

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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Edition: International Table of Contents

<p>Page 01 Syllabus : GS 2 : International Relations</p>	<p>'Trump's priorities work for India'</p>
<p>Page 02 Syllabus : GS 2 : Governance</p>	<p>J&K govt. to promote Bangus Valley near LoC for ecotourism</p>
<p>Page 06 Syllabus : GS 3 : Science and Technology</p>	<p>Govt. launches AI Kosha, repository of data to build models and tools</p>
<p>Page 10 Syllabus : GS 2 : International relations</p>	<p>The academic link between Nepal and India</p>
<p>In News</p>	<p>Wallace Line</p>
<p>Page 08 : Editorial Analysis: Syllabus : GS 3 : Science and Tech : Awareness in various science and tech fields involving India</p>	<p>Is Artificial Intelligence affecting critical thinking skills?</p>

The statement made by External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar during his visit to the U.K. highlights the alignment of U.S. President Donald Trump's policies with India's strategic interests.

'Trump's priorities work for India'

EAM Jaishankar welcomes initiatives that will keep energy prices affordable

He says U.S. interest in multi-polarity, technology and connectivity 'promising'

President seems open to connectivity plans of 'collaborative nature', he adds

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

Citing the shifting geopolitical order, energy, technology and connectivity initiatives, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Wednesday said that several priorities of U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration were promising for India.

"I think we see a President and an administration which, in our parlance, is moving towards multi-polarity. And that is something which suits India," he said, clarifying that by practising multi-polarity, the Trump administration was in fact promoting it.

Mr. Jaishankar was speaking at Chatham House, a London-based think tank on Wednesday, during an official visit to the U.K.

The U.S. had been thought of as a bloc with the West since 1945, rather than as a nation, but now the U.S.'s own self-perception is more as a nation, the Minister said.



Union Minister S. Jaishankar speaking with Chatham House Director and CEO Bronwen Maddox in London on Wednesday. ANI

"I think, from President Trump's perspective, the one big shared enterprise that we have is the Quad [Quadrilateral Security Dialogue]," Mr. Jaishankar said, referring to the grouping of India, the U.S., Australia and Japan.

Each Quad member was paying its "fair share", he said, and so there were no spats about burden-sharing. Financial burden-sharing has become a central

issue between the U.S. and several European countries in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military alliance.

Mr. Trump "appears open to connectivity initiatives of a certain collaborative nature" Mr. Jaishankar said. "We have a deep interest in that," he added.

The Minister was presumably referring to the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC), which

finds mention in the India-U.S. joint statement that emerged from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent discussions with Mr. Trump at the White House.

The statement also refers to other current and future connectivity initiatives, such as the newly announced Indian Ocean Strategic Venture.

On energy, Mr. Jaishankar said India welcomed Mr. Trump's actions that

would keep energy prices stable and affordable. Mr. Trump is a strong proponent of fossil fuels and is changing U.S. policy to drill for more petroleum and natural gas.

The Trump administration's emphasis on the development of technology and its use "as a game changer in global politics" offered a lot of possibilities, according to Mr. Jaishankar.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal is currently in Washington DC, to discuss a trade deal with the Trump administration, a fact that Mr. Jaishankar brought up. India-U.S. relations are at probably their best, Mr. Jaishankar said.

"So we have absolutely no interest in undermining the dollar at all," he said, adding that the problem in India's region was the lack of availability of the dollar. Mr. Jaishankar was asked about the internationalisation of the rupee and whether India supported the U.S. dollar as the world's reserve currency. He said that the govern-

ment was promoting the internationalisation of the rupee as part of the effort to promote the globalisation of India. He cited a growth in India's trade, external investments and Indian tourists abroad. Sometimes there was a lack of hard currency, especially the dollar, necessitating the use of trade settlements, or a need for cashless payments between India and other countries, the Minister said.

Later in the discussion, Mr. Jaishankar said the dollar was the source of international economic stability and, right now, there is a need for stability.

In February, Mr. Trump had threatened at least 100% tariffs on BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) countries if they wanted "to play games with the dollar". The BRICS countries have a diversity of views on the dollar, Mr. Jaishankar said. "The assumption that somewhere there's a united BRICS position against the dollar, I think, is not borne out by facts," he said.

- The discussion revolves around key themes such as multipolarity, connectivity, technology, and energy security, which are vital for India's foreign policy and economic development.

Key Themes and Analysis:

1. Multipolarity and Strategic Alignment:

- EAM Jaishankar emphasized that the Trump administration's shift towards a multipolar world aligns with India's foreign policy approach.

- The U.S. is increasingly focusing on national interests rather than traditional alliances, which allows India to navigate its strategic interests more independently.
- This approach strengthens India's position in global geopolitics, as it moves towards becoming a major power.

2. The Quad and Regional Security:

- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) involving India, the U.S., Japan, and Australia is a key aspect of India's Indo-Pacific strategy.
- EAM Jaishankar highlighted the equal financial burden-sharing within the Quad, unlike NATO, which faces disputes over financial contributions.
- The Quad enhances India's maritime security and acts as a counterbalance to China's influence in the region.

3. Connectivity Initiatives and Economic Implications:

- Trump's support for collaborative connectivity initiatives, such as the India–Middle East–Europe Corridor (IMEC), benefits India's trade and economic outreach.
- The IMEC was mentioned in the India-U.S. joint statement, indicating strong bilateral cooperation.
- The development of the Indian Ocean Strategic Venture further enhances India's strategic and trade interests.

