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**SPECIAL FOR UPSC & GPSC EXAMINATION**

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# The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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## Page 01:GS 2 : International Relations

The Chinese Ambassador to India, Xu Feihong, recently made significant remarks indicating China's willingness to normalize ties with India post the military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). He also underlined the potential of religious diplomacy, such as the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra, and direct flight connectivity as steps toward rebuilding trust.

### Key Developments:

#### 1. Border Tensions and Way Forward

- Xu Feihong suggested that China is ready to refine border management and control rules post the 2020 Galwan Valley clashes and ongoing military standoffs.
- Emphasis was placed on "equal consultation and mutual security" to ensure sustainable peace at the LAC.

#### 2. Kailash Manasarovar Yatra as Diplomatic Symbolism

- China's approval to resume the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra after COVID and border tensions is being projected as a goodwill gesture.
- Seen as an effort to soften people-to-people relations and cultural diplomacy.

#### 3. China's Position on India-Pakistan-China Triangle

- Mr. Xu deflected concerns regarding China's support to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor and the lack of support for India's terror-related concerns at the SCO.
- Instead, he stressed that China's Pakistan policy is not "targeted at a third party", a claim India remains skeptical of.

## Kailash Manasarovar Yatra giving a new impetus to ties, says Chinese envoy

**Suhasini Haidar**  
NEW DELHI

China is prepared to discuss "refining border management and control rules" to resolve issues around its disputed boundary with India after the four-year military stand-off ended at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong said on Sunday.

He expressed optimism that the revival of the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra would "inject impetus" to ties and that direct flights would be launched soon.

Rejecting criticism of China's support to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor, Mr. Xu said that bilateral ties were not targeted at a third country. He warned that comments by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju and other Indian officials supporting the Dalai Lama's statement on his successor could cause friction within India-China bilateral ties.

In written responses to questions posed by *The Hindu*, the Mr. Xu pointed to a flurry of high-level visits from India to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meetings over the past month as proof of improving ties. They include visits by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. Mr. Xu noted the possibility of Prime Minister Narendra Modi travelling to China for the SCO Summit on August 31 and September 1, which would be his first visit since the Galwan clashes.

"In the next stage, China is willing to maintain communication with India through diplomatic and military channels, and in



the spirit of equal consultation and mutual and equal security, further refine the border area management and control rules and strengthen confidence-building measures, so as to achieve sustainable peace and tranquillity in the border areas," Mr. Xu said.

#### 'Move to improve ties'

"Resuming the pilgrimage for Indian pilgrims to the sacred mountain and lake in [Tibet] is an important initiative taken by China to improve relations between the two countries," the Chinese Ambassador said.

"Currently, the government departments of China and India, as well as major airlines, have done a lot of work for the resumption of direct flights," he added.

While the Defence Minister had visited Beijing and held bilateral talks, India had said that the SCO Defence Ministers meeting failed to find consensus as one country – referring to Pakistan – had held up the language on terrorism in a proposed joint statement. The Chinese Ambassador did not respond to a specific query about why the SCO had not included India's concerns over the Pahalgam terror attack, pointing instead to an SCO "code of conduct" that members could express

their positions but "should avoid bringing bilateral conflicts" to discussions, in a reference to India-Pakistan tensions. Asked about the statement of India's Deputy Chief of the Army Staff, Lieutenant-General Rahul R. Singh, about China's support to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor in May, Mr. Xu said that China-Pakistan ties did not "target any third party". In his comments, Lieutenant-General Singh had suggested that China had "used the neighbour [Pakistan] to cause pain" to India, in the manner of a "borrowed knife."

While side-stepping another question about whether China's trilaterals with other countries in South Asia – including a recent China-Bangladesh-Pakistan initiative on trade, and a China-Pakistan-Afghanistan initiative on infrastructure – were a way of "cutting India out" of the SAARC region, Mr. Xu said that India was welcome to join any of the initiatives. He claimed that in the past 12 years since the launch of China's Belt and Road Initiative, which India has refused to join, trade between China and South Asian countries "doubled from less than \$100 billion to about \$200 billion".

