THE EDITORIAL PAGE

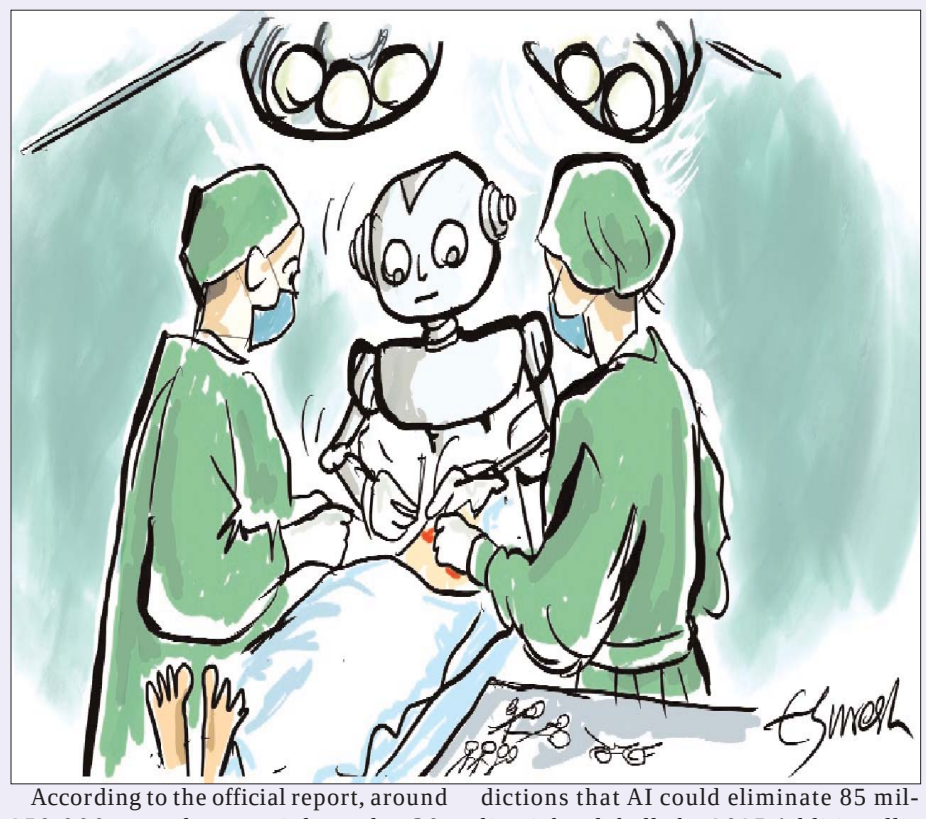
SC SETS LIMITS ON CURRICULAR AUTONOMY

It is not for the first time that the NCERT books have come under fire for their subject content and treatment. Many times, NCERT has been criticised for publishing course books with a political slant or for presenting facts in a skewed manner rather than as they are. However, it has never been criticised for misportraying the country's judiciary. It is for the first time we are seeing an enraged Supreme Court shielding its turf and admonishing the NCERT board for tarnishing the image of the country's judiciary. The row over the Class 8 NCERT social science textbook has opened up a larger and more delicate debate about the boundaries between academic freedom, institutional respect, and the responsibilities of the state. When the NCERT included references to corruption, case backlog, and shortage of judges as challenges before the judiciary, it may have intended to present students with a realistic understanding of the judiciary, but the Supreme Court took it otherwise, describing it as a "well-orchestrated conspiracy" and ordered a blanket ban on the book. With the direction to seize all physical and digital copies of the textbook, along with show cause notices to senior officials, the Supreme Court sent an unequivocal message regarding NCERT's chapter on the judiciary. The response from Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan reflected the government's effort to contain the fallout. Expressing anguish and promising accountability, he emphasised that there was no intention to insult the judiciary. The NCERT also, on its part, apologised for "inappropriate content" and pledged to rewrite the chapter.

