



# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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## US-China Engagement

**Syllabus: GS2/International Relations**

### In News

- The US President and the Chinese President met on the sidelines of the **Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit.**

### About

- Both the leaders agreed to work towards ensuring that the differences between the two countries remain **manageable** and the **relations do not derail.**
- The two leaders discussed bilateral ties, regional and key global issues like Iran, the Middle East, Ukraine, Taiwan, the Indo-Pacific, economic issues, artificial intelligence, drugs, and climate change.

- The two leaders also agreed on the **resumption of military-to-military level talks**.

### **Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)**

- It is a regional economic forum established in **1989** and is a forum of **21 Asia-Pacific economies**.
- There are **12 founding members: The United States**, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, New Zealand, Malaysia, South Korea, Indonesia, Canada, Brunei, and Australia.
  - Since then, several other Pacific countries have joined, including Vietnam, Taiwan, Russia, Peru, Papua New Guinea, Hong Kong, **China**, Mexico, and Chile.
- The word 'economies' is used to describe APEC members because the APEC cooperative process is predominantly concerned with **trade and economic issues**, with members engaging with one another as economic entities.

### **Key Takeaways for India**

- **New Areas of Engagement:** India needs to pay close attention to some of the new areas of US-China engagement — such as **regulating artificial intelligence (AI)**.
  - Potential US-China understandings are bound to have a major impact, over the long term, on the evolution of the global rules on AI.
- **China's Engagement with the West:** India can't bet that the 'China option' is no longer viable for Western businesses, or get complacent about India's attractiveness.
  - Productive engagement with the Western capital should remain a high priority for India.
- **Military Engagement:** The decision to renew high-level political and military communications between the two sides is, arguably, a success for the US in setting the terms of engagement with China.
  - India now needs to keep a closer look on the developments within the military engagements between the two nations.
- **Dialogue on Regional Security Issues:** India will also need to monitor the follow-up from the conversation between the two leaders on regional security issues in the Indo-Pacific, the current crisis in the Middle East, and the Ukraine war in Europe.

### **Way Ahead**

- While it must continuously assess the changes in great power relations, especially among the US, China, and Russia, India's emphasis should be on **taking advantage** of the new possibilities to strengthen its ties with the US, maintaining its long-standing ties with Russia, and managing the difficult ties with China.

- India's own rise in the international system allows it to effectively handle any sudden shifts in great power relations.
- For now, the word from San Francisco is that the prospect for **any dramatic change in US-China relations is remote.**

Source: [IE](#)

## State Funding of Elections

**Syllabus: GS2/Indian Polity**

### In News

- Recently, there has been increased talks about bringing the **State Funding of elections in India.**

### What is State Funding?

- State funding of polls imply the **government providing funds to parties and candidates** to fight elections, replacing the existing system of ploughing in private or party funds for the job.
- Its main purpose is to make it unnecessary for contestants to take money from powerful moneyed interests so that they can remain clean.
  - For this to happen, state funding needs to be accompanied by **strict accounting and transparency.**

### Who is Eligible for State Funding?

- The **share of votes** gained in the previous elections and the number of seats in legislative bodies is also used as a criterion.
- Usually, a lower limit for votes or share of votes is kept to prevent misuse of the provision by floating new parties that contest a large number of seats.

### What is Direct and Indirect State Funding?

- Direct funding means giving funds directly to political parties (or candidates). **Indirect funding** takes the form of various submedia access, tax benefits, free access to public spaces for campaign material display, provision of utilities and travel expenses, transport, security etc.

### Status in India

- While the political parties, and various bodies remain committed to state funding of elections, there has been **little progress on this.**
- Current state funding measures include provision of **free time on public broadcasters** for national parties in general elections and for registered state parties in state legislature elections.
  - Besides this, national parties are provided some benefits like security, office space, utility subsidies etc.
  - Another form of indirect state funding available in India is that registered political parties do not have to pay income tax.

### Arguments in Favour of State Funding of Elections

- **Reduction in cost of Elections:** It helps **reduce and limit the enormous costs of campaigning.**
- **Big Money:** It **reduces the dependence** of parties on big private donations.
- **Level Playing Field:** The expensive nature of elections acts as a huge barrier for a lot of aspiring candidates to enter politics, thus it works as an **entry barrier.**
- **Ensuring Transparency:** Such a strategy promotes **institutionalisation**, thereby greater compliance of transparency norms.