4. Energy Security and Economic Stability:

- India supports Trump's policies that ensure stable and affordable energy prices, as the country remains heavily dependent on fossil fuel imports.
- The U.S.'s increased fossil fuel production helps maintain price stability, reducing economic pressure on India.
- Affordable energy prices support India's industrial growth and economic stability.

5. Technology and Global Politics:

- The U.S. administration views technology as a game changer in global politics, offering India opportunities in AI, cybersecurity, and digital infrastructure.
- Strengthened technological collaboration between India and the U.S. can boost India's innovation ecosystem and digital economy.

6. The Role of the U.S. Dollar and India's Currency Strategy:

- India has no interest in undermining the U.S. dollar, as emphasized by Jaishankar.
- However, he noted the necessity of internationalizing the Indian rupee due to hard currency shortages in some regions.
- The discussion on trade settlements and cashless payments reflects India's efforts to strengthen its global financial standing.

7. Trump's Tariff Threats and BRICS Dynamics:

- Trump's threat of 100% tariffs on BRICS nations highlights challenges in global trade relations.
- Jaishankar clarified that BRICS does not have a unified stance against the dollar, indicating diverse economic interests among member nations.
- Despite differences, India balances its economic diplomacy between BRICS and Western economies.

Conclusion:

- The evolving U.S.-India relationship under President Trump presents both opportunities and challenges. The alignment in strategic areas such as multipolarity, connectivity, energy security, and technology cooperation strengthens India's global position.
- However, issues like trade tariffs and financial dependencies require careful negotiation. For India, leveraging these geopolitical shifts while maintaining strategic autonomy remains crucial for its long-term interests.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques :Analyze the implications of the Trump administration's tariff policies on India and other BRICS nations. How should India navigate such trade challenges? (250 words)

The Jammu and Kashmir government's decision to promote Bangus Valley as an ecotourism destination aligns with its broader efforts to decongest popular tourist sites like Pahalgam, Gulmarg, and Sonamarg while promoting sustainable tourism.

J&K govt. to promote Bangus Valley near LoC for ecotourism

Peerzada Ashiq
JAMMU

The Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday announced a new set of rules for Bangus, a far-off tourist spot near the Line of Control (LoC) in north Kashmir, in a bid to promote it as an ecotourism destination.

The decision comes in the wake of unplanned and uncontrolled growth in the traditional tourist hotspots of Pahalgam, Gulmarg and Sonamarg.

CM's announcement

"To maintain ecological balance, the department concerned has focused on avoiding construction of massive buildings and hotels. The aim would be to develop the area as an ecotourism destination," Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said, while speaking in the



New destination: Tourists waiting for a hot air balloon ride at Bangus Valley in J&K. FILE PHOTO

Assembly.

He said the department would focus on creating basic recreation facilities, rain shelters, public conveniences, signages, lighting, and waste disposal facilities for visitors.

Bangus lies close to the LoC in north Kashmir's Kupwara district. After Gu-rez, Machil and Keran, Bangus is one more addition to the list of tourist spots near the LoC.

Once a militant infiltra-

tion route, Bangus is around 100 km away from Srinagar, with two bowl-shaped valleys perched at an altitude of 10,000 feet.

Work on the basic facilities, according to Mr. Abdullah, would be underta-

ken after the Deputy Commissioner, Kupwara, identifies land parcels in consultation with the Forest department. "Once the land parcels are identified, the necessary permissions and no-objection certificates shall be sought on the Parivesh Portal for forest clearance," Mr. Abdullah said.

Guest houses

To safeguard the livelihood of local shepherds, nomads, and other inhabitants of the Valley, Mr. Abdullah said the J&K Tourism Department had initiated the process of registering paying guest houses in the area. "This will help to preserve and promote local culture, traditions, and cuisine, and would be an immersive travel experience for tourists," he added.

At present, 19 paying

guest houses in the proximity of Bangus Valley are registered with the Department of Tourism, Kashmir.

Fresh measures

The fresh measures towards ecotourism are being taken as record number of tourists are visiting the Valley, leading to uncontrolled constructions in the favourite tourist places of Pahalgam, Gulmarg and Sonamarg, posing a threat to the environment.

Officials told the J&K Assembly that notices were issued against 269 unauthorised constructions in Pahalgam over the past two years.

"The Pahalgam Development Authority (PDA) has been conducting demolition drives whenever necessary to curb illegal construction activities in the area," the government told the House.

- The move is significant in the wake of environmental degradation caused by unregulated constructions in existing tourist hotspots.

Key Highlights

1. Environmental Governance & Sustainable Tourism

- The initiative aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 15 (Life on Land) by focusing on conserving natural ecosystems while promoting tourism.
- It reflects ecotourism best practices, balancing economic benefits with ecological conservation.

2. Security & Development in Border Areas

- As Bangus Valley is near the Line of Control, this initiative contributes to the economic integration of border regions, reducing vulnerabilities associated with past militant activities.

- Tourism-led growth can promote peace and stability in conflict-prone areas.

3. Role of Local Communities

- The focus on homestays and guest houses ensures economic benefits for local communities rather than external investors.
- This supports inclusive growth, a crucial theme in governance and economic development.

4. Government's Approach to Environmental Challenges

- The government's proactive stance in curbing illegal construction in tourist hotspots like Pahalgam is a positive regulatory step.
- However, effective implementation of ecotourism norms in Bangus will be key to avoiding repeat mistakes.

