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LAW IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

A Fundamental Perspective



ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The International Conference on “Law in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Fundamental Perspective” provided an academic platform to examine the transformative impact of Artificial Intelligence on law, legal systems, governance and society.

The conference explored emerging legal and ethical questions relating to Artificial Intelligence, including intellectual property, authorship and ownership, liability, data privacy, cybersecurity, criminal justice, evidence law, human rights, ethics and accountability. It addressed the implications of Artificial Intelligence for legal education, commercial law, regulatory frameworks, policy development, research and scholarly communication.

The conference brought together academicians, research scholars, legal professionals and students to present research, exchange ideas and engage in interdisciplinary discussions. It encouraged meaningful academic dialogue and contributed towards the development of effective, ethical and inclusive legal responses to the rapidly evolving Artificial Intelligence landscape.

Conference	International Conference
Theme	Law in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Fundamental Perspective
Date	24 January 2026
Time	10:00 AM onwards
Mode	Online
Organised by	IQAC, Student Research Society and Library Committee
Publication Partner	LawFoyer International Journal of Doctrinal Legal Research [ISSN: 2583-7753]

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

KES' Shri. Jayantilal H. Patel Law College



It gives me immense pleasure to welcome all academicians, research scholars, legal professionals and students to the International Conference on “Law in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Fundamental Perspective.”

Artificial Intelligence is transforming the way societies function and is increasingly influencing legal systems, governance, professional practices and education. These developments bring significant opportunities as well as complex legal, ethical and social challenges.

This conference provided a valuable platform for intellectual exchange and interdisciplinary dialogue on emerging issues such as data privacy, intellectual property, liability, criminal justice, human rights, ethics and the governance of Artificial Intelligence. The scholarly contributions and discussions during the conference encouraged deeper understanding and promoted responsible approaches to the use of Artificial Intelligence.

I extend my best wishes to all the speakers, researchers, presenters, participants and members of the organising team for a meaningful and intellectually enriching conference.

DR. VIRAL DAVE

I/c. Principal

KES' Shri. Jayantilal H. Patel Law College

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THE DANGLING SWORD OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE INFRASTRUCTURE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Maitreyee Sanjay Raut¹

I. ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence has emerged as one of the most transformative technologies of the twenty-first century, influencing sectors such as education, agriculture, healthcare, law enforcement, traffic regulation and public administration. However, the rapid growth of AI is not merely a digital phenomenon; it is supported by large-scale physical infrastructure in the form of data centres. These data centres generate substantial heat and require continuous cooling, often through the use of clean freshwater. This raises a serious research problem: whether the increasing dependence on AI infrastructure is placing disproportionate pressure on scarce natural resources, particularly potable water and electricity, and whether such pressure may affect the enjoyment of basic human rights. This paper adopts a doctrinal and analytical research methodology, relying upon research papers, reports, articles, legal instruments and authoritative human-rights sources. It analyses the relationship between AI infrastructure, water consumption, electricity demand, fossil-fuel dependence, environmental degradation and corporate accountability. The paper finds that unchecked expansion of AI data centres may affect the right to safe and clean drinking water, the right to health, the right to information and the right of local communities to participate in decisions that affect their resources. It further argues that technological development cannot be treated as sustainable merely because it is innovative. The paper recommends mandatory human-rights and environmental impact assessments, greater transparency in corporate water and energy usage, public participation in approval processes, adoption of sustainable cooling technologies, and stronger State regulation. It concludes that AI development must be balanced with ecological responsibility and human-rights protection.

II. KEYWORDS

Water, Human Rights, AI datacentres, corporations.

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III. INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence is a revolution of the 21st century. The mechanism has the potent to touch and transform every field possible, one names it, and it is done! Agriculture, Education, Law & Order, Traffic Regulation, Health Care and Disease Management, etc. are some of the areas where AI has contributed tremendously to help the mankind.² It is such miracle that it is developed to not only give amazing outcomes, but also learn from its mistakes, revise and improve in the next prompt.

