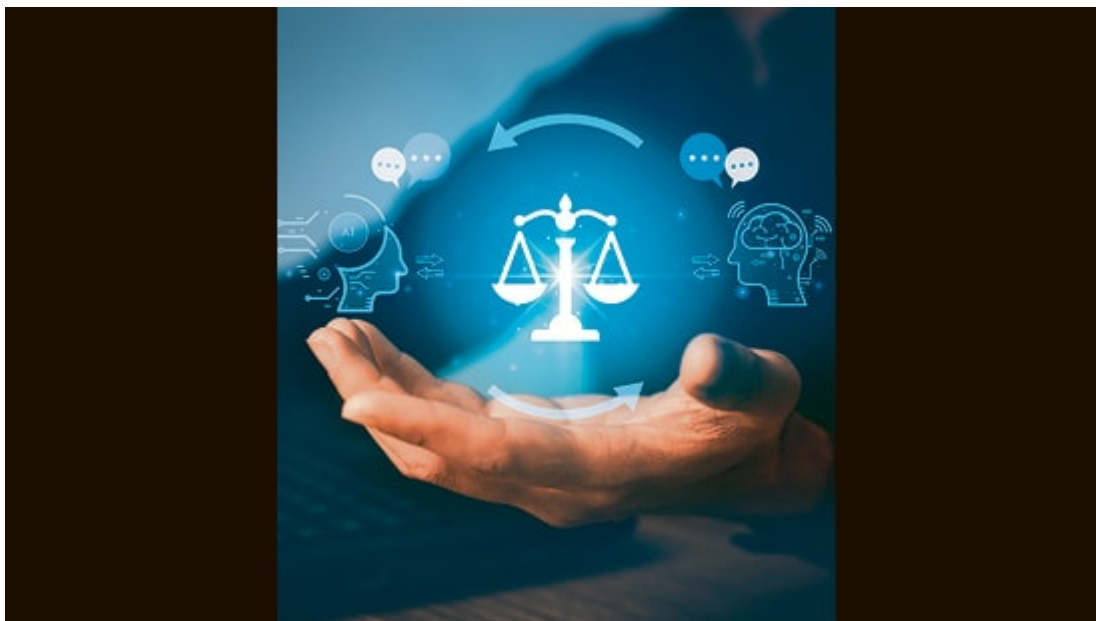


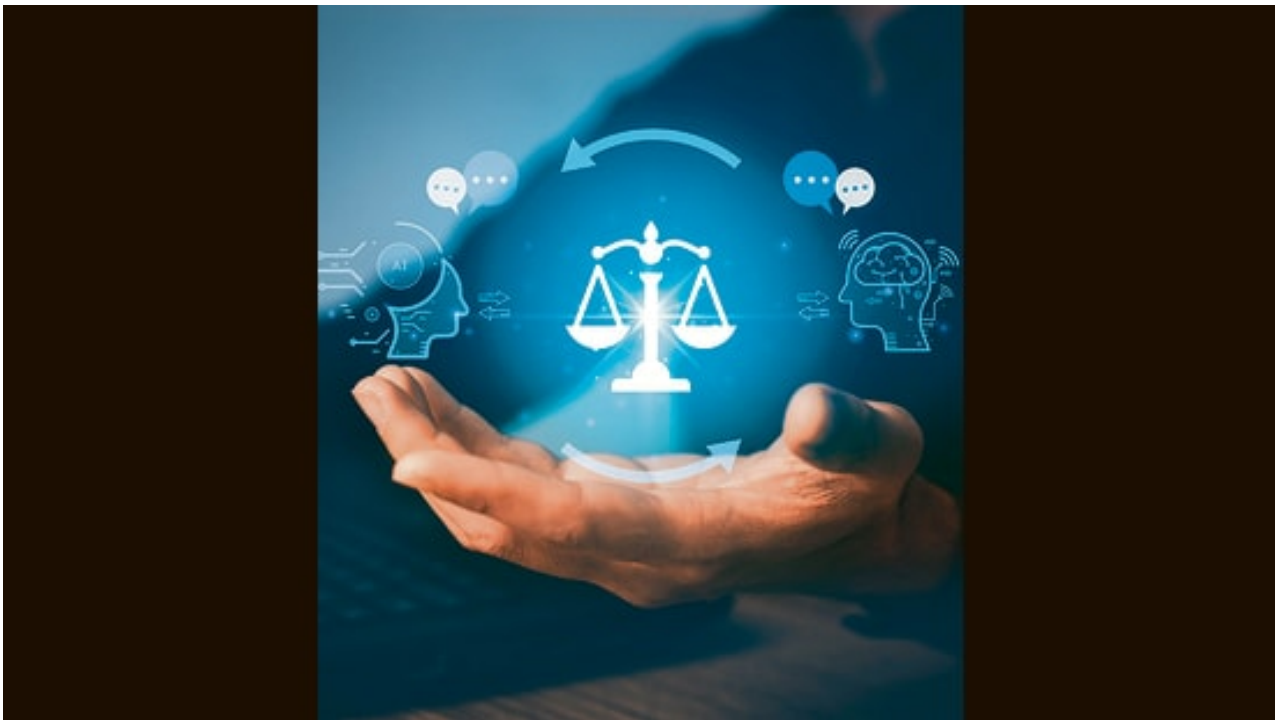
Unique opportunity for India to cement new global model of AI governance

