 154 states that every information relating to the commission of a cognizable offence, if given orally to an officer in charge of a police station, shall be reduced to writing.
- A copy of the information (as recorded) shall be given (free of cost) to the informant.
- In essence, 3 important elements of an FIR:
 - the information must relate to the commission of a cognizable offence,
 - it should be given in writing or orally to the head of the police station and
 - it must be written down and signed by the informant, and its key points should be recorded in a daily diary.

➡ Zero FIRs

- A zero FIR can be filed in any Police Station by the victim, irrespective of their residence or the place of occurrence of crime.
- A police station that receives a complaint regarding an alleged offence committed in the jurisdiction of another police station, registers an FIR and then transfers it to the relevant police station for further investigation.
- No regular FIR number is given and after receiving the Zero FIR, the relevant police station registers a fresh FIR and starts the investigation.
- It came up after the recommendation in the report of the Justice Verma Committee set up after the 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape case to suggest amendments to the Criminal Law.
- The objective of a Zero FIR is to ensure the victim doesn't have to run from pillar to post to get a police complaint registered.
- The provision is meant to provide speedy redressal to the victim so that timely action can be taken after the filing of the FIR.

➡ FIR under new criminal laws

- The three new criminal laws came into effect from July 1, 2024.
- The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023, replaced the British-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act, respectively.
- Under the new laws, a person can now report incidents by electronic communication, without the need to physically visit a police station.
- This allows for easier and quicker reporting, facilitating prompt action by the police.
- Under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) police are now bound to register a 'zero FIR'.
- Under Section 176 (3) of BNSS, collection of forensic evidence and video-recording of the crime scene in case of offences punishable with seven years or more is mandatory.
- If the forensic facility is not available in a state, it can notify the utilisation of such facility of any other state.
- Victims will receive a free copy of the FIR, ensuring their participation in the legal process.

A discourse on AI governance that India must shape

The Summit of the Future (September 22-23 2024) will be a decisive moment for global diplomacy and the international norm-building process in the sphere of Artificial Intelligence (AI). At the summit, world leaders and stakeholders are to come together under the aegis of the United Nations to advance the Global Digital Compact (GDC). The GDC aims to build a collaborative multi-stakeholder framework that strives to address the digital divide, advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and create a secure and inclusive digital environment. Crucially, it seeks to strengthen the international governance of emerging technologies, including AI, to ensure that they align with fundamental rights and values. As digital technologies continue to shape our societal and geopolitical landscape, it is imperative for India to not only to engage with but also actively shape the international discourse on the international governance of AI.

Geopolitical contestation

Parallel to the GDC, the UN General Assembly recently adopted two key resolutions on AI led by the United States and China. The U.S.-led resolution, on 'Safe, Secure and Trustworthy AI for Sustainable Development', advocates a harmonised approach to AI governance and encourages member countries to develop shared ethical principles, data protection measures and transparency standards. By promoting a harmonised approach to AI governance, the U.S. aims to assert dominance in AI technology and dictate the terms of its development worldwide. On the other hand, the China-led resolution, on 'Enhancing Cooperation on Capacity Building of AI', focuses on equitable benefits from AI development, bridging the digital divide, and promoting an open and non-discriminatory business environment. The resolution not only prioritises inclusivity and equitable development but also strategically positions China as an important player in global trade and technology standards. These resolutions are deeply intertwined with each country's interests and highlight growing geopolitical contestation in the domain of digital governance.

The UN is quickly emerging as the apex forum for shaping and harmonising global standards on AI – something not entirely unexpected given the impact of AI on markets and societies. The UN offers an inclusive platform to articulate challenges, reconcile diverse national interests and promote international cooperation mechanisms. India has an active and long-standing engagement at the UN and strategic engagements at the G-20 and Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI). India can, therefore, seize the opportunity to ensure that the GDC aligns with its developmental priorities and ethical standards, bridges the global digital divide, and meaningfully commits to the interests of the Global South.



