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### 1. 7th India-Japan Defense Policy Dialogue held in New Delhi ( April 5, 2023 )

7th India-Japan Defense Policy Dialogue held in New Delhi

The dialogue on April 05, 2023 was **co-chaired by Mr. Giridhar Armane, Defense Secretary of India** and **Mr. Oka Masami**, Defense Minister of International Affairs of Japan.

#### An Overview of the News

- The two countries discussed a wide range of issues, including **service-level exercises and engagements, regional security issues and cooperation in defence equipment and technology.**
- Defense Secretary **Shri Giridhar Armane** stressed the need for both the countries to deepen cooperation between their respective defence industries.
- He also invited Japanese defence industries to **explore investment opportunities in India** under the '**Make in India**' initiative.
- Both sides agreed to diversify cooperation in new and emerging domains such as the **defence sector and cyber.**
- India and Japan reiterated their commitment to a strong defence partnership and agreed to explore opportunities to further enhance bilateral cooperation.
- **Defense Policy Dialogue is an institutional mechanism** between India and Japan to discuss bilateral defence cooperation.

#### About Japan

- It is also called **Nihon or Nippon** and is an archipelago in the **western Pacific Ocean in East Asia.**
- It is made up of four main islands **Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu** and **Honshu** is the largest island of Japan.
- Its highest mountain is **Mount Fuji.**
- It is the **third largest economy in the world after the United States and China.**

Capital - **Tokyo**

currency - **Yen**

Prime Minister - **Fumio Kishida**

## **2. Bahrain Launches Golden License To Make Large-Scale Investments ( April 4, 2023 )**

Bahrain Launches Golden License To Make Large-Scale Investments

**Bahrain launched the Golden License Initiative** to encourage investment and job creation in the country and aims to provide streamlined services and benefits to local and foreign businesses with large-scale investment projects in Bahrain.

### **An Overview of the News**

- Companies with important strategic projects and investments of more than **US\$50 million or creating more than 500 jobs in Bahrain** will be eligible for the licence.
- The Golden License offers various benefits, including **priority land allotment for investment, infrastructure services, utilities, and streamlined access to government services** such as business licensing and building permit approval.
- The licence will also provide support from **Tamkin and the Bahrain Development Bank**.
- The initiative was launched by Bahrain's cabinet, chaired by Prince **Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa**, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain, to attract local and international investment to create job opportunities.
- India has the largest expatriate population in Bahrain, with around **350,000 Indians living in the country**.

### **About Bahrain**

- It is an island country **located in western Asia** on the **Persian Gulf and consists of 50 natural islands and 33 artificial islands**, of which Bahrain Island is the largest.
- The **capital of Bahrain is Manama**, which serves as the **commercial and financial centre of the country**.
- The majority of the population is **Muslim, with Sunni and Shia Muslims** being the largest groups.

## **3. MF Hydra: World's first liquid hydrogen ferry ( April 4, 2023 )**

MF Hydra: World's first liquid hydrogen ferry

**Norwegian company Norld** launched the **world's first ferry to run on MF Hydra liquid hydrogen**.

### **An Overview of the News**

- The vessel, named **MF Hydra**, is a hybrid and uses both batteries and liquid hydrogen fuel cells for power.
- The **Norwegian Maritime Authority (NMA)** granted approval to operate the yacht.
- An important step towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the marine industry.
- **Hydrogen fuel cells** produce only clean water as a byproduct, making them an environmentally friendly option for powering ferries and other marine vessels.
- The **MF Hydra was to be delivered in 2021 and measures 82.4 metres in length**, with a passenger capacity of 300 and a capacity to carry 80 vehicles.
- It uses **two 200 kW fuel cells, two 440 kW** generators and two Shottel thrusters to reach a speed of 9 knots.
- The hydrogen system was provided by **Linde Engineering**, the fuel cell by Ballard and the battery by Corvus Energy. The ferry was completed by Westcon and systems integrator SEAM.

### **About Norway**

Capital- **Oslo**

Currency- **Norwegian Krone**

King- **Harald V of Norway**

### **4. NASA announces four-member team of astronauts to travel to the Moon ( April 4, 2023 )**

NASA announces four-member team of astronauts to travel to the Moon

For the first time in five decades, **NASA** announced a team of **four astronauts for its human spaceflight mission to the Moon.**

#### **An overview of the news**

- The team of **four astronauts will fly around the moon for a 10-day mission next year.**
- NASA has announced the four astronauts who will go to lunar orbit and return with the Artemis 2 mission.

#### **Who are these Artemis 2 astronauts?**

- These four Artemis 2 astronauts are - **Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Jeremy Hansen and Christina Koch.**
- NASA's **Reid Wiseman** will be the commander of the **Artemis 2 mission.**

- **Victor Glover** will serve as the **pilot for Artemis 2**. Glover was previously the pilot of NASA's SpaceX Crew-1 mission.
- **Jeremy Hansen** will represent the **Canadian Space Agency** during the mission.
- NASA astronaut **Christina Koch** will be the **mission specialist for Artemis 3**.
- Koch visited the space station in 2019, where she was part of the first all-woman spacewalk in history.
- The Artemis II flight team will have three American and one Canadian astronauts, the first since the historic Apollo mission ended in 1972.