www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/unique-opportunity-for-india-to-cement-new-global-model-of-ai-governance-101771354211501.html

February 18, 2026



On February 19 and 20, India is set to welcome prominent leaders from around the world for the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi. While these AI summits (previous editions have been hosted by the UK, South Korea, and France) do not follow any formal convention, they have become key platforms for companies and governments to position themselves as dominant in the next technological revolution. Recognised for democratic traditions, cultural diversity, and linguistic affluence, India has a unique opportunity to centre Global South perspectives and build partnerships and cooperation with other nations to cement a new global model of AI governance during the Summit. Global governance conversations often position the Global South as a monolith; India has the opportunity to highlight the diversity and contextual needs of the region based on domestic realities.



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The Indian government has identified three pillars for the India AI Impact Summit — People, Planet, and Progress. Opportunities lie across all three to lay down contextualised priorities on AI governance for the Global South.

People

AI models trained on troves of data are able to mimic human speech and behaviour resulting in a myriad of useful economic and social applications. But if this data is not in local languages and does not represent local histories and cultures, AI systems built on it will erase centuries of indigenous knowledge, craft, and artistic knowledge. To preserve these cultures, in the outcomes of the AI Summit, India must embed the importance of creating and maintaining multilingual datasets in an open and interoperable manner that are based on local realities. Although India has already initiated this approach through initiatives such as Bhashini (multilingual AI platform) and AI Kosh (repository of datasets), widespread global attention during the Summit will ensure sustained commitment and pushback against data colonialism.

The extent to which AI will disrupt labour markets and replace humans is left to be seen. However, more immediately, AI is being built by the labour of gig workers in the Global South who do the manual and mentally taxing work of data labeling and content moderation. These are precarious jobs without benefits of formal employment. At the AI Summit, India must offer to build frameworks for gig workers in the AI stack that advances dignity, fair compensation, and appropriate talent and knowledge transfer.

Planet

The commercialisation of AI technologies has triggered a race for ready access to rare earth materials for advanced semiconductors and massive data centres. These need significant amounts of water and energy to produce and run. Rampant demand for AI infrastructure will exacerbate conditions for vulnerable communities already battling with the effects of climate change. At the Summit, India must lay down a sustainability agenda for the Global South. It could help build frameworks for companies to use renewable and sustainable sources of energy to run data centres and develop alternative models of cooling that do not take away water from local communities. India must also advocate for equitable access to rare earth materials, without having to align to a dominant geopolitical bloc.

Progress

The developmental promise of AI will not be realised without a robust governance agenda for its safety. Many popular AI systems are developed in the Global North and are deployed without contextual training and evaluations for diverse Global South communities. Without contextualisation to domestic needs, these systems will cause significant harm.

If AI systems make inscrutable decisions in public welfare, lead to harassment of women via deepfakes, and deteriorate democracy through misinformation without appropriate redressal, rather than development these technologies will dilute existing progress. India must set a strong agenda for transparency and accountability of these technologies to ensure that in the goal for innovation, we do not permit AI technologies to cause societal harm. Towards this end, it is important for India to push for the recognition of communities and stakeholders such as grassroots organisations, civil society, and academia from law, policy, and social sciences beyond just technical experts in shaping AI governance. In particular, the Summit outcomes should articulate specific mechanisms through which perspectives of vulnerable communities from the Global South are formally surfaced and centred in the design of AI systems.

The AI Summit is a key moment for India to highlight its stewardship of a 'third-way' and negotiate the contours of a new AI geopolitical landscape. Through discussions with national leaders and the outcomes articulated in the Summit declaration there is an opportunity for India to advance a position of strategic autonomy and carve out space for the Global South in global AI dialogues. Effective diplomacy at the India AI Impact Summit can illuminate a path defined by the Global South enabling development, prosperity, and leadership on AI.

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