Sukanya Thapliyal

AI policy expert with the Koan Advisory Group, New Delhi

The U.S. and China are driving the AI governance discourse to advance their strategic interests, which could isolate the Global South

India has a deep historical legacy and influence at the UN, even as it has championed the issues of the Global South. This is most evident from its engagement in international climate negotiations where it has consistently advocated the principle of equity and climate justice as the basis of global climate action. India positioned itself as a key player in climate negotiations following the UNGA Resolution 44/207 in 1989 and contributed to integrating the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR), which acknowledged that developed countries bore the primary responsibility for climate change. India led significant efforts to shape the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol, ensuring that developing countries like itself are not subjected to obligations not aligned with their developmental plans and priorities; it emphasised the need for technology transfer and financial support from developed countries.

India's diplomatic weight

India also played a pivotal role in forming coalitions of developing countries to ensure that their perspectives are adequately represented throughout negotiations. India created the Green Group alliance comprising 72 like-minded developing countries at the first Conference of Parties under the UNFCCC to counter demands from the developed countries to have stringent commitments on developing countries. India also worked closely with Brazil, South Africa and China to form the BASIC Group to safeguard its developmental and poverty reduction objectives in the 2000s. India continues this trend of active participation – evident in the Paris Agreement and reaffirmed at the Dubai Summit – where it advocated fair terms and obligations that consider the varied capabilities and needs of developing countries.

India's history of leading Global South negotiations, along with the unique challenges it faces, positions it as an important contender in debates around AI. As a Global South country, India grapples with structural inequalities in the AI innovation landscape. This includes a lack of advanced computing infrastructure, high-quality data sets, and capital. Just as India advocated differential needs and responsibilities in climate agreements, it must now ensure that discussions around AI governance include considerations of equity, accessibility and fairness.

India has succeeded in registering these considerations at other international fora as seen in the G-20 New Delhi Leaders Declaration and the GPAI Ministerial Declaration. Under India's leadership, the G-20 and the GPAI have underscored the importance of fair access to critical AI resources, emphasised equitable sharing of AI benefits, and mitigated risks while fostering international cooperation. It is crucial to voice these concerns to the UN. The UN has unique legitimacy as an organisation with

universal membership and a well-established framework grounded in the rule of law, a Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), and SDGs that offer clear pathways to accountability. India is adept at building coalitions and advancing first principles that prioritise the interests of the Global South. By leveraging the UN platform, India can amplify its existing efforts on a wider scale, ensuring that the voices of developing countries are heard.

India should push for more equitable access to AI technology, building technical capacity, and creating institutional mechanisms for knowledge sharing to ensure that all countries can harness the benefits of AI. India can use this opportunity to redefine the multi-stakeholder model to be more inclusive – one that actively includes voices from the Global South, particularly those from marginalised and under-represented groups. This includes creating a platform accessible to smaller non-governmental organisations, small and medium enterprises, and groups that otherwise lack the resources to participate in global discussions.

In addition, India should also advocate a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to AI governance that respects human rights, aligns with existing international laws and standards, and ensures that AI systems are designed to be inclusive, fair and representative of diverse global perspectives.

Address the challenges

India's advocacy for a fair and inclusive AI governance framework is also crucial in the context of bipolar dynamics between the U.S. and China, where both countries are driving the AI governance discourse to advance their strategic interests. This risks sidelining the unique needs and perspectives of the Global South. The wide gaps between developed and developing countries are starkly evident in the realm of AI advancements. While developed countries have readily available resources, developing countries lack even the basic infrastructure, Internet access, and electricity – absolute essentials for AI advancements. Addressing these challenges requires a localised understanding and approach, which might be overlooked or simplified by those unfamiliar with these specific contexts. This can result in policies and frameworks that fail to address the root issues faced by developing countries, limit the effectiveness of global AI governance initiatives, and exacerbate existing inequalities.

India's historical legacy of advocating the interests of the Global South, robust engagement at international fora, and lived experiences as a Global South country make it well-positioned to lead these conversations. Its active engagement will not only advance its interests but will also contribute towards a balanced and sustainable digital future.

