

Last week, the U.S. shot down a Chinese 'spy' balloon, days after the surveillance device was first spotted over American airspace. Spy balloons are high-altitude surveillance tools that usually operate at 80,000-1,20,000 feet — well above the cruising altitude of commercial aircraft — to gather intelligence and carry out other military missions. Taiwan has accused the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) of using spy balloons in the past. A similar sighting was reported over Andaman and Nicobar Islands in January last year.

There is no proposal to bring in reservations for transgender persons in education or employment, Minister of State for Social Justice A. Narayanaswamy said in response to a question in the Lok Sabha. Mr. Narayanaswamy said the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment had no information on the number of transgender people employed in the government and the private sector, adding that so far, just 10,635 people had registered on the National Portal for Transgender Persons.

Under fire from the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) over complaints about the lack of mental health support on the campus for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes students, the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay has said that it is now hiring one permanent student counsellor for them.

India's decision to send rescue teams to help with earthquake relief is timely and a sign of "true friendship," said envoys from Turkey and Syria. "The first 24-48 hours after a disaster of these proportions are the most critical, as there is hope that we can search and rescue the maximum number of those trapped in the rubble," Turkish Ambassador Firat Sunel told.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday declined to entertain petitions challenging the appointment of advocate Victoria Gowri as an Additional Judge of the Madras High Court even as the lawyer took oath of office in a ceremony held almost simultaneously with the top court's hearing. "We have a robust scrutiny process. Let us not interfere with that... Assuming that the collegium did not take everything into account may not be proper... We cannot go into the question of her suitability. We cannot direct the collegium to reconsider.

The existing income limit for determining the non-creamy layer among Other Backward Classes (OBC) "is considered sufficient" and hence there is no proposal currently under the Union government's consideration to revise the said income limit, the Social Justice Ministry said in Parliament on Tuesday. Currently, an annual income of both parents of ₹8 lakh or more excludes OBCs from availing themselves of reservation, putting them in the creamy layer category, leaving benefits only for those earning less than that.

The Supreme Court said there may be "gross encroachers" on railway land at Haldwani in Nainital and "some people will have to go out." "Problem here is

PM ROLLS OUT E20 FUEL AT INDIA ENERGY WEEK (IEW) 2023

1. E20 fuel, a blend of 20% ethanol and 80% petrol, was launched 2 year ahead of target and will be rolled out across country in a phased manner. IEW, under Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, aims to showcase India's rising prowess as an energy transition powerhouse.
2. An ethanol blend is a blended motor fuel containing ethyl alcohol that is at least 99% pure, derived from agricultural products, and blended exclusively with gasoline. Apart from sugarcane-based raw materials, ethanol production from surplus rice with Food Corporation of India and Maize is also allowed.
3. Government has been implementing Ethanol Blended Petrol Programme wherein OMCs sell petrol blended with ethanol up to 10%. Target of achieving average 10% blending was achieved in June, 2022 and target of 20% ethanol blending was advanced to 2025 (from 2030).
4. **Significance**-Less polluting fuel and offers equivalent efficiency at lower cost than petrol. Achieving energy security, lowering crude oil import bill and transitioning to a low carbon economy. Enable local enterprises and farmers to participate in energy economy.

PM LAID FOUNDATION STONE OF SOUTH INDIA'S 1ST INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR PROJECT

1. Project will be implemented at Tumakuru (Karnataka) as part of National Industrial Corridor programme (NICP). Krishnapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), Tumakuru, and Ponneri (Tamil Nadu) has been identified as priority nodes under NICP's Chennai Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC). NICP aims to promote world class manufacturing facilities and develop futuristic industrial cities in India.
2. Broad objective is to provide plug and play infrastructural facilities for setting up large scale manufacturing units. Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor was the first corridor taken up for development in 2011. Subsequently, Amritsar- Kolkata, CBIC, Vizag-Chennai, East Coast etc. were added.
3. **Need for industrial corridors**-To foster global manufacturing, investment destination hubs and smart cities with best in-class infrastructure. To unleash manufacturing potential in the country and raising its contribution to GDP by creating quality infrastructure ahead of demand. To expand industrial output, increasing employment opportunities, provide better living and social facilities for workforce.
4. **Important features of NICP**-Land parcels are developed for immediate allotment to manufacturing units. Statutory clearances including environment clearance are being taken beforehand. National Industrial Corridor Development & Implementation Trust (NICDIT) for unified development.

POWERFUL EARTHQUAKES IN TURKEY AND SYRIA LEAVE OVER 6,000 DEAD

1. Hit initially by a magnitude 7.8 earthquake, dozens of aftershocks followed the initial quake. Magnitude is related to amount of seismic energy released at hypocenter of earthquake. Richter Scale, Moment Magnitude scale etc are used to measure magnitude.
2. Region where earthquake has struck lies along a seismic fault line called Anatolia tectonic block that runs through northern, central, and eastern Turkey. Seismicity in this region is a result of interactions between African, Eurasian, and Arabian plates.
3. Arabian plate is known to be pushing northward, which results in a slight westward movement for Anatolian plate, where Turkey is located. One of the largest strike-slip earthquakes to occur in recent times, it struck along East Anatolian Fault Zone.
4. Strike-slip faults are vertical (or nearly vertical) fractures where blocks have mostly moved horizontally. In these faults, two plates move parallel but in opposite direction from one another.
5. Turkey bridges continents of Europe (via. Eastern Thrace) and Asia (via. Anatolian Plateau); divided by Dardanelles, Sea of Marmara, and Bosphorus Strait. It is surrounded by Bulgaria and Greece in Northwest; Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Iran to east; and Syria and Iraq to South.

