

Daily Editorial Analysis 23 August 2025

August 23, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com

A Court Order That Was Barking Up the Wrong Tree

Context

- On August 11, 2025, the Supreme Court of India issued an order directing the **rounding up and incarceration of all street dogs** in New Delhi into mass shelters.
- While the **order was stayed just eleven days later**, its initial pronouncement revealed deep flaws in legal reasoning, scientific understanding, and moral responsibility.
- **Far from solving the problem of dog bites and public health, the decree threatened to create a humanitarian and ecological disaster** while diverting public attention from the city's more urgent crises.

The Problematic Aspect of SC Order on Stray Dogs

- **A Blueprint for Catastrophe**

- The **Court's order was hailed in some quarters** as a long-awaited solution to the so-called stray dog menace.
- Yet, **evidence from both India and abroad demonstrates that mass confinement of street dogs is an unscientific** and counterproductive approach.
- **Experiences in the United States with the pound system** show that such shelters become sites of overcrowding, psychological distress, aggression, and disease outbreaks.
- Studies, such as those by **sociologist Leslie Irvine and researcher David Tuber**, confirm that long-term confinement causes **severe behavioural deterioration in dogs**.
- In the Indian context, **mass shelters would inevitably collapse under the sheer numbers involved**.
- **Delhi's lakhs of territorial dogs**, suddenly captured and caged, **would fight violently, leading to injuries and deaths**.

- **Bypassing Established Guidelines**

- The **order also ignored the well-documented vacuum effect**: the mass removal of dogs from one area merely invites migration from surrounding regions.
- **Nature fills the void, and food sources in Delhi would continue to draw dogs** from neighbouring states.

- **Simultaneously, the disappearance of street dogs**, who serve as efficient scavengers, would likely trigger surges in rodent and monkey populations, **creating new public health crises.**
- **In bypassing global and national guidelines**, such as the WHO's recommendations and India's National Action Plan for Dog Mediated Rabies Elimination (NAPRE), **the Court's directive strayed dangerously from science.**

The Social and Ethical Dimensions and The Politics of Distraction

• The Social and Ethical Dimensions

- The narrative that the dog issue pits an elite against the poor is both simplistic and cruel.
- As scholar Yamini Narayanan's work highlights, **street dogs occupy a symbiotic space within urban ecosystems.**
- For Delhi's **homeless, citizens failed repeatedly by the state, street dogs are not a menace but companions and guardians**, providing comfort and protection in the harshness of life on the pavements.
- To forcibly remove these animals would not only traumatise them but also **strip vulnerable humans of their only source of emotional solidarity.**

• The Politics of Distraction

- Perhaps most troublingly, **the dog order functioned as a diversion from the governance failures** that plague the capital.
- **By foregrounding an emotional and polarising issue, attention was drawn away from collapsing infrastructure**, perennial flooding, corruption, inflation, and even allegations of voter manipulation.
- **Instead of holding the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) accountable** for its inability to manage sanitation, public health, and statutory duties, **the Court's order offered a convenient scapegoat: the city's dogs.**

The Way Forward

• Animal Birth Control

- The answer to Delhi's dog population challenge has long been known: the **Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme.**
- Proven successful in cities like Jaipur and Jodhpur, **ABC relies on sterilisation and vaccination to reduce dog populations** gradually while ensuring high levels of rabies immunity.
- A **2010 study from Jodhpur demonstrated measurable and sustainable declines in dog populations** following such interventions.
- The **problem, therefore, lies not with the animals but with the MCD's dereliction** of duty.

- Chronic underfunding, unmet sterilisation targets, and **lack of accountability have crippled the programme's implementation.**
- In fact, the **Supreme Court's own 2024 Maheshwari judgment upheld the ABC Rules, 2023,** reaffirming their scientific and compassionate foundations.

• Towards an Evidence-Based Future

- There is no denying that **dog bites must be addressed.** But the **answer is not mass incarceration,** a final solution approach that is both inhumane and ineffective.
- Instead, **targeted and evidence-based strategies** are needed.
- **Aggressive dogs must be identified, captured, and monitored,** but indiscriminate round-ups serve no purpose.
- **Vaccination, sterilisation, and public education remain the only sustainable, humane, and scientifically grounded methods** of control.

Conclusion

- **The Supreme Court's August 11 order was a victory of hysteria over science,** expedience over compassion, and distraction over accountability.
- By staying the order, **the Court has already corrected course, but the episode should serve as a warning.**
- **India's cities cannot afford policy dictated by panic or populist narratives; Instead, they must embrace proven, humane, and scientific strategies,** while holding governance institutions accountable for their failures.

A Court Order That Was Barking Up the Wrong Tree FAQs

Q1. What was the Supreme Court's order of August 11, 2025, regarding street dogs in New Delhi?

Ans. The Court ordered that all street dogs in New Delhi be rounded up and confined in mass shelters.

Q2. Why is mass sheltering of dogs considered a flawed solution?

Ans. Mass sheltering leads to overcrowding, disease outbreaks, aggression, and ecological problems such as the "vacuum effect," where new dogs migrate into cleared areas.