Way Forward

1. Strict implementation of ecotourism guidelines to prevent over-exploitation.
2. Capacity building for local communities to ensure sustainable tourism models.
3. Regular environmental impact assessments to monitor tourism's effects.
4. Better connectivity and infrastructure without harming the ecosystem.

Conclusion

- The promotion of Bangus Valley as an ecotourism destination is a step towards sustainable tourism in Jammu and Kashmir.
- If implemented well, it can boost the local economy, protect the environment, and enhance border security through development.
- However, strict regulatory measures will be essential to prevent uncontrolled tourism growth seen in Pahalgam, Gulmarg, and Sonamarg.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Discuss the role of ecotourism in promoting sustainable development in environmentally sensitive regions. How can the government balance tourism promotion with ecological conservation?(250 words)

The launch of AI Kosha marks a significant step in India's AI-driven digital transformation. As a repository of non-personal datasets, AI Kosha aims to facilitate the development of AI models and tools.

Govt. launches AI Kosha, repository of data to build models and tools

14,000 GPUs have been commissioned for shared access and more of it will be added on a quarterly basis, says Ashwini Vaishnaw; he also provided an update on the government-supported effort to create a homegrown foundational AI model

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union government on Thursday launched AI Kosha, a platform with datasets that is being touted as a home for non-personal data that will assist with developing artificial intelligence models and tools. At launch, the platform contains 316 datasets, the bulk of these being programmes to help in creating or validating language translation tools for Indian languages.

The IndiaAI Datasets Platform is one of the seven pillars of the IndiaAI Mission, the Union government's main state-backed AI effort. The Mission has an outlay of ₹10,370 crore, and last month the Centre announced that under its Compute Capacity pillar, start-ups and academia would be able to use pooled access to graphics processing units (GPUs), which are needed to train and run AI models. Other than translation, the limited datasets include submissions from Telangana's own open data initiative, such as health data; 2011



New realms: Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw along with others during announcement of various projects under IndiaAI Mission, in New Delhi. PTI

Census data; satellite imagery captured by Indian satellites; meteorological and pollution data; and so on.

More GPUs
Information Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said while announcing the AI Kosha platform that 14,000 GPUs had been commissioned for shared access, as against nearly 10,000 when announced earlier this year. More GPUs will be added on a

quarterly basis, Mr. Vaishnaw said.

The Minister provided an update on the government-supported effort to create a homegrown foundational AI model, an aim that has gained urgency following the success of DeepSeek, the Chinese firm that was able to train and launch such a model at a fraction of the cost that American firms such as OpenAI and Google had to spend. "Now, the team is

actually inundated with how to evaluate these applications," Mr. Vaishnaw said, indicating a high level of interest from start-ups to build such a foundational model for India.

Government datasets

This is not the first time the Union government has sought to aggregate public data to nudge other entities to leverage it. The government's Open Governance Data platform

(data.gov.in) currently hosts over 12,000 datasets provided by different government agencies across India. The government has designated "Chief Data Officers" across Ministries and departments, encouraging them to provide datasets that can be used by researchers, companies, and other parts of the government.

In 2018, the government constituted a committee to explore the possibility of compelling firms to provide start-ups and government access to non-personal data, such as traffic data from ride-sharing apps, to help new entrants and assist government policy. The committee, led by Infosys co-founder Kris Gopalakrishnan, submitted its report in 2020. However, the proposals faced pushback from the tech industry, as private players were reluctant to share their data with other parties. The conversation within the government around non-personal data from private firms took place largely before the advent of large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT.

- It is a crucial part of the IndiaAI Mission, which has a budget of ₹10,370 crore and focuses on building indigenous AI capabilities.
- The move is particularly relevant as nations worldwide are investing heavily in AI infrastructure. With the announcement that 14,000 GPUs will be available for shared access, the initiative is expected to benefit start-ups, researchers, and academia in India.

Key Highlights

1. Digital Infrastructure & AI Development

- AI Kosha aligns with India's AI policy by promoting indigenous AI research.
- It supports start-ups, researchers, and academia by providing open-access datasets and compute resources.
- The initiative can help reduce India's dependence on foreign AI models by enabling local AI development.

2. Data Governance & Ethical AI

- The success of AI Kosha depends on responsible data sharing, ensuring privacy and security.
- The resistance from private firms highlights the challenge of balancing innovation with data protection.
- A transparent regulatory framework is needed to incentivize private sector participation while safeguarding interests.

3. AI for Socio-Economic Development

- AI Kosha's datasets can support AI-driven solutions in healthcare, agriculture, education, and governance.
- AI models trained on Indian languages will enhance digital inclusion, making AI more accessible to regional populations.
- The initiative can boost India's AI ecosystem, creating jobs and attracting investments in AI research and development.

4. Geopolitical & Strategic Importance

- Countries like China and the US are leading in AI infrastructure and models.
- India's move to develop its own AI models is strategically important for technological sovereignty.
- AI-driven solutions can also strengthen national security, defense intelligence, and cyber capabilities.

Challenges & Way Forward

1. **Ensuring High-Quality Datasets** – The repository must include diverse and well-structured datasets beyond language translation.
2. **Encouraging Private Sector Collaboration** – A clear legal framework is needed to facilitate responsible private-sector data sharing.
3. **Building AI Talent & Research Ecosystem** – The government must invest in AI education, skilling programs, and academic partnerships.
4. **Developing AI Compute Infrastructure** – Expansion of cloud-based compute resources and energy-efficient AI chips is crucial.

