

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 2 2

**MONTHLY UPDATES ON
CURRENT AFFAIRS**

WILEY

NATIONAL

- On February 24, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a military operation in Ukraine, which was termed as “full-scale invasion” by Ukrainian foreign minister. US President Joe Biden called this move of Russia “an unprovoked and unjustified attack”. The US & its allies have been responding to Russian invasion by imposing sanctions on Russia.

Impact on Global Markets:

- Global markets also reacted in kind to ‘demilitarisation and denazification’ of Ukraine.
- Major indices are trading in a deep sea of red.
- Gold hit the highest since early 2021.

Impact on Energy:

As a result of invasion, Crude oil prices have increased to 7-year high. Brent oil prices increased above USD 100 a barrel for the first time since 2014. Russia is a key supplier of energy, worldwide. Europe relies on Russia for about quarter of its oil supplies as well as third of its gas. According to JPMorgan Chase & Co, oil prices are likely to average USD 110 a barrel in second quarter because of Russia-Ukraine crisis. China is the largest single customer for Russia’s oil exports. While Asia and Oceania accounts for 42% of total crude oil of Russia. In 2020, China was the largest importing country of Russia’s crude oil and condensate, at 31%. It is likely that, oil would come to market, but due to geopolitical risks will keep the prices at high levels.

Impact on India:

According to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Russia-Ukraine tension and increase in crude oil prices pose risk to financial stability in India. India accounts for less than 1% share of Russia’s crude oil exports. This is because most Indian refineries cannot process heavy crudes that Russia exports. Higher crude oil prices will result into higher CPI inflation for longer. Furthermore, as European Union is the biggest market for India’s exports, there will be supply disruptions there and a greater demand for steel, engineering goods, etc. for which India is an alternate supplier.

- The Government of India is planning to sell 5% of its share in LIC. LIC is Life Insurance Corporation. With this, the government is trying to raise Rs 65,000 crores. 10% of the shares are being reserved for eligible policy holders. These shares will carry discounted prices. The plan is to sell 316.25 million shares. This is 5% of the total equity base. The total equity base of LIC is 6.32 billion shares. The pricing of IPO, Initial Public Offering, has not yet been decided. 35% of the shares are to be reserved for retail investors. Discounts are to be provided to LIC employees.

- Union Minister of Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, recently flagged off the first direct flight between Delhi and heritage city of Khajuraho. With the start of this flight, a total of 405 routes would be operationalized under UDAN-RCS scheme. Under the RCS-UDAN 3.0, SpiceJet was awarded with the Delhi-Khajuraho-Delhi route. SpiceJet will operate flights on 2 days of the week namely Friday and Sunday. It will deploy its Q400, 78-seater turboprop aircraft, that has been designed for shorter distance flights on this route. SpiceJet is largest regional carrier and strongest supporter of the scheme.

- The government recently approved the sale of loss-making Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd (NINL) to Tata Steel Long Products Ltd. NINL will be sold to Tata Steel for Rs 12,100 crore. This is first case of privatisation of a public sector steel manufacturing enterprise in country.

- Recently scientists found that the highest glacier on the world’s highest peak, Mount Everest is melting at a faster rate. It is the South Col glacier and the glacier has lost 54 metres of thickness in the last 25 years. The South Col glacier is located at a height of 7,906 metres. The glacier is thinning rapidly. The major climatic factors that are inducing the glacier melting are strong winds and warming temperatures. Between 1990 and 2020, the ice that took 2000 years to form had melted away. The snow pack on the glacier has been eroded. This has exposed the underlying black ice in some areas. This is accelerating the melting. Black ice is the coating over the surface of the mountain. If black ice melts, the mountain is exposed to the sun. The mountain retains more heat for longer duration as compared to that of ice. This will accelerate the melting further. The region’s climate is intact. There are no changes in the climatic conditions of the region. The melting

is due to increase in global temperature. The snow packs in the mountain are all gone. They are now replaced predominantly by ice.

ECONOMY

On February 1, 2022, the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman presented the Union budget 2022-23. The budget focuses on macro economic growth, energy transition, promoting digital economy, climate action, tech enabled development, crowding in private investment.

Below are the highlights of the budget.