### Arguments Against State Funding of Elections

- **Financial Constraints:** India being such a vast country it is not economically viable to spend so much money into the elections by the State.
- **Doesn't Ensure Reduction of Cost:** Despite direct subsidies given to political parties in Israel and the US, the electoral expenditure continues to grow with each election, and parties in both countries continue to be dependent on large private donors.
- **Over-dependence on State Funds:** It is argued that public funding can make parties overdependent on state funds and thus reduce their reliance on members and small contributors for finance.
- **Compliance with other Regulations:** Wherever public funds are granted generously, it can be used to secure compliance with other regulations failing which public funds could be withdrawn.

### Suggestions by various Commissions and Committees

- Some major reports on state funding include those given by the on State Funding of Elections (1998), Law Commission Report on Reform of the Electoral Laws (1999), National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2001) and the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2008).
- The **1998 report** said that state **funds should be given only to registered national and state parties** and that it should be given in **kind only.**
- The **1999 and 2001 report** recommended **first putting a strong regulatory framework** in place including internal elections, accounting procedures etc.

### Conclusion

- Evidence from global experiences indicates that it provides **mixed results** and greatly varies across countries. While it has shown plenty of promise in some democracies, it has failed in others.
- From the various observations, however, it is clear that to ensure that public funding is effective, a country must adopt a two-pronged approach: **reducing the dependency on corporate/private money and infusing white money through state funding** or incentivising various other funding options including tax-free donations or loans.

Source: [TH](#)

## Sub-categorisation of Scheduled Castes (SCs)

**Syllabus: GS2/Governance**

### News

- PM Modi declared that his government will set up a committee to consider the sub-categorisation of the Madiga community in Telangana within the Scheduled Castes (SCs) category.

### Background

- **In 1996** the Andhra Pradesh government formed a **Commission under Justice Ramachandra Raju**, which recommended sub-categorisation of SCs in the State.
- However in **2004**, the Supreme Court IN **E.V. Chinniah vs State of Andhra Pradesh case**, held that the State did not have the power to unilaterally sub-categorise communities in the list of SCs or Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- The SC said that the Constitution has provided that **these lists can only be made by Parliament and notified by the President.**

### Arguments in favor

- **Graded inequalities among SC communities:** Among the marginalized, there are communities that have lesser access to basic facilities. As a result, the relatively more forward communities among them have managed to avail benefits consistently while crowding the more backward ones out.
- **The Usha Mehra committee** in its report in 2008 recommended the inclusion of **Clause (3) in Article 341** through a constitutional amendment empowering state legislature to enact reclassification of the SC category subject to Presidential confirmation.

### Arguments against

- Reservation to SC and ST categories have been provided on the basis of historical injustice rather than social and economic backwardness.
- The categorisation among the castes is a complex process as it will require more comprehensive data for segregation.

### Conclusion

- The Parliament has the authority to take steps regarding subcategorization of communities in the list of SCs or STs.
- The primary need is concrete population numbers of each community and sub-community and their respective socio-economic data, to provide a reasonable ground to decide how castes can be categorized, how much percentage should be given, etc.

Source: [TH](#)

# India to emerge as third largest economy by 2027

## Syllabus: GS3/Economy

### News

- The Finance Minister while addressing the **Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue** said India is expected to overtake Japan and Germany to emerge as the **third largest economy by 2027**.

### Factors in India's economic growth

- By the end of **2027** India's GDP will cross the **USD 5 trillion level**. By 2047, India aspires to be a developed economy.
- According to the **UNCTAD**, India was the **2nd largest exporter** of ocean-based goods and services among developing countries in 2020.
- In terms of **international shipments**, India's global ranking has risen from **44th** place in 2014, to the **22nd** rank in 2023.
- As per the **World Bank's Logistics Performance Index report 2023**, the 'turn-around time' of Indian ports is now just **0.9 days**, which is lower than ports in established maritime centers such as Singapore, the UAE, Germany, the USA, Australia, Russia, and South Africa.
- **Blue Economy:** India's 'Blue economy', accounts for roughly 4 percent of the GDP and represents a sea of opportunities.
- **Coastal states:** India has **9 states and 4 Union Territories** situated on the coast, **12 major and 200+** non-major ports situated along its coastline, and a vast network of navigable waterways for international and domestic trade.