From a generation facing slow internet issues, buffering on screen to a generation which is smartly utilising AI in its day-to-day works. With its lightning speed responses, it has indeed made human life easy and quick. However, is it free? Not at all, on the Earth, everything has its own cost. One response of AI costs few litres of water, that too potable drinking fresh water. The giant corporations like Google (their AI Gemini), Microsoft (AI Copilot) draw millions of litres of potable water to cool their datacentres. The datacentres on which AI algorithm works releases lots of heat. It needs to be cooled down simultaneously or else they will crash down, leading to loss of billions of money that were spent in making and maintaining them.

Why only fresh potable water from rivers and not used, saline water? That is in abundance on earth. Saline water can erode the machinery instead of keeping it cool. That is the reason why fresh water is the only cheapest material available for these big AI corporations. The water used to cool down the servers becomes hot, it gets either evaporated or given to Local wastewater facilities. As a result, when gallons of freshwater are used by big corporations with little or no potent residual, imagine the strain on local communities to fulfil their consumption and domestic needs which require enough water regularly.³

Apart from the water it consumes, what it takes to run the AI systems? A USA Research paper has claimed that 56% of electricity AI based Corporations utilise to run their AI technology directly comes from burning down the fossil fuels (non-

² Rashid, A. B., & Kausik, M. A. K., AI revolutionizing industries worldwide: A comprehensive overview of its diverse applications. 7, HYBRID ADVANCES, (2024).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hybadv.2024.100277>

³ Yañez-Barnuevo, M. Data Centers and Water Consumption | Article | EESI. [online] Eesi.org. (2025) Available at: <https://www.eesi.org/articles/view/data-centers-and-water-consumption>.

renewable energy resource).⁴ It is estimated that data-centre electricity consumption may increase substantially in the coming years. According to the U.S. Department of Energy and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, United States data-centre electricity use increased to 176 TWh in 2023 and is projected to reach approximately 325–580 TWh by 2028, indicating a likely doubling or tripling rather than a quadrupling by that year. Separately, the International Energy Agency has projected that electricity demand from AI-optimised data centres may more than quadruple by 2030. Therefore, the concern remains serious, but the relevant projections must be stated with their correct timelines. Another strain on the local community where these datacentres or their power plants exist.

A Scientific Principles says no energy is wasted; rather it is converted into another form. What about the tremendous amount of carbon dioxide emitted in the atmosphere for per unit of electricity consumed to run these AI datacentres? Definitely, it is contributing to the Air Pollution, which knows no boundaries. We see, global warming is not limited to a region but the temperature of the entire Earth is at stake.

Grossly, we can see that though Artificial Intelligence technology has revolutionised human lives, the facts draw a completely different picture of what we lose instead. The clean scarce potable drinking water for the rest humanity, the load on electricity units produced by burning fossil fuels that leads to pollution and conflict.

A. Research Problem

1. The rising AI infrastructure is utilising huge amount of fresh water.
2. Higher the usage of AI, higher it will affect the natural resources.
3. There is lack of accountability on part of AI Corporations.

B. Research Objectives

1. To examine the environmental and human-rights implications of Artificial Intelligence infrastructure, particularly its dependence on freshwater and electricity for data-centre operations.

⁴ G. Guidi et al., Environmental Burden of United States Data Centers in the Artificial Intelligence Era, arXiv (Nov. 14, 2024), <https://arxiv.org/abs/2411.09786>.

2. To analyse how the consumption of scarce natural resources by AI data centres may affect recognised human rights, including the right to safe drinking water, the right to health, and the right to information.
3. To evaluate the accountability of AI corporations and the regulatory responsibility of States in ensuring transparency, sustainability and public participation in AI infrastructure projects.
4. To suggest rights-based and sustainable measures for reducing the adverse impact of AI infrastructure on local communities and natural resources.

C. Research Questions

1. How does the growing infrastructure for Artificial Intelligence affect freshwater availability, electricity consumption and environmental sustainability?
2. Whether the excessive use of water and energy by AI data centres can result in the infringement of basic human rights?
3. What duties do AI corporations and States owe in relation to transparency, accountability and protection of natural resources?
4. What legal, regulatory and sustainable measures can be adopted to balance AI development with human-rights protection?

