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# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS





## Daily Current Affairs from *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express* & *The Assam Tribune*

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### CONTENT LIST

#### GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

	Topics	Syllabus	Page No:
1	Private Members' Bills get short shrift in both LS and RS	Polity (TH)	1
2	Growing India-Gulf ties	International relations (AT)	6

#### GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

	Topics	Syllabus	Page No:
3	ISRO's docking mission on; spacecraft reach right orbit	Science & technology (TH)	1
4	Indians & the H-1B visa	Economy (IE)	18

#### GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

##### 1. Private Members' Bills get short shrift in both LS and RS

**Context:** During the five-year term of the 17th Lok Sabha that ended in 2024, only 9.08 hours were spent on Private Members' Bills, while the Rajya Sabha spent 27.01 hours on them during the period. The Lower House spent 16.43 hours and the Upper House 20.78 hours on Private Members' Resolution, whereas in the two sessions of the 18th Lok Sabha, 0.15 hours was spent on such Bills, while the Rajya Sabha spent 0.62 hours in this period. The resolutions are declarations on which the House votes, while the Bills refer to proposed legislation. These are the only instruments available for MPs' individual expression without being bound by their party's point of view.

#### Key points

- Overview:** Recently, Rajya Sabha reserved its decision to allow the introduction of a Private Member's Bill to amend the Preamble to the Constitution. The Bill seeks to change the words in the

Preamble “EQUALITY of status and of opportunity” to “EQUALITY of status and of opportunity to be born, to be fed, to be educated, to get a job and to be treated with dignity”.

- **Private Members Bill:** Any Member of Parliament (MP) who is not a minister is referred to as a private member. Its drafting is the responsibility of the member concerned. Its introduction in the House requires one month's notice. The government bills\public bills can be introduced and discussed on any day, private member's bills can be introduced and discussed only on Fridays.
  - In case of multiple Bills, a ballot system is used to decide the sequence of bills for introduction.
  - The Parliamentary Committee on Private Member's Bills and Resolutions goes through all such Bills and classifies them based on their urgency and importance.
- **Previous Private Bills:** The last time a private member's bill was passed by both Houses was in 1970. It was the Supreme Court (Enlargement of Criminal Appellate Jurisdiction) Bill, 1968. 14 private member's bills — five of which were introduced in Rajya Sabha — have become law so far. Some other private member bills that have become laws include-
  - Proceedings of Legislature (Protection of Publication) Bill, 1956, in the Lok Sabha.
  - The Salaries and Allowances of Members of Parliament (Amendment) Bill, 1964, introduced in the Lok Sabha.
  - The Indian Penal Code (Amendment) Bill, 1967 introduced in the Rajya Sabha.
- **Significance:** The purpose of the private member's bill is to draw the government's attention to what individual MPs see as issues and gaps in the existing legal framework, which require legislative intervention.

## GS 2: POLITY, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS/INSTITUTIONS

### 2. Growing India-Gulf ties

**Context:** Over the last ten years, Delhi's relationship with the Gulf has undergone a significant transformation, marking a diplomatic success for India. This region holds economic and strategic importance for India, and any strain in relations would have adverse ramifications. India has maintained socio-economic and cultural ties with the Arab world since time immemorial. India has always shared an excellent relationship with Gulf countries, particularly with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The primary driver of this relationship is the robust trade activity between India and the GCC, along with gains from personal remittances. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Kuwait marks his role in strengthening relations between the two countries.

#### India's Relations with the GCC

- **Gulf Cooperation Council:** GCC was established by an agreement concluded in 1981 among Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE in view of their special relations, geographic proximity, similar political systems based on Islamic beliefs, joint destiny and common objectives. The structure of the GCC consists of the Supreme Council (the highest authority), the Ministerial Council and the Secretariat General. The Secretariat is in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- **Political:** The governments of the GCC members are India-friendly and Indian-friendly. In the recent past, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have not adopted hostile posture to India's domestic developments such as removing the special status for Jammu & Kashmir under Article 370.
- **Economic:** The GCC states are among India's key suppliers of energy, and annual remittances from Indians in these countries are worth an estimated USD 4.8 billion. The United Arab Emirates (UAE)

and Saudi Arabia are India's third and fourth-largest trading partners respectively and the total bilateral trade of the GCC countries with India for the year 2018-19 stood at USD 121.34 billion.