- Digital Rupee is to be issued using block chain technologies
 - Issuance of E – Passports
 - National Tele Mental Health programme is to be launched
 - Zero Fossil Fuel policy to be introduced
 - Special Economic Zones Act to be replaced with a new act
 - Sovereign green bonds are to be issued
 - India growth: Estimated at 9.2%
 - Scheme for oil seeds is to be launched to increase domestic oil production and reduce imports.
 - PM Gati Shakti (Rs 20,000 crores): The PM Gati Shakti Master plan is to be expanded to 25,000 km. 100 PM Gati Shakti Cargo terminals are to be developed in next three years.
 - Loans for states: The states are to be provided with Rs 1 lakh crores of financial assistance. These are interest free loans. The states can use this for PM Gati Shakti related investments and other productive investments.
 - Multi modal logistics parks: To be opened in four locations through PPP model.
 - PM eVIDYA: It is One class One TV channel programme. It is to be expanded from 12 to 200 TV channels. This is to educate in regional languages from Class 1 to Class 12.
 - For MSP (Rs 2.37 lakh crores): The minister has allocated Rs 2.37 lakh crores for direct payment of minimum support price. Procurement of wheat in 2021-22 was 1208 lakh tonnes and procurement of paddy was 163 lakh tonnes.
 - PLI: Rs 19,500 allocated for PLI for manufacturing of high – energy efficiency module. This is to help India achieve its solar energy target of 280 GW by 2030.
 - Railways: 400 new Vande Bharat trains are to be launched.
 - Credit guarantee: CGTMSE: Credit Guarantee Trust for Micro and Small enterprises is to be revamped. Additional credit of Rs 2 lakh crores. Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme is extended till March 2023.
 - Housing: PM Awas Yojana: 60,000 houses to be identified as beneficiaries and Rs 48,000 crores allocated.
 - Financial Inclusion: 1.5 lakh post offices will come on core banking system.
 - Ken Betwa Linking Project: Rs 1,400 crores allocated. The total cost of the project is estimated to be Rs 44,605 crores. This is to benefit 9 hectare farmland, supply drinking water to 62 lakh people, generate 103 MW of hydro power and 27 MW of solar power.
 - Tax: The central and state government employees' tax deduction limit is to be increased from 10% to 14%. This will help the social security benefits. The transfer of virtual digital asset shall be taxed at 30%. Corporate surcharge reduced from 12% to 7%. Customs duty on diamonds reduced to 5%. Long Term Capital Gains to be taxed at 15%.
- The Reserve Bank of India has amended the Payments and Settlement Systems Regulations. This system allows the companies who are seeking to run payment businesses to apply for licenses from the regulator. The application for licensing should include the technology platform which is to be used, the operator's process flow, interoperability with operators of the other payment systems, and security features. As per the rules that have been set, the operators will be required to submit all documents and information which are desired by the RBI from time to time.
- On February 25, 2022, the Union Bank of India (UBI) launched "Union MSME RuPay Credit Card" in association with National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). The "Union MSME RuPay Credit Card" was launched to meet business related operational expenses of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).



The Card comes with interest free credit up to 50 days. Dedicated card for MSMEs is available to eligible borrowers of Union Bank of India. It also offers EMI facility for the customers on their business-related purchases. On this card, MSMEs will get specially curated business services. It will help MSMEs in taking their business on most of the digital platforms.

- ⊙ The United States and the European Union (EU) have decided to cut off a number of Russian banks from SWIFT, the main international payment system. Russia's central bank assets will also be frozen, which will limit Moscow's ability to access its foreign reserves. This move's intention is to further isolate Russia from the international financial system keeping in view the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- ⊙ On February 24, 2022, Global banking group Standard Chartered announced its partnership with International Air Transport Association (IATA) to launch a payment platform for airline industry in India. In addition to existing payment options like credit cards, IATA Pay will be a new payment option that will enable participating airlines to offer instant payment options like UPI Collect (Request to Pay), UPI Scan and Pay. This service is already available in several European markets.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

- ⊙ On February 27, 2022, China launched a Long March-8 rocket to place 22 satellites in space. With the launch, China set a domestic record for the most spacecraft launched by a single rocket. The rocket blasted off at the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site in southern Hainan Province. It sent the satellites into pre-set orbits. It marked the 409th flight of Long March

carrier rockets. These satellites will be used for commercial remote sensing services, forest fire prevention, marine environment monitoring, and disaster mitigation.

- ⊙ On February 22, 2022, President Ram Nath Kovind will inaugurate the 'Vigyan Sarvatra Pujyate programme' in virtual mode. Vigyan Sarvatra Pujyate is a week-long, nationwide programme of competitions and lectures for school students and collegians. To organise this programme, Union Ministry of Science and Technology has selected three institutions in Madhya Pradesh.

SPORTS

- ⊙ In the 58th Senior National Chess Championship, that started on February 25, 2022, Grandmaster B Adhiban heads a star-studded field. It includes 23 GMs and 30 International Masters. Former champion Adhiban of Petroleum Sports Promotion Board was given the top billing. He is expected to face stiff challenge from likes of fast-rising Arjun Erigaisi, by defending camp Aravindh Chithambaram, S P Sethuraman, Karthikeyan Murali, and M R Lalith Babu. This is the first time that 23 GMs and 30 IMs are taking part in national championship.
- ⊙ ICC U-19 World Cup final 2022, India cruised to a four-wicket victory against England, at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua, on February 5, 2022. The win was also a record-extending fifth U-19 title for India. ICC U-19 Indian team chased down a target of 190 runs in 47.4 overs and reached 195 for six.
 - Nishant Sindhu played an unbeaten match-winning knock of 50 runs on 54 balls to help India win the match.
 - Shaik Rasheed also played a crucial knock, hitting 50 runs off 84 balls for India.
 - Joshua Boyden, Thomas Aspinwall and James Sales took two wickets each for England's bowling department.
 - England were bowled out for 189 in 44.5 overs.
- ⊙ On February 6, 2022, India played its thousandth ODI match. ODI means One Day International. The match was played against West Indies. Indian team played the match under the captainship of Rohit Sharma. And India won the match. The

Indian Cricket team is the first in the world to complete 1000 ODI matches. The team has so far won two ODI world cups and one T20 world cup. In all, the team has won 519 ODI matches out of the 1000 matches. Nine matches ended in tie and 41 matches ended without results.

