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India AI Impact Summit 2026 — The New Delhi Declaration and India's AI Diplomacy

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SUBJECTS COVERED

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator & Content Creator ●

linkedin.com/in/epicbharat

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✎ WHY IN NEWS

88 nations endorsed the New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi on February 22, 2026. Built on seven "Chakra" pillars including democratising AI resources and ensuring trusted AI, the declaration positions India as a key architect of inclusive global AI governance — distinct from the Western-led safety-first approach of the Bletchley Park and Seoul summits.

CONTEXT: THE GLOBAL AI GOVERNANCE RACE

Since **ChatGPT's launch in November 2022**, artificial intelligence has dominated global policy discourse. Advanced AI systems have moved from research labs to commercial deployment at scale, raising pressing questions about safety, misuse, economic disruption, and geopolitical competition. The international community has struggled to agree on a governance framework.

Three major diplomatic initiatives preceded New Delhi:

> **Bletchley Park AI Safety Summit (UK, November 2023):** Focused on frontier AI safety risks; produced the Bletchley Declaration signed by 28 countries; launched AI Safety Institutes in the UK and USA

> **Seoul AI Summit (South Korea, May 2024):** Extended safety commitments; included 16 AI companies in frontier AI pledges; focused on red-lines for "highly capable AI"

> **Paris AI Action Summit (France, February 2025):** Broader participation; focused on AI for public interest; contested US position on binding regulation

India's approach is deliberately different: less focused on existential AI risk (the concern of wealthy countries with frontier AI labs) and more on **equitable access, economic inclusion, and democratic diffusion** of AI capabilities.

WHAT THE NEW DELHI DECLARATION SAYS

The Declaration's **seven Chakra pillars** are:

Pillar	Core Principle
1. Democratising AI Resources	Foundational AI tools, compute, and data should be accessible to all nations
2. Economic Growth and Social Good	AI development must create broad-based benefit, not concentrate wealth
3. Secure and Trusted AI	Safety standards, transparency, accountability — but through capacity building, not only regulation
4. AI for Science	Accelerate scientific research using AI, especially for global challenges (climate, health, food)
5. Social Empowerment	Bridge the AI divide; ensure marginalised communities benefit
6. Human Capital Development	AI workforce training and education, especially for developing nations
7. Resilient and Innovative AI Systems	Infrastructure, standards, and innovation ecosystems

The **Charter for the Democratic Diffusion of AI** operationalises Pillar 1: it proposes shared access to AI compute infrastructure, open foundational models, and multilingual AI development. This addresses a structural asymmetry: the USA and China have dominant AI compute clusters and proprietary foundation models, while the rest of the world depends on their APIs.

INDIA'S STRATEGIC AI POSITIONING

India's approach to global AI governance reflects its broader diplomatic identity as a **Global South leader** and **bridge between blocs**. The New Delhi Declaration's voluntary, non-binding character is consistent with India's preference for sovereignty-preserving frameworks (as seen in its positions on data governance, digital trade, and cyber norms).

Key elements of India's AI strategic calculation:

1. **India AI Mission:** India approved the **India AI Mission** in **2024** with a budget of **Rs 10,372 crore** over 5 years, focusing on:

> Public AI compute infrastructure (shared GPU clusters for research and startups)
>
> AI in agriculture, health, and public service delivery
>
> Indian language models (India has 22 scheduled languages and over 100 languages with significant speaker populations)
>
> AI safety and trustworthiness standards aligned with India's values

2. IndiaAI initiative: The government has been building an **IndiaAI** platform under MeitY (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology) to coordinate AI policy, facilitate public-private partnerships, and publish AI readiness assessments.

3. Compute sovereignty: India's biggest strategic AI vulnerability is compute — the specialised GPUs and TPUs used for training and running large AI models are manufactured by NVIDIA, AMD, Google, and a handful of others, overwhelmingly in the USA and Taiwan. The New Delhi Declaration's focus on democratising compute access directly reflects India's interest in reducing this dependence.