Conclusion

- AI Kosha is a landmark step in India's AI journey, providing critical datasets and compute infrastructure to researchers and businesses. By balancing innovation with data governance, India can enhance its AI capabilities, foster economic growth, and ensure ethical AI adoption. However, private sector collaboration, regulatory clarity, and continuous expansion of datasets will be key to its long-term success.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Discuss the role of open data repositories like AI Kosha in promoting AI research and innovation. How can the government ensure responsible data sharing while safeguarding privacy and security? (250 words)

India and Nepal share a longstanding academic relationship, with a significant number of Nepali students pursuing higher education in India.

- The recent incident at Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), where a Nepali student died by suicide following harassment, highlights concerns regarding the treatment of foreign students. This has diplomatic implications, particularly in light of the Indo-Nepal Peace Treaty of 1950.

The academic link between Nepal and India

When it comes to the history of modern formal education in Nepal, a cursory glance will reveal that not only is it not very old, it also displays intricate connections with India. Higher educational training embeds avenues that register learning experiences as impactful memories which shape future lives and proclivities

FULL CONTEXT

Sawatashiddha Sarkar

In February 16, a third-year woman student from Nepal was found dead by suicide in the Bhubaneswar-based Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT). Initial investigation by the police revealed that harassment from a fellow male student had led the student to take her own life. Other students from Nepal carried out a protest stating that the university had ignored the consistent complaints made by the female student about the harassment. This led to KIIT halting academic activities and ordering students from Nepal to vacate the campus. This move caused widespread outrage, with the Nepali government also getting involved. KIIT eventually withdrew the order and resumed the academic session.

This piece intends to shed light on some necessary but seldom discussed issues affecting students from Nepal in India.

Foreign student enrolment in India

The latest available All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) data reveals that during 2021-22, 46,878 foreign students from 170 nations were enrolled in various institutes of higher learning in India, and that the highest share of foreign students came from Nepal (28%). The percentage share of foreign students from Nepal had been the highest (25% when the figure for total foreign student enrolment was 34,774) even in 2012-13, as per AISHE data. It is thus evidenced that while the number of foreign students enrolling in India has been on the rise over the years, majority of them came from Nepal. Table 1 gives us a brief overview of the enrolment of students from Nepal studying different courses offered by almost 180 Indian universities and institutes.

These students are spread across the nation – from Kashmir University in the north to Kerala University in the south, from North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) in the east to Gujarat Ayurveda University in the west. While the enrolment is highest in the undergraduate category, enrolment in higher categories like PhD displays a steady increase, although it is far from being impressive. Students from Nepal display an increasing attraction to Indian institutes offering training and degrees in engineering and technology. As a matter of fact, their presence in IITs (Delhi, Kanpur, Roorkee, Guwahati among others), the Indian Institute of Science (IISc Bangalore), and other private institutes like KIIT, has been substantial.

An academic relationship

Nepal's academic relationship with India and Indian academic institutions in particular illustrate a rich history. Paying a cursory look at that historical tapestry, as shown by scholars like Prayshash Onta or Rhoderick Chalmers, would help us recognise the contribution of Banaras and Darjeeling in shaping Nepal's public sphere from both within and outside Nepal. However, unlike the colonial legacy associated to the 'Gorkhas', the cultural linkage between Nepal and India, which epitomised India as an educational hub for the Nepalis, is as old as the gurukul system. Since the days of the Rana regime when education in Nepal remained exclusively an elitist affair, places in India like Banaras, Patna, Dehradun, Gorakhpur and Darjeeling

Destination India, for higher education

The latest available All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) data reveals that during 2021-22, 46,878 foreign students from 170 nations were enrolled in various institutes of higher learning in India



In rage, an agitator holds a poster during a protest over the death of a Nepali student on the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) campus, in Bhubaneswar, on February 19, 2021.

Table 1: Students from Nepal studying at different levels in Indian universities and institutes of higher learning

Enrolment of foreign students from Nepal	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
PhD	28	51	33	43	42	50	48	86	104	114
MPhil	0	3	2	1	10	0	2	0	1	1
PG	1,015	1,005	1,195	1,272	1,280	1,357	1,307	1,608	1,587	1,534
UG	5,839	6,959	7,244	7,344	8,796	9,151	9,444	10,804	10,836	10,708
PG Diploma	7	17	2	19	18	15	7	12	14	8
Diploma	251	265	360	617	1,010	799	1,562	1,252	977	666
Certificate	5	3	1	1	64	7	23	3	3	10
Integrated	22	77	57	77	85	102	104	115	52	85
Total students enrolled from Nepal	7,187	8,360	8,894	9,574	11,250	11,521	12,747	13,880	13,574	13,126
Total foreign students enrolled	34,774	39,517	42,297	45,421	47,515	46,144	47,427	49,348	49,035	46,878
% of students enrolled from Nepal	21%	21%	21%	21%	23.66%	24.99%	26.88%	28.10%	28.26%	28%

Source: Compiled from AISHE Reports of respective years

opened up opportunities to those who could afford to send their wards to India for education.

Further, when it comes to the history of the 'modern' formal education system in Nepal, a cursory glance will reveal that not only is it not very old, but it also displays intricate connections with India. It is said that the western style of education began in Nepal with the establishment of the Durbar High School in 1854, although accessible only to the children of the royal family and courtiers. In 1901, some steps were taken for the benefit of the public, as schools, such as the Bhasa Pabhalha (Language Schools), were opened up with Nepal (then known as Gorkhal/Khas) as the medium of instruction. The 'Tri-Chandra College was established in Kathmandu in 1918 and was initially affiliated to Calcutta University, India. As per this affiliation, the responsibility of the college lied only with the teaching part while the overall academic programme, including courses, textbooks, pedagogy, examinations, award of degree, were run by the affiliating Indian institute.

