AI in law: Revolutionising justice or perpetuating risks

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Why is in news? As artificial intelligence (AI) continues to revolutionise industries and change how we live and work, the potential for this technology to disrupt markets has become a hot topic of debate.

Potential of AI in Legal system

AI has the potential to revolutionise the way the legal industry operates, making it more efficient, accurate and cost-effective.

One of AI's most significant benefits and use cases in the Indian legal system is its potential to aid in clearing outstanding cases.

With the ever-growing backlog of cases, AI could prove to be a valuable tool to reduce the workload of courts and speed up case resolution processes.

AI systems can assist in performing various tasks, such as document analysis, legal research and evidence evaluation, which can free up judges' time to focus on more critical aspects of the case. This can ultimately lead to faster resolution of cases and reduction of the backlog.

AI can also facilitate drafting legal instruments and pleadings, especially in litigations based on big datasets and information.

This can save significant amounts of time and effort for legal professionals while ensuring that the drafted documents are accurate and in compliance with the law.

While the AI technology is still in its early stages, some other key use cases being considered include case management, document analysis, automated drafting, predictive analysis and chatbots.

For example, AI can assist in managing case information, reducing the workload of judges and court staff, and improving the speed of decision-making.

Further, AI can aid in the analysis of legal documents, including contracts, laws and in improving the accuracy and efficiency of legal research.

AI can also be used to analyse case outcomes and make predictions based on previous decisions, helping judges and lawyers in their decision-making processes.

Lastly, AI-powered chatbots can provide citizens with quick and easy access to legal information and assistance, improving access to justice for all

Limitation of AI

Although AI has the potential to bring many benefits to the legal system, some potential adverse effects need to be considered.

Societal Bias: AI algorithms are based on training data, and thus, can perpetuate or amplify societal biases leading to discriminatory outcomes.

Question of accountability: The use of AI in the legal system also raises questions about accountability, especially in case of errors committed by AI systems that do not have meaningful human oversight and review.

Job Loss: It may also result in job losses for lawyers, paralegals and other legal and administrative professionals, which may not only have ill economic effects but also perpetrate the digital divide by declining access to legal services for the socio-economically backward groups

Privacy concern: The use of AI in the legal system also raises privacy concerns, as personal data and information may be collected, analysed and used by AI engines, increasing the risk of misuse and abuse.

Security concern: AI systems may be vulnerable to hacking, cyberattacks and data breaches, potentially exposing sensitive information and raising security concerns.

Confidentiality concern: Lawyers always need to ensure that their clients' confidential information is protected. AI systems may not be able to provide the same level of security and protection, as they may not be subject to similar stringent confidentiality requirements.

Other concerns: Legal system relies on human judgment, and AI engines may not always be able to replace that judgment fully. Moreover, AI systems may sometimes be opaque and difficult to understand in their operations which goes against the tenet of fairness and transparency.

The Way Ahead

It is essential to recognise and address these negative aspects as AI continues to be introduced and integrated into the Indian legal system, such as perpetuation of biases, accountability issues, job losses, privacy concerns, security risks and the limitations of AI to replace human judgment.

In the initial stages, human supervision is necessary as AI systems are not equipped to handle complex legal issues that require human judgment and interpretation.

Therefore, AI should be used as a supplement to the legal system rather than a replacement for humans in the coming years.

A careful and well-informed approach is needed to ensure that the benefits of AI in the legal system are realised while minimising the potential risks and negative effects.

Conclusion:

The technology may be used in a trial run in cases such as minor disputes, motor vehicle fines, consumer complaints and contractual disputes. This will provide an opportunity to assess the capabilities of AI systems in the Indian legal system and help identify any potential limitations or issues. If the trial runs are successful, the use of AI could be promoted to more complex cases in the future.