INDIA VS. EU VS. USA APPROACHES TO AI GOVERNANCE

Dimension	EU AI Act (2024)	USA Executive Orders	India New Delhi Declaration
Binding?	Yes — legally binding regulation	Partially (executive orders)	No — voluntary
Focus	Risk categorisation; prohibitions; compliance	Safety, security, innovation	Access, inclusion, economic growth
Who it protects	EU citizens and markets	US interests and innovation	Global South, developing nations
Enforcement	National AI authorities; fines up to €35M	Federal agency guidance	Multistakeholder dialogue
AI liability	High-risk AI must be audited	Emerging framework	Not addressed

India's approach is closest to the **Global Partnership on AI (GPAI)** model — voluntary, multistakeholder, and consensus-based. It avoids the regulatory rigidity of the EU (which many developing countries cannot afford to comply with) and the US focus on frontier AI company self-regulation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR UPSC

The New Delhi AI Declaration is significant for multiple GS papers:

GS-3 (S&T): India AI Mission, compute infrastructure, foundational AI models, AI safety concepts, CERT-In and AI security

GS-2 (IR + Governance): India's AI diplomacy, multilateral governance frameworks, India's Global South leadership, sovereignty vs. rules-based global governance tension, digital colonialism concerns

GS-2 (Polity): MeitY's role, data governance (DPDP Act 2023 intersection), regulatory capacity building

UPSC RELEVANCE

New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact (Feb 22, 2026), India AI Impact Summit 2026, 7 Chakra pillars, Charter for Democratic Diffusion of AI, India AI Mission (Rs 10,372 crore, 2024), MeitY, GPAI (Global Partnership on AI), Bletchley Declaration (2023), EU AI Act (2024), IndiaAI platform, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. **Mains GS-2:** *AI governance; India's multilateral diplomacy; digital sovereignty vs. global norms.* **GS-3:** *Artificial intelligence; national AI missions; India's technology strategy; compute infrastructure; AI safety frameworks.* **Interview:** *"India promotes a voluntary, sovereignty-preserving approach to AI governance while the EU has adopted binding regulation. Which approach better serves the global public interest — and what does India's choice reveal about its foreign policy priorities?"*

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NEW DELHI AI DECLARATION 2026:

Summit: India AI Impact Summit 2026 | Date: February 22, 2026 | Location: New Delhi

Signatories: **88 countries** (USA, UK, China, Brazil, Australia, Canada, Austria, Switzerland + 80 more)

Structure: 7 pillars ("Chakras") + Charter for Democratic Diffusion of AI

Nature: **Voluntary, non-binding** | Philosophical basis: Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

INDIA AI MISSION:

Approved: **2024** (Union Cabinet) | Budget: **Rs 10,372 crore** | Duration: 5 years

Nodal ministry: **MeitY** (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology)

Components: Public compute infrastructure; Indian language models; AI startups; AI safety

Platform: **IndiaAI** (centralized portal for AI policy + resources)

GLOBAL AI GOVERNANCE MILESTONES:

Nov 2023: **Bletchley Park AI Safety Summit** (UK) | 28 countries | Bletchley Declaration

May 2024: **Seoul AI Summit** (South Korea) | Frontier AI safety pledges (16 companies)

Feb 2025: **Paris AI Action Summit** (France) | AI for public interest

Feb 2026: **New Delhi AI Impact Summit** (India) | 88 nations | New Delhi Declaration

EU AI ACT (2024):

World's first legally binding AI regulation

Risk-based framework: Unacceptable risk (banned) | High risk (audited) | Limited risk (transparency) | Minimal risk (free)

Unacceptable risk examples: Social scoring by govts, real-time biometric surveillance, subliminal manipulation

Fines: Up to €35 million or 7% of global turnover

Enforced by: National AI authorities in each EU member state

GPAI (GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP ON AI):

Founded: **2020** by G7 countries + EU | India joined: 2020

Secretariat: OECD, Paris

Focus: Responsible AI development through multistakeholder research

India assumed GPAI Presidency: 2023

COMPUTE AND AI:

GPU (Graphics Processing Unit): Key hardware for AI training (NVIDIA H100 most used)

LLM (Large Language Model): ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Llama — core AI products

Foundation model: Pre-trained model used as base for many AI applications

Compute access gap: USA/China have dominant GPU clusters; most countries rent access via API

Sources: GKToday, PIB, MeitY

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in linkedin.com/in/epicbharat