

A social media ban will not save our children

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3
Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security

1. Context

- A recent suicide of three minors in Ghaziabad has **raised concerns over screen addiction and teen mental health.**
- The incident has **triggered calls for stricter social media rules**, highlighting the tension between child safety, platform accountability, and digital rights in India.

2. Global Responses and the Push for Bans

- Recent studies link heavy social media use to anxiety, depression and body image issues among teenagers, especially girls.
- In response, **Australia has enforced a social media ban for those under age of 16**, while Spain has proposed a similar one.
- These steps appear strong but are largely driven by panic rather than evidence.

3. Why Social Media Bans Will Fail in India?

Ineffective and Risky Enforcement

- Age bans are **easy to bypass through Virtual Private Networks (VPNs)** and may push children toward unregulated, unsafe online spaces.

(A **VPN** is a tool that hides a user's location and internet activity by sending your internet traffic through a secure server. It is used to protect privacy, access blocked content, and bypass internet restrictions.)

Ignoring Adolescents' Social Realities

- For many marginalised groups (rural youth, queer adolescents & differently-abled children) **social media provides essential community support and visibility.**

Democratic Deficit

- Policies affecting young people are often made without their input**, ignoring their views and needs.

Worsening Gender Inequality

- Only 33.3% of women in India reported having ever used the Internet** compared to 57.1% of men.
- Bans **may affect girls more**, as families may restrict their internet access further.

4. What Should Be Done Instead?

- Reduce reliance on censorship and content takedowns** under the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000.
- Instead, platforms must be legally responsible for protecting children from online harm** and can be penalised for failure.
- Introduce strong digital competition laws** to regulate dominant technology platforms.
- Regulation should be handled by an expert body**, not political bureaucracy.
- Fund long-term Indian research** and include young people in policymaking

5. Conclusion

- However current focus is only on social media, while **risks from Artificial Intelligence (AI) are ignored.**
- Excessive AI use can weaken critical thinking** and influence children's behaviour.
- Banning social media creates false control**, without solving root problems.
- Safer digital ecosystems, not bans, are needed to protect children's future.**

Myanmar's military-scripted polls, India's strategic bind

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2
India and its neighborhood- relations.

1. Context

- **Five years after the February 1, 2021 military coup, Myanmar's junta held elections between December 2025 and January 2026** for political stability.
- The **military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) won as voting was allowed in only 265 of 330 townships.**

2. Lack of Credibility and Political Exclusion

- The elections **lacked legitimacy due to the dissolution of major opposition parties** (National League for Democracy), and the jailing of their leaders.
- **Voters' turnout fell to about 55%**, reflecting public rejection
- Parliament is expected to be formed within two months, despite widespread protests.
- Resistance groups like the People's Defence Forces (PDFs) control large areas, **limiting the stability after elections.**

3. India's Calibrated Response

- **Myanmar remains strategically important** for India's Act East Policy.
- India **supports for a free, fair, and inclusive democratic process** without endorsing the current elections.
- India **continues diplomatic talks with Myanmar's leaders** (recent meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Min Aung Hlaing).
- But the **engagement is careful and limited, avoiding legitimacy to the junta.**
- **Humanitarian assistance, such as Operation Brahma** during the 2025 earthquake, has allowed continued engagement without political endorsement.

4. Implications for India

- **Myanmar's instability affects India's Northeast through refugee inflows** and security risks.
- **Key connectivity projects are delayed**, such as the **Kaladan Project and India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway.**
- **Weak border control has increased illegal activities** like narcotics and human trafficking.
- Cyber scams and cybercrime pose new security threats to India.

5. Way Forward

- ASEAN and Western countries have not recognised Myanmar's elections.
- India **should continue a balanced approach towards Myanmar** without endorsing the elections.
- **Limited engagement with the regime** must be maintained to **protect strategic interests.**
- At the same time, India should maintain contacts with local and democratic stakeholders.
- Overall, **India needs to balance democratic principles** with pragmatic security and regional interests.

Budget boosts domestic space research while spending lags behind

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Economic and Social Development-Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector Initiatives, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 3
Government Budgeting.

