



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



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## DEEPPAKING ELECTIONS

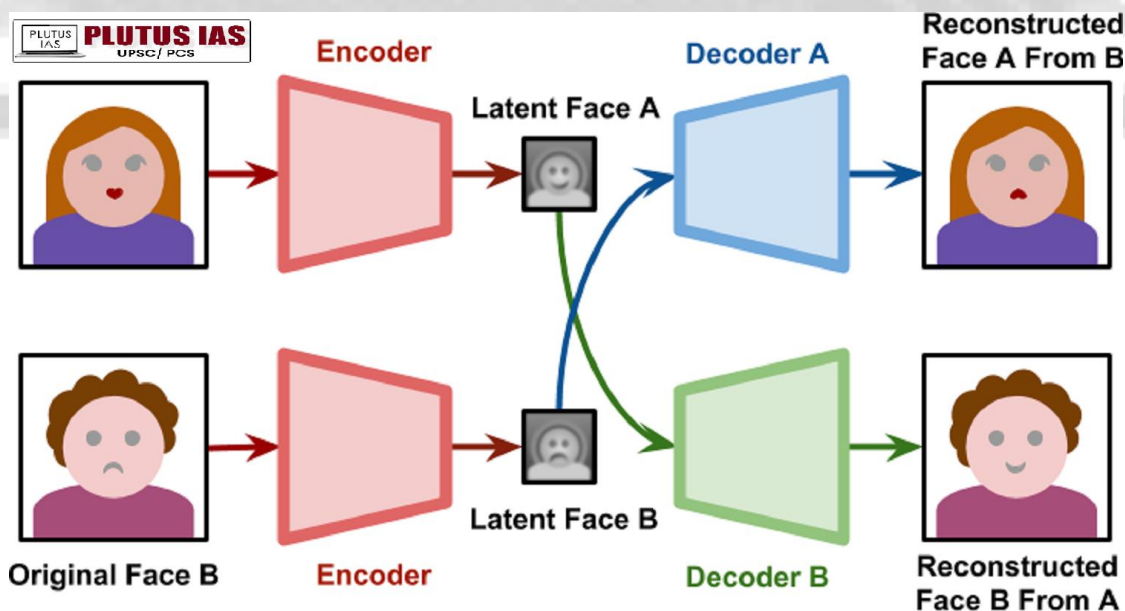
THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "DEEPPAKING ELECTIONS". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "POLITY and GOVERNANCE" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

### Why in the News?

Bollywood star Ranveer Singh has filed a formal complaint with the Mumbai Police Cyber Crime Cell following the emergence of a deep fake video. This fabricated video portrays the actor expressing political views and endorsing a specific political party during his recent trip to Varanasi.

### WHAT IS DEEP FAKE?

- Deepfakes represent sophisticated fabricated videos or audio recordings produced through digital tools, machine learning algorithms, and facial substitution methods. These creations result from artificial intelligence systems manipulating original images, videos, or audio recordings of individuals to generate deceptive content.
- Utilizing **generative adversarial networks (GANs)**, the software refines its inputs and outputs, aiming to blur the line between authentic and falsified material, making it challenging for discriminators to distinguish between the two. Deepfakes can be highly convincing and difficult to detect, posing risks for misinformation, fraud, and privacy violations.



## How Deep Fakes Can Impact Elections?

Deepfakes can have a significant impact on elections by spreading misinformation, manipulating public opinion, and undermining electoral integrity. Here are some ways deep fakes could impact elections:

