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1. Miguel Diaz-Canel re-elected as the President of the Republic of Cuba (April 21, 2023)

Miguel Diaz-Canel re-elected as the President of the Republic of Cuba

Miguel Díaz-Canel has been re-elected as **President of the Republic of Cuba** for a **second five-year term** on April 19, 2023 by the **National Assembly of the People's Power**.

An Overview of the News

- **Salvador Valdés Mesa** has also been re-elected as **Vice President**.
- **Díaz-Canel** received **97.66% of the vote**, while **Valdés Mesa received 93.4%**.
- The leadership body of the National Assembly was re-elected by parliamentarians.
- **Juan Esteban Lazo Hernández, Ana María Mari Machado and Homero Acosta Álvarez** were re-elected as **President, Vice President and Secretary of the National Assembly, respectively**.
- The deputies also elected 18 members to the Council of State, including eight re-elections and ten new appointments.

About Cuba

President - **Miguel Diaz-Canel**

Capital - **Havana**

Currency - **Cuban peso**

Prime Minister - **Manuel Marrero Cruz**

Official language - **Spanish**

2. Exercise INIOCHOS-23 (April 21, 2023)

EU-India Aviation Summit begins in New Delhi

The **Indian Air Force (IAF)** will be participating in **Exercise INIOCHOS-23**, a **multi-national air exercise** hosted by the **Hellenic Air Force, the air force of Greece**.

An overview of the news

- The exercise will be conducted at the **Andravida Air Base in Greece from 24 Apr 2023 to 4 May 2023**.
- The Indian Air Force will be participating with **four Su-30 MKI and two C-17 aircraft**.

- The exercise will be conducted in a **realistic combat scenario** involving a wide variety of air and surface assets.
- It will also enable participating parties to engage in professional interactions, providing valuable insight into each other's best practices.

Objective of Exercise INIOCHOS-23

- The exercise aims to enhance **international cooperation, synergy and interoperability** among the participating air forces.

About exercise INIOCHOS-23

- This exercise to be held at **Greece's Andravidia Air Base** is considered to be **Europe's biggest air exercise**.
- Many countries like **France, Italy** are participating in this. **The Indian Air Force will participate in this exercise for the first time**.
- The exercise will see participation of air assets from countries like **France, USA, Italy, Saudi Arabia and Jordan** apart from India's Su-30MKIs.

3. 8th India-Thailand Defence Dialogue (April 20, 2023)

8th India-Thailand Defence Dialogue

The **8th India-Thailand Defence Dialogue** was held in **Bangkok on 20th April**.

An overview of the news

- The meeting was co-chaired by **Nivedita Shukla**, Special Secretary in the Ministry of Defense and **General Nuchit Sribunsong**, Deputy Permanent Secretary of Defense of Thailand.
- They reviewed defence cooperation between the two countries and explored **new initiatives to further strengthen bilateral ties**.
- The two sides also exchanged views on regional and global issues of common interest.
- India and Thailand share a **strategic partnership and defense** is a major pillar of this cooperation.

India-Thailand relations

- India and Thailand share a maritime boundary in the **Andaman Sea**.
- Thailand was one of the first countries to establish **diplomatic relations with India in 1947**.

- Since 2001, **India-Thailand economic and commercial relations** have grown significantly.
- India and Thailand have been cooperating in various multilateral fora such as **ASEAN and BIMSTEC**, a sub-regional grouping consisting of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan.
- India is a member of the **Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD)** initiated by Thailand in 2002 and the **Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC)** grouping of six countries.
- The **India-AESAN Agreement on Trade in Goods** was implemented in January 2010.
- Since 2015, India has been participating in the largest Asia Pacific military exercise **X-Cobra Gold**.
- Exercise **MAITREE (Army)** and exercise **SIAM BHARAT (Air Force)** are Bilateral exercises between both countries.

About Thailand

- Prime minister - **Prayuth Chan-ocha**
- Capital - **Bangkok**
- Head of State - **King Vajiralongkorn**
- Official Language - **Thai**
- Official Name - **Ratcha Anachak Thai (Kingdom of Thailand)**

4. China launched Fengyun-3 satellite (April 19, 2023)

On 16th April 2023, China successfully launched the **Fengyun-3** meteorological satellite using **Chang Zheng-4B carrier rocket** from Jiuquan Cosmodrome in **Gansu Province**.

An Overview of the News

- The primary objective of the **Fengyun-3 satellite** is to monitor and provide information on severe weather conditions, especially heavy rainfall, which can cause natural disasters such as floods and landslides.
- This was the **471st mission for the Chang Zheng rocket family**.