Q3. How are street dogs significant to Delhi's homeless population?

Ans. For many homeless people, street dogs provide companionship, protection, and emotional support in otherwise harsh living conditions.

Q4. What is the scientifically proven solution to managing street dog populations?

Ans. The Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme, based on sterilisation and vaccination, is the only sustainable and humane solution.

Q5. What larger issue does the focus on street dogs distract from?

Ans. The street dog debate diverts attention from governance failures in Delhi, such as poor infrastructure,

corruption, and inadequate public health management.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Set the Guardrails for AI Use in Courtrooms

Context

- The **integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into judicial processes** represents one of the most significant shifts in the administration of justice in recent years.
- In July 2025, **the Kerala High Court became the first judicial body in India to release a policy** regulating the use of AI in the district judiciary.
- This **policy is timely and forward-looking**, given the enormity of India's judicial backlog—over five crore pending cases, and the potential of AI to introduce efficiency, accuracy, and speed into a strained system.
- However, **while the allure of AI-enabled efficiency is undeniable, its risks and ethical implications demand equal attention.**

The Promise of AI in Judicial Processes

- **AI tools offer numerous advantages for courts**, particularly in automating routine tasks.
- Document translation, transcription, defect identification in filings, and legal research can all be **significantly accelerated through AI integration.**
- For a system plagued by excessive pendency and resource constraints, **these efficiencies are attractive incentives.**
- **Pilot projects in Indian courts have already explored AI transcription** of oral arguments and witness depositions, with the potential to standardize records and reduce delays.
- **Beyond speed, AI can also increase accessibility by providing translations in regional languages**, ensuring litigants and lawyers from diverse linguistic backgrounds can engage more effectively.
- **Moreover, AI-powered data analysis may help in identifying case patterns**, facilitating judicial reforms, and streamlining case management.

Risks and Challenges

- **Translating and Transcription Errors**
 - Instances such as the **mistranslation of leave granted into holiday approved or transcription software mistaking Noel for no** underscore the dangers of over-reliance on imperfect systems.
 - **Large Language Models (LLMs), while powerful, are prone to hallucinations**, generating false case laws or misrepresenting facts, an unacceptable risk in legal contexts where accuracy is paramount.
- **Lack of Clear Framework**

- **AI risks reducing adjudication into mechanical**, rule-based outcomes, neglecting the contextual interpretation, human reasoning, and **moral judgment that underpin justice**.
- Furthermore, without clear frameworks for data storage, access, and security, the use of sensitive personal information through AI could lead to breaches of privacy.
- **Market-driven pilot projects offered on a test basis risk** creating dependencies without long-term sustainability, especially in the absence of supporting infrastructure such as reliable internet connectivity and secure digital systems.

• **Absence of Robust Risk Management**

- **Equally concerning is the absence of robust risk management frameworks** in AI procurement by courts.
- **Current practices reveal little attention to ethical safeguards**, technical accountability, or error mitigation.
- Even where human oversight exists, such as retired judges manually vetting AI translations, the problem remains **that AI systems continuously learn and adapt, introducing new forms of error in evolving contexts**.

Safeguards and Frameworks for Responsible Adoption

• **AI Literacy**

- Judges, lawyers, and court staff **require training not just in using AI tools but also in understanding their limitations** and risks.
- Judicial academies and bar associations, working alongside AI governance experts, can lead capacity-building programmes that equip legal professionals to critically assess AI outputs.

• **Clear Guidelines**

- Second, **Clear Guidelines** must govern the individual use of generative AI in research and judgment writing.
- **Litigants should have the right to know if AI has been used in a case**, whether for transcription, legal research, or drafting.
- **Courts may also consider offering litigants the right to opt out of AI-assisted proceedings**, ensuring respect for individual consent and safeguarding against blind reliance on machines.

• **Standardised Procurement Frameworks**

- These **should include pre-procurement assessments** to evaluate whether AI is the most suitable solution, followed by strict criteria for explainability, accountability, and data security.
- **Such frameworks can help courts monitor vendor performance** and compliance with ethical and legal standards, tasks that often extend beyond judicial expertise.

The Way Forward

- As Indian courts cautiously move toward AI adoption, **it is essential not to lose sight of the ultimate purpose of judicial processes, the pursuit of justice.**
- **Efficiency cannot come at the cost of fairness, transparency,** or accountability.
- The **challenge lies not in rejecting AI altogether but in ensuring its careful, ethical,** and context-sensitive adoption.
- **If deployed with appropriate literacy,** guidelines, procurement frameworks, and institutional support, AI can become a valuable ally to the judiciary.

Conclusion

- **The Kerala High Court's initiative** in laying down the first policy framework for AI in the **judiciary is a critical milestone.**
- **It signals recognition of both the transformative potential** of AI and the urgent need for safeguards.
- As courts across the country experiment with digital solutions, **the key lies in ensuring that**
- **technology enhances human judgment rather than displaces it.**

Set the Guardrails for AI Use in Courtrooms FAQs

Q1. What prompted the Kerala High Court to release AI guidelines in 2025?

