THE EDITORIAL PAGE

RAJOURI-POONCH NEED HELP

Flash floods in Rajouri town caused by incessant rains have wreaked havoc in the town. With the warning about more rainfall and the possibility of floods across the UT, we must remain prepared for rescue and relief operations. Each calamity raises our hopes for better mechanisms to deal with such eventualities, and then gradually everyone forgets the promises made. J&K people as a society must rise to the occasion and support each other in such times. We all remember making donations for food, rations and even clothes for the victims of natural calamities across the world, but have no consideration for those suffering nearby. The government authorities including Chief Minister and his minister are busy in Delhi on a political mission must return home immediately to monitor the situation. People can not be left to end for themselves. A good preparation can avert a lot of human sufferings and loses.

STATEHOOD

New Delhi and Srinagar do not share the perspective on the restoration of Statehood for J&K. While the Center thinks it has far more crucial issues to deal with for full integration of J&K with the rest of the country, the politicians in Srinagar are only interested in getting the statehood back. These leaders believe that sorting out major problems like terrorism, Pakistan's support for terrorists, radicalisation and uprooting embedded jihadis are none of their problems. It's not that they feel helpless in a situation where security is directly with New Delhi; earlier too they never felt they had a stake in improving the situation. When it comes to dealing with terrorism and religious radicalisation, they would look the other way. While it's the right of a political party to raise its demands and stage a protest, the Centre can call a meeting of political parties from J&K or hold parleys with individual parties to brief them about the plan for restoration of the promised statehood.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decade of power

Nilantha Ilangamuwa

On July 15, 2026, Recep Tayyip Erdogan marked ten years since the night warplanes bombed Turkey's parliament, telling a crowd in Ankara that the network Turkey blames for the coup attempt has lost its guard but remains dangerous - this despite the death, in Pennsylvania in 2024, of the exiled cleric at the center of it all, Fethullah Gülen. That the threat still needed naming, a decade on and well after its supposed architect died, says less about what remains of Gülen's network than about how load-bearing July 15 has become for everything Erdogan has built since. Turkish outlets critical of the government reportedly weren't accredited to cover the commemoration at all.

The same week offered a sharper illustration of the method than any anniversary speech could. As NATO leaders gathered in Ankara for the alliance's summit on July 7 and 8 - Turkey's second turn hosting the full membership since 2004 - a courtroom outside Istanbul pressed on with the trial of Ekrem Mamolus, the jailed mayor and Erdogan's most credible electoral rival, on corruption charges spread across more than four hundred co-defendants and a combined sentencing demand north of two thousand years. Ekrem Mamolus was ejected from his own hearing days into the summit; his lawyer called the ruling arbitrary and outside the law. Human rights monitors have called the case and the parallel removal of more than a dozen elected opposition mayors a politically driven effort to clear the field before Turkey's next presidential vote.

That overlap points to something the familiar story of an elected strongman riding a strong economy tends to miss: Erdogan does not meet every threat with the same tool. Where a challenge arrives wrapped in votes - Ekrem Mamolus, or Selahattin Demirtas, the Kurdish politician the European Court of Human Rights has repeatedly ordered released since 2018 and whom Ankara has kept in prison regardless - the instrument is the courtroom, applied patiently and indefinitely. Where a threat arrives wrapped in weapons, the instrument is negotiation. In 2025, after four decades of insurgency and more than 40,000 deaths, the PKK held a ceremony in northern Iraq and burned its weapons; by mid-2026, Erdogan's government was drafting legislation, together with pro-Kurdish lawmakers his coalition had spent years branding as terrorist proxies, to formalize the group's dissolution. It is a genuine settlement no predecessor achieved. It also sits oddly next to Ankara's reported success, described this year in Israeli press accounts, in persuading Donald Trump to shelve a Mossad-backed plan to arm Kurdish militias against Iran. Whether the fighters in question are burning weapons in Sulaymaniyah or being organized by Israeli intelligence, Turkey's answer to Kurdish paramilitary power has been the same: neutralize it, by whatever means the moment allows.

Economics

Foreign policy runs on the same instinct for turning constraint into leverage. Hosting NATO gave Erdo? an a stage, and he used it in a way only he would think to: sending all thirty-two visiting leaders home with an engraved Gümü? ay .357 revolver from the state manufacturer MKE, a gift so unusual that several delegations had to check their own gun laws before deciding whether to keep it, hand it to a museum, or leave it with their embassy - one leader joked that his own gift to Erdogan, a shipment of maple syrup, looked badly outmatched, while another only learned he had received a revolver at all after landing back home, and passed it to a police museum. It doubled as a sales pitch, delivered days before Washington was expected to lift sanctions tied to Ankara's 2019 purchase of Russian S-400 missiles - part of a rapprochement one American official described to reporters as a "special chemistry" between the two presidents. The wider pattern holds: Erdogan supplies armed drones to Ukraine while buying Russian gas, criticizes Israel's conduct in Gaza in some of the bluntest language of any regional leader while keeping Washington close, and has spent the past year quietly reopening trade and diplomatic doors across the Gulf that stayed shut for most of the 2010s.

