

# PrepAlpine

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# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS DATED 09.02.2026

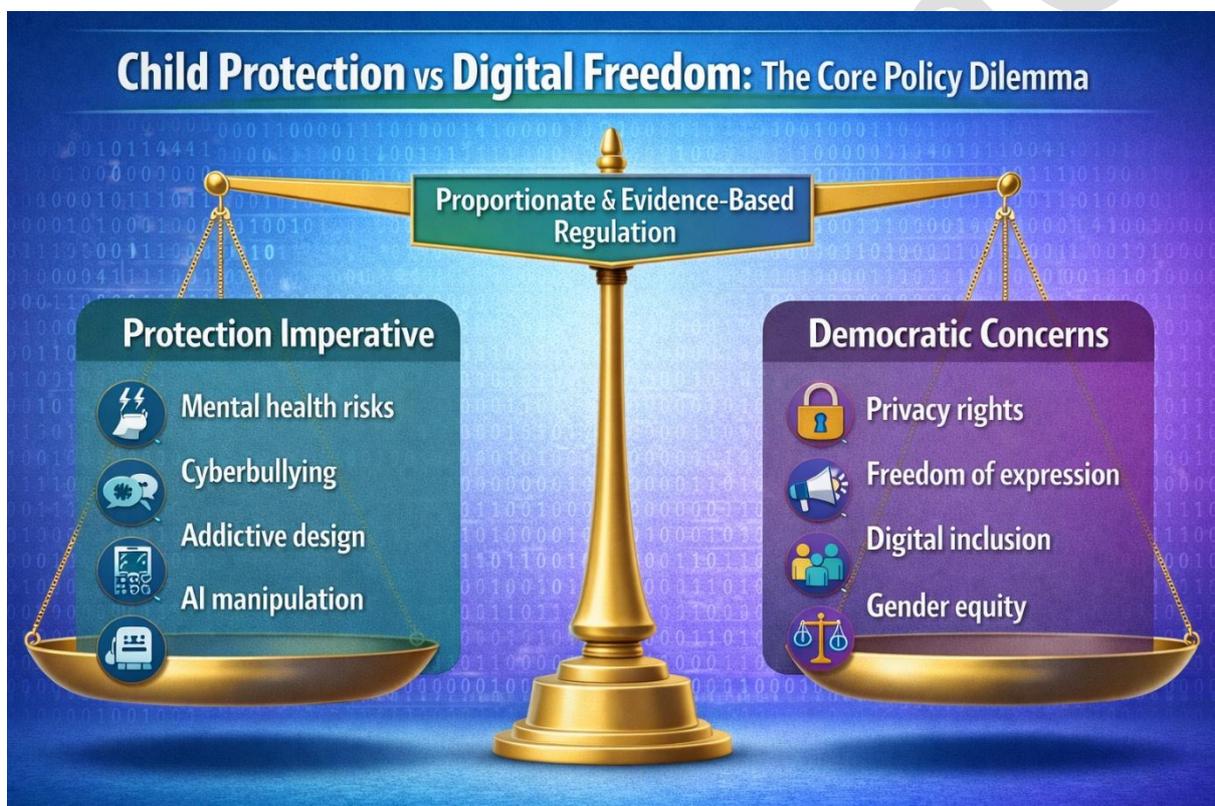
## GS Paper II: Current Affairs

### 1. Regulating Social Media for Children in India: Beyond Blanket Bans

#### a. Introduction

Social media has become deeply integrated into the lives of children and adolescents. It offers opportunities for learning, creativity, peer interaction and civic participation. At the same time, excessive or unregulated use has been linked to anxiety, depression, cyberbullying and exposure to harmful content.

Some countries have considered or introduced blanket bans on social media access for minors below a certain age. The key policy question for India is whether such total prohibition would effectively protect children, or whether it would create deeper problems related to privacy, inequality and governance.



#### b. Why the Concern is Genuine

##### i. Mental Health and Psychological Impact

###### Correlation with distress

Research indicates that heavy social media use may correlate with anxiety, depression and low self-esteem, especially among adolescents.

###### Gendered vulnerability

- Girls are often more exposed to body image pressures.
- Social comparison intensifies emotional distress.

###### Cyberbullying and harassment

Online abuse can be persistent and public, increasing psychological harm.

## **ii. Algorithmic Amplification and Addictive Design**

### **Engagement-driven algorithms**

Social media platforms use recommendation systems designed to maximise engagement. These systems may amplify emotionally triggering or sensational content.

### **Artificial intelligence risks**

- AI-driven chatbots may simulate emotional intimacy.
- Personalised content feeds may reinforce echo chambers.
- Addictive features such as endless scrolling reduce reflective thinking.

Thus, the policy concern is legitimate and requires structured intervention.

## **c. Why a Blanket Ban May Be Problematic**

### **i. Practical and Technological Limitations**

#### **Circumvention risks**

- Minors can bypass restrictions using VPNs.
- Migration to less regulated or encrypted platforms may occur.

#### **Enforcement complexity**

Strict age verification systems are technically difficult and financially costly.

