A New Global Standard for AI Ethics

What is the issue?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is more present in our lives than ever but it cannot be said to always be beneficial.

What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

- **AI**- AI refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think like humans and mimic their actions.
- The goals of artificial intelligence include learning, reasoning, and perception.
- **Machine learning**- Machine learning refers to the concept that computer programs can automatically learn from and adapt to new data without being assisted by humans.
- **Deep learning**- Deep learning techniques enable this automatic learning through the absorption of huge amounts of unstructured data such as text, images, or video.

What about the application of AI?

- India is one of the world's largest markets for AI-related technologies valued at over 7.8 billion dollar in 2021.
- **Applications of AI**
    - **Healthcare**- AI is utilised for dosing drugs and different treatment in patients, and for surgical procedures.
    - **Gaming-** Artificial intelligence include computers that play chess.
    - **Automobiles**- Self-driving cars utilise the AI technology.
    - **Finance-** AI is used to detect and flag activities such as unusual debit card usage and large account deposits.
    - **Agriculture**- AIs are utilised for real-time insights from their fields, intelligent spraying, disease diagnosis, etc.
    - **Assistance**- Personal assistants such as Amazon's Alexa and Apple's Siri are included in the weak AI systems (designed to carry out one particular job).

The National Strategy on Artificial Intelligence released by NITI Aayog in 2018 highlights the massive potential of AI across areas such as agriculture, health, and education.

What are the issues in AI?

- **Biased outcomes**- The data used to feed into AI often aren't representative of the diversity of our societies, producing biased or discriminatory outcomes.
    - For instance, while India and China together constitute around a third of the world's population but they form just 3% of images used in ImageNet.

- **Issue with facial recognition tech**- The scope for racial discrimination is increasing with increased usage of facial recognition technology.
    - For three programs released by major tech companies, the error rate was 1% for light-skinned men, but 19% for dark-skinned men, and up to 35% for dark-skinned women.
- Biases in facial recognition technologies have led to wrongful arrests.

What is the global standard for AI ethics?

- In 2021, the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence was adopted by UNESCO's General Conference at its 41st session.
- It aims to fundamentally shift the balance of power between people, and the businesses and governments developing AI.
- UNESCO members have agreed to use affirmative action to make sure that women and minority groups are fairly represented on AI design teams.
- The recommendation also underscores the importance of the proper management of data, privacy and access to information.
- It calls on member states to ensure that appropriate safeguards are devised for the processing of sensitive data and effective accountability and redress mechanisms are provided.
- The Recommendation takes a strong stance that
    - AI systems should not be used for social scoring or mass surveillance purposes
    - Attention must be paid to the psychological and cognitive impact that these systems can have on children
    - Member states should invest and promote not only digital, media and information literacy skills, but also socio-emotional and AI ethics skills.
- The UNESCO is also in the process of developing tools to help assess the readiness in the implementation of the recommendations.

Finland's 2017 AI Strategy demonstrated how governments can effectively promote ethical AI use without compromising the desire to be on the cutting edge of new technologies.

How to ensure the full potential of these technologies?

- The right incentives for ethical AI governance need to be established in national and sub-national policy.
- The recommendations must be put to use to guide governments and companies to develop and deploy AI technologies that conform to the commonly agreed principles.

NITI Aayog's #AIForAll campaign aimed at the development of responsible and ethical AI governance.

References

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