#### 4. Multilateral Diplomacy via SCO and Beyond

- India has participated actively in recent SCO meetings, with visits by Rajnath Singh, Ajit Doval, and S. Jaishankar.
- Chinese side hinted at PM Modi possibly attending the SCO summit in August — significant if it happens, marking a first visit post-Galwan.

#### 5. China's Growing South Asia Footprint

- China's trilateral efforts (e.g., China-Bangladesh-Pakistan and China-Pakistan-Afghanistan initiatives) are seen as attempts to marginalize India in South Asia.
- China, however, claimed that India is welcome to join these platforms.

#### Critical Analysis:

##### Positive Signals:

- Willingness for dialogue on border mechanisms is a strategic opportunity to reduce flashpoints.
- Religious tourism diplomacy (Manasarovar Yatra) can improve cultural links and public perception.
- Indications of direct flights could ease communication and bolster trade ties.

##### Challenges:

- Deep trust deficit post-Galwan remains unresolved despite tactical disengagement.
- China's strategic alignment with Pakistan, especially in security and infrastructure, continues to be a core concern for India.
- India's exclusion from Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China's alternate trilaterals could isolate India in regional connectivity architecture.

#### Way Forward for India:

1. **Diplomatic Engagement with Caution** – Continue high-level talks, but without compromising territorial claims.
2. **Revitalizing SAARC or BIMSTEC** – To counter Chinese trilateralism in South Asia.
3. **Leveraging Multilateral Forums** – Use platforms like SCO, G20, BRICS to raise India's security and trade concerns.
4. **Public Diplomacy Tools** – Promote cultural and spiritual diplomacy like the Kailash Yatra to improve bilateral understanding.
5. **Strengthen Defence and Border Infrastructure** – Maintain strategic preparedness even while engaging diplomatically.

**Conclusion:**

The revival of the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra and China's overtures for talks signal an attempt to mend relations. However, India must pursue a calibrated engagement strategy, balancing dialogue with deterrence, especially as China continues to deepen its regional influence through strategic alliances and economic partnerships.

**UPSC Mains Practice Question**

**Ques:** Religious diplomacy and people-to-people initiatives such as the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra can serve as confidence-building measures between India and China. However, strategic distrust continues to shape the bilateral relationship. Critically examine this statement in the context of recent developments in India-China ties. **(250 Words)**

## Page 06: GS 2 : International Relations

India's voting behavior at the United Nations has undergone a major transformation in recent years. A data analysis reveals that in 2025, India's share of abstentions in UN voting reached an all-time high of 44%, while 'yes' votes fell to 56%, the lowest since 1955.

## Annual share of abstentions in India's votes at the United Nations reaches an all-time high

**T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan**  
NEW DELHI

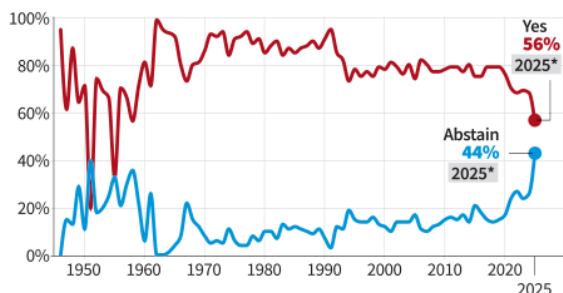
An increasingly polarised world has led to India altering its voting strategy at the United Nations in such a way that the proportion of abstentions every year has increased, while the 'yes' votes have reduced, an analysis has found. According to former diplomats, this rise in the share of abstentions could in fact help India establish its own position on various issues.

An analysis by *The Hindu* of more than 5,500 different resolutions in the UN that India voted on between 1946 and June 2025 shows that the annual percentage of 'yes' votes by India has fallen to 56%, the lowest since 1955. On the other hand, the annual percentage of abstentions has increased to 44%, the highest share in India's history at the UN.

The data show that this change in voting patterns

### UN voting pattern shifts

India's annual share of 'yes' votes on United Nations resolutions dropped to 56% in 2025\* — the lowest since 1955 — while abstentions rose sharply to 44%, marking a new high for the same period



\*Data up to June 2025  
Source: United Nations

Note: No voting took place on General Assembly resolutions in 1964

began around 2019.