- **Misinformation and Manipulation:** Deepfakes can be used to create convincing videos of political candidates saying or doing things they never actually did. These fabricated videos can spread rapidly on social media platforms, leading to misinformation and manipulation of public opinion.
- **Undermining Trust:** Deepfake videos can erode trust in the electoral process by casting doubt on the authenticity of real videos and statements made by candidates. This can confuse voters and undermine their confidence in the political system.
- **Smear Campaigns:** Deepfakes can be weaponized as part of smear campaigns against political opponents. By creating fake videos depicting candidates engaging in unethical or illegal behaviour, malicious actors can tarnish their reputations and influence voter perception.
- **Psychological Warfare:** Deep fakes could be employed as psychological warfare tactics designed to trigger fear or anxiety among certain demographics, affecting voter behaviour negatively. For instance, fake news stories portraying violence or civil unrest could deter people from participating in elections.
- **Polarization and Divisiveness:** The proliferation of deepfake content can exacerbate political polarization and divisiveness by amplifying false narratives and reinforcing existing biases. This can further deepen societal rifts and hinder constructive dialogue during election campaigns.
- **Damage to Reputations:** Deepfakes can tarnish the reputations of political candidates by portraying them in compromising situations or making them appear to hold controversial views. Even if the content is later proven to be false, the damage to the candidate's image may already be done.
- **Challenges for Fact-Checking:** Deepfakes pose significant challenges for fact-checking organizations and journalists tasked with verifying the accuracy of political content. The rapid spread of deep fake videos can outpace efforts to debunk false information, allowing misinformation to gain traction before it can be effectively addressed.

## Initiatives Taken By India to Counter Deep Fakes in Elections

The Indian government has taken steps to address the challenges posed by deep fakes and misinformation in several ways:

- **Regulations and advisories:** The government has issued advisories to social media platforms and tech companies, urging compliance with regulations concerning deepfakes and misinformation. For example, the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** issued an advisory in December 2023, directing social media platforms to adhere to the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**, particularly regarding deceptive, misleading, or impersonating content.
- **Legislation:** Recognizing the necessity for a comprehensive legal framework to tackle deep fakes and misinformation, the government plans to develop appropriate legislation following the elections. This may involve amending existing laws or enacting new ones specifically targeting deepfakes and misinformation.
- **Collaboration with tech companies:** The Indian government has collaborated with major technology companies, including Meta, Amazon, Google, Microsoft, OpenAI, and Anthropic, to combat harmful and deceptive AI-generated content that could disrupt electoral processes. **For**

**example, Google has formed a partnership with the Election Commission of India (ECI) to combat** the dissemination of misinformation during the general elections.

- **Awareness and education:** Efforts are underway to raise awareness about the risks associated with deep fakes and misinformation. The government and various organizations emphasise the importance of fact-checking and fostering critical thinking skills among the public.
- **Fact-checking initiatives:** Several fact-checking organizations, such as **Alt News, Boom Live, and Fact Crescendo**, are actively engaged in debunking deep fakes and misinformation related to elections.
- **Technological solutions:** Researchers and tech companies are developing AI-powered tools to detect deepfakes effectively. These tools could help identify and remove manipulated content from social media platforms and other digital channels.

### **International efforts to counter deep fakes**

- **Tech Industry Accord:** Major players in the technology sector are joining forces to address the issue of deceptive AI-generated election content through the proposed Tech Accord. This collaborative agreement aims to develop tools such as watermarks and detection techniques to identify, label, and refute deep fake AI-manipulated images and audio recordings of public figures.
- **Funding for Forensic Techniques:** Governments are being encouraged to allocate resources towards the advancement of media forensic techniques designed to detect deep fakes. Initiatives like the **Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in the United States** investing in forensic detection techniques highlight the critical need for ongoing funding to stay abreast of evolving deep fake algorithms.
- **EU Strategy:** The European Union has taken proactive measures to address the issue of disinformation, including deep fakes, by issuing guidelines for defending against various forms of intentional disinformation. These guidelines stress the significance of public engagement and the implementation of measures to assist individuals in discerning the authenticity of content.
- **International Organizations:** Several international organizations promote awareness about deep fakes' threats, encourage international collaboration, provide guidance on best practices, and coordinate responses to emerging challenges. One example is the **United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**, which coordinates global initiatives to fight cybercrime and online exploitation.

