

CENTRAL INFORMATION COMMISSION

Recently, the Information Commissioner, Heeralal Samariya, was sworn in as the chief of the Central Information Commission (CIC) by the President of India.



About the Central Information Commission:

- It has been constituted under the **Right to Information Act, 2005**.
- The jurisdiction of the Commission extends over all Central Public Authorities.
- **Objectives**
 - To exercise the powers conferred on them under the RTI Act, 2005.
 - To **receive and inquire** into complaints from any citizen (Section 18 of the RTI Act, 2005).
 - To perform the duty of “**Monitoring and Reporting** “(Section 25 of the RTI Act, 2005).
- **Composition**
 - It consists of a **Chief Information Commissioner** and not more than ten Information Commissioners.
- **Appointment:**
 - They are appointed by the **President** of India on the recommendation of a committee consisting of the **Prime Minister as Chairperson**, the **Leader of Opposition** in the **Lok Sabha**, and a **Union Cabinet Minister** nominated by the Prime Minister.
- **Eligibility**
 - The members of CIC and SIC shall be **persons of eminence in public life** with wide knowledge and experience in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass media, or administration and governance.
 - Members **shall not be a Member of Parliament or Member of the Legislature** of any State or Union Territory as the case may be, or **hold any other office of profit or connected with any political party** or carry on any business or pursue any profession.
- **Tenure**
 - The Chief Information Commissioner, or Information Commissioners, as the case may be, shall hold office for a **period of three years** from the date on which he enters upon his office.

DEEPPAKES: A POPULAR INDIAN ACTOR'S VIRAL VIDEO SPOTLIGHTS BIG TECH'S DEEPPAKE PROBLEM

Why in News?

- In a recent turn of events, popular actress Rashmika Mandanna has found herself at the center of a controversy involving a **deepfake video**.
- The video, which has gone viral on social media, shows a woman (in revealing clothes) entering an elevator, but her face has been digitally altered to resemble Mandanna.

What is Deepfake?

- Deepfake uses **deep learning techniques in AI** to generate videos, photos, or news that **seems real but is actually fake**.
- These techniques can be used to **synthesise faces, replace facial expressions, synthesise voices**, and generate news.
- This technique is also used to **create special effects in movies**. However, more recently this technique is being **widely used by criminals to create disinformation**.
- **For example**, in March 2022, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky revealed that a video posted on social media in which he appeared to be instructing Ukrainian soldiers to surrender to Russian forces was actually a deepfake.

Issues with Deepfakes:

- **Spread misinformation and propaganda**: Deep fakes seriously compromise the public's ability to distinguish between fact and fiction. **For example**, recent events that never happened include -
 - Football fans in a stadium in Madrid holding an enormous Palestinian flag.
 - A video of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy calling on his soldiers to lay down their weapons.
- **Can depict someone in a compromising and embarrassing situation**: For instance, deepfake pornographic material of celebrities not only amounts to an **invasion of privacy**, but also to harassment (especially of **women**).

- **Deepfakes have been used for financial fraud:** Scammers recently used AI-powered software to deceive the CEO of a U.K. energy company into thinking he was speaking with the CEO of the German parent company over the phone.
 - As a result, the CEO transferred a large sum of money (€2,20,000) to what he thought was a supplier.
- **Deepfakes could lead to the ‘Liar’s Dividend’:** This refers to the idea that individuals can take advantage of the growing awareness and prevalence of deepfake technology by denying the authenticity of certain content.

Legal Framework Related to AI in India:

- **In India**, there are no legal rules against using deepfake technology. However, specific laws can be addressed for misusing the tech, which include Copyright Violation, Defamation and cybercrimes.

Way Ahead to Curb the Menace of the Deepfake Technology:

- **Companies should respond with tech solutions:** While laws could take a long time to bear fruit, the menace of the technology has prompted some of the online platforms to come up with clear policies on how they will deal with deepfakes.

INDIA, BHUTAN AGREE TO EXPAND CONNECTIVITY, TRADE

Why in news?

- Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who is on a visit to India, held a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi.
- This is significant amid growing concerns over China’s efforts to forge a bond with Thimphu.