India's voting pattern remained volatile until the late 1960s, with the percentage of annual 'yes' votes swinging between 20% and 100% during this period. The percentage of abstentions also fluctuated between 0% and 40%.

The subsequent 25 years — between around 1970 and 1994 — saw the magnitude of this volatility

decrease substantially. The percentage of annual 'yes' votes during this period ranged between a low of 74% and a high of 96%. Annual abstentions ranged between 8% and 19%.

Between the mid-1990s and 2019, India's voting patterns in the UN became even more stable, with the share of 'yes' votes ranging between 75% and 83%. The share of abstentions

ranged between 10% and 17%.

According to former representatives to the UN, the increase in abstentions is simultaneously a reflection of an increasingly polarised world, as well as a reflection of the fact that UN resolutions have become much more complicated.

### 'A useful tool'

"This may best be looked at through a much wider lens than merely an India-centric one to better understand the pattern," T.S. Tirumurti, former Permanent Representative of India to the UN, explained. "It is probably a reflection of greater polarisation between major powers in the UN. This has resulted in a lesser incentive to make compromises by either side to strive hard for a consensus resolution, which was the case a decade or so earlier."

In such a context, Mr. Ti-

rumurti said abstentions also provide emerging and middle powers like India the opportunity to express themselves more freely, rather than merely going along with the consensus or voting against it.

Voting for or against a resolution has also become more fraught now because they have become very complicated, according to Syed Akbaruddin, former Permanent Representative of India in the UN. "Previously, resolutions used to be clear and focussed on one topic," he explained. "What happens now is that contested resolutions are becoming like Christmas trees, where several different aspects and provisions are hung on the same resolution. So, there are situations where we might agree with most of the provisions of a resolution but not with some. In such situations, we cannot vote 'yes' or 'no', and so abstention is a useful tool."

### Key Highlights:

#### 1. Shift in Voting Trends

- From 1995 to 2019, India's UN votes were relatively stable, with around 75–83% 'yes' votes and 10–17% abstentions.
- Post-2019, there is a marked shift, with abstentions rising sharply.
- 2025 marks the highest-ever annual abstention rate (44%) in India's UN history.

## Reasons for the Shift:

### A. Global Polarisation

- Rise in U.S.-China tensions, conflicts like Russia-Ukraine, and divisive global narratives have made consensus harder at the UN.
- Increased polarization among permanent members of the Security Council affects the tone and content of resolutions.

### B. Complexity of Resolutions

- Resolutions today include multiple, sometimes contradictory provisions (likened to "Christmas trees").
- India often agrees with core elements but disagrees with peripheral clauses→ Abstention becomes a diplomatic middle path.

## Strategic Significance for India:

### 1. Assertion of Strategic Autonomy

- Abstentions allow India to avoid taking sides while protecting national interest.
- India can signal disapproval without burning bridges.

### 2. Diplomatic Flexibility

- Abstaining gives India space to re-evaluate or engage bilaterally later.
- Useful in contentious issues like Israel-Palestine, Russia-Ukraine, or China's human rights record.

### 3. Independent Voice in Global Forums

- It strengthens India's claim to be an independent pole in global geopolitics, aligned with neither the West nor the China-Russia bloc.

## Challenges & Criticism:

- **Perception of fence-sitting:** Frequent abstentions could be seen as lack of moral clarity or leadership.
- **Expectation mismatch:** Other developing countries or allies might expect stronger solidarity on certain issues.
- Could undermine India's ambition to be seen as a global rule-maker or aspirant for permanent UNSC seat.



### Way Forward:

1. **Issue-Based Positioning:**

- India must continue to adopt a principled, issue-based stance, rather than a reactive one.

2. **Transparent Communication:**

- Clearly communicate reasons for abstention to avoid misinterpretation of intent.

3. **Strengthen Coalition Building:**

- Work with like-minded countries in the Global South to shape resolutions before they are finalized.

4. **Push for UN Reforms:**

- India must leverage its growing global profile to push for UNSC reforms to reflect today's geopolitical realities.