Letting go of colonial influence

Thus, without even being colonised, the colonial legacy of Nepal's education system was established through two routes: first, by affiliating the first college in Nepal to universities of colonial India, thereby, diminishing any opportunity to premise pedagogy around Nepali roots and branches (except language); and the second was through college instructors, all of whom had received their master's degrees from Indian universities, and

therefore felt secure in following the same content. Before the establishment of the Tribhuvan University in 1959, there was no provision for postgraduate instruction in the country, and higher education was limited to the undergraduate level. Social science teaching, followed by science, was introduced in Nepal only in the 1940s, starting with economics and geography, while sociology and anthropology came a little while later in the 1950s.

In summary, until the 1950s, the colonial legacy of British India strongly influenced Nepal's education, even when attempts were undertaken to 'Nepalise' the education system. Towards this end, the Gandhian model of education was valorised as a reference point albeit with certain tweaks. Finally, in 1954, the government constituted the National Educational Planning Commission (NEPC) to give recommendations across all aspects of education, having declared that the goal is to make education relevant to 'national need'. Later, with the introduction of the New Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971, the entire machinery was revamped. Nepal began her independent journey in the sphere of higher education, even though students from Nepal continued to enrol themselves in Indian higher education institutions. Major players within the intellectual field post-1950s Nepal, were trained in India, and with the passage of time the numbers kept on rising, even amidst ups and downs in diplomatic relations between these two nations.

Cultural capital
Higher educational training, even though

available as a commodity, still embeds avenues that register learning experiences as impactful memories which shape future lives and proclivities. These memories, among other things, are potential sources of South Asian cultural capital that grows spontaneously when nurtured with care. And when this process involves the category of 'foreign students', it becomes the responsibility of the host institution to prevent the process from turning into a pedagogy of the oppressed.

Students are students, no matter where they are from. Creating categories within studenthood and offering differential treatment is an act of institutionally sponsored ragging that devalues the institution, renders the educational ambience volatile, and most importantly, propagates a culture of misanthropy, thereby nullifying the core of education in itself, no matter where the institution appears on the charts of national or international grading systems.

Moreover, the KIIT instance, when viewed in the light of the Indo-Nepal Peace Treaty of 1950, appears to be a case that is in direct conflict with Article 6 (confirms national treatment to be offered to the nationals of either country) and Article 7 (confirms reciprocal privileges of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other) of the said Treaty, and thereby has the potency to affect bilateral ties between India and Nepal.

Sawatashiddha Sarkar teaches at the Centre for Himalayan Studies, University of North Bengal.

THE GIST

On February 16, a third-year Nepali woman student was found dead by suicide in the Bhubaneswar-based Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT).

Nepal's academic relationship with India and Indian academic institutions in particular illustrate a rich history.

Without even being colonised, the colonial legacy of Nepal's education system was established through two routes: first, by affiliating the first college in Nepal to universities of colonial India, thereby, diminishing any opportunity to premise pedagogy around Nepali roots and branches (except language); and the second was through college instructors.

Key Points

Daily News Analysis

- A large proportion of foreign students in India come from Nepal, with enrolment concentrated in engineering and technology institutes, including IITs and private universities.
- Nepal's formal education system has historical ties to India, dating back to the colonial era when institutions in Banaras, Patna, and Darjeeling served as centers of learning for Nepali elites.
- The influence of Indian universities on Nepal's education system persisted even after Nepal's independence, with institutions like Tri-Chandra College affiliating with Indian universities.
- Nepal's efforts to establish an independent education system began in the 1950s, with the introduction of national education policies. However, Nepali students continued to seek higher education in India, reinforcing cross-border academic ties.
- The incident at KIIT raises questions about the responsibilities of Indian institutions in ensuring the safety and fair treatment of foreign students. It also challenges the principle of equal treatment as outlined in the Indo-Nepal Peace Treaty.
- The historical and cultural linkages between India and Nepal create a shared academic space, but institutional actions that create divisions among students threaten the foundational values of education.

