Daily Editorial Analysis 16 February 2026

February 16, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com

Bridging a Divide with an 'Indian Scientific Service'

Context

- In the immediate aftermath of Independence, India's foremost administrative challenge was stability.
- The newly formed nation inherited vast territorial, linguistic, and institutional complexities and therefore relied upon a system of generalist civil servants to unify governance.
- This framework proved essential to **nation-building** and administrative continuity, however, governance in the twenty-first century has transformed fundamentally.
- Scientists working within government continue to operate under administrative service rules designed for a different era.
- This structural mismatch limits the effective integration of **scientific expertise** into **policymaking**.

The Historical Logic of the Generalist Civil Service

- At Independence, India required administrative coherence more than technical expertise.
- The country needed uniform laws, revenue collection, institutional continuity, and political integration.
- A **generalist bureaucracy** provided flexibility and coordination across diverse sectors.

- Competitive examinations ensured **meritocracy**, and structured training prepared administrators to manage multiple responsibilities. The nature of governance problems has since changed.
- Early governance dealt with territorial and institutional management, whereas contemporary governance must manage complex systems, ecological networks, epidemiological patterns, technological risks, and long-term environmental change.
- These challenges cannot be addressed through administrative experience alone and require specialised scientific understanding.

The Administrator–Scientist Paradox

- The integration of scientists into government created a structural contradiction. Civil servants are selected through rigorous examinations and trained for coordination, implementation, and regulatory decision-making.
- Scientists emerge through long processes of higher education, experimentation, and peer review.
- Their professional role is based on questioning assumptions, evaluating evidence, and acknowledging **uncertainty**.
- Administrators receive defined career paths, structured training, and clear authority structures.
- Scientists are often placed in technical portfolios without equivalent institutional support, professional safeguards, or **career progression**.
- As a result, scientists are evaluated using administrative criteria rather than scientific performance.
- Bureaucratic systems emphasise discipline and **hierarchy**, while scientific work depends on independent inquiry and **peer review**.
- Scientists remain present within governance structures but cannot fully perform their professional role.

Administrative Rules and Their Consequences

- Service rules shape institutional behaviour and culture. The Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964 were designed to ensure **neutrality**, discipline, and administrative efficiency.
- Scientific work, however, depends on transparent recording of evidence, communication of uncertainty, and the ability to present findings even when they challenge **policy**
- Without supportive frameworks, scientific input remains **advisory** rather than integral.
- Scientists may hesitate to document risks or long-term consequences in areas such as environmental regulation, nuclear safety, and public health.
- Consequently, science is often used reactively during crises instead of guiding long-term **governance**.
- When scientific assessments cannot be formally recorded, their role becomes symbolic rather than substantive.

International Experience

- Several advanced democracies have created dedicated **scientific cadres** within government.
- Countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Japan maintain institutional mechanisms that protect **scientific integrity**.
- These systems ensure transparent documentation of advice, prevent political interference, and prohibit suppression of research findings.

- Elected authorities retain final decision-making power, while policies remain informed by credible evidence.
- India possesses strong research institutions and highly trained professionals, yet the institutional **authority** of government scientists remains limited.
- Their expertise may not always carry formal weight in technically complex sectors. This produces cautious communication, incomplete recording of uncertainty, and reliance on science primarily during emergencies.

The Case for an Indian Scientific Service

- The establishment of an Indian Scientific Service offers a constructive institutional solution.
- The ISS would function as a permanent all-India cadre working alongside existing civil services rather than replacing them.
- Recruitment would combine national-level selection with professional evaluation, and scientists would be embedded within ministries and regulatory bodies as participants in **decision-making**.
- Separate service rules would protect professional **independence**, enable transparent documentation of scientific assessments, and clarify the relationship between scientific advice and political authority.
- Administrators would ensure coordination and implementation, while scientists would contribute **risk assessment**, **long-term** analysis, and technical expertise.

A Potential Institutional Structure

- The ISS could include specialised branches reflecting **contemporary governance needs:** environmental and ecological services, climate and atmospheric services, hydrological services, marine and ocean services, etc.
- Such a structure would integrate scientific knowledge directly into **institutions** rather than confining it to research bodies.