### Challenges

- **Higher rate of unemployment** has given rise to jobless growth.
- **Supply-chain disruptions** and economic turbulence due to contemporary conflicts in Ukraine and Israel.
- **The complexity of decision-making bureaucracy:** It reduces India's attractiveness as a destination for foreign direct investment, compared to developing economies in the region such as Indonesia and Vietnam.
- **Challenges related to prolonged project gestation:** including uncertainties around land acquisition approvals, regulatory clearances, license procurement, and business setup procedures, further compound the situation.
- **Climate change and Air pollution** has a direct, and debilitating impact on GDP growth and per-capita income levels by reduced worker output, lower consumption, hampered asset productivity, and a surge in health expenses and welfare allocations.

### Steps taken by Government

- A '**Marine Cargo Pool**' has been created with the support of the **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India** and domestic insurance companies, to support maritime trade.

- To provide protection to coastal and inland shipping, India is setting up a full-fledged Indian-owned **Protection and Indemnity (P&I) entity**.
- For capacity building 31 projects have been identified in 9 major ports for monetisation under the **National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP)** launched in 2022.
- **India-Middle East-Europe Connectivity Corridor (IMEC)** will enhance transportation efficiency, reduce logistic costs, increase economic unity, generate employment, and lower Greenhouse Gas emissions.

**Source:**[TOI](#)

## Facts In News

### Edinburgh to Kozhikode: UNESCO's City of Literature list

**Syllabus :GS 1/Art and Culture**

#### **In News**

- Kozhikode in Kerala has made it to the prestigious **creative cities list of UNESCO** for contributions in the fields of literature.

#### **About Kozhikode**

- Kozhikode District was the capital of the erstwhile kingdom of the mighty **Zamorins** and once a renowned commercial centre.
  - Today Kozhikode is one of the best cities in Kerala.
- It is home to one of the greatest writers of our time, M.T. Vasudevan Nair.
  - It was also home to another much loved legendary author, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer. S.K. Pottekkatt, yet another master storyteller, also lived in this city.
- It also has a vibrant theatre tradition, best represented by the likes of K.T. Muhammed and Thikkodiyam.
  - It has also produced one of Malayalam cinema's finest scriptwriters, Ranjith.

#### **About Creative Cities Network**

- The **UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)** was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.
- Almost 300 cities around the world which currently make up this network work together towards a common objective: placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level.

- The Network covers seven creative fields: Crafts and Folk Art, Media Arts, Film, Design, Gastronomy, Literature and Music.
  - **Edinburgh** was the **first City of Literature**.
  - **Kozhikode** is **India's first City of Literature**.
  - This year, Gwalior has been named a City of Music, an honour that was achieved before by two other Indian cities, Varanasi (2015) and Chennai (2017). A city has to submit a bid explaining why it deserves to be considered.

**Source:**[TH](#)

## India-US Pact To Boost Cooperation Among Startups

**Syllabus: GS2/ International Relations**

### News

- **India and the US** recently signed an **agreement to promote innovation through increasing cooperation among startups**.

### About

- The MoU on enhancing innovation ecosystems through an **innovation handshake** under the framework of **India-US Commercial Dialogue** was signed recently.
- The MoU is signed with the objective to,
  - connect the two sides' dynamic startup ecosystems,
  - address specific regulatory hurdles to cooperation,
  - share information and best practices for startup fundraising and promote innovation and job growth, particularly in **critical and emerging technologies (CET)**.

### **India-US initiative for Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET):**

- The iCET was announced jointly by India and the US in May 2022.
- **Aim:** To position the two countries as trusted technology partners by building technology value chains and supporting the co-development and co-production of items.
  - It also aims to address regulatory restrictions, export controls and mobility barriers through a standing mechanism
- The iCET involves collaboration in a range of areas including **Quantum computing, Semiconductors, 5G and 6G wireless infrastructure, and Civilian space projects such as lunar exploration**.
- **Defence:** On the defence front, iCET aims to expand India-US cooperation in fields like artificial intelligence and military equipment.
  - The USA has also agreed **to produce a fighter jet engine in India** for the indigenously manufactured Light Combat Aircraft(LCA).



