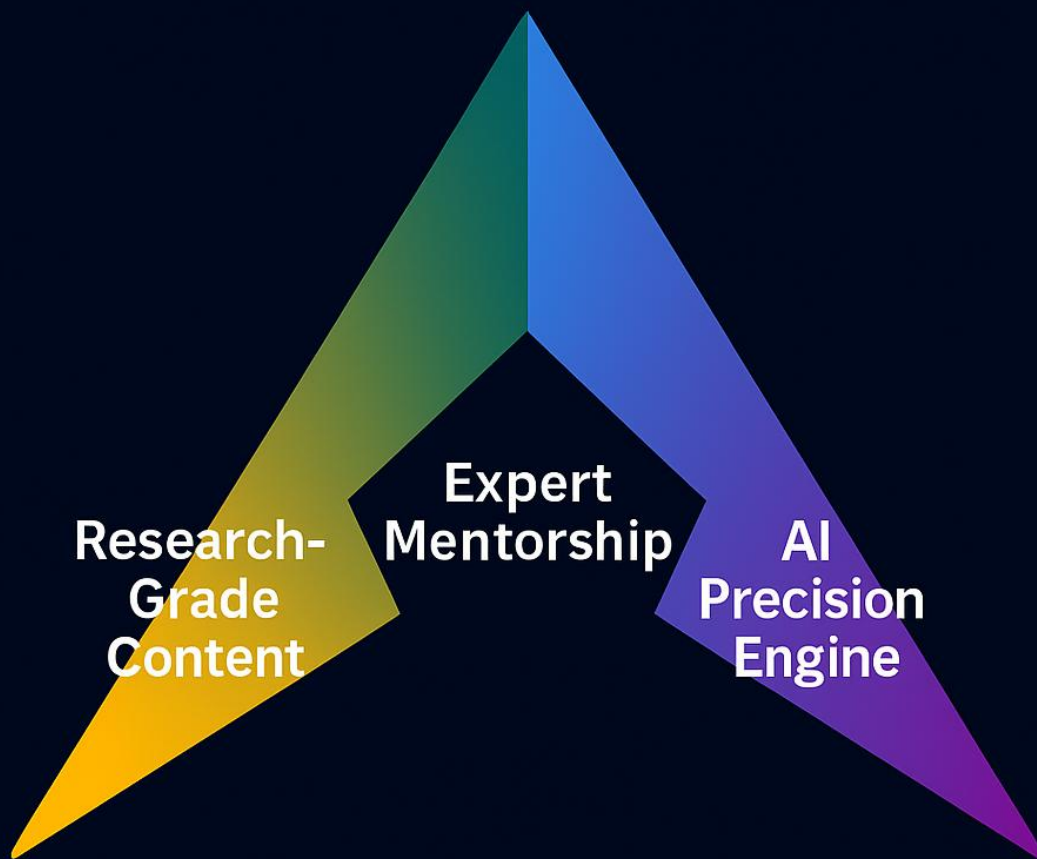


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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS DATED 02.07.2026