Conclusion

- India’s post-Independence administrative system successfully ensured stability and unity; however, present challenges differ fundamentally from those of the mid-twentieth century.
- Modern governance requires both **administrative efficiency** and institutionalised scientific reasoning.
- When scientists function under frameworks designed for generalist administrators, their expertise cannot fully inform policy.
- Establishing an **Indian Scientific Service represents an evolution** rather than a replacement of the existing system.
- By integrating scientific expertise into governance while preserving democratic authority, India can strengthen **accountability**, improve policy quality, and build **resilience** in addressing technological and environmental challenges.

Bridging a Divide with an ‘Indian Scientific Service’ FAQs

Q1. What problem exists in India’s current governance structure?

Ans. India’s governance structure relies on generalist administrative rules that limit the effective use of scientific

expertise in policymaking.

Q2. Why is a separate scientific service considered necessary?
Ans. A separate scientific service is necessary to integrate scientific evidence, risk assessment, and long-term analysis into government decision-making.

Q3. How do administrators and scientists differ in their professional roles?
Ans. Administrators focus on coordination and implementation, whereas scientists evaluate evidence, question assumptions, and assess uncertainty.

Q4. What is the proposed Indian Scientific Service (ISS)?
Ans. The ISS is a permanent all-India cadre of scientists working alongside civil services within ministries and regulatory institutions.

Q5. How would the ISS improve governance?
Ans. The ISS would strengthen evidence-based policymaking and improve the government's ability to address technological and environmental challenges.

Source: **The Hindu**

The UAE-India Corridor is Sparking a Growth Story

Context

- India and the United Arab Emirates have significantly deepened their economic partnership under the **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement** (CEPA) signed in 2022.
- The two countries achieved their initial target of $100 billion in bilateral trade five years ahead of the 2030 deadline.
- Building on this momentum, leaders in January set a new and more ambitious goal of $200 billion in trade by 2032, underscoring the rapid growth and strategic importance of the **India–UAE economic corridor**.
- This article highlights how the India–UAE economic corridor has rapidly evolved into one of the most dynamic global partnerships, achieving $100 billion in trade ahead of schedule and now targeting $200 billion by 2032.

India–UAE Economic Corridor: Scale and Strategic Shift

- **Rising Trade and Deep Economic Integration**
    - India–UAE non-oil trade surged nearly 20% last year to reach $65 billion, signalling a partnership that has expanded far beyond energy.
    - Since 2000, UAE investments in India have crossed $22 billion, while Indian investments in the UAE exceed $16 billion.

- Nearly five million Indians live and work in the UAE, strengthening economic ties and supporting over 1,200 weekly flights — one of the busiest air corridors globally.

- **Shift Toward Advanced Sectors**
  - The relationship is increasingly driven by advanced manufacturing, financial services, technology, and logistics:
    - Reliance Industries has partnered with TA'ZIZ on a $2 billion low-carbon chemicals project in Abu Dhabi.
    - Ashok Leyland has shifted electric bus production to the UAE.
    - Larsen & Toubro is leading a major solar-plus-storage project in Abu Dhabi.
    - Indian banks, tech firms, and healthcare companies are expanding their operational footprint in the Emirates.
  - These represent long-term industrial commitments rather than exploratory ventures.

- **Strong Reverse Investment Flows**
  - UAE investments in India are equally robust:
    - DP World has pledged an additional $5 billion for Indian infrastructure.
    - Emirates NBD acquired a majority stake in RBL Bank, marking a landmark FDI in Indian banking.
    - ADNOC signed multi-billion-dollar LNG supply agreements with Indian oil companies.
    - Mubadala has invested over $4 billion in Indian healthcare, renewables, and technology.
    - Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) established a base in India's GIFT City.

India–UAE Partnership: Built for the Long Term

- **Trust and Policy Foundations**
  - The deepening India–UAE economic relationship is anchored in decades of trust, strong diaspora ties, and a robust policy framework.
  - The CEPA removed tariffs on nearly 90% of tariff lines, while the 2024 Bilateral Investment Treaty and a new strategic defence partnership provide long-term certainty for businesses and investors.

- **Expanding Into Third Markets**
  - The partnership is now extending beyond bilateral trade.
  - The upcoming **Bharat Mart** in the UAE will function as a wholesale hub for Indian goods targeting Africa, West Asia, and Eurasia, aiming to significantly boost exports.
  - Both countries are also exploring joint digital infrastructure and capacity-building initiatives in Africa, transforming the corridor into a platform for global economic outreach.