### **Significance of the Pact**

- It is poised to **positively impact economic activity, attract investment, and generate employment**, especially in startups working in CET areas.
- The dialogue is a cooperative undertaking at the **ministerial level** between India and the US **to facilitate regular discussion to deepen ties between business communities, encompassing regular government-to-government meetings** to be held in conjunction with private sector meetings.

**Source:** [BS](#)

## **CITIIS 2.0 Challenge**

### **Syllabus:GS2/Governance**

#### **News**

- The Union Minister of Housing & Urban Affairs and Petroleum & Natural Gas launched the CITIIS 2.0 Challenge.

#### **About**

- **CITIIS 2.0** is the second phase of the City Investments To Innovate, Integrate and Sustain (CITIIS) program.
- The program has been conceived by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** in collaboration with the **French Development Agency (AFD)**, KfW Development Bank, the European Union and the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA).
- **The aim** of the program is to:
  - **Drive investments into urban climate action** through competitively selected projects promoting a circular economy with focus on integrated waste management.
  - **Foster climate-sensitive planning** and action in states and cities through evidence-driven approaches.
  - **Build institutional mechanisms**, leverage partnerships and anchor capacity building for all urban local bodies in India.
- **Significance:** CITIIS 2.0 will complement the Smart Cities Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission, AMRUT along with commitments to combating the challenges posed by climate change.

**Source:** [PIB](#)

**Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme**  
**Syllabus: GS2/ Government Policies & Interventions, GS3/ Indian Agriculture**

**In News**

- The 15th instalment of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme was recently announced to be released.

**About Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme**

- **Aim:** To provide financial assistance to all cultivable landholding farmer families across the country, subject to certain exclusion criteria.
  - It is a Central Sector Scheme.
- **Digital payment:** Under the Scheme, an amount of Rs. 6000/- is transferred annually in three equal installments of Rs.2000/- directly into the Aadhaar Seeded bank accounts of the farmers.
- **Identification of beneficiaries:** State Government and UT administration will identify the farmer families which are eligible for support as per scheme guidelines.
- **Eligibility:**
  - Small and marginal farmers are eligible for PMKSNY.
  - Farmer families that hold cultivable land can apply for the benefits of this plan.
  - A beneficiary should be an Indian citizen.
  - Farmers from both rural and urban regions can be enlisted.
- **Exclusion Categories:** The following categories of beneficiaries of higher economic status shall not be eligible for benefit under the scheme:
  - All Institutional Landholders.
  - Former and present holders of constitutional posts
  - Former and present Ministers/ State Ministers and former/present Members of Lok Sabha/ Rajya Sabha/ State Legislative Assemblies/ State Legislative Councils, former and present Mayors of Municipal Corporations, former and present Chairpersons of District Panchayats.
  - All serving or retired officers and employees of Central/ State Government Ministries /Offices/Departments and its field units Central or State PSEs and Attached offices /Autonomous Institutions under Government as well as regular employees of the Local Bodies (Excluding Multi Tasking Staff /Class IV/Group D employees)
  - All Persons who paid Income Tax in last assessment year
  - Professionals like Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, Chartered Accountants, and Architects registered with Professional bodies and carrying out their profession by undertaking practices.

**Significance**

- A farmer-centric digital infrastructure has ensured the benefits of the scheme reach all the farmers across the country without any involvement of the middlemen, maintaining absolute transparency in registering and verifying beneficiaries.

Source: TH

## First Vaccine for Chikungunya Approved

### Syllabus: GS2/ Health

#### News

- Recently, the **world's first vaccine for chikungunya** was approved by the **Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the U.S.**

#### About

- The vaccine has been **developed by European vaccine manufacturer Valneva** and will be available under the **brand Ixchiq**.
- It has been approved for administration in **people who are 18 years or older**, and are at increased risk of exposure to the virus.
- **Ixchiq** is administered as a **single dose** by injection into the muscle. It contains a **live, weakened version of the chikungunya virus**.