### **Prelims Based Question**

**Q1. Which of the following Fintech companies launched India's First indigenously developed AI platform?**

- (a). Uber
- (b). PayTM
- (c). Ola
- (d). Phonepe

**ANSWER: C**

### **Mains Based Question**

**Q1. What are the potential implications of deep fakes on electoral processes, and how might they impact voter perceptions and decisions? What specific measures has the Indian government implemented to address the challenges posed by deep fakes in elections?**

# CRIMINALISATION IN POLITICS

**THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS "CRIMINALISATION IN POLITICS". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "POLITY" SECTION OF GS2 IN THE UPSC CSE EXAM.**

In a recent amicus curiae report submitted to the Supreme Court, it was revealed that candidates with criminal backgrounds secured more seats in the 17th Lok Sabha compared to those with clean records. As the country heads into the second phase of polling for the 18th Lok Sabha, the report underscored the crucial necessity for voters to be informed about the individuals they are electing into power.

Senior advocate Vijay Hansaria, serving as the amicus curiae, emphasized that voters have a **fundamental right to information**, which is inherent in their right to free speech and expression. Specifically, he stressed that voters should have access to comprehensive details regarding the criminal history of candidates, including the status of ongoing trials and reasons for any delays.

To facilitate this, the report recommended the **establishment of a dedicated section on the homepages** of State High Courts' websites. This section would offer district-wise information about criminal trials involving legislators, prominently displaying updates on each case and explanations for any procedural delays. Such transparency, the report argued, would empower citizens and voters to make more informed decisions during elections.

## HIGHLIGHT OF THE REPORT

- According to the report, the scenario during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections mirrored the current situation. Out of a total of 7,928 candidates in the fray, a staggering 1,500 candidates, constituting 19%, had criminal cases registered against them. Among these, 1,070 candidates, amounting to 13%, faced serious criminal charges.
- However, what stood out was the outcome: despite the significant percentage of candidates with clean records, a substantial 44% of the elected members to the 17th Lok Sabha, spanning the period from 2019 to 2024, had criminal cases against them.
- This stark revelation underscores the trend where candidates with criminal backgrounds tend to secure more seats than those without such records, further emphasizing the need for greater transparency and awareness among voters regarding the criminal antecedents of their elected representatives.

## REASONS FOR CRIMINALISATION OF POLITICS

- **Social Factors:** Socio-economic inequalities, lack of access to justice, and widespread corruption can all contribute to the normalization of criminality in politics. In some cases, individuals may enter politics as a means of seeking power and influence in the absence of legitimate opportunities for social mobility.
- **Lack of Internal Democracy within Political Parties:** Many political parties in India lack internal democracy, with decisions often being centralized within a small group of leaders. This can create an environment where individuals with criminal backgrounds can thrive, as they may have the resources or connections to gain favor with party leaders.
- **Dynastic Politics:** India has a long history of dynastic politics, where political power and influence are passed down within families. In such a system, individuals with criminal

backgrounds who belong to influential families may find it easier to enter politics and secure nominations from their parties.

- **Money and Muscle Power:** Elections in India often involve significant spending on campaigning and mobilizing support. Individuals with criminal backgrounds may have amassed wealth and influence through illegal means, which they can then use to fund their electoral campaigns and garner support through coercion or intimidation.
- **Weak Legal Enforcement:** Despite laws and regulations aimed at preventing individuals with criminal backgrounds from contesting elections, enforcement mechanisms can be weak or ineffective. Loopholes in the legal system, delays in the judicial process, and lack of coordination between law enforcement agencies can all contribute to the impunity enjoyed by politicians with criminal records.
- **Vote-bank Politics:** Some political parties may see candidates with criminal backgrounds as advantageous for securing votes from certain communities or regions. These candidates may have a reputation for being able to deliver on promises or provide protection to their supporters, leading parties to field them in elections despite their criminal histories.

