Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

Ravi is a senior police officer with vast experience in riot control and cyber policing. Since one year, he has been the Superintendent of Police (SP) of a district with a history of frequent rioting.

Last year, Ravi had sought installation of an AI enabled software for predictive policing. This system has been operational for approximately six months. This new system employs advanced algorithms for capturing the biometric data of persons in a crowd and swiftly relating it to a data library. This has enabled the police to identify the persons involved in various crimes.

The system has identified an immigrant and low-income neighbourhood as a centre for gang violence and drug trafficking. Aided by this AI analysis, the local police has focused its patrolling, preventive detentions and establishing checkposts. Consequently, public order and law enforcement has visibly improved.

Last week, some community leaders, civil rights lawyers and human rights activists visited Ravi's office. They submitted a memorandum that the new system is faulty as it is based on incorrect historical data caused by social biases and discriminatory policing. The memorandum also alleges that the increased surveillance has created a climate of tension amongst residents. This feeling is aggravated by the fact that the residents are not aware of

the data noted against their names.

(a) What are the ethical issues including biases involved in the use of AI in data-driven policing?

(b) Place yourself in Ravi's role and discuss the alternatives available. Justify the action that optimizes compliance with ethics.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2026	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Algorithmic bias, privacy, surveillance, discrimination, data quality, transparency, accountability, due process, proportionality, human oversight

Model Answer

1. Ethical Issues

The primary concern is algorithmic bias. If historical policing data reflected discriminatory practices, AI may reproduce and amplify those biases. This can create a feedback loop in which greater surveillance produces more recorded offences, which then reinforces the algorithm's original conclusion.

Privacy, dignity, presumption of innocence and equal treatment are also at stake. Preventive detention based substantially on algorithmic predictions may compromise due process. Lack of transparency further weakens accountability.

2. Alternatives for Ravi

Ravi can continue the system unchanged, suspend it completely, or adopt a regulated middle path. The first option risks discriminatory policing, while complete suspension may sacrifice genuine public-safety benefits.

3. Ethical Course

Ravi should retain the technology only subject to an independent bias and accuracy audit. Biometric collection should be lawful, necessary and proportionate. Human officers must make final decisions rather than treating AI outputs as conclusive. The affected community should receive appropriate information and grievance mechanisms should be established.

4. Safeguards

Periodic algorithmic audits, representative training data, data minimisation, access controls, deletion protocols and independent oversight should be introduced.

Conclusion

Technology should augment ethical policing, not replace human judgment. Ravi should combine evidence-based policing with fairness, transparency, accountability and protection of individual rights.

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