Conclusion

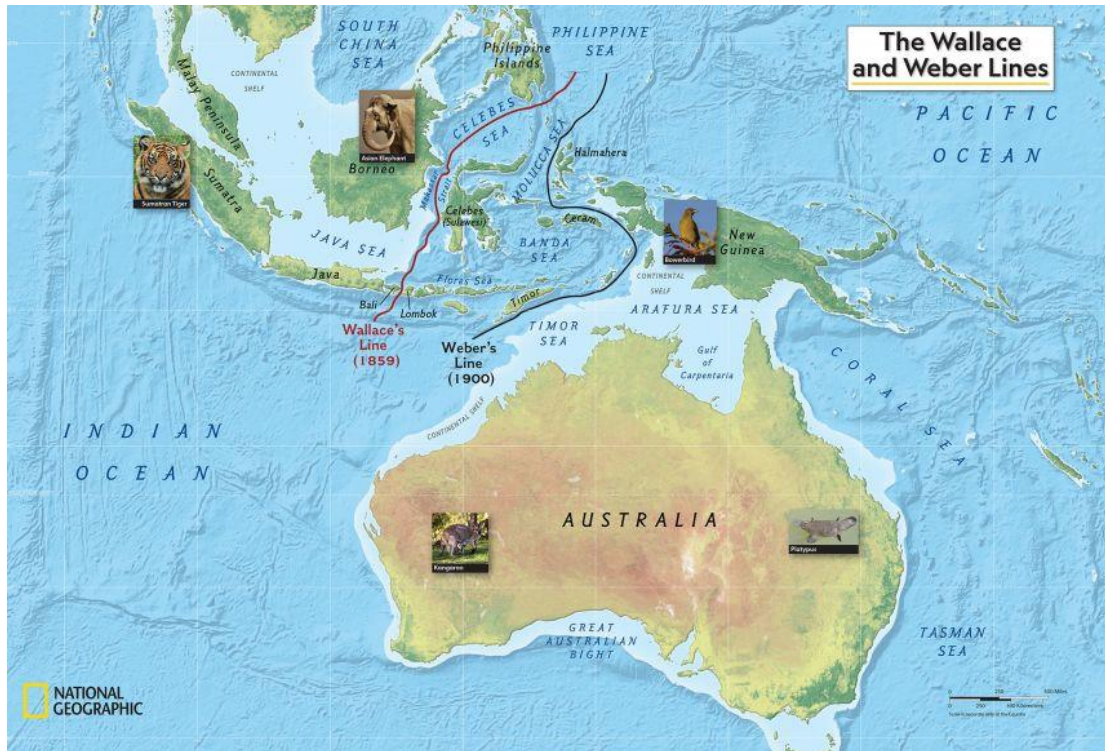
- India remains a crucial academic destination for Nepali students, but cases like the KIIT incident highlight the need for stronger institutional policies to protect foreign students. Educational institutions must ensure inclusivity, prevent discrimination, and uphold the principles of academic and cultural cooperation that define Indo-Nepal relations.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Discuss the historical evolution of Nepal's education system and its deep-rooted academic connections with India. How has this relationship shaped Nepal's higher education sector? (250 words)

In News : Wallace Line

In the 19th century, English naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace observed a sharp shift in biodiversity as he moved from Asia to Australia, leading him to propose the Wallace Line—an imaginary boundary separating species from both regions.



About the Wallace Line:

- It is a bio-geographical boundary separating Asia and Australia's eco-zones.
- It was identified by Alfred Russel Wallace in 1863 during his explorations.
- It is an imaginary line running through the Lombok Strait (between Bali and Lombok) and the Makassar Strait (between Borneo and Sulawesi).

Distinct evolutionary histories:

- **West of the line (Asia):** Tigers, elephants, and orangutans.
- **East of the line (Australia):** Kangaroos, marsupials, and cockatoos.
- A very few species cross the line, particularly birds and mammals.
- This is a barrier for land species but not marine life.

Its formation:

Daily News Analysis

- ▶ Continental drift: Australia separated from Antarctica and moved toward Asia (~35 million years ago). This created a deep-water channel, preventing species migration.
- ▶ Pleistocene Epoch Influence: Lower sea levels exposed land bridges but deep waters maintained the boundary.

Scientific Relevance:

- ▶ Wallace Line is more of a gradient than a strict boundary.
- ▶ Understanding biogeography helps predict species adaptation to climate change.

Note:

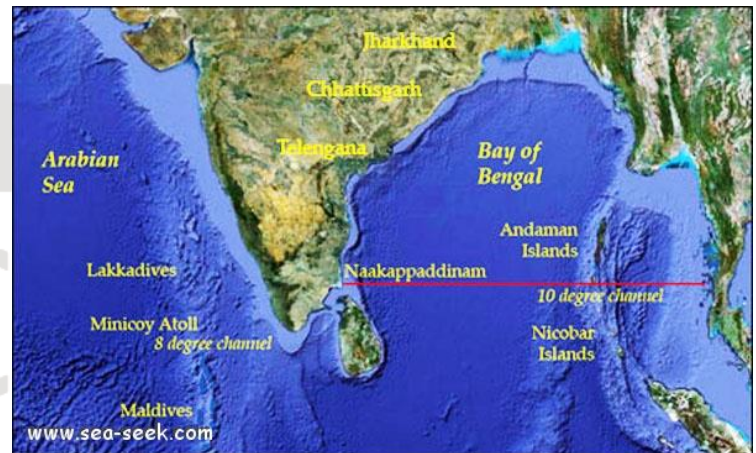
- ▶ Weber Line more accurately defines the balance point where the influence of Asian and Australian species is nearly equal, whereas the Wallace Line marks a sharper divide.

UPSC Prelims PYQ : 2014

Ques : Which one of the following pairs of islands is separated from each other by the 'Ten Degree Channel'?

- (a) Andaman and Nicobar
- (b) Nicobar and Sumatra
- (c) Maldives and Lakshadweep
- (d) Sumatra and Java

Ans: (a)



Page : 08 Editorial Analysis

Is Artificial Intelligence affecting critical thinking skills?



Arun Kumar Tangirala

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are increasingly being used in classrooms around the world. Last month, British universities were warned to “stress-test” all assessments after new research revealed that “almost all” undergraduates are using generative AI (GenAI) in their studies. Last year, a study by TeamLease EdTech revealed that over 61% of educators in India are using AI tools. All this has given rise to fears that students will likely begin accepting information at face value rather than critically analysing it. Does the use of AI in education affect critical thinking skills? Arun Kumar Tangirala and Arul George Scaria discuss the question in a conversation moderated by **Sai Charan**. Edited excerpts:

Should AI be permitted in college classrooms? If yes, to what extent?