The episode may be over but it has generated a heated debate on the limits of textbook content and what young minds must be taught when they are yet to experience it in real life. Should students be shielded from discussions about systemic challenges within institutions, or should they be encouraged to understand them critically and constructively? This is the vital question being asked. Though no denying the fact that the truth must be told, there are truths that are inconvenient and would confuse the young minds. For instance, corruption in high places, the uglier truths of democracy, or, for that matter, bureaucratic red tape cannot always be presented bluntly, as doing so may lower the stature of these institutions in the eyes of the young, who may then grow up without respect for them. Having said that, a rosy picture would also not be in the best interests of the students. A balanced and nuanced reference to these topics could be the way forward, where students can also know the pressures our institutions face and the challenges the large democracy has to face in order to survive. Openness and transparency should not in any way undermine the institutions that have evolved painstakingly over the years. The episode also exposes a deeper tension between autonomy and oversight in curriculum design. NCERT, as the apex body for school curriculum, must maintain rigorous editorial standards and anticipate sensitivities. At the same time, institutions must not function under the shadow of fear. In a mature democracy, they must go hand in hand.

India at the forefront of AI governance

Kalyani Shankar



India's recent AI summit concluded with the New Delhi Declaration, engaging 88 nations and marking a major milestone in global AI regulatory efforts, highlighting India's growing influence on the international stage.

The declaration presents a global vision for "collaborative, trusted, resilient, and efficient" artificial intelligence, highlighting that its benefits must be shared by all of humanity to realise its full potential.

AI has become very popular in the last decade, especially in the past five years. It has many benefits but also poses risks, making the topic complicated. People around the world are worried about these risks.The recent summit was the first of its kind in the region and focused on these growing concerns about AI.India has signed an agreement to join Pax Silica, a US — led group focused on building a strong supply chain for critical minerals and artificial intelligence (AI).

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw highlighted the alliance's significance for the semiconductor industry and stated, "" The U.S. delegation head at the AI summit added, "AI adoption cannot lead to a brighter future if hindered by bureaucracies and centralised control."The summit attracted major investments for India, with the Adani Group and Ambani each committing $1 billion and Microsoft investing `50 billion.

This summit highlights India's commitment to aligning its AI standards with global frameworks, with a focus on inclusion, responsibility, and international leadership in AI regulation.The summit brought together participants from over 88 countries, including leaders such as Emmanuel Macron and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. A strong US delegation and executives from companies such as Microsoft and IBM highlighted the importance of international collaboration.

According to the official report, around 250,000 attendees, mainly under 30, participated in the exhibition.Technology Minister Vaishnaw believed that India's AI investments could increase to $140 billion.

As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes more integrated into daily life-from healthcare to entertainment — the need for regulatory oversight is growing. AI is a double-edged weapon. While it can help increase efficiency, there are also possible risks.What is AI technology, and why is the world concerned? There is cause for concern, as it is a double-edged weapon. There is fear that AI will take over the world.

AI can help improve patient care and resource management in organisations, but it raises ethical, privacy, and security concerns. There's also anxiety about job displacement and bias in credit systems and the criminal justice system, with predictions that AI could eliminate 85 million jobs globally by 2025.Additionally, people are increasingly worried about how data is handled and its consequences. Establishing common standards benefits everyone.

AI regulations vary worldwide: the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act imposes strict rules on high-risk systems, while the US adopts a fragmented approach, underscoring the need for a unified global regulatory framework.These differences highlight the need for a more unified approach, as international collaboration is essential for establishing universally adopted standards and best practices in AI.

The summit showcased India's expanding digital infrastructure and the government's proactive steps, including a comprehensive AI roadmap, to establish the country as a global leader in technology and AI development.The India AI Mission has allocated `10,372 crore to enhance the artificial intelligence ecosystem. Additionally, more than 38,000 GPUs have been integrated into a centralised computing facility, and 12 indigenous foundation models are currently under development. Consequently, India is positioning itself as both a developer and a facilitator in the emerging era of AI.AI is now a vital part of India's defence sector, according to Dr Chandrika Kaushik, Director General of DRDO.

Policymakers are worried that the lack of transparency in private markets, such as private credit and private equity, could hinder the identification of early warning signs of trouble.