- **AI as the Next Frontier**
  - Artificial intelligence is emerging as the next major area of collaboration.

- India’s hosting of the AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi signals its growing leadership in AI governance and innovation.
- The UAE, a pioneer in institutional AI adoption, is a natural partner.
- Both nations are exploring cooperation in advanced computing, data centres, and AI-driven innovation, recognising that future technological leadership will depend on strategic partnerships rather than isolated growth.

India–UAE Partnership: The Next Chapter of Global Expansion

- **India’s Global Economic Moment**
  - India, now the world’s **fourth-largest** economy with a GDP of around $4 trillion, is entering a decisive global phase.
  - Driven by entrepreneurial dynamism, manufacturing growth, and world-class digital infrastructure, Indian businesses are increasingly focused on international expansion.
  - The question is no longer whether Indian enterprises will go global, but how effectively strategic corridors can accelerate that ambition.
- **Wider Strategic Realignment**
  - The India–UAE partnership is part of a broader geopolitical and economic convergence.
  - The recent Delhi Declaration between India and Arab Foreign Ministers sets out an ambitious roadmap for cooperation through 2028, spanning politics, trade, energy, technology, and security.
  - The India–UAE corridor stands at the forefront of this realignment.
- **Beyond Trade: Deep Economic Integration**
  - Having achieved $100 billion in trade ahead of schedule, the partnership now moves into a deeper phase.
  - The next chapter will be defined not just by higher trade volumes, but by greater integration of capital, technology, infrastructure, and strategic interests.

The UAE-India Corridor is Sparking a Growth Story FAQs

Q1. What milestone did India and the UAE achieve under CEPA?

Ans. India and the UAE achieved their $100 billion bilateral trade target five years ahead of schedule and have now set a new $200 billion goal by 2032.

Q2. How has the India–UAE trade relationship diversified?

Ans. Non-oil trade has surged, and cooperation now spans advanced manufacturing, finance, logistics, renewables, infrastructure, and technology, moving well beyond traditional energy ties.

Q3. What role does investment play in the corridor?

Ans. Two-way investments are strong, with UAE sovereign funds and companies expanding in India, while Indian firms deepen manufacturing and infrastructure commitments in the UAE.

Q4. Why is AI considered the next frontier of cooperation?

Ans. Both nations are investing in AI infrastructure, advanced computing, and data centres, recognising that strategic partnerships will determine future technological leadership.

Q5. How does the corridor fit into broader geopolitical trends?

Ans. The India–UAE partnership aligns with wider regional realignment, including the Delhi Declaration, positioning the corridor at the forefront of economic and strategic convergence.

Source: TH

Building Trusted AI Ecosystems in Asia – From Fragmentation to Shared Governance

Context

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly central to economic growth, public service delivery, and national competitiveness.
- Across South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the wider Asia-Pacific, AI promises **breakthroughs** in public health, education access, productivity gains, and human rights protections.
- However, AI's expansion remains **uneven**. Governance decisions on bias, safety, accountability, cybersecurity, and social impact are often taken far from the communities most affected.
- As a result, the core question for Asia is no longer about AI adoption—but about **trust**.

Why Trust is Central to AI Governance

- AI systems, no matter how advanced, **risk** public rejection, governmental resistance, misuse or weaponisation, and cross-border regulatory friction.
- Trust becomes difficult because AI ecosystems are inherently **transnational**, marked by –
    - Global data flows
    - Semiconductor supply chain interdependence
    - Concentrated AI talent pools
    - Uneven cybersecurity standards
    - Dispersed cloud and compute infrastructure
- For developing nations in South and Southeast Asia, this often translates into becoming **passive consumers** of AI technologies developed elsewhere, with limited regulatory influence.

