

PrepAlpine

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Where Research Meets Mentorship & Precision



Preparation Meets Precision

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PrepAlpine

Email: info@PrepAlpine.com

Website: PrepAlpine.com

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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS DATED 20.03.2026

GS Paper II: Current Affairs

1. Supreme Court on Maternity Leave in Adoption Cases

a. Introduction

The Supreme Court's decision to strike down the three-month age limit for maternity leave in adoption cases marks a significant evolution in India's understanding of motherhood, equality, and welfare. The ruling recognises that caregiving is not confined to biological processes but is deeply rooted in emotional bonding, responsibility, and the integration of a child into a family. In doing so, the Court has aligned labour law with constitutional morality and social reality.

This judgment thus raises an important question: how should laws balance formal rules with real-life social needs?

Impact of Judgment on Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Impact	Example
Adoptive mothers	Access to leave, dignity	Time for bonding with adopted child
Child	Emotional stability	Better adjustment into family
Employers	Compliance responsibility	Need to revise HR policies
State	Welfare obligation strengthened	Align laws with constitutional values
Society	Shift in perception	Acceptance of non-biological families

b. Understanding the Core Issue

At the heart of the case was a restrictive provision in maternity benefit laws, which allowed adoptive mothers to avail maternity leave only if the child adopted was below three months of age.

Practical Problem in Adoption Process

- Adoption under the Juvenile Justice framework involves verification, scrutiny, and waiting periods.
- These procedural safeguards often delay the actual transfer of the child.

Resulting Exclusion

- Many adoptive mothers became ineligible for maternity leave despite genuine caregiving needs.
- The benefit existed more on paper than in reality.

Key Constitutional Question

- Was this classification reasonable?
- Did it serve the objective of maternity welfare?

This leads us to examine how the Constitution evaluates such classifications.

c. Constitutional Foundations of the Judgment

i. Equality under Article 14

Test of Reasonable Classification

- Laws must be based on intelligible differentia.
- The classification must have a rational link to the objective.

Court's Finding

- No real difference exists in caregiving needs based on the child's age.
- The rule was arbitrary and discriminatory.

ii. Dignity and Autonomy under Article 21

Expanded Meaning of Liberty

- Reproductive autonomy includes the choice to adopt.
- Family formation is a matter of personal dignity.

Recognition of Non-Biological Motherhood

- Motherhood includes nurturing, not just childbirth.
- Denial of leave undermines both maternal dignity and child welfare.

iii. Directive Principles as Guiding Values

Welfare Orientation of Law

- Emphasis on humane working conditions.
- Focus on protection of women and children.

Interpretive Role

- Though non-justiciable, they guide constitutional interpretation.

Together, these principles shift the focus from rigid legal rules to human-centred justice.

d. Revisiting the Purpose of Maternity Leave

Traditional Understanding

- Linked mainly to physical recovery after childbirth.

Expanded Judicial Understanding

- Emotional bonding between parent and child.
- Integration of the child into the family unit.

Specific Needs in Adoption Cases

- Children from institutional care may require more emotional support.
- Trust-building and psychological adjustment are crucial.

Thus, denying leave to adoptive mothers defeats the very purpose of maternity welfare.

This redefinition naturally raises the question—why was the earlier rule fundamentally flawed?

e. Why the Earlier Rule Was Unsustainable

Artificial Classification

- The three-month limit had no logical connection with caregiving needs.

Mismatch with Ground Reality

- Legal delays made the benefit inaccessible.
- It became a theoretical right, not a practical one.

Inadequate Alternatives

- Crèche facilities cannot replace parental bonding.
- Emotional care cannot be institutionalised.

These flaws highlight the need for a more humane and realistic approach to welfare laws.

f. Broader Significance of the Judgment

Redefining Motherhood

- Motherhood is recognised as a social and emotional role.
- Adoption is affirmed as a legitimate form of family creation.

Advancing Substantive Equality

- Different situations require different treatment.
- Law must account for real-life conditions.

Strengthening Child Welfare

- Early bonding is essential for emotional development.
- Stability improves long-term well-being.

Humanising Labour Law

- Laws must evolve with society.
- They should reflect lived experiences, not rigid formulas.

While the judgment is progressive, it also exposes deeper systemic issues.

g. Challenges and Limitations

Implementation Gaps

- Weak compliance in private and informal sectors.
- Limited awareness among employers and employees.