Background of India-Bhutan Relationship

- Diplomatic relations between Bhutan and India were established in January 1968.
- Relationship between both the countries are guided by the **Indo-Bhutan Friendship treaty**. The treaty was signed in 1949 and was revised in 2007.

- Article 2 of the Treaty declares that India would not interfere in Bhutan's administrative affairs and the latter would be guided by the former's advice in its external relations.
- After the revision of treaty in 2007, Bhutan no longer require India's approval over importing arms. India supports Bhutan's progress towards sovereignty and democracy.
- Also, now there are no limitations of Bhutan with respect to other countries. But Bhutan cannot use its territory for activities against India's security threat.
- In 2014, the new Prime Minister at New Delhi chose Bhutan as his first foreign destination.
- He coined the idea of **B2B** as '**Bharat to Bhutan**' for building effective and renewed bilateral relationship.

Key highlights of the visit by King of Bhutan

● **9 steps to expand ties**

- The two sides announced 9 steps to expand ties in trade, technology, cross-border connectivity, mutual investments, education and people-to-people contacts.

● **Rail link**

- The two sides agreed on a final location survey for the proposed cross-border rail link connecting Kokrajhar in Assam to Gelephu in Bhutan.

● **Bridge financing**

- India also decided to provide bridge financing for the period between 12th and 13th Five-Year Plans of Bhutan for India-assisted projects and schemes.

● **Immigration check post between Bhutan and India**

- Both sides agreed to designate Darranga (Assam) and Samdrup Jongkhar (Bhutan) as immigration check post between Bhutan and India.

● **Other announcements**

- Both the leaders decided to
 - safeguard the ecological diversity of the region,
 - allocate additional MBBS seats for Bhutanese students in medical colleges in Assam and
 - double the outlay under Ambassador's scholarship for Bhutanese students pursuing higher education in India.

GRAP STAGE 4 IMPLEMENTED IN DELHI-NCR AMID SEVERE AIR POLLUTION

Why in news?

- The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) invoked measures under Stage 4 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) with immediate effect.
- This was invoked after the National Capital Region's Air Quality Index (AQI) deteriorating to the 'severe' category.

Graded Response Action Plan

About

- GRAP is a set of emergency measures that kick in to prevent further deterioration of air quality once it reaches a certain threshold in the Delhi-NCR region.
- It was approved by the Supreme Court in 2016 and notified in 2017.



- The plan was formulated after several meetings between Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA), state government and experts.

- GRAP works only as an emergency measure.
- The plan does not include action by various state governments to be taken throughout the year to tackle industrial, vehicular and combustion emissions.

- GRAP is incremental in nature and thus, when the air quality dips from 'poor' to 'very poor,' measures listed under both sections have to be followed.

- **Stage 1** of GRAP is activated when the AQI is in the 'poor' category (201 to 300);

- **Stage 2** is when it's in the 'Very poor' category (301-400);

- **Stage 3** is when the AQI is the 'Severe' category (401-450); and

- **Stage 4** is when it rises to the 'Severe +' category (more than 450).

Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)

- CAQM is a statutory body which aims at better coordination, research, identification, and resolution of problems related to air quality in NCR and adjoining areas.

DIGITAL LIFE CERTIFICATE (JEEVAN PRAMAAN)

Over 16 lakh Digital Life Certificates, or Jeevan Pramaan, have been generated by the end of the first week of the launch of Campaign 2.0, an initiative of the Ministry of Personnel to enhance the 'ease of living' of Central Government pensioners across the country.



About the Digital Life Certificate (Jeevan Pramaan):

- The Digital Life Certificate for Pensioners Scheme of the Government, known as Jeevan Pramaan, is a **biometric-enabled digital service for pensioners**.
- It was introduced in 2014 to **simplify and enhance** the convenience of life certificate submissions for pensioners.