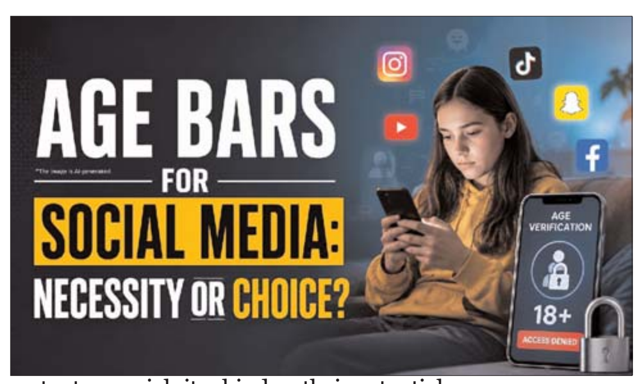
What that formula cannot paper over is the economy Turks actually live in. Annual inflation, after peaking above 80 percent in recent years, has been climbing back through 2026, running above 32 percent in the spring as an energy shock from the Iran war pushed up fuel and food prices - even as the central bank held its policy rate at 37 percent, the highest in the G20. The lira has slid past 47 to the dollar, down roughly 17 percent against the currency over twelve months. Finance minister Mehmet Simsek's return to economic orthodoxy since 2023 has rebuilt some investor confidence, but it runs on the same logic as everything else: manage the pain rather than end it, and bet that voters credit the direction of travel more than they punish the distance still to go.

None of this looks like a leader coasting on the memory of a defeated coup. It looks like a governing method that has been generalized far past July 15 - conciliation for enemies who can hurt him with force, litigation for rivals who can beat him with votes, and a foreign policy built to extract leverage from exactly the contradictions that would sink a less agile government. Even the Kurdish settlement may serve a second purpose.

Turkey's constitution caps Erdogan at two terms, due to expire with elections now targeted for April 2028, and the only routes past that cap run through parliament: 360 of its 600 members calling an early vote, or a larger bloc rewriting the charter outright. His coalition currently holds 321 seats on its own. The pro-Kurdish DEM party holds 56 - exactly the kind of bloc a movement freshly persuaded to lay down its weapons might be willing to lend the president who ended its war. Whether that arithmetic works, whether a currency still hunting for its floor holds, and whether an opposition that keeps producing candidates even as Ankara jails them can ever actually compete are the questions the next two years will answer - not whether Erdogan's command of July 15 endures, but whether a country this size can keep being governed by anniversary alone.

AGE BARS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA: NECESSITY OR CHOICE

Kajleen Kaur



Social media for the present generation is more than a form of simple communication; it is a holistic mechanism for socialising, education, entertainment and recognition. It has transformed the way children and adolescents engage with and explore their lives, in contrast to previous generations. However, of late, there has been a public furore on the downside of the online exposure, including digital addiction, cyber-bullying, misinformation, mental health and behavioural issues at this tender age. Many countries are thereby implementing an age limit for social media use.

The minimum age for most major social media platforms today is 13 years, which is mainly to secure adherence to data protection laws like the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) in the United States. But with lax enforcement, the majority of children have access to social media long before the recommended age. Age restrictions demonstrate the importance of protecting children during their developmental period. Research shows that while adolescents' critical cognitive and emotional abilities are developing, exposure to endless content on social sites hinders their potential intellectual growth. Excessive social media use has been associated with increased anxiety levels, depression, sleep disorders, and social comparison among teenagers. In a world where information spreads rapidly without any authentication, the young users are the most affected, as they are not able to mindfully decide about its repercussions before absorbing or spreading it.

India is at an even higher risk, with one of the world's largest populations of internet users, affordable smartphones, low-cost data, and unregulated usage. It has certainly helped in digital empowerment with more information and educational content, but has also exposed young users to cyber threats, online harassment, digital scams, and harmful content. The age restriction is also critical to safeguard society from any immature digital actions by this section of the population, which may be unintentional but can result in unprecedented adversities. Quoting a recent personal anecdote of an encounter with a young girl in her early teens, popular enough, but not to my knowledge, who creates digital content for her social media channels. She randomly requested me for a brief general interaction for a video, which seemed casual and harmless enough. When I received the video-bite through some forward messages, I discovered the clip had been edited and presented unexpectedly and unpleasantly to make it a subject of mockery, for engaging viewership. What followed were the insensitive and distressing comments on the video. It was unignorable, and therefore, I had to lodge an official cybercrime complaint to get the clip removed from all the platforms. Undoubtedly, the young generation possesses remarkable technological skills, yet lacks the sense needed to understand the serious consequences of their digital pursuits. The irresponsible content targeting people can damage social reputation, bearing serious repercussions. They also lack awareness of the importance of digital ethics, informed consent, privacy, and legal accountability. The importance of age bars on social media can therefore not be denied. The more pressing issue is how age restrictions are implemented. Robust age-verification and platform accountability, parental and teachers' engagement, and digital literacy education are all important factors in effective regulation. Many countries, including Australia, the UAE, China, and several European countries, have mandated strict age verification methods like facial scans or ID checks instead of relying on self-declaration as an effective mechanism to enforce age limits. History

What is needed, therefore, in this digital era is a comprehensive approach that includes protection, education, accountability, empowerment and wise engagement with technology.