### Conclusion:

India's increasing abstentions at the UN are not a sign of indecision, but rather a reflection of mature and strategic diplomacy in a deeply divided world. As the global order becomes more complex, India's cautious, case-by-case approach reflects its effort to balance national interest, moral responsibility, and geopolitical strategy.

### UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques:** India's increasing abstentions at the United Nations reflect a shift in its diplomatic approach amidst rising global polarisation. Critically examine the reasons behind this trend. What are its implications for India's foreign policy and global standing? **(150 Words)**



## What is International Moon Day?

- Celebrated every year on July 20.
- Commemorates first human landing on the Moon by the Apollo 11 mission in 1969.
- Officially recognized by the UN General Assembly in 2021.
- Based on recommendation by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS).

### WHAT IS IT?

## Moon Day: remembering the leap

**The Hindu Bureau**



International Moon Day is celebrated every year on July 20 to commemorate humankind's first landing on the moon by the Apollo 11 mission in 1969. The UN General Assembly formally recognised this date in 2021, following a proposal recommended by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). The commemoration also aims to highlight the collective progress of all nations in exploring the moon.

On the day, activities like public events, sky-gazing, educational outreach, and science competitions are organised worldwide to inspire curiosity and foster interest in space science, especially among the youth. According to the UN, International Moon Day also serves to promote sustainable practices in space, international cooperation, peaceful exploration, and the responsible use of lunar resources.

There have been minor criticisms related to the chosen date. Some commentators have noted that while the Apollo 11 lunar module landed on July 20, Armstrong's first step technically occurred at 2:56 UTC on July 21. This ambiguity has occasionally prompted debate over whether July 21 is more accurate to commemorate. There is also



An aircraft passes in front of the moon; the red glow is attributable to smoke particles from North American wildfires, a day ahead of the full supermoon on August 18, 2024. REUTERS

occasional commentary questioning whether the date, rooted in an American achievement, fully encompasses the international spirit intended by the UN, more so since other nations have contributed significantly to lunar exploration.

Despite these discussions, July 20 remains globally recognised for now as the date humankind first leapt beyond the earth.

**For feedback and suggestions**  
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[science@thehindu.co.in](mailto:science@thehindu.co.in)  
with the subject 'Daily page'

## Apollo 11 Mission – Key Facts

- Landed on July 20, 1969.
- Neil Armstrong became the first human to walk on the moon at 2:56 UTC on July 21.
- The mission included Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins.

## Objectives of International Moon Day

- Celebrate global achievements in lunar exploration.

- Promote:
  - International cooperation in space.
  - Peaceful uses of outer space.
  - Sustainable practices in lunar resource use.
  - STEM education and youth engagement via public outreach and competitions.

### Controversies & Criticism

- **Timing Dispute:** Actual first step on the Moon occurred on July 21 (UTC)→ Some suggest that's a more accurate date.
- **US-Centric Date?:** Critics say the date honors an American mission, not reflecting the multinational contributions to lunar science.

### Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS)

- Formed in 1959 by the United Nations.
- Deals with international cooperation in peaceful exploration of outer space.
- India is an active member.

### UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques:** Consider the following statements:

1. International Moon Day is observed on July 21, the date Neil Armstrong first walked on the moon.
2. The United Nations recognised Moon Day officially in 1969.
3. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space proposed International Moon Day.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (A) 1 and 2 only
- (B) 2 and 3 only
- (C) 3 only
- (D) 1, 2, and 3

**Ans: C)**

## Page 09 : GS 2: Social Justice

A recent controversy in Tamil Nadu over the diversion of temple surplus funds for building colleges has reignited debates about the government's role in managing temple resources. While some argue this is interference in religious affairs, the issue is rooted in a historical, legal, and social justice framework unique to South India, particularly Tamil Nadu.

### Temples of social justice

**R**ecently, a political controversy erupted in Tamil Nadu on the issue of diverting temple funds for building colleges. Beyond the political debates, the issue throws light on a unique social justice model around the regulation of secular practices associated with religion. This model, predominantly developed in the erstwhile Madras Presidency, draws strength from a 200-year-old legislative framework which continues till date. It has gained more acceptance in south India. As elections approach in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, clarity on the issue will help diffuse attempts to polarise voters around it.