Gender Imbalance in Caregiving

- Absence of paternity leave.
- Burden of care remains largely on women.

Limited Social Security Coverage

- Many women remain outside formal protection.
- Informal workforce is largely excluded.

These challenges point towards the need for broader reforms.

h. Towards a More Inclusive Framework

Expanding the Idea of Parental Leave

- Recognise diverse family structures.
- Move beyond biological assumptions.

Introducing Paternity Leave

- Promote shared caregiving responsibility.
- Reduce gender inequality at home and workplace.

Towards Gender-Neutral Policies

- Balance biological needs with equality principles.
- Encourage inclusive caregiving norms.

Strengthening Enforcement

- Ensure legal rights translate into real benefits.
- Improve monitoring and compliance mechanisms.

Such reforms would align labour policy with modern social realities.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's decision represents a meaningful step towards aligning law with the values of equality, dignity, and compassion. By recognising adoptive motherhood as equal in importance to biological motherhood, the Court has expanded the scope of constitutional protection and reinforced the idea that care work is central to both individual well-being and societal progress.

GS Paper III: Science and Technology

2. Artificial Intelligence in Governance: Balancing Innovation with Constitutional Restraint

a. Introduction

The growing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in governance represents a major transformation in how modern states function. Governments are increasingly relying on data-driven systems to improve efficiency, service delivery, and decision-making.

However, the real challenge is not just adopting AI, but deciding how far and under what limits it should be used. In a constitutional democracy like India, technology cannot override values such as liberty, equality, dignity, and accountability.

Thus, the key question is: *How can AI be used in governance without compromising constitutional principles?*

b. Understanding Artificial Intelligence in Governance

Artificial Intelligence in governance refers to the use of computer systems that can analyse large amounts of data, identify patterns, and assist in decision-making.

What AI Does in Governance

- Analyses large datasets quickly
- Helps in prediction e.g., disease outbreaks, crop patterns
- Assists or automates routine decisions

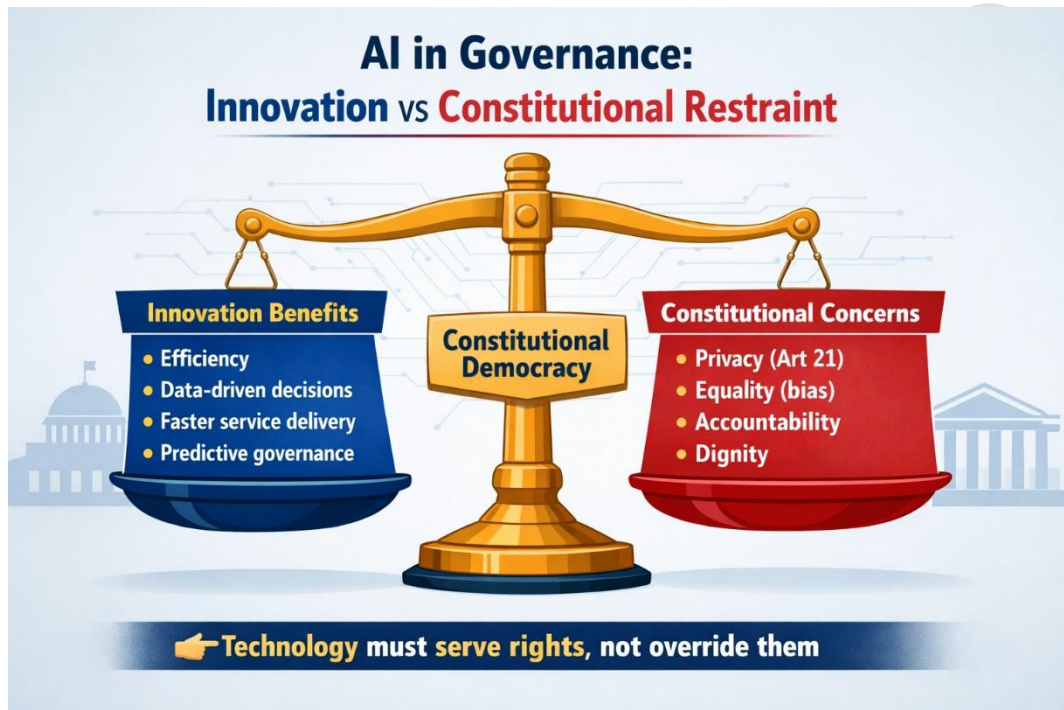
Examples in Real Life

- Detecting tax evasion patterns
- Assisting doctors in reading medical scans
- Managing traffic systems in cities

