

The Indian Express

The Idea Page

Opening a door in Kabul (Page no 11)

GS Paper 2 International Relation

On June 2, the Ministry of External Affairs announced that a team led by JP Singh, Joint Secretary (PAI) "is currently on a visit to Kabul to oversee the delivery operations of our humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan".

While conceding that the delegation would meet "senior members of the Taliban", the MEA clearly implied that this engagement should be seen only in the limited context of assistance to the Afghan people with whom, it said, "India has historical and civilisational ties and that these "long-standing linkages will continue to guide our approach".

Later, that day, the MEA spokesperson cautioned the media not to read too much into the visit.

If the government has been coy about the implications of the Singh visit, the Taliban has shown no inhibitions about its connotations.

While this is not surprising because the Taliban, the de-facto ruler of Afghanistan, is keen to gain international recognition, the outfit's attitude also indicates that it is not averse to developing ties with New Delhi, despite whatever concerns Pakistan may have regarding an Indian presence in Afghanistan.

A Taliban spokesperson tweeted after Singh's meeting with acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi that diplomatic relations between the two countries, and trade and humanitarian assistance were discussed.

Muttaqi also called Singh's visit a good beginning in the ties between the two countries. Muttaqi's deputy, the Indian Military Academy-trained former Afghan army officer, Abbas Stanikzai, whom Singh also met reportedly stressed that bilateral ties would not be influenced by rivalries with other countries.

Explained

Why the Gulf matters for India. (Page no. 12)

GS Paper 2, International Relation

BJP suspended its national spokesperson Nupur Sharma and expelled its Delhi spokesperson Naveen Kumar Jindal, following comments they had made about Islam and the Prophet last week.

The move came after three countries in the Gulf region had summoned the Indian ambassadors to their nations to register their protest, and demanded a public apology from India.

The BJP's action against its own leaders underlines the significance of the Gulf region for India. Barring the Jewish state of Israel, the 10 other countries of the Gulf region-Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Jordan and Yemen-together account for one-fifth of the world's Muslim population, and are among the strongest voices of the Muslim world.

India has enjoyed centuries of good relations with countries like Iran, while smaller gas-rich nation Qatar is one of India's closest allies in the region. India shares good relations with most of the countries in the Gulf.

The two most important reasons for the relationship are oil and gas, and trade. Two additional reasons are the huge number of Indians who work in the Gulf countries, and the remittance they send back home.

How inflation defeated the RBI: A recent history of MPC statement (Page no. 12)

GS Paper 3, Indian Economy

The Reserve Bank of India is expected to both raise the interest rate and slash the amount of money in the financial system to control retail inflation when it announces its monetary policy statement on June 8.

More than the quantum of the anticipated hike in the repo rate, RBI's outlook on inflation will be important.

The retail inflation in India has been above the RBI's target rate of 4% since October 2019. Only on three occasions (months) in the past 30 months has retail inflation come close to 4.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI sits once every two months-typically in February, April, June, August, October, and December to review its policy stance.

In August 2019, retail inflation was comfortably below RBI's target rate, and the MPC, noting that inflation is currently projected to remain within the target over a 12-month ahead horizon", decided to cut the repo rate by 35 basis points (or 0.35%) from 5.75% to 5.40%.

In October, given the steadily weakening growth momentum, the MPC cut the repo rate by another 25 basis points from 5.40% to 5.15%.

Economy

People centric Governance, simplifying reform keys: PM (Page no 13)

GS Paper 3, Indian Economy

Launching "Jan Samarth", a portal connecting 13 credit-linked government schemes, PM said, it is necessary to focus on making domestic banks, currency an important part of international supply chain and trade.

Inaugurating the week-long events by the Ministry of Finance and Corporate Affairs as part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav from June 6-11, PM said India has developed various financial inclusion platforms and there is a need to create awareness about them for their optimum utilisation. There should be an effort to extend these financial inclusion solutions globally.

"Earlier it was the responsibility of the people to go to the government for availing benefit of the schemes. Now emphasis is on taking governance to people and free them from the rigama role of doing rounds of different ministries and websites this portal will improve the lives of students, farmers, businessmen MSME entrepreneurs and will help them in realising their dreams.

The Jan Samarth portal will be an "end-to-end delivery platform", and more people will come forward to avail loans because of ease of compliance.

This portal will help reduce turnaround time and facilitate faster sanction of loans to beneficiaries. The Prime Minister said that the government is focussed on simplification in reforms.

GST has now replaced the web of many taxes at the centre and the state. The country is also seeing the result of this simplification."