#### Religious endowments law

Through the Religious Endowment and Escheats Regulation 1817, the East India Company set up the earliest legislative architecture around regulation of religious endowments. When the British Crown assumed direct control over Indian territories in 1858, Queen Victoria issued a proclamation stating that the sovereign would restrict interference in religious affairs. This was necessary as there was concern about losing face from the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, which was triggered by religious issues.

However, the withdrawal of the British government from religious affairs was not complete. In fact, in the Madras Presidency, various British officials argued for continued oversight of religious endowments. Finally, the British government settled for a balanced approach: the sovereign would not interfere with practices that were essentially religious, such as rituals, but would exercise control over the lands and secular aspects of the religious endowments.

The idea of the government supervising religious institutions came to be crystallised when the Justice Party was elected in 1920. One of the earliest legislative interventions by the Justices was Bill No. 12 of 1922: Hindu Religious



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Advocate practising before the High Court of Madras

Endowments Act. When it was introduced in the Madras Legislative Council, it faced opposition, mainly due to the provision in the law that allowed surplus temple funds to be diverted for other purposes.

The nub of the issue was whether funds provided to a temple could be used for secular purposes. The matter was debated and settled in 1925, when the law was enacted. Since then, every revised version of the plenary law, including the current law – The Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, 1959 – has retained the provision of surplus funds.

Section 36 of the 1959 Act permits the trustees of religious institutions to appropriate any surplus funds for any purposes listed under the law, with the prior sanction of the Commissioner. 'Surplus' means any amount remaining after adequate provisions have been made for the maintenance of the temple and training of its officials. The Act also empowers the Joint Commissioner or the Deputy Commissioner to appropriate funds in cases where the original purpose has become impossible to fulfil.

Endowments to temples have a long and rich history. Temples received lavish donations from the sovereign rulers from as far back as in 970 AD, when the Chola empire was at its peak. Historian Anirudh Kanisetti writes that Sembiyan Mahadevi, a Chola queen, made strategic donations of land and kind to temples. The practice continued during the Vijayanagara kingdom. Temples were not just places of worship; they were socio-cultural hubs and were also used for educational purposes. This is confirmed by the inscriptions on temple walls and the spacious *mandapams* (pillared halls) which were used to hold educational or cultural events. So the original intent argument would also support the theory of utilising temple resources for educational purposes.

The 1959 Act has been tested

and upheld by constitutional courts. Among the permissible uses of surplus funds under the 1959 Act is the establishment and maintenance of universities or colleges (Section 66). These educational institutions are also required to make available the study of the Hindu religion or Hindu temple architecture. Seen within this framework, building colleges from temple funds is not only legal, but a logical extension of these provisions.

#### Social justice legacy

The controversy around the use of temple funds cannot be restricted to discussing legal propositions, however; it also carries ideological and sociopolitical significance. In the pre-colonial era, the motivation for the rulers to support large-scale endowments was that the temples acted as channels through which state resources could be allotted for important welfare projects. Through colonial rule, the British East India Company and the Crown viewed sovereign involvement in the management of temple affairs as necessary for reasons of revenue and maintenance of local control.

Over the last century, the Self-Respect Movement, which emerged from the Madras Presidency, viewed the regulation of temples and oversight of their resources as a critical feature of anti-caste reforms. Without this, there would have been no temple entry legislation in 1936 and 1947. Today, Tamil Nadu and Kerala are among the few States where governments have appointed priests from backward classes after a prolonged legal struggle.

Ultimately, any argument against government control of temple affairs would be striking at the root of social justice. The role of the government in ensuring that surplus funds are appropriated in a lawful manner is settled. Any reversal of this would only result in a set back of the long legacy of social justice and religious reforms that south India has pioneered.

Any argument against government control of temple affairs would be striking at the root of social justice

### Historical Background:

#### 1. Colonial-Era Legislative Framework:

- Regulation began in 1817 with the Religious Endowment and Escheats Regulation by the East India Company.
- Though Queen Victoria's 1858 Proclamation promised non-interference in religious matters, British officials in the Madras Presidency continued oversight of secular aspects of temple administration.