D. Research Methodology

The present paper adopts a doctrinal and analytical research methodology. It relies upon primary legal and policy sources, including United Nations resolutions, international human-rights instruments, Indian constitutional principles, government policy documents and other authoritative legal materials relevant to the right to water, right to health, right to information and environmental protection. The paper also uses secondary sources such as scholarly research papers, scientific and technical reports, institutional publications, articles and credible news reports to understand the environmental and technological dimensions of Artificial Intelligence infrastructure.

The doctrinal method is applied to examine the legal recognition of human rights affected by AI data-centre expansion, particularly in relation to access to safe drinking

water, clean environment, public participation and corporate accountability. The analytical method is used to assess how the increasing consumption of freshwater and electricity by AI infrastructure may create conflicts between technological development and the protection of natural resources. Since the subject involves law, environmental science and technology, the paper follows an interdisciplinary approach, drawing upon international human-rights law, Indian constitutional law, environmental sustainability principles and contemporary research on data-centre operations.

IV. THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF AI TECH CORPORATIONS

Several AI technology companies do not give a transparent account of their annual water and energy consumption. They often treat such information as commercially sensitive, even though the use of freshwater, electricity and land directly affects local communities and the environment. This highlights a serious accountability gap, because corporate secrecy over resource consumption may deprive the public of information concerning basic needs such as water, clean air and a healthy environment.

With the rising demand for Artificial Intelligence across sectors, corporations are increasingly looking to build data centres in locations that provide access to water, electricity and land. The MeitY Guidelines are relevant because they expressly treat sustainability as a governance concern. However, their approach remains largely flexible, facilitative and innovation-oriented. While such a framework is useful as a first step, it does not by itself create a binding obligation requiring every AI data-centre operator to disclose facility-level water use, electricity consumption, carbon emissions or the impact of cooling systems on local communities.”

The people of such locality often have little meaningful participation in corporate and governmental decisions concerning AI infrastructure. Although the MeitY Guidelines call for accountability, transparency, grievance redressal, risk mitigation and institutional coordination, they do not specifically mandate prior public consultation or human-rights impact assessment before resource-intensive AI data-centre projects are approved. Therefore, the framework acknowledges the problem of responsible AI

governance, but it falls short of the binding assessment mechanism required to prevent what may be described as modern 'resource colonialism'.

"Resource colonialism at the cost of financial power, large technology corporations may secure access to resources over which the public also has legitimate and equal claims. The Indian AI governance framework rightly recognises sustainability and accountability, but the protection of community resources cannot be left only to voluntary commitments or market-led mechanisms. Where AI infrastructure consumes scarce water and electricity, accountability must include mandatory disclosure, independent audit, public consultation and enforceable consequences for non-compliance. There are many places where already people are facing water scarcity. Consequently, such ambitious projects of the Tech giants will make people struggle to secure easy access to resources than what it was earlier.

These tech giants are relying on local municipalities for water. However, these age-old municipalities or their water systems were never made to supply to huge industrial demands.⁵ Companies like Google are committing to not just pay for the water they are consuming but also to spend in the infrastructure improvement that provide water to that locality.⁶

India that is currently in the race to become topmost growing economies of the world, is witnessing collaborations between its business tycoons like Reliance and Adani and these AI tech giants like Meta, Google. The Prime Minister of India, himself has supported the bid to build mega-data centres in India, allowing them to draw share from the already strained resources like land, water and electricity.⁷ Andhra Pradesh, a state of India has passed a pretty policy to attract Tech giants, but these fair incentives are taking away rights of people over the resources. The State promises that

⁵ Ana Pinheiro Privette, AI and Water: Toward a Sustainable Digital Future, Field Actions Sci. Reps., May 1, 2026 (Special Report), https://www.institut.veolia.org/sites/g/files/dvc2551/files/document/2026/02/P3A2.%20Ana%20Pinheiro%20Privette_AC.pdf.