### **ii. Privacy and Surveillance Concerns**

#### **Mandatory identity linkage**

Age verification may require linking accounts to government identification systems.

#### **Constitutional test of proportionality**

Under privacy jurisprudence, state action must be:

- Necessary
- Proportionate
- Least intrusive

A child protection measure should not create an expansive surveillance framework.

### **iii. Gender and Social Inequality**

#### **Existing digital divide**

India already has a gender gap in digital access.

#### **Risk of disproportionate restriction**

In patriarchal settings, a ban may lead families to restrict girls' access more than boys'.

Instead of protecting minors, such a measure may deepen educational and social inequalities.

### **iv. Overlooking Positive Functions**

#### **Educational access**

Social media provides access to learning resources and academic communities.

#### **Peer support networks**

Marginalised youth, including rural or minority groups, may find supportive communities online.

A complete prohibition fails to recognise these constructive uses.

## **v. Shifting Responsibility Away from Platforms**

Blanket bans focus on restricting children rather than reforming:

- Addictive platform design
- Data exploitation practices
- Opaque algorithms

Without corporate accountability, root causes remain unaddressed.

## **d. Governance and Ethical Dimensions**

### **i. Proportionality**

Regulation must not exceed what is necessary to achieve child protection.

### **ii. Autonomy and Evolving Capacities**

Adolescents possess evolving decision-making capacity. Policy should not treat them as entirely passive subjects.

### **iii. Equity**

Regulation must avoid disproportionately harming vulnerable or marginalised groups.

### **iv. Corporate Accountability**

Technology companies must bear responsibility for design choices that generate foreseeable risks.

Thus, policy must be evidence-based rather than symbolic or reactionary.

## **e. Towards a Balanced Regulatory Framework**

### **i. Duty of Care for Platforms**

- Legal obligation to prevent foreseeable harm to minors.
- Penalties for failure to moderate harmful content.
- Responsibility for algorithmic amplification of harmful material.

### **ii. Independent Digital Regulator**

- Expert-led and institutionally independent body.
- Oversight of compliance and risk assessment.
- Continuous evaluation of emerging digital harms.

Technical expertise is essential to regulate complex AI systems.

### **iii. Algorithmic Transparency and Design Reform**

- Disclosure of recommendation system functioning.
- Limits on addictive features such as endless scrolling.
- Restrictions on manipulative emotional targeting.

### **iv. Strengthening Digital Literacy**

- Integration of digital literacy in school curricula.
- Training students to identify misinformation and manage screen time.
- Parental guidance frameworks to complement institutional efforts.

### **v. Evidence-Based Policymaking**

- Longitudinal research on mental health impacts in Indian socio-cultural contexts.

- Inclusion of youth voices in policy design.
- Periodic review mechanisms.

#### **f. Regulating Artificial Intelligence Systems**

- Standards for AI chatbots interacting with minors.
- Safeguards against manipulative or psychologically harmful interactions.
- Transparent grievance redressal mechanisms.

#### **g. Constitutional and Policy Linkages**

The issue intersects with:

- Protection of vulnerable groups under welfare obligations.
- Fundamental rights, including privacy and freedom of expression.
- Digital economy regulation and cybersecurity frameworks.
- Ethical considerations of state intervention and corporate responsibility.

A regulatory approach must harmonise child protection with democratic freedoms.

#### **Conclusion**

Protecting children in the digital age is a legitimate and urgent objective. However, a blanket ban on social media is a blunt instrument that risks enforcement failure, privacy intrusion and unintended inequality.

A sustainable approach lies in strengthening platform accountability, enhancing digital literacy, ensuring independent regulatory oversight and grounding interventions in evidence and constitutional values. The aim should not be to exclude children from the digital world, but to shape digital spaces so they promote safety, resilience and dignity within a democratic framework.

## **GS Paper II: International Relations**

### **2. India–Malaysia Strategic Partnership Expansion**

#### **a. Introduction**

The recent expansion of the India–Malaysia partnership marks a significant step in India’s engagement with Southeast Asia. During the Prime Minister’s visit to Kuala Lumpur, both countries signed agreements covering defence cooperation, semiconductors, digital payments, trade settlement in local currencies, energy, advanced manufacturing and counter-terrorism. Malaysia also reiterated support for India’s permanent membership in a reformed United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

This development reflects a transition from traditional trade engagement to a deeper comprehensive strategic partnership, aligned with India’s *Act East Policy* and Indo-Pacific vision.

#### **b. Historical and Strategic Context**

##### **i. Civilisational and Maritime Linkages**

- Long-standing maritime trade connections across the Indian Ocean.
- Cultural exchanges and Indian diaspora presence in Malaysia.
- Shared historical interactions through commerce and migration.

These links provide a strong socio-cultural base for modern diplomacy.

## ii. Strategic Geography

### Malaysia's regional position

- Key member of ASEAN.
- Located near the Strait of Malacca—one of the busiest global maritime trade routes.

### Relevance to India

- ASEAN is central to India's Indo-Pacific strategy.
- Maritime security in the Malacca Strait directly affects India's energy and trade flows.