Arun Kumar Tangirala: Yes, AI should be permitted. As it has pervaded every aspect of our lives, it is not a good idea to prohibit it. Even if you were to prohibit it, students will use it because it has pervaded every home and device.

The extent to which it should be used and who should be using it in the classroom is contextual. It would depend on whether I am teaching a coding course, a technical course, a science course, or a humanities course. For example, if my aim is to impart cognitive skills, I would use AI minimally. But if I am teaching coding, it would be different. There has been a shift in skill sets in the industry. The ability to code is not necessarily the primary skill; the ability to evaluate and validate a code is more or less the evolving skill. So I would use AI, because everybody uses AI to generate codes. But it is important to make sure that the students use AI in an ethical and responsible way.

There are no government regulations on usage yet. So institutes and instructors have to form their own rules, declare these clearly at the beginning of the course, and also explain why they are imposing these. As long as things are done in a systematic, informed, ethical, and responsible manner, AI should be allowed.

Arul George Scaria: It is nearly impossible and perhaps even futile to prohibit AI in classrooms. Whether we like it or not, that is the reality. We might have to change our teaching and learning approaches according to this changing scenario because AI is also getting more and more integrated into many of the applications we use daily. For example, Copilot is getting integrated into Microsoft Word. Even when you open Adobe Reader, it suggests providing an AI-generated summary.



India's first AI teacher 'Iris' interacts with students at a school at Attingal in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. PTI

When we talk about AI usage in classrooms, we have to also understand that it is not just students who are using AI; teachers are using it too. School administrators want to bring AI into the classroom and many policymakers believe that there should be greater use of AI in education. But in all these contexts, ethical and responsible AI usage policies are required. AI is helpful in many ways, but it is also a tool that needs to be used cautiously for a wide variety of reasons, including, but not limited to, issues such as potential biases in responses.

The decision on the extent of use should be clearly guided by the learning objectives of the courses. When I teach a comparative copyright law course in collaboration with Professor William Fisher at the Harvard Law School, one of the assignments I give to the students is to use different AI platforms to generate potentially copyright infringing materials. Through this hands-on experience, the students get a better picture of the diverse issues in this particular area. They even get a better sense of whether it is possible to prevent generation of potentially copyright infringing materials and what kind of steps have been put in place by firms in this regard. So we need to evolve general guidelines for all stakeholders in an educational institution, but let the specific approaches for each course be developed as per the learning objectives of those courses.

Courses are being developed with AI. In that case, do you think AI will slowly be seen as a critical part of infrastructure?

AKT: Yes. AI is going to be integral to every type of operation in an academic institution, company, or any other organisation. Therefore, preparations have to be underway in order to integrate AI in a seamless manner. A report published by the World Economic Forum not



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ARUL GEORGE SCARIA

only throws light on the future skills required, but also on how institutions should realign themselves. The Future of Jobs Report 2025, published in January, showed that the top skills that learners require are analytical and cognitive thinking, AI related skills, social connection, adaptability, etc. Programming skills are lower down the list. If you compare it with earlier reports, the big difference you see is the arrival of AI and related skills. If AI-related skills have to be acquired, not only by the users, but also by employees, it has to be integrated into the infrastructure. But there has to be a secure way of doing this. Unlike a calculator or a computer, AI tools such as Chat GPT, Perplexity, and other LLM models that you are using take your data and broadcast it back to the server, which means that your own personal and confidential information could be at stake if it is not integrated properly. Every user has to be trained and made aware of the benefits and side effects.

AGS: AI is becoming critical infrastructure in many different ways. The government and other stakeholders need to be mindful of this and take appropriate measures for regulation. For example, many State governments suggest adopting AI in schools. But has there been a safety audit of the AI tools that have been suggested for incorporation in these schools? Has there been an audit on the potential biases that might exist in the system? With respect to the training data, are we demanding disclosure? Are we mindful of the impacts?

With AI here to stay, do you think we should accept it in a regulated manner rather than being critical about it?

AKT: There is apprehension and fear about the usage of AI. But we should start using it. For a long time, I also desisted and my reason for using it was to really experience what the fears are about. There is no point in imagining what may happen. Start using AI in a limited way, and experience the benefits and the possible risks. Do it the way you would with an automobile. The difference is that for automobiles, we have excellent regulations. For AI, it will take time. There are countries saying forget about regulations for now, because that is going to hamper the growth of this technology. I

disagree. While technology is evolving, discussions on regulation should also be happening. The European Union has been active in that respect. In India, there are more and more discussions happening now, but it will take some time for actual regulations to kick in.

AGS: It is clear that the state might take some time to frame regulations. To me, it is vital that every university initiates dialogues among faculty members and students on responsible AI usage. This will help in evolving appropriate and ethical usage guidelines as per the needs of the institution. We cannot have universal rules, but at least some general guidelines can be evolved at the institutional level. The most prominent global universities have a general AI policy and they have also left it to the faculty to frame specific policies with respect to their courses. That is the only way forward now.

There are concerns that students may become overly dependent on AI-generated responses. Are these valid?

AKT: It's true; many teachers fear this. I don't think it is a valid fear. It depends on what skills we want to impart. An academic institution has its own goals apart from preparing students for employment. Those goals may include training students to think deeply and in a scholarly manner. But at the same time, we need to be practical. We have to train our students so that they get jobs, not necessarily scholarly ones, but where they can implement what they have learned. So, in any course, we will probably have to ask to what extent we want to impart critical thinking skills vis-a-vis practical skills.