⁶ Google, Our New Water Stewardship Commitments, Google: The Keyword (Sept. 9, 2021), <https://blog.google/company-news/outreach-and-initiatives/sustainability/new-water-stewardship-commitments/>.

⁷ Latha Jishnu, Global resistance to AI data centres hardens, Down To Earth (June 12, 2026), <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/science-technology/global-resistance-to-ai-data-centres-hardens>.

such a step will provide employment opportunities to the local youth.⁸ However, with advent of Artificial Intelligence, aren't the top companies laying off their employees with immediate effect just to cut down the extra cost.

V. INFRINGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS BY AI INFRASTRUCTURE

Encouraging AI tech companies to build their mega-centres will allow them take a heavy share resource at the cost of money. However, it will deplete the natural resources instantly over which the human population itself is not able to satisfy their needs. Even today, it is very easy for the Government to deprive the economically weaker sections of Society in order to maintain good status quo with the Bourgeoisie class. The disproportionate deal actually abrogates our basic human rights.

In 2010, the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation recognised 'right to safe and clean/ potable drinking water and sanitation (cleanliness) as human right, which is essential for enjoyment of life as well as all other human rights. Such is the significance of this right that enjoyment of life and other rights depends on the fulfilment of access to clean water. The General Assembly also called upon States and International Organisations to take efforts so that each one can afford clean and safe water.⁹

Water is elixir of life, available on this Earth just to meet needs of people not the extravagant wants. That needs to be understood by not only the AI tech giants or the Government bodies allowing them to earn profit but also by the common public who is not bothered about the water conflict that will arise soon. It is said that the third world war will be for Water, so precious is this thing.

Even if an AI technology company chooses to use desalinated water instead of freshwater to cool its servers, the question of environmental burden does not disappear. Desalination itself may require considerable electricity, and large data

⁸ Andhra govt develops roadmap for 15 GW power transmission infrastructure by 2034, ETEnergyworld (Dec. 31, 2024), <https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/power/andhra-govt-develops-roadmap-for-15-gw-power-transmission-infrastructure-by-2034/131650268>.

⁹ G.A. Res. 64/292, (July 28, 2010).

centres may still place pressure on the local power grid. Where such electricity is generated through fossil fuels, the resulting emissions may affect air quality and public health. In Indian constitutional law, such concerns are directly connected with Article 21 of the Constitution.

In *Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar*, the Supreme Court of India held that the right to life includes the right to enjoyment of pollution-free water and air for the full enjoyment of life. Therefore, AI infrastructure that contributes to freshwater depletion, air pollution or ecological degradation cannot be examined merely as an industrial or technological issue; it must also be tested against the constitutional guarantee of life, health and environmental dignity.

Another important right that may be affected is the right to information and public participation in crucial decision-making processes, especially where such decisions have the potential to affect access to water, health and local environmental conditions. The principle in *Subhash Kumar* strengthens this argument because if clean water and clean air form part of Article 21, then communities likely to be affected by resource-intensive AI data centres must have access to relevant information before such projects are approved. Without disclosure of water usage, cooling methods, electricity demand and pollution-control measures, the public cannot meaningfully protect its Article 21 interests. The AI tech companies and the Government cannot extract profit by putting several innocent lives in danger or undermining their health. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has recognised the freedom to receive and share information.¹⁰ Many States like India too as recognised it as her Constitutional Right flowing from Article 19 (1)(a) and Article 21, and also as a statutory right under the Right to Information Act, 2005. This right needs to be practiced in its full capacity today.

States are entrusted with the duty to protect and equitably distribute natural resources for the benefit of their citizens. This duty becomes more significant when read with the Supreme Court's interpretation of Article 21 in environmental matters. Since pollution-free water and air are constitutionally protected dimensions of life, the State

¹⁰ G.A. Res. 217 (III) A, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Dec. 10, 1948).

cannot permit resource-intensive AI infrastructure without examining whether such projects may impair local access to clean water, increase pollution, or weaken environmental sustainability. The State's role is therefore not merely to facilitate technological investment, but to ensure that AI-led development remains consistent with constitutional environmental rights. Many AI tech companies keep their exact water usage data a secret from the Public. This itself violates people's right to know. In Democratic Society, such kind of secrecy should not be tolerated as it affects the very core of transparency, sustainability and conservation.