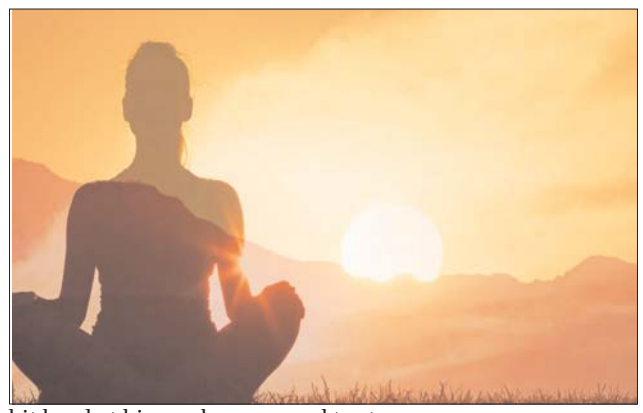
India's challenges include striking a balance between innovation and government overregulation of AI. It could stifle creativity and hinder the development of groundbreaking technologies. At the same time, a lack of regulation could lead to dangerous results.Regulatory bodies need to engage with stakeholders across the AI ecosystem, including technologists, ethicists, and civil society organisations. This collaborative approach ensures that regulations are grounded in practical realities and adaptable to the fast-evolving nature of AI technology.

There is growing recognition of the importance of fostering ethical AI practices, including transparency, fair access, and user privacy, to reassure users that responsible development is a priority.As we acknowledge the potential of artificial intelligence, a balanced regulatory framework can help us maximise the benefits of AI while minimising its risks.

The way we regulate artificial intelligence (AI) in the future will greatly affect society. We must ensure that AI is used to help everyone. Many countries are worried that AI might take control of our world. The conference was a chance to promote transparency, which is important for reassuring people around the globe.

MASTERING FORTUNE THROUGH THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI



We all have good days and bad days. What amounts to a good day for one person may equate to someone else's bad day. When a person says that he is having bad days, what he generally means is either that some people are criticising him bitterly without fault on his part and are accusing him without any basis, or that whatever role he plays and whatever job he does turns into a complete failure and he flops. He does his best and yet success eludes or evades him. He loves some people and has good wishes for them, yet these people get estranged from him or turn into his enemies or rivals. He has not done any bad act and yet his mind is empty of peace and he feels that happiness is totally missing from his heart.

Those very people whom he had helped in their dire need have now turned their backs on him and show not even a little concern for his well-being. There is no one even to encourage him or at least to utter a word of sympathy. On the other hand, they unashamedly point to his shortcomings, hit hard at his weaknesses and try to open or scratch his wounds. A person who is having good days, when people easily help him, appreciate his work and qualities and like or love him, feels that there is happiness in relationships. He has stamina and good health and does not have to beg money from anyone but is fairly comfortable. He feels that people do not misbehave with him and that he generally meets success whatever the venture he embarks upon.

History is full of examples of kings becoming beggars or of ordinary men ascending to thrones. But what we need to remember is that the shift in our fortunes or the change in our days is brought about by the change that took place in the past in the quality of our own actions.

The change in days, some say, is due to a change in our stars, but even stars in the sky change due to the actions of souls which are also the stars now on earth. Remember, the whole of nature is influenced by our own actions and, therefore, we are the makers of our own fortune. We determine our own destiny.

So, basically, bad days are those days when a person has bad thoughts or does bad actions, and good days are those when a person thinks good and does good.

We should also keep in mind, during days of stress and strain or tests and tribulations, that these difficult days will also change because nothing in this world stays forever.

Since our bad days are a consequence of our actions, we cannot run away from them but must bear with them, whether happily or with a heavy heart. We have to adopt a posture, a strategy, a line of action or a plan to remain as unaffected as we possibly can.

There is no use cursing our stars or accusing people of having left us or caused misery to us. On the other hand, we should take lessons from these hard tests and consider them as exercises in self-development or opportunities for crisis management. Also, when anyone is having good days, he should not boast of his wisdom, achievements, knowledge or circle of friends, because one never knows when one will be hauled up on live coals.

So, let us not be proud to the point of boasting, bragging or praising ourselves. Instead, we must always keep in mind that whether our days are good or bad, we should always be good in our actions, our state of mind, our dealings and relations with others, our attitudes and our response to various situations. If we follow this process, we can turn even bad days into good ones. So, let us stop thinking about good or bad days and become masters of our own fortune.