### **Artemis 2 mission**

- The Artemis 1 mission will allow NASA to test the foundation of its **latest human space exploration capabilities**.
- This includes the **Space Launch System (SLS) rocket, the Orion spacecraft, and all associated ground systems**.
- Artemis 2 will be the first crewed mission to test all of these.

### **About NASA**

- NASA was formed under the **National Aeronautics and Space Act** on July 19, 1948, in place of its predecessor, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA).
- NASA - **National Aeronautics and Space Administration**
- Headquarters- **Washington D.C.**
- Administrator - **Bill Nelson**

### **5. India, Netherlands hold first Ministerial-level meeting of Joint Working Group ( April 4, 2023 )**

1st Ministerial-level meeting of the Joint Working Group between India and the Netherlands  
The **1st Ministerial-level meeting of the Joint Working Group** between **India and the Netherlands** was held on 3 April in New Delhi.

### **An overview of the news**

- The meeting was held in the presence of Union Jal Shakti Minister **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** and Minister for Infrastructure and Water Management, Government of the Netherlands, **Mark Harbours**.
- The '**Strategic Water Partnership**' was launched during a virtual meeting between the Prime Ministers of India and the Netherlands in April 2021.

- The partnership provides the necessary impetus to expand bilateral water cooperation.
- The Netherlands is associated with various states and municipalities, including **Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Punjab, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Maharashtra**, in various water resources projects.
- River-city alliance between the two countries for river-sensitive cities and technologically driven nature-based solutions for river rejuvenation.

## **India-Netherlands Relations**

- **India and the Netherlands** enjoy long-standing warm and friendly relations based on shared values of democracy, rule of law, human rights and historical bonds of friendship.
- Both countries share **common ideals of democracy, pluralism and rule of law.**
- Bilateral relations have been marked by strong economic and commercial ties.
- The Netherlands signed the **Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance (ISA)** and became the **64th signatory member** country.
- There are over **200 Indian companies** operating in the Netherlands.
- The total bilateral trade stood at **US\$ 6.28 billion in the financial year 2018-2019.**
- The Netherlands was India's fourth largest trading partner in the European Union after Britain, Germany and Belgium.

## **About Netherlands**

- The Netherlands, also known as **Holland**, is a country located in northwestern Europe.
- Monarch: **King Willem-Alexander**
- Prime Minister: **Mark Rutte**
- Capital: **Amsterdam**
- Currency: **euro**

## **6. India and Romania sign agreement for 'Practical Cooperation between Armed Forces' ( April 3, 2023 )**

**India and Romania signed a defence agreement** during a meeting between **Romania's Deputy Defense Minister Simona Cojocaru and India's Defense Secretary Giridhar Aramane in New Delhi.**

## **An Overview of the News**

- This agreement is the **first defence cooperation agreement** between the two countries and is a practical cooperation between the armed forces of India and Romania.
- The defence pact represents the basis for the establishment and expansion of military relations between the two countries. It will provide more opportunities to work together in various fields such as military education, training, cyber defence, military medicine, military history and other areas that can benefit both the countries.
- Representatives from the **Romanian Institute for Political Studies of Defense and Military History** are part of the delegation accompanying Cojocaru, and they are set to collaborate with the Indian Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses.
- Romania and India have worked together in multinational environments such as UN missions, and both countries are making important contributions to enhancing stability and strengthening peace and security in regions marked by the horrors of war.

### **About Romania**

- It is located in **southeastern Europe, bordering Hungary, Ukraine, Moldova, Bulgaria, and the Black Sea.**
- Its rich history includes influences from the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire and the Soviet Union. **It gained independence in 1877** and became a **republic in 1947 after World War II.**
- Most Romanians are **Orthodox Christians**, but there are also populations of **Catholics, Protestants and Muslims.**
- The economy is mixed with manufacturing, agriculture and services as its main industries.

President - **Klaus Iohannis**

Capital - **Bucharest**

Official languages - **Romanian, Romanian Sign Language**

Government - **republic, unitary state, parliamentary republic, semi-presidential system**

Continent - **Europe**

Currency - **Romanian leu**

### **7. OPEC members announce cut in oil production exceeding one million barrels per day from next month ( April 3, 2023 )**

OPEC members announce cut in oil production exceeding one million barrels per day from next month

On April 2, **Saudi Arabia and other OPEC Plus members** announced that they would further **reduce oil production amounting to around 1.16 million barrels per day.**

### **An overview of the news**

- The move is aimed at **bringing stability to the market.**
- The announcement was made at a **virtual meeting of the OPEC Plus ministerial panel.**
- The unexpected cuts announced by **Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Algeria and Oman** will begin in May and last until the end of the year.
- This would be the **biggest reduction** since oil producers cut two million barrels per day in October 2022.
- The move follows a drop in oil prices last month (down to \$70 a barrel) and concerns that the global banking crisis could hit demand.