The hidden economy behind every AI prompt

Anuradha PS

The majority of people associate AI with a chatbot, an image generator or a coding assistant. But these are merely the buildings that have a face. There is another economy behind them, an invisible economy that operates in the name of data, computing power, electricity, human work and public infrastructure. We use it every day, but do not fully appreciate who's creating the value, who's taking the value, who's really paying for the value.

Each 'prompt' from the AI generates something bigger. But there is an invisible economy to getting that seemingly easy answer; chips and electricity, water and cloud infrastructure, data and human labour and billions of dollars of investment. AI is the next Industrial Revolution. However, there is an important point to the comparison. All industrial revolutions had their own infrastructure. The infrastructure of AI is not so visible. It has factories that are data centres. It's using data as its raw material. It operates on electric fuel. It has an assembly line process, and a number of thousands of human workers train, test, and fine-tune intelligent systems.

This hidden infrastructure is growing exponentially. PwC has estimated that AI will have the power to add up to US$15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030. These figures are often touted as the harbingers of the promise of AI. Much less consideration is given to the source of that wealth, the ownership of infrastructure that produces it, and who will benefit from it.

The solution is as simple as a question. When a user requests an email be drafted or a spreadsheet be analysed by AI, the request goes through extremely fast networks to data centers with specialized processors. These are not regular computers, but powerful graphics processors (GPUs) that can calculate trillions of calculations per second for thousands of dollars. The reason why the response is so quick is that gigantic investments have already been made in semiconductor manufacturing, cloud computing and networking infrastructure.

It has just emerged that intelligence isn't light. Nor is it free of pollution. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), data centres used approximately 415 terawatt-hours of electricity in 2024, which amounted to about 1.5% of global electricity consumption. Each prompt thus comes with an invisible energy cost and connects AI policy with the discussions around renewable energy, grid resilience and sustainable infrastructure.

Another little-talked-about expense comes even further down the list: people. Although the popular notion is that AI generation will replace human jobs, it still relies on a huge amount of people to label images, check translations, moderate and filter out harmful content, and evaluate the responses of the models. Much of their work is hidden in plain sight, frequently spread out across the developing rest of the world, done away from the spotlight of AI success. All polished AI answers have a human judgment component which users are not aware of.

Traditionally, economists have called such uncompensated expenses externalities, and AI is ushering in a new era of digital externalities. Costs that the user may not have in mind include those in the electricity grid, water resources, cloud infrastructure, copyright issues and human labour. The costs of intelligence are distributed through a complex economic system and thus seem free. The invisibility applies to value creation as well. All interactions with AI create economic value. The accuracy of models is enhanced by users' questions.

AI becomes a core part of businesses as a tool. Cloud providers rent computations. Manufacturers of chips are providing ever more advanced equipment. In this fledgling value chain, the most lucrative positions go to companies who own their data and infrastructure for computation. This is a chance and a strategic dilemma for India. Through Aadhaar, UPI and DigiLocker, the country has created one of the most revered ecosystems of digital public infrastructure in the world that can serve millions while scaling, showcasing how digital systems can scale. India also has more than 900 million Internet users, which produce one of the world's most prolific sources of digital data. However, having a digital scale won't guarantee AI leadership.

Without the ability to develop its own AI, India is at risk of becoming a data exporter and an AI importer. The next big step in digital policy needs to go beyond promoting the use of AI. It needs to prioritise the enhancement of domestic computing power, semiconductor manufacturing, providing affordable computing to start-ups, investing in AI research, establishing high-quality public datasets and establishing clear regulations that engender trust. The debate surrounding AI has mostly centered on the question of whether AI will lead to job displacement. That's a very important question, but possibly not the most important one.

According to the International Monetary Fund, AI could impact approximately 40% of all jobs around the world. Equally important, though, is who will be the owners of the infrastructure on which AI creates wealth. Its long-term consequences will not only be related to innovation, but also to institutions, investment and public policy. Each AI prompt is thus more than just a digital conversation. It is an economic exchange that is part of an extensive global system of energy, infrastructure, investment and human effort. Although the technology is invisible, its economic impact is not. Each prompt has an invisible cost; its value is invisible, and its infrastructure is invisible. The hidden economy is the first step towards a technologically transformative, economically fair, and viable AI revolution.