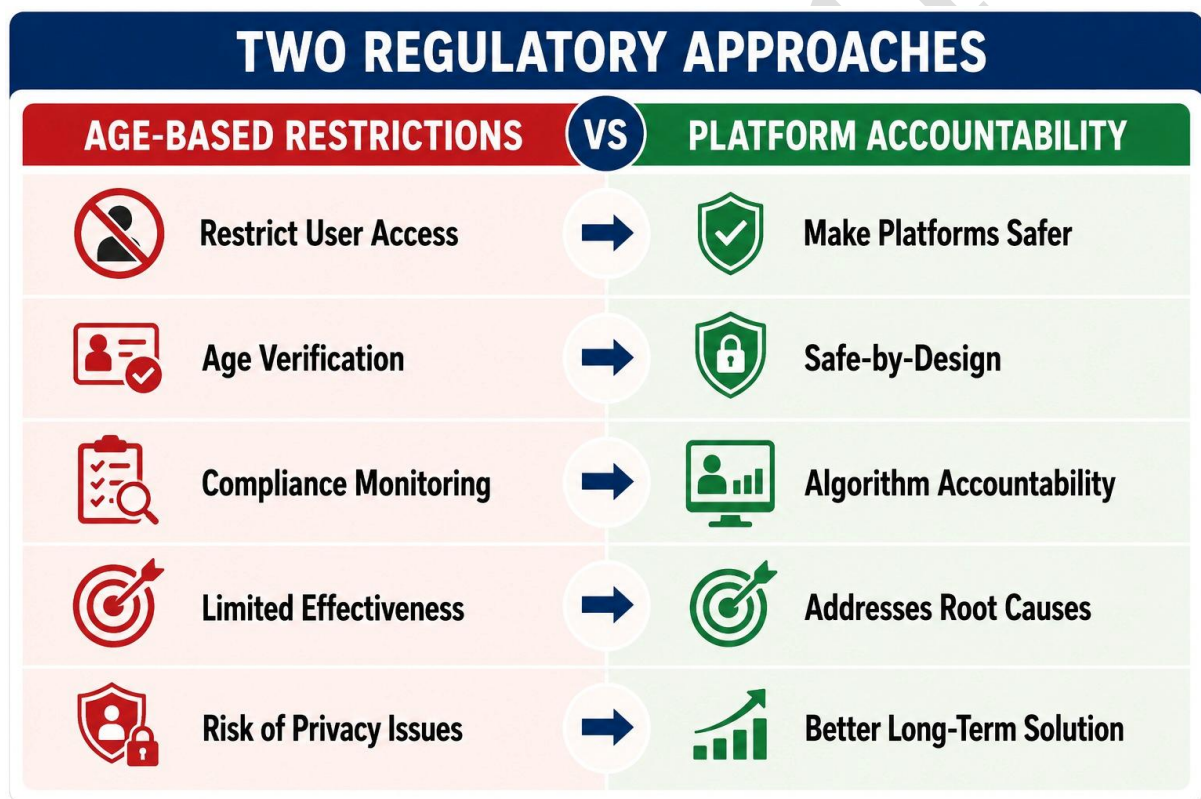
GS Paper II: Current Affairs

1. Regulating Social Media Use Among Minors: Ban versus Platform Accountability

a. Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of children's education, communication, entertainment and social interaction. While digital platforms provide opportunities for learning, creativity and connectivity, they have also raised growing concerns regarding excessive screen time, cyberbullying, online exploitation, misinformation and adverse mental health outcomes. The increasing use of engagement-driven algorithms has further intensified concerns about children's digital well-being.

Several countries, including the United Kingdom, Australia, France and Indonesia, are considering or implementing restrictions on children's access to social media. The debate has also gained prominence in India, raising an important policy question: Should governments primarily rely on age-based restrictions, or should digital platforms bear greater responsibility for ensuring child safety through safer design and stronger accountability?



b. Background Context

The rapid expansion of smartphones, affordable internet access and social media platforms has fundamentally altered children's interaction with the digital world. Although online platforms support education and communication, they have simultaneously increased children's exposure to harmful content, addictive digital behaviour and cyber risks.

Governments across the world are therefore exploring two broad regulatory approaches:

- Age-based restrictions limiting children's access to social media.
- Platform accountability, requiring technology companies to design safer digital ecosystems for minors.

While both approaches seek to protect children, each presents distinct governance, legal and technological challenges.

c. Key Issues

Rising Online Risks for Children

Growing social media use has increased concerns regarding:

- Mental health issues.
- Excessive screen time and addictive online behaviour.
- Cyberbullying.
- Exposure to harmful or inappropriate content.
- Online exploitation and grooming.

Ban versus Regulation

A central policy question is whether:

- Age-based restrictions provide effective protection; or
- Greater responsibility should be imposed upon digital platforms through stronger regulatory standards.

Challenges in Age Verification

- Reliable age verification remains technologically difficult.
- Verification mechanisms may require collection of sensitive personal information.
- Privacy and data protection concerns therefore become significant.