- ⊙ The Ministry of External Affairs officially announced the diplomatic boycott of Beijing winter Olympics of India. Doordarshan will not telecast the opening and closing ceremonies of Beijing Winter Olympics. India will not send its envoy to the opening and closing ceremony of Beijing Winter Olympics. However, India will send an athlete to attend the ceremonies. Earlier, India had supported Beijing Olympics. India also supported China for conducting winter Olympics during BRICS summit. India is withdrawing its support now for Chinese annoying actions.

PERSONS IN NEWS

- ⊙ Legendary Singer Lata Mangeshkar took her last breath on February 6, 2022, at the age of 92. She was tested Covid-19 positive on January 8 and was admitted to Mumbai's Breach Candy hospital.



She was under observation in the ICU. She was an asset to the film industry and won numerous awards throughout her extensive singing career. Bharat Ratna, Padma Bhushan, Filmfare awards, National Awards, State Awards etc are few honours to her.

PLANS AND POLICIES

- ⊙ On February 1, 2022, Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a "Battery swapping policy for EVs", during Budget speech of 2022. The Battery Swapping Policy for EVs was announced in a bid to scale, promote and use electric vehicles in India. This policy will be brought to set up battery stations at a mass level. For this purpose, interoperability standards will also be formulated. With this policy, private players will be encouraged to develop innovative and sustainable models for battery as a service. It will help in increasing the efficiency in electric vehicle ecosystem.
- ⊙ The One Nation One Ration card plan was recently enabled in the state of Chhattisgarh. With this, the One Nation One Ration card scheme has become operational in 35 states and union territories. It is now covering 96.8% of the population included in the National Food Security Act. Under the scheme, the Aadhaar number is linked to the ration cards. And also e-point of sale machines are installed in public distribution shops. The beneficiaries shall get the food subsidies at any ration shop in the country. Earlier, they can only get in the ward where their card is registered. They cannot even get it the other ward in the same town.
- ⊙ On February 24, 2022, the World Economic Forum (WEF) and National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to design 'Sustainable Cities India' program. This partnership between WEF and NIUA is significant in the light of India's commitment of achieving net zero carbon emission by 2070, made at COP26 summit in Glasgow. WEF and NIUA will adapt WEF's 'City Sprint' process as well as 'Toolbox of Solutions' for decarbonisation of five to seven Indian cities in two years.
- ⊙ Giriraj Singh, Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, launched the Ombudsman App for MGNREGA. This App is a step toward e-governance, and it will help in accountability and transparency. This app will help the Ombudsman in carrying out their duties in a transparent and accountable manner. The minister showed concern regarding the appointment of Ombudspersons, and



that in many districts the appointment of an Ombudsperson has yet to be made. Hence, all states and UTs have been asked to work with the union government to make MNREGA more transparent by utilizing the Ombudsperson App.

- ⊙ A 1.7-megawatt solar photovoltaic plant has been commissioned by Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. (BHEL) at Bina, Madhya Pradesh for the Indian Railways. Power to the traction systems of Indian Railways will be fed directly through this plant. This plant was commissioned after the Indian Railways decided to become self-reliant for their electricity need and planned to solarise railway stations by utilizing the vacant lands it has for various Renewable Energy (RE) projects.
- ⊙ Bill Gates, noted philanthropist and creator of Microsoft have been awarded the Hilal-e-Pakistan, Pakistan's second-highest civilian honor, for his efforts to help eradicate polio in the country. A lunch was held at the Pakistani premier's residence in honor of Bill Gates, who was briefed on Pakistan's polio eradication efforts and Covid response.
- ⊙ Indian documentary Writing with Fire, has been nominated at the 94th Academy Awards in 'Best Documentary Feature Category'. The documentary is directed by filmmakers Rintu Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh. It has been nominated alongside Ascension, Flee, Attica, and Summer of the Soul. Writing with Fire is the only Indian title, to be nominated at Oscar awards 2022.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

- ⊙ On February 22, 2022, Professor Neena Gupta, conferred the Ramanujan Prize for Young Mathematicians 2021. Neena Gupta is a mathematician from Indian Statistical Institute in Kolkata. She conferred the award for her outstanding work in affine algebraic geometry and commutative algebra.