## SUPREME COURT JUDGMENTS

1. **Lily Thomas v. Union of India (2013):** In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that lawmakers would be immediately disqualified if they were convicted of a crime and sentenced to a jail term of two years or more. This judgment aimed to prevent individuals with serious criminal records from holding public office.
2. **Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India (2002):** This case led to the introduction of disclosure requirements for candidates contesting elections. The Supreme Court mandated that candidates must disclose criminal cases pending against them, their educational qualifications, financial assets, and liabilities while filing nomination papers.
3. **Public Interest Foundation v. Union of India (2019):** In this case, the Supreme Court directed political parties to publish details of criminal cases against their candidates on their websites and social media platforms. The court emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability in electoral politics.
4. **Ramesh Dalal v. Union of India (2005):** The Supreme Court held that voters have a right to know about the criminal antecedents of candidates contesting elections. The court observed that this information is essential for voters to make informed choices and exercise their democratic rights effectively.
5. **PUCL v. Union of India (2003):** In this case, the Supreme Court issued guidelines for electoral reforms, including measures to curb the criminalization of politics. The court recommended the establishment of fast-track courts to expedite the trial of cases involving elected representatives and to ensure their timely disposal.

## WHAT IS REPRESENTATION OF PEOPLE ACT, 1951

The Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RPA, 1951) is a key legislation in India that governs various aspects of elections, including the conduct of elections, qualifications and disqualifications of candidates, and the registration of political parties. The RPA, 1951, was enacted to ensure free and fair elections in the country and to establish democratic norms and procedures.

Key provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, include:

1. **Qualifications and Disqualifications of Candidates:** The Act lays down the qualifications that a person must possess to contest elections to the Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies. It also specifies various grounds for disqualification, including conviction for certain offenses, bankruptcy, and holding an office of profit under the government.
2. **Conduct of Elections:** The RPA, 1951, provides detailed provisions regarding the conduct of elections, including the process of nomination, the appointment of election officers, polling procedures, and counting of votes. It also regulates the use of election symbols by political parties and candidates.
3. **Election Petitions:** The Act provides for the filing of election petitions challenging the validity of an election on various grounds, such as corrupt practices, illegalities in the conduct of elections, or violations of election laws. These petitions are adjudicated by the High Courts or the Supreme Court, depending on the level of the election.
4. **Registration of Political Parties:** The RPA, 1951, prescribes the procedure for the registration and recognition of political parties. Political parties seeking recognition must fulfill certain eligibility criteria, including having a certain minimum number of members and following internal democratic processes.
5. **Electoral Offenses and Penalties:** The Act defines various electoral offenses, such as bribery, undue influence, and impersonation, and prescribes penalties for individuals found guilty of such offenses. These offenses are punishable by imprisonment, fines, or both.

#### PROVISION FOR DISQUALIFICATION UNDER RPA, 1951

- **Conviction for Certain Offenses:** A person convicted of certain offenses by a court of law is disqualified from contesting elections. These offenses include crimes such as bribery, electoral malpractices, corruption, and offenses under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) or any other special laws.
- **Corrupt Practices:** Any individual found guilty of engaging in corrupt practices during elections, such as bribery, undue influence, or impersonation, is disqualified from contesting elections.
- **Undischarged Insolvency:** A person who is declared as an undischarged insolvent by a court is disqualified from contesting elections until the insolvency is discharged.
- **Office of Profit:** Holding an office of profit under the government, whether Central or State, can lead to disqualification from contesting elections. However, certain offices are exempted from this disqualification by law or by the President of India.
- **Unsoundness of Mind:** Individuals who have been declared to be of unsound mind by a competent court and are under guardianship are disqualified from contesting elections.
- **Dual Membership of Legislative Bodies:** A person cannot simultaneously be a member of both Houses of Parliament or both Houses of a State Legislature. If a person is elected to more than one such legislative body, they must resign from one within a certain period, failing which they will be disqualified.
- **Government Contracts and Tenders:** Holding government contracts or being involved in government tenders can lead to disqualification from contesting elections, as it may create a conflict of interest.