

## Notes from Davos: The ultimate networking platform

By Ajay Khanna, ET CONTRIBUTORS | Last Updated: Jan 17, 2023, 08:18 PM IST

### Synopsis

The Winter Davos World Economic Forum (53rd) meeting kicked off yesterday evening at the sprawling Congress Centre. This year is headed for the highest participation and is a signal that everyone is invested in reviving the "Contact Economy".



Reuters

So, after the hiatus of two years, the Winter [Davos](#) World Economic Forum (53rd) meeting kicked off yesterday evening at the sprawling Congress Centre. This year is headed for the highest participation and is a signal that everyone is invested in reviving the "Contact Economy".

Swiss punctuality and hospitality are legendary. We took off from Delhi on Sunday early morning and landed ahead of time in Zurich. I always prefer direct flights but wonder why we can't have flights out to Europe and USA at decent timings. There are a few but need many more for our convenience!



We saw no snow at all in Zurich, which is surprising for January. A friend who lives in Zurich said it has been unusually warm! Global warming? The temperature in Zurich and Delhi yesterday morning was the same.

The immigration counters were full but managed very efficiently at Zurich Airport. At immigration there were only two queries:

Where are you going?

To the hills for what purpose? Skiing or [WEF](#).



Now there were more skiers than WEF participants. But by the weekend the ratios will be reversed when delegates start descending in hordes.

Now that I have been coming here every year for so long (36 years) that it is almost like coming home. Loved the drive along smooth, clear roads—though the fields were sans snow; saw some when we had all but reached Klosters.



The approach to Davos Dorf takes you past the lake. I recall that this lake used to be frozen; in fact, I have done a test drive of Audi cars on the frozen lake. But this year there is no chance—the lake is yet to freeze over.

As I write, the quiet, sleepy Davos city, the highest town in Europe (1560 m above sea level) transforms dramatically with the arrival of delegates. We—always the early birds--arrived on Sunday. The Promenade was peaceful, and the only activity was the hardworking workers were giving finishing touches to all the company, country, forum stalls, lounges, locations. There were few restaurants open, and you could walk in for a meal. Renu & I had our idli , uttapam & masala chai breakfast at the India lounge, helmed by executive chef Amit Chowdhury of [Taj hotels](#).



### **Davos Chaos**

By Sunday evening it started to snow. By Monday morning, there was white blanket covering the entire town. It's like a Big Wedding Party (Specially an Indian) where arrangements are given finishing touches a day before the wedding.

By Monday afternoon, the traffic piles up on the Promenade, the mall road of Davos, had begun. You could see rows of cars; the lounges were inaugurated. All the restaurants, old and new, were reserved for the use of visiting officials of companies and countries.



Unlike driving, walking along the Promenade was easy. Though one had to be watchful about the black ice and sub-zero temperatures. A few hours later the Davos chaos struck as delegates started to arrive, meet and network—converging by evening at the Congress centre.

### **Green vs White Davos**

My first engagement was the Davos circle, a closed-door reception hosted by Klaus & Hilde exclusively for participants who have been attending Davos for more than a decade.



The big conversation over drinks was whether delegates preferred a winter or a summer Davos. As for me, May was a different experience, no hassle of overcoats, mufflers, snowshoes, no long security queues in snowy Davos! But as someone said what is Davos without all this and remember you make great conversations with participants waiting in those long queues!

**Crystal Award** I was thrilled to learn that this year's annual Crystal award was bestowed upon Idris Elba—the brilliant British actor, who starred in the cult series, *Wire*. Imagine the coincidence that on the flight to Zurich I had kept myself entertained by watching his movie—*Beast*. For a fan like me to see Idris in person was a treat. The actor and his wife Sabrina Dhowre Elba were being recognized for their leadership in addressing food security, climate change and environmental conservation.



The award ceremony was followed by an outstanding performance by the Morphing Chambers Orchestra featuring exclusive performances by internationally acclaimed award-winning artists. The concert entitled "I Sea You" was a powerful cultural message about unity and collaboration and a call to action to preserve the Carols reefs of the Northern Red sea.



We closed the evening with the welcome reception hosted by Klaus and Hilde Schwab with some exciting cuisines from Switzerland and an array of Swiss chocolates!

*Ajay Khanna is a Davos Regular, Strategic Advisor with [Jubilant](#) Bhartia Group and Co-Founder of PAFI. Views are Personal.*

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