- The approach was to separate ritual practices (left untouched) from secular endowments (regulated by the state).

## 2. Justice Party & Legislative Reform:

- In 1920, the Justice Party initiated Hindu Religious Endowments Act (1922), formalizing government control.
- Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, 1959, codified the principle that surplus temple funds can be appropriated for public welfare (e.g., education, health) with state approval.

## Legal Provisions & Endowment Use:

- **Section 36 of the 1959 Act:** Surplus funds may be used for legally sanctioned purposes after maintaining temple needs.
- **Section 66:** Funds can be directed toward establishing educational institutions, provided they include Hindu religious or architectural studies.

## Cultural & Historical Precedents:

- Temples in the Chola and Vijayanagar periods were not just religious spaces but also education and cultural centers.
- Queens like Sembiyan Mahadevi made strategic donations for social infrastructure via temples.
- Inscriptions and mandapams confirm temples' use for education in pre-modern India.

## Social Justice Angle:

### 1. Temple Entry & Anti-Caste Reforms:

- Regulation of temple affairs allowed temple entry legislation in 1936 & 1947.
- Enabled legal reforms ensuring access and equal priesthood opportunities for backward classes.

### 2. Self-Respect Movement Legacy:

- Spearheaded the view that temple resources should serve all, not just dominant castes.
- Government control was essential to democratize temple access and redistribute resources for welfare.



## Contemporary Implications:

### Arguments in Favour of Using Temple Funds:

- Legally sanctioned by constitutional courts and statutes.
- Socially justified as part of South India's reformist history.
- Educational and cultural continuity from historical temple roles.

### Arguments Against:

- Seen by critics as state overreach into religious autonomy.
- Risk of politicization and diversion of funds without community consent.

## Broader Issues Raised:

### 1. Indian Model of Secularism:

- Different from Western notion — allows principled state intervention in religion to uphold equality and reform.

### 2. Democratic Management of Religious Institutions:

- Ensures that public donations serve public good, not just elite interests.

### 3. Wider Application Potential:

- Could inspire debate in other states where religious institutions hold large wealth but lack transparency or inclusiveness.

## Conclusion:

The use of temple surplus funds for educational and welfare purposes in Tamil Nadu reflects a deeply embedded model of social justice and inclusive governance. Rather than being seen as interference, it should be appreciated as a continuation of India's pluralistic, reformist, and socially conscious approach to secularism. Any reversal would undermine a century of legal and social reform that has made religious institutions more democratic and accessible.

## UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques:** Discuss the constitutional, historical, and social justice dimensions of state regulation over religious endowments in India. In this context, critically examine the legitimacy of using surplus temple funds for public welfare activities such as education. **(250 Words)**

## **In News : National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)**

The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) is an initiative by the Government of India, launched in 2015 by the Ministry of Education to evaluate and rank higher education institutions across the country. It provides a systematic methodology for ranking institutions based on the following key parameters:

- Teaching, Learning, and Resources (TLR)
- Research and Professional Practices (RP)
- Graduation Outcomes (GO)
- Outreach and Inclusivity (OI)
- Perception (PR)



**Each year, the Ministry releases rankings across multiple categories, including:**

- Overall
- Universities
- Engineering
- Colleges
- Management
- Pharmacy
- Law
- Medical

- Dental
- Architecture and Planning
- Agriculture and Allied Sectors
- Research Institutions
- Innovation

### **To streamline assessment, institutions are grouped into:**

- **Category A:** Institutions of National Importance, State Universities, Deemed-to-be Universities, Private Universities, and Autonomous Institutions.
- **Category B:** Institutions affiliated with a university.

The primary aim of NIRF is to empower students to make informed choices about their education and to motivate institutions to enhance quality and performance. Rankings are updated annually, based on institution-wise data submissions.

### **Key Highlights of NIRF 2024 Rankings:**

- The ninth edition of the NIRF was released by the Ministry of Education in August 2024.
- Participation has significantly increased — from 3,500 institutions in 2016 to over 6,500 unique institutions across 16 categories in 2024, marking an 86% rise.