The views expressed are personal

GS Paper 02 : Governance,

GS Paper 03 : Science and Technology

(UPSC CSE (M) GS-3 : 2023) Introduce the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI). How does AI help clinical diagnosis? Do you perceive any threat to privacy of the individual in the use of AI in healthcare? (150 w/10m)

UPSC Mains Practice Question Discuss India's potential role in shaping global Artificial Intelligence (AI) governance at international forums like the United Nations, particularly in advocating for the interests of the Global South. (250 w /15 m)

Context :

- The article highlights India's role in shaping global AI governance at the upcoming 2024 Summit of the Future, focusing on bridging the digital divide and advocating for the Global South.
- It contrasts U.S. and China-led resolutions on AI, emphasising India's strategic position in ensuring equitable, inclusive, and ethical AI frameworks.

Introduction : India's Role in Global AI Governance

- The Summit of the Future, scheduled for September 2024, is a crucial event where global leaders and stakeholders will convene to advance the Global Digital Compact (GDC) under the United Nations.
- The GDC aims to build a collaborative framework to bridge the digital divide, achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and ensure a secure and inclusive digital environment.
- A key focus is to strengthen international governance of emerging technologies, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI), aligning with fundamental rights and values.
- India is urged to actively shape international discourse on AI governance, ensuring it serves its developmental priorities.

Geopolitical Contestation in AI Governance

- Two key AI-related resolutions have recently been adopted at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), reflecting geopolitical contestation between the U.S. and China.

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- The S.-led resolution on "Safe, Secure and Trustworthy AI for Sustainable Development" advocates a harmonised approach to AI governance, focusing on shared ethical principles, transparency, and data protection.
- The U.S. aims to assert dominance in AI technology and its development.
- The China-led resolution on "Enhancing Cooperation on Capacity Building of AI" prioritises equitable AI benefits, bridging the digital divide, and creating a non-discriminatory business environment.
- China positions itself as a key player in global trade and technology standards.
- These resolutions reflect each nation's strategic interests, highlighting the broader geopolitical contestation in digital governance.

The UN as a Platform for AI Governance

- The UN is becoming the central forum for shaping global standards on AI, given AI's profound impact on societies and markets.
- India, with its long-standing engagement at the UN, G-20, and Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), has the opportunity to ensure that the GDC aligns with its developmental goals and ethical standards.
- India can advocate for the interests of the Global South and bridge the global digital divide through its active participation.

India's Historical Legacy at the UN

- India has a deep historical legacy at the UN, particularly in advocating for the Global South in international climate negotiations.
- India's leadership in the UNGA Resolution 44/207 (1989) helped integrate the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) in climate agreements.
- This principle ensured that developed countries bore more responsibility for climate change.
- India played a key role in shaping the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol, ensuring that developing countries were not subjected to obligations that hindered their development plans.
- India formed coalitions like the Green Group and BASIC Group to safeguard its developmental and poverty reduction objectives.

India's Role in AI Governance for the Global South

- India faces unique challenges, including a lack of advanced AI infrastructure, quality data, and capital, similar to other Global South countries.
- Just as India advocated for differential needs in climate negotiations, it should push for fairness, equity, and accessibility in AI governance.
- India's advocacy for these principles is already evident in the G-20 New Delhi Leaders Declaration and the GPAI Ministerial Declaration.

Daily News Analysis

- India's leadership at the UN can ensure that the voices of developing countries are included in global AI governance, prioritising equitable access and technical capacity building.

Redefining the Multi-stakeholder Model

- India has an opportunity to redefine the multi-stakeholder model to be more inclusive by involving marginalised and under-represented groups from the Global South.
- This model should be accessible to smaller non-governmental organisations (NGOs), small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and other groups lacking resources for global discussions.
- India should advocate for AI systems that are inclusive, fair, and representative of diverse perspectives, aligning with human rights and international laws.

Challenges in the U.S.-China AI Discourse

- The current AI governance discourse is largely driven by the strategic interests of the U.S. and China, sidelining the concerns of the Global South.
- There are stark disparities between developed and developing countries in AI advancements. While developed countries have abundant resources, many developing nations lack basic infrastructure, internet access, and electricity.
- A localised understanding of these challenges is necessary for effective global AI governance frameworks.

Conclusion

- India's experience as a Global South country, combined with its historical legacy of advocating for the Global South, positions it well to lead discussions on equitable AI governance.
- Active participation by India will not only advance its interests but also ensure a balanced and sustainable digital future that benefits all nations.