Protecting Children in the Age of AI

- Getting all children on-line and creating child-safe digital spaces.

- According to UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), as many as two-thirds of the world's children do not have access to the Internet at home.

- In addition to closing the digital divide, we need to better protect children and adolescents online;

- The virtual world is full of unsupervised "vacations" and "playgrounds" with other children and, potentially, less-than-scrupulous adults, sometimes posing anonymously as children.

- While video gaming and chat forums like Fortnite: Battle Royale, to name one popular example, offer an online space for children to socialise with their friends, multiple reports identify such virtual playgrounds as "honeypots" for child predator.

- Right when children and youth are forming their initial views of the world, they are being sucked into virtual deep space, including the universe of fake news, conspiracy theories, hype, hubris, online bullying, hate speech and the likes.

- Today, many AI toys come pre-programmed with their own personality and voice.

- They can offer playful and creative opportunities for children, with some even promoting enhanced literacy, social skills and language development.

- However, they also listen to and observe our children, soaking up their data, and with no framework to govern its use.

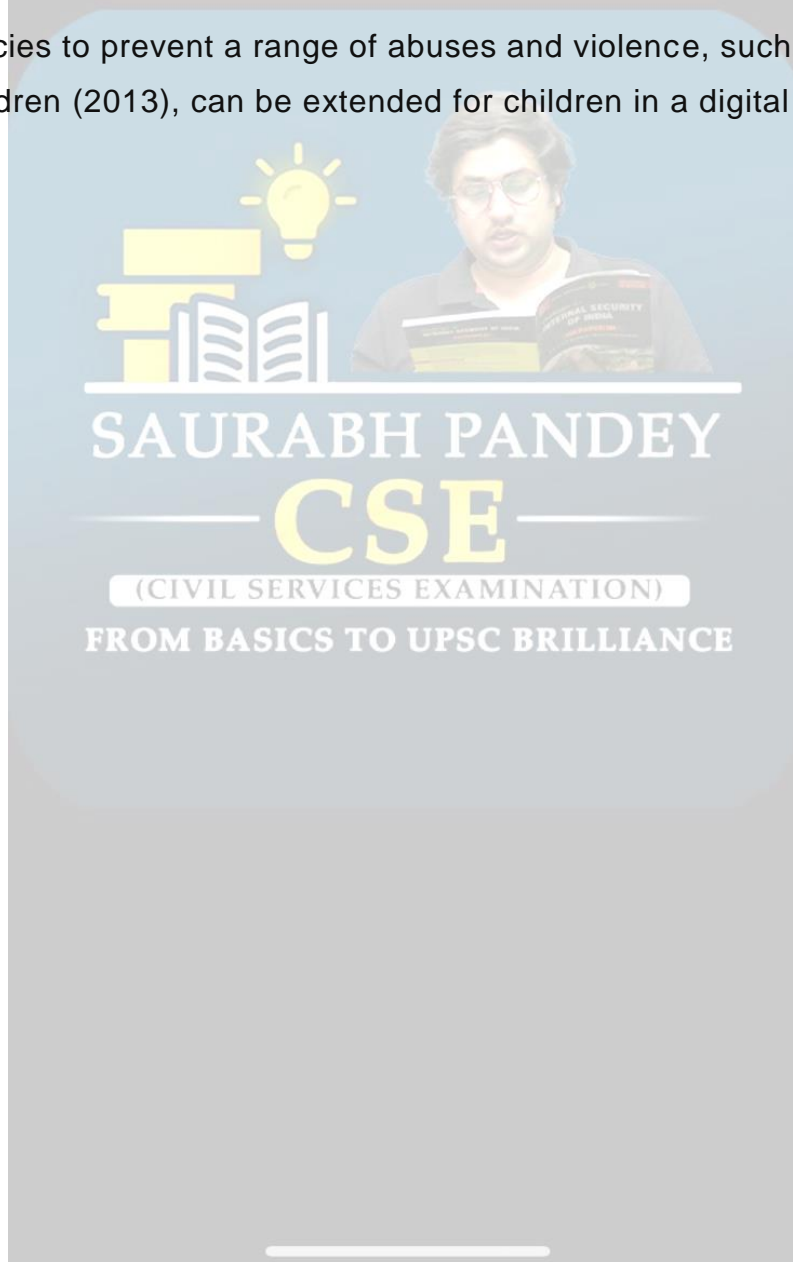- Some of these AI toys even perform facial recognition of children and toddlers.

- Germany banned Cayla, an Internet-connected doll, because of concerns it could be hacked and used to spy on children.

- In the field of education, AI can and is being used in fabulous ways to tailor learning materials and pedagogical approaches to the child's needs — such as intelligent tutoring systems, tailored curriculum plans, and imaginative virtual reality instruction, off• ering rich and engaging interactive learning experiences that can improve educational outcomes.

- Unless the educational and performance data on children is kept confidential and anonymous, it can inadvertently typecast or brand children, harming their future opportunities.

- We need a multipronged action plan: we need legal and technological safeguards;

- We need greater awareness among parents, guardians and children on how AI works behind the scenes;

- We need tools, like trustworthy certification and rating systems, to enable sound choices on safe AI apps;

- We need to ban anonymous accounts; we need enforceable ethical principles of nondiscrimination and fairness embedded in the policy and design of

- AI systems — we need "do no harm" risk assessments for all algorithms that interact with children or their data.

- We need safe online spaces for children, without algorithmic manipulation and with restricted profi• ling and data collection.

- And we need online tools (and an online culture) that helps prevent addiction, that promotes attention building skills, that expands children's horizons, understanding and appreciation for diverse perspectives, and that builds their social emotional learning capabilities.

- In February, in a landmark decision, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted General Comment 25, on implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and fulfilling all children's rights in the digital environment.

- This is an important first step on the long road ahead

- The Government of India has put in place strong policies to protect the rights and well-being of children, including a legislative framework that includes the Right to Education.

- Laws and policies to prevent a range of abuses and violence, such as the National Policy for Children (2013), can be extended for children in a digital space.