The humble button that might save the planet

Sharmila Das

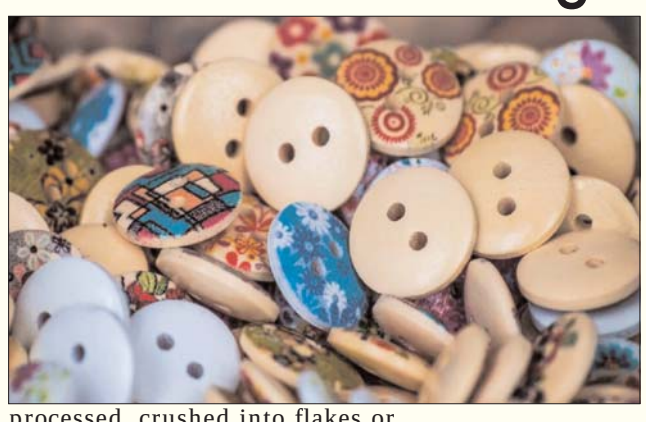
When we think of saving the planet, we imagine sweeping gestures. Solar farms stretching across deserts. Wind turbines pose heroically against sunsets. Electric cars are humming silently down highways. Rarely - if ever - do we picture a button.

Yes, a button. That tiny, often-ignored disk that quietly holds your shirt together, keeps your jacket respectable, and prevents wardrobe malfunctions of global consequence. It turns out that this modest little fastener may have more environmental influence than we give it credit for. Let's talk about sustainability - and how something as small as a recycled plastic button can make a surprisingly meaningful difference.

At its heart, sustainability is actually quite simple. It means meeting our present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It is about balance. Thoughtfulness. Responsibility. And if we're honest, it's also about paying attention to details. It lives in the everyday choices - what we buy, what we wear, how things are made, and crucially, what they're made from. And this is where our little hero enters the story. When we speak about buttons, we are not talking about polyester fabric. We are talking about plastic buttons - specifically polyester resin, the material commonly used in button manufacturing. Traditional buttons are made using virgin polyester plastic.

That means fresh petroleum extraction, fossil fuels, and energy-intensive processing. Yet polyester has an important advantage: it can be structured into the required strength in the end product and sustain washes.

Recycled polyester used in buttons is not made by crushing old buttons. Instead, it is typically derived from post-consumer PET - plastic bottles and other materials that have already served a purpose. These are collected, cleaned,



processed, crushed into flakes or pellets, and then blended in specific percentages with virgin polyester. For a product to qualify as recycled plastic, at least 30 per cent recycled content is generally required. But manufacturing advancements have pushed that inclusion even further.

Today, many buttons can incorporate up to 50 per cent to almost a 100 per cent recycled material while still maintaining strength, durability, and aesthetic precision, along with meeting the statutory chemical contents requirements prevalent in most continents. Designers demand colour consistency and finish - and modern manufacturing has evolved enough to achieve this even with blended materials. Now you might reasonably ask: "It's a button. How much difference can it really make?" A typical shirt button weighs approximately 0.35 grams. Ten buttons on a shirt equal 3.5 grams of plastic -ball park. On 100,000 shirts, that becomes 350 kilograms of plastic. If 50 per cent of that material is recycled, 175 kilograms of virgin plastic are avoided. Quietly. Precisely. Intentionally. And remember - the apparel industry produces garments in the millions. Multiply that calculation across brands, uniforms, workwear, school wear, and fashion lines, and the scale grows rapidly. That's only just the shirt.

Sometimes sustainability isn't about dramatic reinvention. It is about responsible refinement. One of the most compelling ideas in sustainability is the circular economy - moving from "take-make-dispose" to "make-use-reuse-recycle." A plastic bottle and other food-grade plastic vessels are used, discarded, collected, processed, and transformed into usable material again. Waste becomes resource.

The lifecycle extends. There is something quietly elegant about that transformation. One of the most overlooked aspects of sustainability is durability. The longer something lasts, the fewer resources are needed to replace it. A well-engineered button made with blended recycled material can withstand daily wear and multiple washes without compromising performance. If a button fails easily, the garment risks being discarded prematurely. One missing button can demote a perfectly good shirt to the back of the cupboard.

Quality components extend garment life. Extended garment life reduces consumption. Reduced consumption lowers environmental impact. It is a chain reaction - and it can begin with something as small as a button.

In Closing: Fastening the Future

The next time you button your shirt, pause for a moment. Consider that what seems insignificant may carry intention within it - a percentage of recycled material, a conscious manufacturing decision, a quiet reduction in virgin plastic use. Sustainability is rarely built on a single grand gesture. It is built through accumulation. 0.35 grams at a time. One shirt at a time. One decision repeated thousands - even millions - of times. Recycled-content buttons may be small, but they represent progress. They represent evolution. They represent a willingness to rethink even the tiniest details. They are a marvel in engineering. They are a reflection of good intention of protecting the earth.