AGS: I have a slightly different perspective. At a broader level, I fear that we are currently seeing an over-dependence on AI-generated responses among students and sometimes even among many faculty members. So we need to educate everyone on how to be responsible AI users, particularly by understanding the limitations of the technology. This might even require re-imagining many components of our education. Maybe the kind of technology which we are talking about here can have more negative impacts if we indiscriminately adopt it. Over time, AI technologies may also be more mature. But as it stands now, my fear is that most of the time, people are overlooking the limitations of technology.



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Context :

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are being used more and more in classrooms worldwide. In India, a study by TeamLease EdTech last year found that over 61% of educators are using AI tools.

What are the key findings as per the TeamLease EdTech?

- **A study by TeamLease EdTech titled "Revolutionising Classrooms: The Impact of Generative AI on the Future of Education"** surveyed over 6,000 educators across India, including school teachers and university professors.
- **Widespread Adoption of AI Tools:** Approximately 61.60% of educators are utilizing AI tools for teaching, preparation, and student engagement.
- **Recognition of AI's Transformative Potential:** Around 64.87% of educators acknowledge that AI has the potential to transform learning experiences and personalize education.
- **Preparation for an AI-Dominated Future:** About 63.61% of educators believe that integrating AI is crucial for preparing students for a future where AI is prevalent.
- **Advocacy for AI Regulation:** A significant 87.85% of educators support government regulation and monitoring of AI development and application to address ethical implications.
- **Need for Teacher Training in AI:** Approximately 54.92% of educators express the need for AI training to ensure teachers are prepared for AI integration in education.

What are the key concerns regarding the use of AI in education?

- **Over-Reliance on AI and Reduced Critical Thinking:** Students may become dependent on AI-generated responses, leading to a decline in their ability to critically analyze information. Example: If students use AI tools like ChatGPT for essay writing without verification, they may accept biased or inaccurate information without questioning it.
- **Ethical and Privacy Issues:** AI tools collect and store user data, raising questions about the privacy and security of sensitive academic information. **Example:** Using AI-powered platforms without adequate security may expose student data to third parties, violating privacy regulations like GDPR.
- **Unequal Access and Digital Divide:** Not all students and institutions have equal access to advanced AI tools, widening the educational inequality gap. **Example:** Rural schools with limited technological infrastructure may struggle to implement AI-based learning.

Why is it important for educational institutions to develop their own AI usage policies?

- ➔ **Ensuring Ethical and Responsible AI Use:** Clear policies guide the ethical use of AI, preventing misuse, plagiarism, and data breaches. **Example:** A university policy on AI-assisted research can outline acceptable use, ensuring students disclose AI-generated content in academic work.
- ➔ **Protecting Student Privacy and Data Security:** Policies help safeguard sensitive student information and comply with legal standards like GDPR or India's DPDP Act. **Example:** Schools can restrict AI tools from accessing personal data by enforcing guidelines on how and when these technologies are used.
- ➔ **Maintaining Academic Integrity and Fair Assessment:** AI policies uphold the integrity of learning by defining appropriate AI use in assignments and assessments. **Example:** A school policy may allow AI for research assistance but prohibit its use in writing final exam essays to ensure fair evaluation.

When should AI tools be integrated into the curriculum?

- ➔ **When Enhancing Personalized Learning:** AI tools should be introduced when they can tailor educational content to individual student needs, improving learning outcomes. **Example:** Adaptive learning platforms like Khan Academy or Duolingo can adjust the difficulty of lessons based on a student's progress, offering personalized learning paths.
- ➔ **When Supporting Skill Development for the Future:** AI should be integrated when it helps students develop critical skills like data analysis, problem-solving, and digital literacy, which are essential for future careers. **Example:** Teaching AI programming using platforms like TensorFlow or Scratch can prepare students for careers in technology and data science.
- ➔ **When Facilitating Innovative Teaching Methods:** AI tools should be included when they enhance creative and interactive teaching approaches that traditional methods cannot achieve. **Example:** Virtual labs using AI simulations in subjects like biology or physics allow students to conduct experiments safely and repeatedly, improving comprehension.

How can educators balance the use of AI while fostering critical thinking and analytical skills in students?

- ➔ **Aligning AI Tools with Specific Learning Outcomes:** AI should be used when it directly supports and enhances the achievement of clearly defined educational goals. **Example:** If the objective is to improve analytical reasoning, AI-powered data visualization tools like Tableau can help students interpret complex datasets and draw meaningful insights.

Daily News Analysis

- ➔ **Enhancing Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills:** AI should be integrated when it fosters deeper learning by encouraging inquiry, creativity, and solution-oriented thinking. **Example:** AI-driven coding platforms like Scratch or Python Tutor can promote computational thinking and logical reasoning through hands-on programming tasks.
- ➔ **Supporting Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms:** AI should be used to provide timely, personalized feedback that aligns with the learning objectives and helps track student progress. **Example:** Automated grading systems like Grammarly or Turnitin can assist in assessing writing skills and offer constructive feedback to improve academic writing.

Way forward:

- ➔ **Develop Comprehensive AI Literacy Programs:** Equip educators and students with the skills to critically evaluate AI outputs, ensuring responsible and informed use.
- ➔ **Establish Clear, Adaptive AI Governance Frameworks:** Implement dynamic policies that balance innovation with ethical standards, ensuring equitable access and academic integrity.