- **Security:** Both India and the GCC are members of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Apart from the participation of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and others in India's mega multilateral Milan Exercise, India also has bilateral exercises with most of them.

#### Key points

- **Indian Workers Want to Return to Arab Countries:** India has asked the members of the GCC to facilitate the return of Indians who want to resume work with the relaxing of Covid-19-related restrictions. This can happen through sustainable travel bubble arrangements.
  - **'Transport Bubbles' or 'Air Travel Arrangements'** are temporary arrangements between two countries aimed at restarting commercial passenger services when regular international flights are suspended because of the Covid-19 pandemic. They are reciprocal in nature, meaning airlines from both countries enjoy similar benefits.
- **Cooperation:** Both sides affirmed their commitment to reform multilateral institutions to reflect the realities of the 21st century and work together to address contemporary challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, sustainable development and terrorism.
- **Importance of Gulf Region for India:** India's priorities include attracting investments to increase economic growth, addressing regional security concerns (including in the Arabian Sea and the Gulf), and enhancing its regional presence and influence.
  - **Energy Security** - The Gulf countries are major suppliers of crude oil and natural gas to India. India is highly dependent on Gulf oil for its energy needs, making the region crucial for India's energy security.
  - **Remittance** - Remittances from Indian expatriates working in the Gulf contribute significantly to India's economy. Remittance is the non-commercial transfer of money by an individual to his/her home country or family.
- **Challenges Ahead:** The outbreak of the Hamas-Israel war and shipping attacks in the Red Sea directly impact India's energy security and economic growth. The war has also impacted the I2U2 minilateral group, through the continued postponement of a senior-officials meeting since 2023.
- **Way Forward:** Growing security challenges are sharpening the need for India to become a key 'strategic partner' of the Gulf states and to enlarge its regional presence and influence. Increased strategic convergence spanning political, economic and security interests has resulted in a new framework for India-Gulf relations, which, if successfully maintained, will enhance trust levels and enable cooperation to become more ambitious in scope.

#### GS 3: ECONOMY, ECOLOGY, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, DEFENCE, SECURITY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

##### 3. ISRO's docking mission on; spacecraft reach right orbit

**Context:** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) mission on Monday. The PSLV C60 rocket carrying two small satellites, SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target), along with 24 payloads, lifted off from the first launchpad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota at 10 p.m. With the SpaDeX mission, the ISRO aims at exhibiting technologies needed for spacecraft rendezvous, docking, and undocking using two small satellites which have been mastered by only an elite group of spacefaring nations. The demonstration of this technology is

essential for futuristic missions, including sending an Indian astronaut to the moon, sample return from the moon, and the building and operation of an Indian space station.

### SpaDeX Mission

- **About:** SpaDeX (Space Docking Experiment) is a technology demonstrator mission developed by the ISRO to showcase in-space docking technology. This mission aims to demonstrate the ability to rendezvous, dock, and undock two small spacecraft, marking a significant advancement in India's space capabilities. The mission Duration is of two years
- **Objective:** The primary goal of SpaDeX is to develop docking technologies for two small spacecraft, SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target), in low Earth orbit.
  - They will dock autonomously using advanced sensors and propulsion systems.
  - Secondary objectives include testing electric power transfer and demonstrating spacecraft control.
- **Mission Design:** SpaDeX will deploy two satellites, SDX01 and SDX02, into a 470 km orbit using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) rocket, where they drift apart and gradually approach each other, eventually docking at distances from 20 km to 3 meters.
  - The two satellites are equipped with the Bharatiya Docking System (BDS).
  - SpaDeX is using PSLV's fourth stage, POEM (PSLV Orbital Experimental Module)-4, to carry 24 payloads from academic institutions and startups. These experiments will leverage the microgravity environment in orbit.
- **Docking Challenge:** The two satellites (Chaser and Target) will orbit at speeds of 28,800 km/h. They will need to carefully reduce their relative velocity to just 0.036 km/h before docking.