China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC)

- It is a state-owned organisation that serves as the primary contractor for **China's space program**.
- CASC has several subsidiaries that specialise in the **design, development and manufacture of a variety of space-related technology**, including **spacecraft, launch vehicles, missile systems and ground equipment**.

- The organisation is responsible for overseeing all aspects of **China's space program**, from research and development to mission planning and execution.

Establishment - **1 July 1999**

Headquarters - **Beijing, China**

President - **Zhang Zhongyang**

About China

Government - **Unitary Marxist-Leninist One Party Socialist Republic**

President - **Xi Jinping**

Capital - **Beijing**

Official language - **Standard Chinese**

Currency - **Renminbi**

5. Kenya Launched Its First Operational Earth Observation Satellite "Taifa-1" (April 19, 2023)

Kenya launched its **first operational Earth observation satellite "Taifa-1"** on a rocket of **Elon Musk's rocket company 'SpaceX'** from **Vandenberg Base in California** on 15 April 2023.

An Overview of the News

- The launch rocket carried **50 payloads** from various countries, including **Turkey, under SpaceX's 'rideshare programme'**.
- Taifa-1 was designed and developed by **SayariLabs and EnduroSat** and the satellite was built over two years at a cost of **50 million Kenyan shillings (\$372,000)**.
- The satellite's primary purpose is to collect agricultural and environmental data, including floods, droughts and wildfires, to help Kenya deal with disaster management and food insecurity.

Taifa-1

- It is an optical camera that can take pictures in both multispectral and panchromatic modes.
- The satellite can operate in and out of the visible light spectrum, allowing it to capture images even in low light conditions.
- **Taifa-1** is capable of capturing images in five different multispectral bands.
- The **Ground Sampling Distance (GSD) of Taifa-1 is 32 m** for the multispectral band and 16 m for the panchromatic band.

About Kenya

Republic - **12 December 1964**

Capital - **Nairobi**

Official languages - **Swahili, English**

Currency - **Kenyan shilling (Kesia)**

Government - **Unitary presidential republic**

President - **William Ruto**

Deputy President - **Rigathi Gachagua**

Senate President - **Amason Kingi**

Assembly Speaker - **Moses Wetangula**

Chief Justice - **Martha Koome**

6. Efforts to revive the India-Brazil-South Africa Forum (April 19, 2023)

Diplomatic focus is likely to increase on the long-dormant **trilateral India-Brazil-South Africa forum**.

About India-Brazil-South Africa forum (IBSA)

- It is a trilateral dialogue forum of **India, Brazil and South Africa** which was **created in the year 2003**.
- The grouping was formalized under the name of the **IBSA Dialogue Forum under the Brasilia Declaration**.
- On **June 6, 2003**, at a meeting of the foreign ministers of the three countries in **Brasilia (Brazil)**, the Brasilia Declaration was issued and the grouping was formalized and named the **IBSA Dialogue Forum**.
- It brings together **India, Brazil and South Africa, three large democracies and major economies from three different continents**, facing similar challenges.
- **IBSA Fund was established in 2004** which facilitates the execution of human development projects to advance the fight against poverty and hunger in developing countries.
- **IBSAMAR is a joint multinational maritime exercise, among the Indian, Brazilian and South African navies**.

Forum Meetings

- **Between 2011 and 2022**, the forum has held **only four trilateral ministerial commission meetings**.

- The latest is in **September 2022**, when **senior ministers from the three countries meet in New York**.
- However, there has not been a meeting of their heads of state or government **since 2011**.
- The meetings have become inactive in recent years.

7. Syria is the world's largest 'narco-state' (April 18, 2023)

Syria has **become the world's largest 'narco-state'** and most of its foreign exchange earnings come from the **production and export of Captagon**, a highly addictive amphetamine commonly referred to as "**poor man's coke**".

An Overview of the News

- Drug trafficking, is especially **Captagon**, which is a **significant part of Syria's economy**. It accounts for more than **90 percent of the country's foreign exchange** earnings according to criteria to be classified as a narco-state.
- Experts have indicated that Syria is the **major producer of Captagon**, with much of it exported to the Gulf region. Following a crackdown on protesters by **President Bashar al-Assad in 2011** and subsequent sanctions or trade embargoes with Syria, the Lebanese regime along with Hezbollah increased the production and **export of Captagon** to the Gulf countries.
- The US enacted the **Captagon Act** last year, linking the drug trade to the Assad regime in Syria and labelling it an "**international security threat**".