These concerns indicate that simply restricting access may not fully address the underlying causes of online harm.

d. Limitations of Age-Based Restrictions

Enforcement Challenges

- Age verification systems can often be bypassed using borrowed identities, parental accounts or technological workarounds.
- Effectiveness therefore remains limited.

Privacy Concerns

- Mandatory age verification may require collection and storage of children's personal data.
- This increases risks relating to privacy, data breaches and misuse of sensitive information.

Platform Migration

- Restricting one platform may merely shift children to alternative or less regulated platforms.
- Overall online exposure may remain largely unchanged.

Administrative Burden

- Monitoring user identities requires substantial technological and regulatory resources.
- Excessive monitoring may inadvertently encourage intrusive digital surveillance.

These limitations suggest that regulatory efforts must also address the design and functioning of digital platforms themselves.

e. Why Platform Accountability is Equally Important

Algorithmic Responsibility

- Social media platforms rely on engagement-driven recommendation algorithms.
- These systems may unintentionally amplify:
 - Addictive content.
 - Harmful material.
 - Misinformation.
 - Polarising content.

Safety-by-Design

Platforms should incorporate:

- Child-friendly default settings.
- Age-appropriate design standards.
- Strong safeguards against cyberbullying and online exploitation.
- Effective parental supervision tools.

Greater Transparency

- Platforms should disclose information regarding:
 - Recommendation algorithms.
 - Content moderation practices.
 - Safety mechanisms.
- Greater transparency improves regulatory oversight and public accountability.

Role of Government

Governments should establish:

- Clear regulatory standards.
- Independent oversight mechanisms.
- Appropriate balance between:
 - Child protection.
 - Privacy.
 - Freedom of expression.
 - Technological innovation.

A balanced regulatory framework therefore requires shared responsibility among governments, platforms, parents and users.

f. Way Forward

Adopt a Risk-Based Regulatory Framework

- Combine child protection with strong safeguards for privacy and personal data.
- Apply proportionate regulation according to platform risk.

Strengthen Platform Accountability

- Mandate transparency requirements.
- Enforce age-appropriate service design.
- Conduct independent safety audits.
- Strengthen mechanisms protecting minors from harmful content.

Expand Digital Literacy

- Educate children, parents, teachers and caregivers.
- Promote responsible online behaviour and critical digital literacy.
- Improve awareness regarding cyber safety.

Encourage Shared Responsibility

- Strengthen parental guidance.
- Promote balanced screen-time management.
- Encourage responsible digital habits instead of relying solely on blanket restrictions.

Develop a Comprehensive Legal Framework

- Clearly define children's online rights.
- Specify platform responsibilities.
- Establish robust digital safety standards.
- Ensure consistency with constitutional guarantees relating to privacy and freedom of expression.

g. Global Approaches to Child Online Safety

Country	Regulatory Approach
Australia	Considering stricter minimum-age requirements and stronger platform accountability.
United Kingdom	Online Safety Act emphasises platform responsibility and child safety duties.
France	Introduced parental consent requirements for younger users on social media platforms.
Indonesia	Exploring stronger regulation to protect minors from harmful online content.

Conclusion

Protecting children in the digital age requires moving beyond the narrow debate of "ban versus access." A balanced governance framework should combine platform accountability, child-centric design, strong privacy safeguards, digital literacy and proportionate regulation. Such an approach will better protect children's rights while preserving the educational, social and developmental opportunities offered by the digital ecosystem.

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While every effort has been made to balance depth with brevity, please keep the following in mind:

1. Orientation & Purpose

This compilation is curated primarily from the UPSC Mains perspective — with emphasis on conceptual clarity, analytical depth, and interlinkages across GS papers.

However, the PrepAlpine team is simultaneously developing a dedicated Prelims-focused Current Affairs Series, designed for:

- factual coverage
- data recall
- Prelims-style MCQs
- objective pattern analysis

This Prelims Edition will be released separately as a standalone publication.

2. Content Length

Some sections may feel shorter or longer depending on topic relevance and news density. To fit your personal preference, you may freely resize or summarize sections using any LLM tool (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.) at your convenience.

3. Format Flexibility

The formatting combines:

- paragraphs
- lists
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