### Key points

- **Overview:** Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has achieved a significant milestone with the launch of the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) mission on 30th December 2024. The mission aims to demonstrate satellite docking capabilities, a crucial technology for future space missions.
- **Space Docking:** Space docking is the intricate process of manoeuvring two fast-moving spacecraft into the same orbit, bringing them closer, and joining them to form a single unit. This capability is pivotal for assembling large structures or transferring equipment, crew, or supplies in space.
- **Importance of space docking for India:**
  - Modular Space Infrastructure* - Docking is a prerequisite for constructing multi-modular space stations. It allows the assembly of structures in space, reducing the size and weight constraints of single-launch missions.
  - Interplanetary and Lunar Missions* - Docking supports orbital refuelling, and payload exchange, enhancing mission flexibility for lunar bases and Mars exploration.
  - Human Spaceflight Program* - Space Docking is critical for crew transfers and emergency evacuations during long-duration missions like Gaganyaan and beyond.
  - Global Collaboration and Market Potential* - SpaDeX could position India as the fourth nation, after Russia, the US, and China, to master space docking, strengthening its presence in satellite servicing and enabling advanced international collaborations.
  - Satellite Servicing* - Docking allows for repairing, refuelling, and upgrading satellites, enhancing their operational life and performance.

#### **4. Indians & the H-1B visa**

**Context:** Immigration is one of the most polarising political issues in the US. According to a YouGov poll from October. The H-1B visa program allows American employers to hire immigrant workers in occupations that require a high level of skill and at least a bachelor's degree, according to the US Department of Labour. An H-1B can be issued for a maximum of six years at a stretch, after which the visa holder must either leave the US for a period of at least 12 months before returning or apply for and receive permanent residency (Green Card). Currently, there is an annual limit of 65,000 new visas under this program each fiscal year, an extra 20,000 visas will be available to those with a master's degree from a higher US university.

#### **Key points**

- **Overview:** People born in India are the largest beneficiaries of the H-1B program. Data from the US government show that Indians account for more than 70% of all H-1B petitions approved since 2015.
- **Recent data:** According to a data from Centre for Security & Emerging Technologies (CSET) in 2020 India (2.55 million) and China (3.57 million) had the highest number of STEM graduates in the world, significantly more than the US.
- **Implications for India:** The two major H-1B beneficiary groups are-
  - Indian employees that work for the big IT majors in the US.
  - Indian students who obtain a US Master's/Ph.D. degree and then apply for H-1B visas at US-based companies.
- **H1-B visa programme Bill:** The Bill encourages companies to recruit American workers. It explicitly prohibits replacement of American workers by H1-B or L-1 visa holders. The Bill seeks to increase the minimum salary of H1-B visa holders from \$60,000 to \$1,00,000 per annum. It also prohibits companies from hiring H1-B employees if they employ more than 50 people and more than 50 per cent of their employees are H1-B and L-1 visa holders.
- **Donald Trump's stand:** Reshaping immigration is a central tenet of President-elect Donald Trump's push for companies to invest and hire more in the U.S. He promised to end the misuse of visa programmes by companies to undercut American workers, referring to an incident that involved Indian companies and IT professionals on H1-B visas.
- **Effect on Indian companies:** If the reform goes through, the resultant increase in employee wages will be a cost worry for the IT industry. Indian IT stocks today fell by as much as 4 per cent after the re-introduction of the bill. The top four companies — TCS, Infosys, Wipro and HCL Tech — together lost over Rs 22,000 crore in market valuation.
- **Effect on American Economy:** Indians with H1B and L-1 visas contribute USD 1 billion annually to the US. A stricter immigration law towards H1B visas is likely to hurt the American economy, as the people working with foreign IT companies in the US holding H1B visas are adding value to American companies.

#### **NASA'S PARKER SOLAR PROBE**

NASA's Parker Solar Probe recently set a historic record by flying closer to the Sun than any other man-made object, reaching speeds of 430,000 mph and withstanding temperatures up to 982°C. Launched in 2018, a car-sized robotic spacecraft, is named after American solar astrophysicist Eugene Newman Parker. The Parker Solar Probe aims to approach within 6.5 million kilometers of the Sun to study energy flow, solar corona heating.