50 YEARS OF INDIA-SOUTH KOREA DIPLOMATIC TIES

1. Relations started with bilateral consular relations in 1962. In 1973, it was upgraded to diplomatic-ties (Ambassador-level).
2. **Key areas of engagement**-Both signed Strategic Partnership in 2010 which was upgraded to 'special strategic partnership' in 2015 and defence cooperation lies at heart of this partnership.
3. **Economic**-Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), operationalized on 1st January 2010. Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation Agreement in 2011. In 2022, trade between two nations

there may be people who may be gross encroachers, some people with a semblance of titles, people living on the railway line.” a Bench led by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul said. The court was hearing pleas challenging an Uttarakhand HC order to evict poor families whose tenements straddle over 29 acres of land said to belong to the Indian Railways at Haldwani.

25 percentage by which shares in the flagship firm of Adani rocketed on Tuesday, clawing back some of its recent huge losses, after saying it would repay more than \$1 billion in loans. The group owned by Gautam Adani lost around \$120 billion in value after claims of accounting fraud were levelled by U.S. short seller investment firm Hindenburg Research.

\$ 3.5 billion, the amount Oil and Natural Gas Corp will invest over the next three-four years to boost output from its western offshore assets. The company will start producing oil from its ultra-deepwater block in the eastern offshore Krishna-Godavari basin from May this year. India wants companies to monetise their oil reserves to cut its import bill.

174.53 gigawatt, the non-fossil fuel power generation capacity of India at the end of 2022. The capacity includes 63.30 GW solar power, 46.85 GW large hydro, 41.93 GW wind power, 10.73 GW biopower, 4.94 GW small hydro power and 6.78 GW of nuclear power. Total power generation capacity was at 410 GW at the end of 2022.

₹859 crore, the worth of crime proceeds attached by the Directorate of Enforcement in illegal loan app cases. Over the last year, agencies found a number of loan apps which were found to be indulging in predatory lending as well as charging of high interest rates. Harassment of users over repayment has led to reported incidents of suicides.

The Union Budget for 2023-24 came with a reduction of 38% in funds for the Ministry of Minority Affairs. The worst affected scheme under the all encompassing fund crunch was the Education Scheme for Madrasas which suffered a whopping 93% cut in allocation, down to ₹10 crore from the ₹160 crore in the previous financial year. Another scheme which suffered the most was the Skill Development Initiative among minorities. It received ₹235 crore in 2022-23 but is now down to merely ₹10 lakh.

reached an all-time high at USD 27.8 bn. Target is to reach USD 50 bn by 2030. Also launched 'Korea Plus' initiative to promote and facilitate Korean Investments in India.

4. **Cultural**-Sharing Kinship and Buddhist Connection According to "SamgukYusa" written in 13th century, a Princess from Ayodhya married King Kim-Suro of Gaya Confederacy, Korea and became Queen Hur(Heo) Hwang-ok in 48 AD.
5. **Others**-1st 2+2 dialogue at Secretary/Vice Minister of Foreign Office and Defence Ministry between two nations was held in 2021; synergising India's 'Act East Policy' with South Korea's 'New Southern Policy'.

GOVERNMENT SETS UP PANEL ON DIGITAL COMPETITION LAW FOR REGULATIONS

1. Panel will be chaired by Secretary of Ministry of Corporate Affairs and will examine various regulatory aspects in dealing with challenges emerging from digital economy. Digital economy refers to a broad range of economic activities that use digitized information and knowledge as key factors of production.
2. India's consumer Digital Economy is expected to reach US\$1 trillion market by 2030, from \$537.5 billion in 2020. Panel will also examine need for an ex-ante regulatory mechanism for digital markets through a separate legislation. Ex-Ante regulation aims at identifying issues in market beforehand. Currently, Competition Act, 2002 regulates practices having adverse impact on competition.
3. Earlier, a Parliamentary Standing Committee report also discussed several types of anti-competitive practices (refer image) by Big Tech companies (such as Google, Apple) and recommended suggestions such as: Frame a definition for systemically important digital intermediaries (SIDIs) to counter monopoly.
4. Separate Digital Competition Act to ensure a fair, transparent and contestable digital ecosystem. Specialized digital markets unit within Competition Commission of India to closely monitor SIDIs. Strict regulation on data usage for advertising and curbs on deep discounting, bundling/tying of services.

TRADE AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL(TTC)

1. **Strengthening India-EU** relationship as strategic partners, three working groups are formed under India-EU TTC on: Strategic Technologies, Digital Governance and Digital Connectivity. Green and Clean Energy Technologies. Trade, Investment and Resilient Value Chains.
2. TTC is a strategic coordination mechanism to allow both partners to tackle challenges at nexus of trade, trusted technology, and security; deepening India-EU bilateral relationship in these fields. It is the first such mechanism for India and second for EU, after US-EU TTC. India-EU TTC was launched in April 2022.

REMISSION

1. Supreme Court has turned down Uttar Pradesh government plea to not bind the governor with a deadline of three months to decide on remission pleas of convicts serving life term. The state has 2,248 cases of remission pending.
2. Remission refers to reduction of the sentence of a person without changing the character of the sentence.
3. Article 161 empowers the Governor to grant remissions of punishment of any person convicted of any offense against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the State extends.



**“Failure is not the absence of success.
It is the absence of craving.”**

DR. KHAN
(KSG)