Purpose:

- One of the major requisites for **pensioners after their retirement** from the service is to **provide life certificates** to authorised **pension disbursing agencies** like the bank, **following which their pension is credited** to their account.
- **In order to get this life certificate, the individual** drawing the pension is **required to be either personally present themselves before the Pension Disbursing Agency or to have the Life Certificate issued by the authority where they have served earlier and have it delivered to the disbursing agency.**
- **The Jeevan Pramaan scheme seeks to address this very problem by digitising the whole process of securing the life certificate.**
- Pensioners have the **option to create Jeevan Pramaan, either online or via a mobile app.**
- Using Jeevan Pramaan, a pensioner can now **digitally provide proof of his/her existence to authorities for continuity of pension every year** instead of requiring to appear in person before the certifying authority or the disbursing agency.
- It **employs biometric authentication** to validate the pensioner's identity, effectively preventing fraudulent activity.

Beneficiaries:

- Pensioners of the Central Government, State Government, or any other Government organisation can take benefit of this facility.
- It is **not available to remarried or reemployed Pensioners**. They are required to submit the life certificate the conventional way to their pension disbursing authority.

WORLD LOCAL PRODUCTION FORUM (WLPF)

Recently, the Indian delegation led by the Union Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers participated in the 2nd World Local Production Forum at the Hague.



About the World Local Production Forum:

- It is an initiative of the World **Health Organisation**.
- The first WLPF was organised virtually in 2021.
- **Aim:** Increasing access to medicines and other health technologies.
- This forum provides Member States and the global community with a regular platform to **shape strategies**, galvanize **collective action**, and foster partnerships on sustainable local production to improve **timely and equitable access to quality-assured health products**.
- **Secretariat:** The Local Production and Assistance (LPA) Unit at the WLPF.
- The **second WLPF aims**
- To provide a global platform to discuss key challenges in **promoting local production and technology transfer**.
- To explore opportunities and mechanisms to tackle the bottlenecks.
- To promote sustainable local production capacity to improve access to quality, safe and effective health products and technologies.

Key Facts about the World Health Organisation

- It was established in
- It is a United Nations agency that connects nations, partners, and people **to promote health, keep the world safe** and serve the vulnerable.

- It provides **technical assistance to countries**, sets international health standards, and collects data on global health issues.
 - It has played a leading role in several public health achievements, most notably the Eradication of smallpox, the near-eradication of polio, and the development of an Ebola
 - The World Health Assembly, the agency's decision-making body, elects and advises an executive **board made up of 34 health specialists**.
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EUCLID SPACE TELESCOPE

The first images captured by the European Space Agency's (ESA's) Euclid mission are due to be released.



About the Euclid Space Telescope:

- The Euclid mission is part of ESA's Cosmic Vision programme, which aims to explore the origin and components of the universe and the fundamental laws that govern it.
- Its **main goal is to investigate the "dark side" of the universe, focusing on dark matter and dark energy**.
- It was launched on 1 July 2023.
- It is **named after the Greek mathematician Euclid of Alexandria**, who lived around 300 BC and **founded the subject of geometry**.
- The Euclid mission **will make a 3D map of the universe** (with time as the third dimension) by **observing billions of galaxies** out to 10 billion light-years **across more than a third of the sky**.
- It will reveal how dark energy has influenced the stretching and separation of matter over cosmic time.
- **Spacecraft and instruments:**
- The Euclid spacecraft is approximately **7 m tall and 3.7 m in diameter**. It consists of two **major components: the service module and the payload module**.

- The **payload module** comprises a **2-m-diameter telescope** and two scientific instruments: a **visible-wavelength camera** (the **VISible instrument, VIS**) and a **near-infrared camera/spectrometer** (the **Near-Infrared Spectrometer and Photometer, NISP**).
- The **service module contains the satellite systems**: electric power generation and distribution, attitude control, data processing electronics, propulsion, telecommand and telemetry, and thermal control.
- **Orbit**: Its **operational orbit will be a halo** around a point known as the **Sun-Earth Lagrange Point 2 (L2)**, at an average distance of **5 million km beyond Earth's orbit**.
- **Lifetime**: Nominal mission lifetime is **six years**, with the **possibility of extension** (limited by the amount of cold gas used for propulsion).

What is Dark Energy?

- Dark energy is the name given to the **mysterious force that's causing the rate of expansion of our universe to accelerate over time** rather than to slow down.
- It is now thought to **make up 68% of everything in the universe**.
- It's not matter or energy in the conventional sense. It **does not interact with electromagnetic forces** and, therefore, **cannot be observed directly**.