#### Chikungunya

- Chikungunya is a **mosquito-borne viral disease** that causes fever and severe joint pain.
  - It is a **ribonucleic acid (RNA) virus** that belongs to the **alphavirus** genus of the family **Togaviridae**.
- The disease was **first recognized in 1952** during an outbreak in southern **Tanzania**.
  - The name “chikungunya” derives from a word in the **Kimakonde language of southern Tanzania**, meaning “**to become contorted**”, and describes the stooped appearance of **sufferers with joint pain** (arthralgia).
- **Transmission:** Chikungunya is transmitted to humans by the bites of infected **female mosquitoes**.
  - Most commonly, the mosquitoes involved are ***Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus***. These two species can also transmit other mosquito-borne viruses, including **dengue**.
  - They bite throughout daylight hours, although there may be peaks of activity in the early morning and late afternoon.
- Since 2004, outbreaks of CHIKV have become more frequent and widespread, **partly due to viral adaptations** allowing the virus to be spread more easily by the *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes.
- **Treatment:** As of now, **there is no cure, only symptomatic relief**, with analgesics to help with the pain, antipyretics for the fever, rest, and adequate fluids.
- **Prevention:** Prevention includes **mosquito control activities**, primarily falling under public health outreach and routine civic maintenance.

Source: [TH](#)

## RBI Tightens Norms on Consumer Credit

Syllabus: GS2/Government Policies & Interventions, Indian Economy

### In Context

- The Reserve Bank recently tightened norms for consumer credit.

### More about the news

- **Background - Rise in unsecured loans:**
  - Indian banks have seen a **sharp rise in unsecured loans**, mostly personal loans and credit cards that has outpaced the overall bank credit growth of about 15 per cent over the past year.
- **The regulation by RBI:**
  - To address the build-up of risks and institute safeguards to stave off stress in the banking system, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently **increased the risk weights** on the exposure of banks to consumer credit, credit card receivables and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) by 25 percentage points up to 150 per cent.
  - Housing loans, education loans, vehicle loans and loans secured by gold and gold jewellery are excluded from this hike.
  - **What is the Risk weight?**
    - Risk weight refers to the capital banks keep aside as provisioning to cover any loan defaults.

Source: TH

## Nirbhay Cruise Missile

Syllabus :GS 3/Defense

### In News

- India's defence forces will soon have long-range cruise **missiles of Nirbhay Class**.

### About Nirbhay

- It is a Long Range **Subsonic Cruise Missile** capable of deep penetration into adversary territory to strike high value targets with precision.
  - It is **India's first indigenously designed** and developed Long Range Subsonic Cruise Missile
- Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE) as the system designer and integrator led a consortium of DRDO laboratories for the indigenous design and development of Nirbhay.
- Presently, Nirbhay is launched from a mobile articulated launcher.
- It is being adopted for launch from **sea and air platforms**.
- India is in the list of select few countries having capability to design and develop this class of cruise missiles.

Source:[ET](#)

## Exercise Mitra Shakti

**Syllabus: GS3/Defence**

### In News

- The **ninth edition** Exercise MITRA SHAKTI-2023 has commenced.

### About

- It is an **annual joint military exercise** between **Srilanka and India**.
- The first edition of the Exercise was conducted in **2012**.
- India and Sri Lanka also conduct **Trilateral Maritime Exercise “Dosti”**, and a **Naval exercise named SLINEX**.

Source: PIB

## NISAR Satellite

**Syllabus :GS 3/S&T**

### In News

- Scientists and engineers involved in the **NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR)** mission have completed key tests ahead of its launch.

### About NISAR

- It is a **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)** observatory being jointly developed by **NASA** and **ISRO** with the goal to make global measurements of the causes and consequences of land surface changes using advanced radar imaging.
- It will measure **Earth’s changing ecosystems**, dynamic surfaces, and ice masses providing information about biomass, natural hazards, sea level rise, and groundwater, and will support a host of other applications.
- It will observe **Earth’s land and ice-covered surfaces** globally with 12-day regularity on ascending and descending passes, sampling Earth on average every 6 days for a baseline 3-year mission.
  - It carries **L and S dual band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR)**, which operates with Sweep SAR technique to achieve large swaths with high resolution data.
    - NISAR is the first satellite mission to collect radar data in two microwave bandwidth regions, called the L-band and the S-band
  - The SAR payloads mounted on Integrated Radar Instrument Structure (IRIS) and the spacecraft bus are together called an observatory.
- **Planned Launch Date:** 2024 and is expected to be launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota onboard ISRO’s GSLV Mark-II launch vehicle.

Source:[TH](#)