### **Production cuts announced by OPEC Plus members, as per their official statements-**

- **Russia** - 500,000 bpd
- **Saudi Arabia** -500,000 bpd
- **UAE** - 144,000 bpd
- **Kuwait** - 128,000 bpd
- **Kazakhstan** - 78,000 bpd
- **Algeria** - 48,000 bpd
- **Oman** - 40,000 bpd

### **About OPEC**

- The **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** is a **permanent, intergovernmental organisation** that was **established in 1960** at the **Baghdad Conference** by **Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.**
- The purpose of this organisation is to coordinate and integrate the petroleum policies of its member countries and to ensure the stabilisation of oil markets to ensure efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to the consumer.
- Headquarters - **Vienna (Austria).**
- Member Countries (15)- **Algeria, Angola, Congo, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, IR Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Venezuela.**

### **OPEC plus**

- It is a coalition of OPEC members and the **world's 10 major non-OPEC oil exporting countries**.
- **Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, South Sudan and Sudan.**

## **8. India, Malaysia can now trade in Indian rupee ( April 3, 2023 )**

The **Ministry of External Affairs** announced on 1 April that **India and Malaysia have agreed to settle trade in the Indian rupee.**

### **An overview of the news**

- In July 2022, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** allowed settlement of **international trade in Indian currency**.
- This step has been taken only after this **decision of the RBI**.
- According to the Ministry of External Affairs, **trade between India and Malaysia** can now be **settled in Indian Rupee (INR)** in addition to the existing methods of settlement in other currencies.
- The RBI initiative is aimed at **facilitating trade growth and supporting the interests** of the global trading community in the Indian Rupee.
- **Kuala Lumpur-based India International Bank of Malaysia (IIBM)** has introduced this system in India by opening a special Rupee Vostro account through Union Bank of India.
- Vostro accounts are used to make payments in domestic currency.

### **What is a Vostro Account?**

- Vostro is a Latin word meaning "**your**", hence, Vostro Account means "**your account**".
- Vostro account is defined as an account maintained by a **correspondent bank on behalf of another bank**.
- For example **HSBC's Vostro account is being handled by SBI in India**.
- A Vostro account is established to enable a foreign correspondent bank to act as an agent or provide services as an intermediary for a domestic bank.

### **About Malaysia**

- Prime Minister - **Anwar Ibrahim**
- Capital - **Kuala Lumpur**
- Currency - **Malaysian ringgit**



- Official Language - **Malay**
- Official Religion - **Islam**

## **9. PM Modi invited to France for Bastille Day parade ( April 3, 2023 )**

**France** has invited Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** to visit **Paris** as a **guest at the annual Bastille Day parade** in July.

### **About Bastille Day Parade**

- The **National Day of France**, also known as **Bastille Day**, is celebrated every year on **14 July**.
- Known in French as **La Fête Nationale or Le 14 Juillet**, the day is celebrated with fireworks and parades.
- This day is considered as one of the **most important days in the history of France**.
- It marks the fall of the Bastille, a military fortress and political prison, which was then considered a symbol of the monarchy and the Armory.

### **About Bastille Day Parade**

- The Bastille Day military parade is a **French military parade** held on the morning of **14 July each year in Paris since 1880**.
- It is one of the **oldest regular military parades** in the world.
- The fall of the **Bastille on July 14, 1789** is widely regarded as the beginning of the **French Revolution**.
- The Bastille was a fortress prison located in the heart of Paris, which became a symbol of royal tyranny and oppression.

## **10. US Senate confirms Indian-American Richard Verma to top State Department post ( April 2, 2023 )**

The **United States Senate** on March 30 confirmed the appointment of **Indian American Richard Verma** as **Deputy Secretary of State, Management and Resources**.

### **An overview of the news**

- This position is normally seen as the **CEO of the powerful State Department in the US Government**.

- Richard Verma served as the **US Ambassador to India** from January 2015 to January 2017 and is currently the Chief Legal Officer and Head of Global Public Policy at **MasterCard**.
- He also served as **Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs** during the Obama administration.
  - Prior to this he was **National Security Advisor to United States Senator Harry Reid**.
  - Verma has also served as **Vice Chairman of The Asia Group**, Partner and Senior Counselor at Steptoe and Johnson LLP, and Senior Counselor at the Albright Stonebridge Group.
  - Verma holds a BS degree from Lehigh University, an LLM with distinction from **Georgetown University Law Center**, and a PhD from Georgetown University.
  - He was appointed to the **President's Intelligence Advisory Board** and he is a former member of the **Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism Commission**.