Divergent National Agendas in Asia

- Asian countries are pursuing AI policies aligned with their strategic strengths and constraints. **For example**,

    - **South Korea**: Aims to preserve its dominance in memory chips within the global AI supply chain.
    - **Singapore**: Seeks to position itself as a “pace-setter” in AI governance.
    - **China**: Intends to lead global AI governance while reinforcing sovereign state control.
    - **India**: Focuses on upskilling its IT workforce and leveraging its expanding digital market.
    - **Nepal**: Aspires to become a hub for energy-efficient compute infrastructure.
- Despite differing objectives, one shared principle stands out – the need to **institutionalise.**

Emerging Governance Initiatives

- Recent policy developments underline convergence. **For example**,
    - India’s AI Governance Guidelines (2025) place trust at the core of AI adoption.
    - South Korea’s AI Basic Act establishes a legal foundation for trustworthy AI.
    - The United Nations Secretary-General’s AI Advisory Body calls for shared understanding and common benefits.
    - The UNESCO Recommendation on the **Ethics of AI** promotes rights-based AI development.
    - **ISO** standards such as ISO 42001/42005 aim to standardise AI management systems.
- These reflect an emerging consensus – trust must be **measurable, interoperable**, and regionally grounded.

Foundational Layers of a Trusted AI Ecosystem

- A trusted AI ecosystem rests on interconnected layers.
    - **Trusted datasets:** High-quality, representative, real-time data. Inclusion of Asia’s linguistic and cultural diversity. Anchoring within Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).
    - **Resilient AI infrastructure:** Secure access to compute, energy, and cloud services. Protection against geopolitical and supply-side disruptions.
    - **AI skills and public awareness:** Advanced technical talent pipelines. AI literacy among citizens. Responsible adoption frameworks.
    - **Global value chain leverage:** Access to semiconductors and critical minerals. Building manufacturing capabilities, and predictable and stable supply chains.
    - **Proportionate AI governance:** Balancing innovation with accountability. Managing risks like misinformation, deepfakes, liability. Avoiding regulatory overreach that stifles data flows or deters investment.
    - **Cybersecurity backbone:** Safeguarding AI systems against AI-enabled attacks. Harmonised security protocols.
- Together, these dimensions enable measurement of trust and guide policy interventions.

Key Challenges

- **Fragmented:** Regulatory landscape across Asia.
- **Technological asymmetry:** Between advanced and developing economies.
- **Dependence:** On Global Supply Chains, especially semiconductors.
- **Cybersecurity gaps**: In cross-border AI systems.
- **Risk:** Of Digital Colonialism, where developing countries lack influence.

India’s Strategic Opportunity

- India is uniquely positioned to bridge governance divides:
    - Strong DPI (Aadhaar, UPI model)
    - Large IT workforce and expanding AI talent base
    - Techno-legal regulatory approach that simplifies compliance
    - Growing influence in global digital governance debates
- India’s **AI Impact Summit** offers a platform to promote:
    - A shared Asian framework for AI trust measurement
    - Interoperability with global standards
    - **Balance** between innovation and safeguards
- Rather than minimising risks, India can shape a model that builds trusted ecosystems necessary for **inclusive** AI-driven development.

Way Forward

- Develop a Regional AI **Trust Index** measuring cybersecurity, bias mitigation, data representativeness, and governance preparedness.
- Promote interoperability with global frameworks (UNESCO norms, ISO standards).
- Strengthen semiconductor and compute cooperation among Asian economies.
- Invest in **AI literacy** and cross-border research collaboration.
- Institutionalise multi-stakeholder participation—governments, academia, private sector, and civil society.

Conclusion

- Asia stands at a **pivotal** AI’s transformative potential can either deepen inequalities or drive inclusive growth. The determining factor is trust—institutional, technical, and societal.
- A fragmented governance model risks reinforcing existing asymmetries. A shared, interoperable trust-based framework can convert AI from a tool of technological dominance into a **catalyst** for human-centric, inclusive development.

AI Ecosystems in Asia FAQs

Q1. Why is ‘trust’ considered the foundational principle in AI governance across Asia?

Ans. Trust ensures legitimacy, societal acceptance, and responsible AI deployment by addressing concerns like cross-border governance.

Q2. What are the challenges faced by developing Asian countries in the global AI ecosystem?

Ans. Developing nations face technological asymmetry, semiconductor dependence, weak cybersecurity standards, etc.

Q3. What are the key components of a trusted AI ecosystem in the Asian context?

Ans. A trusted AI ecosystem rests on representative datasets, resilient infrastructure, skilled talent, value-chain leverage, etc.

Q4. How can India leverage its Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) model to lead AI governance in Asia?

Ans. India can use its techno-legal DPI framework and large IT talent base to promote interoperable, trust-based AI governance.

Q5. What is the need for a shared regional AI governance framework in Asia?

Ans. It is essential to reduce regulatory fragmentation, ensure interoperability with global norms, etc.

Source: TH
