

PANEL DISCUSSION ON EVOLVING ECOSYSTEM OF AI: IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSUMERS

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BACKGROUND NOTE

In the past few years, technology-led transformations such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) have brought dynamic changes across sectors in both the services offered and consumption patterns. The advance of AI technologies has brought with it many benefits for the consumers, in the form of new or improved products and services, ‘more intelligent’ and faster delivery, reduced search and transaction costs, and increased safety. The use of AI is increasing globally by 25 per cent every year with the most rapid adoption in developing economies which is led by China.¹

There has been a growing narrative for emphasising the use of AI for the Sustainable Development Goals,² especially within developing countries. Based on this premise, there has been an increased interest of the private sector and government for the deployment of AI in domains such as agriculture, education, health care, smart cities and smart mobility.

Developing countries such as India, Kenya, Tunisia etc. have focused AI strategies and Taskforce for these sectors.³ However, there are unique challenges as in the development sector target consumers (farmers, students, doctors etc.) and industries are usually technologically under-capacitated to understand the functioning and effects of AI. This results in an asymmetry of information.

Additionally, in most developing countries privacy regulations and consumer protection laws are not yet adequate to deal with emerging technologies. Therefore, concerns such as – whether there is an adequate representation of the marginalised population in the datasets; do AI service providers give information in an explainable manner to the consumers regarding the functioning of AI technology; do consumers have redress mechanisms in a case of bias and discrimination in AI system; how transparency and accountability can be ensured within AI technologies become very critical.⁴

In India, the National AI Strategy and the Report of Taskforce for AI has itself identified these challenges for AI ecosystem. This transcends into posing risks such as algorithmic bias, discrimination, privacy risk, manipulation and dilution of consumer trust. However, this should be considered as an opportunity to address these challenges sooner rather than later and to examine policy and industry readiness for addressing consumer concerns to make the AI ecosystem more inclusive.

This panel discussion will try to engage policymakers, experts and industry representatives for discussion on these challenges and a way forward to build a responsible AI ecosystem for consumers.

¹ “Survey: AI Adoption Proves Its Worth, but Few Scale Impact | McKinsey” (McKinsey, 2018), <<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/artificial-intelligence/global-ai-survey-ai-proves-its-worth-but-few-scale-impact>>.

² AI for Global Good Summit, United Nation 2017

³ <https://medium.com/politics-ai/an-overview-of-national-ai-strategies-2a70ec6edfd>

⁴ <https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/artificial-intelligence-international-development-avoiding-ethical-pitfalls>