VI. IS A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION POSSIBLE?

Astoundingly, only 0.5% water available on Earth is fresh water, while in the year 2022, half of the World's population was struggling to get access to water. These facts pinpoint how important it is to secure balanced, and proportional sharing of scarce natural resource like water. Everyone is determined to uphold the sixth Sustainable Development goal of equitable access to water and sanitation for all.¹¹ In this phase, a river of a town cannot be led to be vanished, just to make sure that a Company aspires to be number One in the super AI development race.

First, every proposed AI data-centre project should be subjected to a compulsory and independent human-rights impact assessment before governmental approval is granted. This recommendation directly addresses the risk that AI infrastructure may consume local water, electricity and land resources without adequately considering the rights of affected communities. Such assessment should not be a one-time formality, but should continue periodically throughout the operation of the project. In 2018, The Human Rights Council, an intergovernmental body of United Nations Organisation, gave guiding principles for the States, whenever they take decisions for economic reforms.¹²

¹¹ Goal 6: Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/water-and-sanitation/> (last visited June 18, 2026).

¹² Human Rights Council, Guiding Principles on Human Rights Impact Assessments of Economic Reforms: Report of the Independent Expert on the Effects of Foreign Debt and Other Related International Financial Obligations of States on the Full Enjoyment of Human Rights, Particularly Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/40/57 (Dec. 19, 2018).

Secondly, prior environmental and human-rights assessments should be based on empirical evidence relating to water availability, electricity demand, carbon emissions, local ecological conditions and the needs of surrounding communities. This would help identify risks and deficiencies at an early stage, thereby ensuring that preventive safeguards are adopted before irreversible harm is caused. Such assessment must be regularly carried out, not just one before approving a Project.

Thirdly, public participation must be made an essential condition in the approval and monitoring of AI data-centre projects. Local residents should be informed about the expected water use, electricity consumption, environmental impact and mitigation measures associated with such projects. Dedicated communication channels should also be created so that citizens can report inaction, omission of safety measures, excessive resource use or any suspicious activity affecting their locality.

Fourthly, the Government must ensure that complaints and public queries relating to AI infrastructure are addressed through a transparent and time-bound mechanism. This is necessary to protect the larger public interest and to ensure that development projects do not undermine the human rights of communities living near such infrastructure.

Fifthly, AI corporations must be required to assume measurable responsibility for the natural resources they consume. Water-positive commitments should not remain voluntary publicity measures; they should be supported by verifiable targets, independent audits and local restoration plans. This recommendation addresses the problem of corporate opacity and ensures that companies consuming freshwater contribute meaningfully to replenishment and conservation.

Finally, investment in sustainable cooling technologies should be prioritised so that dependence on potable freshwater is reduced. AI corporations should explore alternatives such as recycled water, non-potable water, closed-loop cooling systems, renewable-energy-supported cooling and other resource-efficient technologies. Such innovation is necessary to balance technological advancement with the rights of communities that already struggle to secure water for domestic and personal use.

VII. CONCLUSION

The rising AI infrastructure is definitely a strain on the natural resources like fresh water. The tripartite parties: The AI tech companies, the Government and common citizens must come together, deliberate upon such plans to construct mega-centres, a thorough assessment is critical at this juncture when the World is constantly dwindling due to climate change. Everyone is equally responsible; we all owe to the Earth that has evolved millions of years to become liveable. Her mere creature 'human being', must not take it for granted and turn it into a disaster. Water scarcity is a failure to sustainably use, the resources that we are grateful to have today. There is no doubt that the usage of AI has revolutionised almost every sector, but there must be a guaranteed track on natural resources it is consuming. Development cannot be reckless so that the humanity has to pay a heavy prize for it.

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