About Syria

Capital - **Damascus**

Official language - **Arabic**

President - **Bashar al-Assad**

Vice President - **Najah Al-Attar**

Prime Minister - **Hussain Arnoos**

Speaker of the People's Assembly - **Hammouda Sabbagh**

8. Nepal became a founding member of the International Big Cats Alliance (April 17, 2023)

Nepal became a founding member of the International Big Cats Alliance

Nepal has become a **founding member of the International Big Cats Alliance** launched by India on 13 April.

An Overview of the News

- The alliance was launched under India's initiative, and during the launch event, Nepal's Energy Minister **Shakti Bahadur Basnet** presented a letter indicating Nepal's membership as a founding member to India's Forest and Climate Change Minister Bhupendra Yadav. Handed over
- The International Big Cats Alliance aims **to conserve seven big cat species including tigers, lions, leopards, snow leopards, cheetahs, jaguars and pumas.**
- Nepal's tiger population has seen a significant increase, increasing **from 121 in 2010 to 335 in 2022.**
- Nepal successfully achieved its target of doubling the tiger population by 2022, as done during the **first Tiger Summit in 2010 in St. Petersburg.**

About the International Big Cats Alliance

- The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) was launched by the Prime Minister of India, Shri **Narendra Modi** on April 9, 2023, for the conservation of **seven big cat species including tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, cheetah, jaguar, and puma.**
- The alliance aims **to reach 97 range countries covering the natural habitats** of these big cats and strengthen global cooperation and efforts for their conservation.
- Ministers from **Bhutan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya, Nepal, Ethiopia and Malaysia** expressed their support for India's efforts in alliance and conservation.

About Nepal

The kingdom of Nepal was established by the **Shah dynasty.**

It is a **landlocked country in South Asia.**

Prime Minister - **Pushpa Kamal Dahal**

President - **Ram Chandra Paudel**

Capital - **Kathmandu**

Currency - **Nepalese Rupee**

9. Buzi Bridge in Mozambique inaugurated by External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar (April 17, 2023)

Buzi Bridge in Mozambique inaugurated by External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar

On 14 April, India's External Affairs Minister **Dr. S. Jaishankar** virtually inaugurated the **Buzi Bridge built by India in Mozambique.**

The bridge is part of the **132 km long Tika-Buzi-Nova-Sofala road project** and was constructed by India.

An Overview of the News

- The **bridge represents the strong bond of friendship and solidarity between India and Mozambique.**
- Dr Jaishankar took a train ride from Maputo to Machava in an Indian made train and showcased India's contribution to the development of Mozambique's rail infrastructure.

About Mozambique

- Mozambique is located in **southeastern Africa**, with the **Indian Ocean to the east and several neighbouring countries** to the **north, northwest, west, and southwest.**
- The **Portuguese arrived in 1498** and colonised Mozambique for four centuries before the country gained independence in 1975.
- Mozambique descended into a **civil war from 1977 to 1992**, but has since held multi-party elections and become a relatively stable presidential republic.
- Christianity is the largest religion in **Mozambique, with Islam and African traditional religions** also present.

Government - **Unitary major-party semi-presidential republic**

President - **Filipe Nyusi**

Prime Minister - **Adriano Maleiane**

Capital - **Maputo**

Official language - **Portuguese**

Currency - **Mozambican metical**

10. India opens its 16th Visa application center in Bangladesh's Kushtia (April 17, 2023)

India opens its 16th Visa application center in Bangladesh's Kushtia

The **High Commission of India** opened its **16th Visa application center in Kushtia town of Southwestern Bangladesh** on 16th April.

An overview of the news

- The new **Indian Visa Application Center (IVAC) was inaugurated by High Commissioner Pranya Verma.**
- **Mahbubul Alam Hanif**, MP from Kushtia-3 was also present on this occasion.
- This will provide greater ease and convenience to residents of **Kushtia and its surrounding areas** seeking visa services to visit India.
- Continuous efforts are being made to improve visa facilities for the people of Bangladesh.

- The new center will further strengthen people-to-people contact.
- It will serve as a new platform to promote tourism, trade and people-to-people exchanges between India and Bangladesh.
- The High Commission of India operates its largest Visa Operations Center in the world in Bangladesh.
- **Bangladesh accounts for the largest number of foreign tourists in India**, including those availing medical, tourism, business and student visa facilities.
- **In the year 2019-20, more than 16 lakh visas were issued in Dhaka.**

People's Republic of Bangladesh

- Capital: **Dhaka**
- Prime Minister: **Sheikh Hasina Wazed**
- President: **Mohammad Shahabuddin**
- Currency: **Taka**