### **Top Performers in Various Categories:**

- **Overall Category:** IIT Madras retained the 1st position for the sixth consecutive year (2019–2024).
- **Engineering:** IIT Madras also topped for the ninth consecutive year (2016–2024).
- **Universities:** Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru ranked 1st for the ninth year in a row (2016–2024).
- **Research Institutions:** IISc Bengaluru also led this category for the fourth consecutive year (2021–2024).
- **Management:** IIM Ahmedabad secured the top position for the fifth consecutive year (2020–2024).
- **Medical:** AIIMS, New Delhi maintained its top rank for the seventh year (2018–2024).
- **Pharmacy:** Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi claimed the 1st position this year.
- **Law:** National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru continued as the top law institute.
- **Dental:** Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences, Chennai topped for the third consecutive year.
- **Agriculture and Allied Sectors:** Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), New Delhi retained the top spot for the second year.
- **Architecture and Planning:** IIT Roorkee secured 1st rank for the fourth year in a row.
- **Innovation:** IIT Kanpur was ranked number one in this emerging category.
-

**UPSC PrelimsPractice Question**

**Ques: Consider the following statements regarding NIRF:**

1. NIRF is a ranking system launched by the Ministry of Education in 2015.
2. It ranks only central government institutions in India.
3. NIRF rankings are based on five broad parameters.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

- A) 1 and 2 only
- B) 1 and 3 only
- C) 2 and 3 only
- D) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: B)**



## Page : 08 Editorial Analysis

# India can reframe the Artificial Intelligence debate

Less than three years ago, ChatGPT dragged artificial intelligence (AI) out of research laboratories and into living rooms, classrooms and parliaments. Leaders sensed the shock waves instantly. Despite an already crowded summit calendar, three global gatherings on AI followed in quick succession. When New Delhi hosts the AI Impact Summit in February 2026, it can do more than break attendance records. It can show that governments, not just corporations, can steer AI for the public good.

### India can bridge the divide

But the geopolitical climate is far from smooth. War continues in Ukraine. West Asia teeters between flareups. Trade walls are rising faster than regulators can respond. Even the Paris AI Summit (February 2025), meant to unify, ended in division. The United States and the United Kingdom rejected the final text. China welcomed it. The very forum meant to protect humanity's digital future faces the risk of splintering. India has the standing and the credibility to bridge these divides.

India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology began preparations in earnest. In June, it launched a nationwide consultation through the MyGov platform. Students, researchers, startups, and civil society groups submitted ideas.

The brief was simple: show how AI can advance inclusive growth, improve development, and protect the planet. These ideas will shape the agenda and the final declaration. This turned the consultation into capital and gave India a



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is a former Indian Permanent Representative to the United Nations and, currently, Dean, Kautilya School of Public Policy, Hyderabad

As the host of the AI Impact Summit next year, India can set the course — steering AI for the public good

democratic edge no previous host has enjoyed. Here are five suggestions rooted in India's digital experience. They are modest in cost but can be rich in credibility.

### Pledges and report cards

First, measure what matters. India's digital tools prove that technology can serve everyone. Aadhaar provides secure identity to more than a billion people. The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) moves money in seconds. The Summit in 2026 can borrow that spirit. Each delegation could announce one clear goal to achieve within 12 months. A company might cut its data centre electricity use. A university could offer a free AI course for rural girls. A government might translate essential health advice into local languages using AI. All pledges could be listed on a public website and tracked through a scoreboard a year later. Report cards are more interesting than press releases.

Second, bring the global South to the front row. Half of humanity was missing from the leaders' photo session at the first summit. That must not happen again. As a leader of the Global South, India must endeavour to have as wide a participation as possible.

India should also push for an AI for Billions Fund, seeded by development banks and Gulf investors, which could pay for cloud credits, fellowships and local language datasets. India could launch a multilingual model challenge for say 50 underserved languages and award prizes before the closing dinner. The message is simple: talent is everywhere, and not just in California or Beijing.

Third, create a common safety check. Since the Bletchley Summit in 2023 (or the AI Safety Summit 2023), experts have urged red teaming and stress tests. Many national AI safety institutes have sprung up. But no shared checklist exists. India could endeavour to broker them into a Global AI Safety Collaborative which can share red team scripts, incident logs and stress tests on any model above an agreed compute line. Our own institute can post an open evaluation kit with code and datasets for bias robustness.