Ans. The Kerala High Court released AI guidelines to regulate the use of AI in judicial processes, as India faces over five crore pending cases and AI tools promise greater speed and efficiency.

Q2. What are some benefits of AI in the judiciary?

Ans. AI can improve efficiency by automating tasks such as document translation, transcription, and legal research, while also making courts more accessible to diverse linguistic groups.

Q3. Why is over-reliance on AI tools in courts risky?

Ans. Over-reliance is risky because AI tools can make errors, generate false information, and reduce complex judicial decision-making into mechanical, rule-based outcomes.

Q4. What role does AI literacy play in responsible adoption?

Ans. AI literacy ensures that judges, lawyers, and court staff understand both how to use AI tools and the risks they carry, preventing blind trust in machine outputs.

Q5. What is the ultimate purpose of AI in the judicial system?

Ans. The ultimate purpose of AI in the judicial system is to support and enhance the delivery of justice without replacing the human reasoning and fairness essential to adjudication.

Source: [The Hindu](#)

AI and the Future of Work in India - Towards Inclusive Growth

Context:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly **reshaping global economies**.
- **For India**, the **challenge** lies in ensuring that AI **enhances productivity** and generates **inclusive employment** rather than deepening inequalities.

AI's Potential Impact on Jobs and Economy:

- **ServiceNow-Pearson AI Skills Research 2025 report:** AI could reshape over 10.35 million jobs and create 3 million new tech roles in India by 2030, placing the country ahead of Singapore and Australia in AI transformation.
- **International Labour Organisation (ILO) 2025 study:**
 - **Jobs may evolve** with AI, rather than disappear.
 - **Structural challenges** like low skilling levels and informal workforce vulnerabilities remain key hurdles.
- **Sectoral impact:**
 - **Agriculture:** Limited exposure to AI.
 - **Labour-intensive sectors:** Especially services, which contributed 55% to GDP and 31% to employment in FY24, are highly vulnerable.

AI Pathways - Automation vs. Augmentation:

- **Automation:**
 - **Replaces** workers, increases efficiency.
 - Risks large-scale job losses.
- **Augmentation:**
 - **Complements** human effort.
 - Enhances productivity while preserving employment.
- **Key argument (by Economist and Nobel Laureate Daron Acemoglu):**
 - AI's impact is a policy choice, not destiny.
 - **India must avoid the automation trap.**

Policy Priorities for Inclusive AI:

- **Skilling and lifelong learning:**
 - Embed digital and AI competencies across schools, ITIs, universities, and vocational centres.
 - **Large-scale reskilling initiatives** by firms like Infosys, Tata Steel, and Siemens show positive pathways.

- **Reducing inequality:**

- **Build inclusive infrastructure.**
- Programs like **Atal Innovation Mission**, Startup India, Future Skills PRIME, and Youth for Unnati and Vikas with AI must be scaled up.

- **Fostering entrepreneurship:**

- Support MSMEs through access to digital tools, computing, and tailored skilling.
- **Focus on sustainable enterprises**, not just unicorns.

Ensuring Competitive and Open AI Ecosystems:

- **Prevent monopolisation** by vertically integrated firms.
- Ensure contestability in AI markets:
 - **Open APIs** – A publicly available application programming interface that provides developers with programmatic access.
 - **Interoperable systems.**
 - Indigenous Small Language Models (**SLMs**) and vernacular AI tools.
- Treat computing, storage, and datasets as **public goods** under India's Digital Public Infrastructure model.

Way Forward:

- AI should be seen as **saarathi** (charioteer), not vinashak (destroyer).
- With **right policies, infrastructure, and skilling**, India can transform AI into a driver of inclusive growth.
- Policy choices today will determine whether AI bridges or widens India's employment and productivity gaps.

Conclusion:

- India stands at a **critical juncture** where the trajectory of AI adoption will determine whether it deepens inequalities or drives inclusive prosperity.
- By **prioritising augmentation over automation**, investing in skilling, and ensuring open, competitive AI ecosystems, India can harness AI as a transformative force for equitable and employment-rich growth.

AI and the Future of Work in India FAQs

Q1. How is AI expected to reshape employment in India by 2030?

Ans. AI could reshape over 10.35 million jobs and create 3 million new tech roles, positioning India ahead of Singapore and Australia in AI transformation.

Q2. What is the central dilemma of AI adoption in India?

Ans. The dilemma lies between automation (job replacement and efficiency) and augmentation (human-AI collaboration preserving employment).

Q3. Why is skilling critical for inclusive AI-led growth in India?

Ans. Skilling ensures that India's workforce, especially informal workers, can adapt to evolving AI-driven tasks and avoid large-scale job displacement.

Q4. How can India prevent monopolisation in AI ecosystems?

Ans. By promoting open APIs, interoperability, indigenous AI models, and treating computing/storage as public goods under the Digital Public Infrastructure framework.

Q5. What role can MSMEs play in India's AI-driven future?

Ans. Empowered with digital tools, computing access, and tailored skilling, MSMEs can emerge as engines of employment-rich and inclusive growth.

Source: IE

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/daily-editorial-analysis-23-august-2025/>

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