

After months of political debate, the German government announced on January 25 that it would send Leopard 2 main battle tanks (MBTs) to Ukraine. In 1971, with the adoption of 'Ostpolitik' by West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, significant economic interaction began. As a result of this policy, Germany signed an agreement and started importing Russian natural gas for the first time. The energy relationship went hand-in-hand with the political relationship. Regardless of Russia's actions in the past, the German political establishment continued enhancing Germany's energy reliance on Russia.

3 million number of people in India at risk of flooding caused by glacial lakes, the highest number of those exposed, according to a study by Newcastle University. This is the first global assessment of areas and people at greatest risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF). The study estimates 15 million people to be at risk from flooding caused by glacial lakes.

50,000 no of users for the recently launched retail central bank digital currency (CBDC) pilot, according to the Reserve Bank of India. The pilot project started on December 1 has witnessed 7.70 lakh transactions, and is now being carried out in five cities, Deputy Governor T. Rabi Sankar said.

The death toll from a massive earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria rose above 11,700 on Wednesday as rescuers raced to save survivors trapped under debris in the winter cold. Officials and medics said 9,057 people had died in Turkey and 2,662 in Syria from Monday's 7.8-magnitude tremor, bringing the total to 11,719. For two days and nights since the quake, thousands of searchers have worked in freezing temperatures to find those still alive under flattened buildings on either side of the border. Turkish Red Crescent chief Kerem Kinik had warned that the first 72 hours were critical in search and rescue efforts but pointed to complications of "severe weather conditions".

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday raised the benchmark lending rate by 25 basis points (bps) to 6.5% as the RBI targets persistently high core or underlying inflation that it sees as a risk to the improving outlook for the economy. Observing that the rate increases since May were still working their way through the system, Governor Shaktikanta Das said, "The MPC was of the view that further calibrated monetary policy action is warranted to keep inflation expectations anchored, break the persistence of core inflation and thereby strengthen the medium-term growth prospects."

YEAR 2023 MARKS 50 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND QATAR

1. India is strengthening its bilateral relations with Qatar. Diplomatic relations between both countries were established in 1973.
2. **Key areas of engagement Economic:** India's bilateral trade with Qatar in 2021-22 was US\$ 15.03 billion. Qatar's exports to India include LNG, LPG, chemicals and petrochemicals, fertilisers, plastics etc. India's exports to Qatar include cereals, copper articles, iron and steel articles, fruits, spices etc. India-Qatar Start-up bridge is a joint initiative to link the start-up ecosystems of two countries as well as helping their economies mutually.
3. **Defense:** India regularly participates in biennial Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX) in Qatar. Za'ir-Al-Bahr (Roar of Sea) is naval exercise between Indian and Qatar Navy.
4. **Diaspora:** Over 8 lakhs Indian nationals residing in Qatar. They comprise largest expatriate community in Qatar and are engaged in professions like medicine, engineering etc.
5. **Humanitarian:** Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) sent Covid medical relief material to India for combating second wave of Covid-19. Education: 14 Indian schools in Qatar are offering CBSE curricula to over 30,000 students, most of whom are children of Indian nationals working in Qatar.

INDIAN SPACE RESEARCH ORGANISATION (ISRO) FINALISED CHANDRAYAAN-3 LANDING SITES COORDINATES

1. All the probable three landing sites are on moon's south polar region on the side facing earth. Landing sites are decided on basis of local and global slope, illumination from sun, radio communication with earth, and crater and boulder sizes. Prime landing site lies between Manzius U and Boguslawsky M craters (southern pole region) on moon.
2. Chandrayaan-3 is a follow-on mission to Chandrayaan-2. Its primary objective is putting a lander and rover in highlands near south pole of Moon in 2023. It consists of Lander and Rover configuration.
3. **Lander:** Chandra's Surface Thermophysical Experiment measure thermal conductivity and temperature; Instrument for Lunar Seismic Activity measures seismicity around landing site; Langmuir Probe estimates plasma density and its variations.
4. **Rover:** Alpha Particle X-ray Spectrometer (APXS) and Laser Induced Breakdown Spectroscopy (LIBS) for deriving elemental composition in vicinity of landing site. It will be launched by Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) Mk III from Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh. GSLV is a 3-stage rocket, powered by a cryogenic engine.

NITI AAYOG PROPOSES SETTING UP SEPARATE CENTRAL BOARD FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (VE)

1. NITI Aayog's report titled "Transforming Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)" had recommended to set up separate board for VE on lines of an education board such as Central Board of Secondary Education. It will ensure better credibility and recognition of institutes providing VE.
2. Credit framework implemented through Board will facilitate equivalence and mobility between general and VE and enable lifelong learning. VE refers to training in skills and teaching of knowledge related to a specific trade, occupation, or vocation.
3. Need/Significance of VE-Makes students "work ready" upon graduation by providing practical education in professional environment. Helps people move forward in their careers. Programs are often shorter and more flexible than college or university programs.
4. **Issues with VE:** Shortage of trainers, absence of qualified trainers, poor infrastructure at training institutes, inflexible and partly obsolete curricula etc.
5. **Other recommendations highlighted by report-**Centralized, web-enabled admission process for filling vacancies of ITIs at pan India level. Online grievance redressal mechanism to ensure transparency and accountability for resolution of issues in timely manner. Facilitate Tie-ups with MSMEs.

MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (MHA) CHAIRED PARLIAMENTARY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING ON LEFT WING EXTREMISM (LWE)

1. MHA highlighted that its policy to deal with LWE has three main pillars which are, Strategy to curb extremists' violence with Ruthless Approach. Better coordination between Centre and States. Eliminating support for LWE through Public participation in development.

1,087 million tonnes (MT), the estimated demand for coal in the ongoing financial year 2022-23, the Lok Sabha was informed. As against the increased coal demand, domestic production of the fossil fuel has also increased, the Coal Minister added. The demand for coal increased to 1,027.92 MT in FY22 from 906.13 MT in FY21.

86,713 number of startups recognised by the government as of December 31, 2022, the Minister of State for Commerce, and Industry Som Parkash informed Parliament. These startups are eligible to avail fiscal incentives under the Startup India action plan.

In the Union Budget for 2023-24, the government has set a disinvestment target of ₹51,000 crore, down nearly 21% from the budget estimate for the current year and just ₹1,000 crore more than the revised estimate. Disinvestment or divestment, in this context, is when the government sells its assets or a subsidiary, such as a Central or State public sector enterprise. Minority disinvestment, majority disinvestment, and complete privatisation are the three main approaches to disinvestment. The Centre is not going to add new companies to the list of CPSEs to be divested in 2023-24 and the aspirational divestments of two public sector banks and one general insurance firm, announced in the Budget two years ago, will also not be a part of the plan.

India's connectivity projects with Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar have been accelerated due to its "obvious" concerns about the frontier with China, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Tuesday. He cited a number of infrastructure projects along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), and border connectivity efforts with "friendly neighbours", including all nations which share land borders with India, except Pakistan.

2. This strategy had catalysed in curbing LWE in past eight years such as: Number of civilian and security personnel killed in LWE incidents declined to 98 in 2022. 76% reduction in violent incidents related to LWE is observed in 2022 in comparison to 2010.
3. Number of districts most affected by LWE has reduced to 30 in 2018 and further reduced to 25 since 2021. LWE, popularly known as Maoists worldwide and as Naxalism in India, started as an agrarian rebellion in Naxalbari (West Bengal), 1967 against local landlords. Maoist ideology believes in use of violence and armed insurrection as a means to capture State power.
4. **Initiatives for LWE affected areas**-SAMADHAN strategy to frame short and long-term policies to tackle LWE. Eklavya Model Residential Schools to promote literacy among tribals. Security Related Expenditure Scheme and Special Infrastructure Scheme for State Police.

ROLE OF STATES/UTS IN ACHIEVING NET ZERO

1. Idea has been mooted to set up India's Intranational COP (India Cop), forum similar to GST council, to generate national consensus on India's climate goals and means to achieve them. It can promote spirit of cooperative and competitive federalism with each state/UT committing bolder actions towards net zero. Net zero refers to a state in which greenhouse gases going into atmosphere are balanced by removal out of atmosphere. India aims to achieve net zero emissions by 2070.
2. **Importance of states/UTs in achieving net zero**-Though a project is conceived, financed, and implemented by central agencies, site-specific mobilisation of resources requires active cooperation of states/UTs. Constitutional provisions, legislations of Parliament, etc. enable states/UTs to have a influence on matters like land, electricity, pollution control etc. Directly support local bodies in innovating customised approaches for adoption of climate goals in line with socioeconomic and cultural sensitivities of region.
3. **Challenges faced by state/UTs**- Lack of climate finance along with limited scientific knowledge, technical and institutional capacity constraints. Absence of concrete strategies.
4. Road ahead-Fast-track implementation of climate related actions as part of development planning at sub-national level. Develop reliable downscaled climate models to predict district and block-specific climate impacts across country.

INTERNATIONAL ENERGY FORUM(IEF)

1. India hosted 9th Asian Ministerial Energy Roundtable in association with IEF in Bengaluru. Theme for this roundtable was "Mapping new pathways for energy security, inclusive growth and energy transitions."
2. IEF is world's largest international organization of energy ministers from 72 countries (including India) and includes both producing and consuming nations. Member countries are signatories to IEF Charter, which outlines framework of global energy dialogue through this inter-governmental organization. HQ: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.



“All the cars get the same fuel. It is not the fuel but the engine that processes the fuel matters.”

DR. KHAN
(KSG)