Fourth, offer a usable middle road on rules. The United States fears heavy regulation. Europe rolls out its AI Act. China trusts state control. Most nations want something in between. India can voice that balance. It can draft a voluntary frontier AI code of conduct. Base it on the Seoul pledge but add teeth. Publish external red team results within 90 days. Disclose compute once it crosses a line. Provide an accident hotline. Voluntary yet specific.

Fifth, avoid fragmentation. Splintered summits serve no one. The U.S. and China eye each other across the frontier AI race. New Delhi cannot erase that tension but can blunt it. The summit agenda must be broad, inclusive, and focused on global good.

### The path for India

India cannot craft a global AI authority in one week and should not try. It can stitch together what exists and make a serious push to share AI capacity with the global majority. If India can turn participation into progress, it will not just be hosting a summit. It will reframe its identity on a cutting edge issue.

## Paper 02 International Relations

**UPSC Mains Practice Question:** India has the credibility and capacity to bridge the global divide on Artificial Intelligence governance and lead a more inclusive, democratic model. Discuss India's potential role in global AI regulation and how it can balance innovation, equity, and safety in emerging tech diplomacy. (250 words)

## Context :

India is set to host the AI Impact Summit in February 2026. Amid rising global geopolitical tensions and fragmented approaches to AI governance, India has a unique opportunity to bridge divides, democratize innovation, and reclaim leadership for the Global South in setting ethical and inclusive AI standards.

### Why This Matters:

- Global AI discourse is currently polarized — the U.S. fears over-regulation, Europe prefers rules-first, and China relies on state control.
- Summits intended for cooperation (e.g., Paris AI Summit 2025) have failed to secure consensus.
- The AI domain is increasingly defined by corporate monopolies, geopolitical race, and inequitable access.

### India's Unique Advantage:

- India has both technological capabilities and democratic legitimacy.
- India's digital public infrastructure (e.g., Aadhaar, UPI, MyGov) offers replicable models of inclusive and low-cost tech governance.
- Positioned as a voice of the Global South, India can champion AI policies that prioritize development, equity, and multilingual inclusivity.

## 5 Key Proposals Suggested for India's AI Diplomacy:

### 1. Measure What Matters – Pledges and Scoreboards

- Encourage each participant to make a public, trackable commitment (e.g., reducing data center emissions, offering rural AI education).
- Launch a global scoreboard — transparency over tokenism.

### 2. Center the Global South

- Many developing countries were absent in earlier summits.
- India should push for:
  - AI for Billions Fund for cloud credits, fellowships, local data creation.
  - Multilingual AI challenges for underserved languages.

### 3. Global AI Safety Collaborative

- Push for a shared checklist for red teaming and stress testing AI models.
- Suggest creation of a collaborative safety consortium sharing:
  - Incident logs

- Bias datasets
- Safety evaluation protocols

#### **4. Balanced Regulation – Middle Path Approach**

- U.S. (corporate-led) vs EU (rules-led) vs China (state-led) models show sharp divergence.
- India can present a voluntary but enforceable code of conduct:
  - Publish red-team reports
  - Disclose compute capacity
  - Set up an AI accident hotline

#### **5. Avoid Fragmentation of Global Forums**

- India must ensure the AI Summit is inclusive, non-aligned, and focused on global welfare.
- Reduce geopolitical rivalry and encourage constructive dialogue.

### **Broader Significance for India:**

#### **Strategic Gains:**

- Soft power boost in digital governance.
- Leadership on future-facing issues (AI, ethics, climate-tech).
- Reaffirmation of India's global south stewardship.

#### **Challenges:**

- Domestic AI governance still evolving; no comprehensive AI law or policy yet.
- Needs institutional capacity to implement global commitments.
- Balancing developmental needs with AI safety and ethical concerns.

### **Conclusion:**

India's AI Summit in 2026 is more than a diplomatic event — it's a strategic opportunity to define ethical, inclusive, and development-driven AI governance for the world. If successful, India will not only reframe the AI debate but also cement its place as a global thought leader on a domain shaping the 21st century.