1. Budget Allocation for Space Research

- The Union Budget 2026–27 has allocated **₹13,416.20 crore to the Department of Space.**
- Major funding is directed toward **deep-space exploration and astrophysics research.**
- **Key planned projects include:**
 - ➔ 30-m National Large Optical-Infrared Telescope
 - ➔ National Large Solar Telescope (Ladakh)

- **Other initiatives:**
 - ➔ Completion of COSMOS-2 planetarium (Amaravati).
 - ➔ Upgrading the Himalayan Chandra Telescope (Hanle).
- These investments aim to **strengthen India's astronomy research capability and science outreach.**

2. Concerns About Implementation and Funding

- Experts highlighted **underutilisation of allocated funds in previous years.**
- This has **caused delays in major space missions and project execution bottlenecks.**
- **Scientists stress the need for:**
 - ➔ Better resource management
 - ➔ Institutional checks and balances

3. Dependence on Foreign Facilities

- For many years, India has **relied on foreign observatories for high-resolution scientific data.**
- Researchers also **depend on overseas specialised equipment for space science studies.**
- This includes **radio, optical, and space-based astronomical observations.**
- Therefore, **building strong domestic capabilities in space science and astrophysics is necessary.**
- This will help **reduce India's dependence on foreign research facilities.**

4. Future Opportunities and Collaboration

- India's astronomy ecosystem is improving through:
 - ➔ Facilities like the **Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT).**
 - ➔ AI-based data processing centres.
 - ➔ Growing **public-private partnerships** in the space sector.
 - ➔ Establishment of **IN-SPACE** (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre) to support space startups.
- Developing next-generation observatories will:
 - ➔ Encourage **advanced research in India**

- ➔ Help **reduce brain drain**
- ➔ Strengthen India's position in global space science.
- Proposed projects under Astronomy & Astrophysics Mega Science Vision 2035 include sub-millimetre astronomy facilities.
- The sub-millimetre wavelength range **allows astronomers to observe objects that are invisible at other wavelengths.**
- These include **cold and dense molecular gas involved in star formation.**

How are dating apps relying on artificial intelligence for their users?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
General Science.

Mains: General Studies - 3
Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

1. Context: AI in Dating Apps

- Dating apps like Hinge, Tinder, Bumble, and matrimony platforms are **increasingly using Artificial Intelligence (AI).**
- The trend gained attention after New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani shared that he met his spouse on Hinge.
- Companies aim to promote meaningful connections and reduce **"swiping fatigue"** by using AI-based matching tools.

2. AI Features in Digital Dating

- **Dating platforms are using Generative AI (Gen AI) to:**
 - ➔ Improve user experience
 - ➔ Help users start conversations
 - ➔ Provide personalised match suggestions
- The goal is to provide more **compatible matches and engaging conversations**

3. Privacy and Legal Concerns

- **Experts warn about privacy risks** when users share personal data and photos.
- AI systems often work in ways that are **difficult to understand, making data processing unclear to users.**
- **Concerns include:**
 - ➔ Lack of informed consent
 - ➔ Potential misuse of sensitive personal data
- Organisations like (noyb-European Center for Digital Rights) have raised legal complaints against AI features on dating apps.

4. Risks of AI Misuse in Dating

- **Users are increasingly using AI chatbots to:**
 - ➔ Flirt
 - ➔ Generate messages
 - ➔ Create fake profiles
- Risks include:
 - ➔ Romance scams (“pig butchering” scams)
 - ➔ AI-generated fake identities
- Warning signs for users:
 - ➔ Requests to move conversations off the app
 - ➔ Claims of financial or cryptocurrency profits
- With AI becoming common in dating platforms, **building trust in online relationships is becoming more difficult.**

KEYWORDS

Operation Brahma

- Operation Brahma was **launched by India in response to the 7.7-magnitude earthquake that struck Myanmar** in March 2025.
- The earthquake caused over 1,600 deaths and widespread destruction in Myanmar and neighbouring regions.
- Indian naval ships **INS Satpura and INS Savitri** carried 40 tonnes of humanitarian aid to the port of Yangon.
- The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the Indian Army deployed rescue teams and medical task forces for emergency relief.

India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway

- The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway (IMT Highway) is a **major regional connectivity project linking India, Myanmar, and Thailand by road.**
- The highway spans **about 1,360 km, running from Moreh in Manipur to Mae Sot in Thailand via Myanmar.**
- It was **proposed by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee** and approved in April 2002 at a ministerial meeting.
- The construction began in 2012 and is being implemented in multiple phases.
- The **India-Myanmar Friendship Road forms the first segment of the IMT Highway.** It runs from the border at Tamu/Moreh to Kalemmyo and Kalewa.
- On the Indian side, the **project is executed by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA),** with cooperation from Myanmar and Thailand.

Places In News

Pangong Lake

- Pangong Lake, located at an altitude of about 4,350 metres, is considered the **world's highest saltwater lake**.
- Stretching nearly 160 km, around **one-third of the lake lies in India while the remaining two-thirds lies in China**.
- The lake's name comes from the **Tibetan word "Pangong Tso", meaning "high grassland lake."**
- It is also an **important breeding ground for migratory birds during the summer season**, including **bar-headed geese, Brahminy ducks, black-necked cranes, and seagulls**.
- A unique feature of Pangong Lake is that it **changes colour- appearing blue, grey-green, and sometimes reddish at different times**.
- In winter, the **lake freezes completely despite being saline water**.