Thus, the partnership has implications beyond bilateral engagement—it fits into India's broader Indo-Pacific strategy.



## c. Key Areas of Cooperation

### i. Defence and Maritime Security

#### Areas of collaboration

- Defence dialogue and training exchanges.
- Maritime cooperation and joint exercises.
- Strengthening secure sea lanes.

#### Strategic relevance

This aligns with India's *SAGAR* (*Security and Growth for All in the Region*) doctrine, promoting cooperative maritime security.

### ii. Counter-Terrorism Cooperation

- Enhanced intelligence sharing.
- Cooperation against transnational terror networks.
- Shared stance against extremism.

This strengthens India's internal security architecture and reinforces zero tolerance toward terrorism.

### **iii. Semiconductor and Advanced Manufacturing**

#### **Why semiconductors matter**

Semiconductors are critical for electronics, defence systems and digital infrastructure.

#### **Complementarity**

- India: Expanding domestic manufacturing under the Semiconductor Mission.
- Malaysia: Strong base in semiconductor assembly and testing.

#### **Strategic gain**

Reduces overdependence on concentrated global supply chains and enhances resilience amid geopolitical tensions.

### **iv. Digital Economy and Artificial Intelligence**

- Cooperation in digital payments.
- Collaboration in AI and emerging technologies.
- Joint innovation and startup ecosystems.

This strengthens India's digital economy and supports technology-driven growth.

### **v. Local Currency Trade Settlement**

#### **Mechanism**

Trade settlement in Indian rupees and Malaysian ringgit.

#### **Significance**

- Reduces reliance on the US dollar.
- Enhances financial resilience.
- Supports gradual internationalisation of the rupee.

### **vi. Energy and Food Security**

- Stable access to energy supplies.
- Cooperation in food systems and agricultural trade.
- Diversification amid global supply disruptions.

## **d. Strategic and Diplomatic Significance**

### **i. Strengthening ASEAN Centrality**

The partnership reinforces ASEAN's central role in Indo-Pacific architecture and positions India as a constructive regional partner.

### **ii. UNSC Reform Support**

Malaysia's support for India's permanent membership in a reformed UNSC strengthens India's diplomatic campaign for equitable global governance.

### **iii. Indo-Pacific Balance**

Deeper India-Malaysia ties contribute to supply chain resilience, technology cooperation and strategic stability within the Indo-Pacific.

## **e. Economic Implications**

### **i. Trade Expansion**

Malaysia is an important trading partner within ASEAN. Expanded cooperation can increase trade volumes and diversify trade baskets.

## **ii. Manufacturing and Technology Hub Vision**

- Advanced manufacturing partnerships support India's Make in India objectives.
- Technology collaboration strengthens innovation ecosystems.

## **iii. Supply Chain Diversification**

Reduced vulnerability to disruptions enhances economic resilience in an era of geopolitical competition.

## **f. Emerging Challenges**

### **i. Balancing Great Power Competition**

Malaysia maintains strong economic ties with China. India must pursue cooperation without forcing strategic alignment choices.

### **ii. Trade Imbalance Risks**

Asymmetric market access could create imbalances if not monitored carefully.

### **iii. Implementation Gaps**

- Agreements often face execution delays.
- Institutional coordination is essential.
- Private sector participation determines real outcomes.

## **g. Way Forward**

### **i. Institutionalising Defence Cooperation**

- Regular joint maritime exercises.
- Structured defence dialogues.
- Capacity-building initiatives.

### **ii. Operationalising Semiconductor Collaboration**

- Joint research centres.
- Technology parks.
- Skill development partnerships.

### **iii. Expanding Financial Cooperation**

Extend local currency trade mechanisms to broader ASEAN frameworks to strengthen regional financial resilience.

### **iv. Aligning with ASEAN Centrality**

Ensure bilateral initiatives complement regional multilateral structures rather than fragment them.

### **v. Linking with Global Development Goals**

Align cooperation with goals relating to industry, innovation and institutional strengthening to enhance legitimacy and sustainability.

## **Conclusion**

The expansion of India–Malaysia ties marks a qualitative transformation toward a comprehensive strategic partnership. By integrating defence cooperation, semiconductor development, digital innovation and local currency trade, the relationship strengthens India's Indo-Pacific engagement while reinforcing principles of sovereignty, stability and multilateral reform.

Its long-term success will depend on sustained implementation, institutional trust and the ability to navigate evolving regional dynamics. If effectively operationalised, the partnership can serve as a cornerstone of India's engagement with Southeast Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

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## Reader's Note — About This Current Affairs Compilation

Dear Aspirant,

This document is part of the PrepAlpine Current Affairs Series — designed to bring clarity, structure, and precision to your daily UPSC learning.

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
- tables
- visual cues

—all optimised for retention.

If you prefer a specific style (lists → paras, paras → tables, etc.), feel free to convert using any free LLM.

### 4. Monthly Current Affairs Release

The complete Monthly Current Affairs Module will be released soon, optimized to a compact 100–150 pages — comprehensive yet concise, exam-ready, and revision-efficient.

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