Core Objective

- Make governance more efficient
- Improve responsiveness
- Enable evidence-based policymaking

This shows that AI is not replacing governance, but reshaping how it operates.



c. Domains Where Artificial Intelligence Can Be Productively Used

i. Administrative Efficiency and Routine Functions

Automation of Repetitive Tasks

- Document processing
- Basic grievance redressal
- Translation and record management

Benefits

- Reduces workload of officials
- Saves time and resources
- Allows focus on complex tasks

ii. Data-Driven Policy Formulation

Use of Big Data

- Health, agriculture, environment data analysis
- Identification of trends and risks

Examples

- Weather prediction for farmers
- Disease surveillance systems

iii. Sector-Specific Applications

- **Healthcare:** Diagnosis through image analysis
- **Urban Governance:** Traffic optimisation
- **Disaster Management:** Early warning systems

AI works best in structured and well-defined problems

iv. Strategic and Technological Development

Building National Capacity

- Reduces dependence on foreign technology
- Enhances cyber security

Strategic Importance for India

- Strengthens technological sovereignty
- Supports economic growth

While AI offers many benefits, its use is not without risks.

d. Areas Requiring Caution and Restraint

i. Surveillance and Privacy Concerns

Risks of AI Surveillance

- Facial recognition misuse
- Mass monitoring of citizens

Constitutional Concern

- Violates Right to Privacy (Article 21)
- May suppress dissent

ii. Welfare Delivery Systems

Risk of Exclusion

- Errors in data or algorithms
- Denial of benefits to deserving people

Impact

- Direct harm to vulnerable populations

iii. Policing and Predictive Systems

- **Algorithmic Bias:** Past biased data, may lead to future biased outcomes
- **Result:** Reinforcement of social discrimination

iv. Defence and Autonomous Systems

Ethical Issues

- Machines taking life-and-death decisions

Challenge

- Weak accountability

- Concerns under humanitarian law

These risks highlight the need for strong safeguards in governance.

e. Key Governance Challenges

Lack of Clear Purpose

- AI adopted for its novelty, not necessity

Privacy and Data Protection Issues

- Misuse of personal data
- Lack of informed consent
- Function creep — data used beyond original purpose

Accountability Deficit

- Who is responsible for AI errors?
- Government vs developer vs system

Dependence on Private Companies

- Reduced state control
- Risks to national sovereignty

Risk of Exclusion and Inequality

- Digital divide
- Missing or incomplete data

Overemphasis on Efficiency

- Fast decisions aren't always fair decisions.
- Justice must not be sacrificed

These challenges make it clear that AI cannot be blindly adopted.

f. Guiding Principle: Necessity and Proportionality

- **Necessity Test:** Is AI actually needed for this function?
- **Proportionality Test:** Do benefits outweigh risks?
- **Implication:** If either test fails, AI use is unjustified

This principle ensures that technology remains within constitutional limits.

g. Way Forward

Selective Adoption of AI

- Focus on low-risk, high-benefit areas

Strong Legal Frameworks

- Data protection laws
- Transparency and algorithm audits

Human Oversight

- Essential in welfare and policing

Regulation of High-Risk Uses

- Strict control over surveillance and autonomous systems

Building Indigenous Capacity

- Reduce dependence on foreign firms

Citizen-Centric Data Governance

- Informed consent
- Protection against misuse

Ensuring Inclusivity

- Prevent digital exclusion
- Promote equitable access

These steps can help align AI with democratic governance.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence has immense potential to make governance more efficient, responsive, and data-driven. However, unchecked use can threaten fundamental rights, weaken accountability, and reduce public trust.

In a democracy, technology must serve the citizen—not control the citizen. True progress lies not in adopting advanced systems blindly, but in ensuring that innovation strengthens justice, dignity, and equality.

Ultimately, the success of AI in governance will depend not on how powerful the technology becomes, but on how wisely and ethically it is used.

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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