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1. Saudi Arabia to send its 1st female astronaut to space this year (Feb. 14, 2023)

Saudi Arabia's first female astronaut

Saudi Arabia's first female astronaut is set to go into space this year, in what is seen as a move to reform Saudi Arabia's **ultra-conservative image**.

An overview of the news

- Saudi female astronaut **Rayna Barnawi** will join **Saudi Ali Al-Qarni** on a 10-day mission to the **International Space Station (ISS)** this year.
- **Barnawi and al-Karni** will fly to the ISS aboard a **SpaceX Dragon spacecraft** as part of a mission by American privately funded space infrastructure developer private space company **Axiom Space** .
- The **Ax-2** will be launched by a **SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket** from Launch Complex 39A at **NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, America**.
- Another fellow **Emirati, Sultan Al-Neyadi** will also visit the space station at the end of February 2023.
- Axiom Space launched its **first private astronaut mission** to the ISS in April 2022, with four private astronauts spending 17 days in space orbit.
- In 2019, Saudi Arabia's neighbouring **United Arab Emirates became the first Arab country** to send a citizen into space. Astronaut Hazza al-Mansoori spent eight days on the ISS.
- **In 1985**, Saudi royal prince **Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz** participated in a US-organised space mission, becoming the first Arab Muslim to travel in space.

Saudi Arabia

- King - **Salman**
- Capital - **Riyadh**
- Currency - **Saudi Arabian riyal**
- Official Language - **Arabic**
- Official Religion - **Islam**

2. Mohammad Shahabuddin elected President of Bangladesh (Feb. 13, 2023)

According to the notification issued by the **Election Commission of Bangladesh** on **13th February Mohammad Shahabuddin** will be the next **President of Bangladesh**.

An overview of the news

- He will be the **22nd President of Bangladesh.**
- He was the only candidate to file his nomination after the time for nomination and withdrawal was over.
- Retired judge, Anti-Corruption Commission commissioner and freedom fighter Mohammad Shahabuddin was nominated for the post by the ruling **Awami League.**
- The term of current President **Abdul Hamid** ends on **April 23.**
- He served as the President of Bangladesh for two consecutive terms.
- The Constitution of Bangladesh does not allow any person to hold the presidency for more than two terms.

About Mohammad Shahabuddin

- He was born in **1949 in Pabna.** He took part in the **Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971.**
- After the assassination of **Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman** on 15 August 1975 along with most of his family members, he was imprisoned for several years.
- He is a member of the **Awami League Advisory Council.**

People's Republic of Bangladesh

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

3. Nikos Christodoulides elected as the new president of Cyprus (Feb. 13, 2023)

Former Foreign Minister **Nikos Christodoulides** was elected **President of Cyprus** on 13 February after a second and final round of voting.

An overview of the news

- Christodoulides, 49, won **51.9% of the vote**, while his opponent **Andreas Mavroyanis, 66, took 48.1%.**
- More than **72.4 percent** of people voted in Cyprus this time, which is higher than before.
- He was appointed **Government Spokesperson in 2014 and Foreign Minister in 2018.**

- Christodoulides is supported by the **Democratic Party**, the Movement for Social Democracy and the Democratic Alignment.
- Cyprus was divided in **1974**, when Turkish forces occupied the northern part in response to a Greek-sponsored coup d'état.
- Since then the current issue between Cyprus and Turkey is the ongoing dispute between the Greek Cypriots in the south and the Turkish Cypriots in the north.

Republic of Cyprus

- It is an island **European country** in the **eastern Mediterranean Sea**.
- It gained its Independence from **Britain in 1960**.
- The country has a majority population which are of Greece descent while the minority population are of Turkish origin.
- Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974 and created a Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983.
- Except Turkey no country recognises Turkish Cyprus.
- India also recognises the Cyprus government.
- Capital: **Nicosia**
- Currency: **Euro**
- President: **Nikos Christodoulides**

4. Moldov's PM Natalia Gavrilita resigns (Feb. 11, 2023)

Moldovan Prime Minister **Natalia Gavrilita** announced her resignation on 10 February.

An overview of the news

- She resigned, citing lack of support in the former Soviet republic. She was in power only for **18 months**.
- Moldova's President **Maia Sandu** has accepted Gavrilita's resignation and said she will speak to parliamentary groups about a possible replacement.
- Ms. Gavrilita's party won a majority in the elections held in **August 2021**.
- The next prime minister of Moldova could be **Dorin Risen**, a European security adviser who is a supporter of Sandu.
- Rieken is expected to be approved as the country's prime minister without interference.
- Moldova, a **former Soviet republic** with a **population of 2.5 million people**, is already facing a host of issues such as rising inflation, a massive influx of refugees from Ukraine and a severe energy crisis in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war.

- Moscow significantly reduced its **electricity supply to Moldova**.
- Last year alone, the country saw protests against a dramatic increase in prices, particularly for **Russian gas**.

About Moldova

- Moldova is located between **Ukraine and Romania**.
- Capital: **Chişinău**
- President: **Maia Sandu**
- Official Language : **Romanian**
- Currency : **Moldovan leu**

5. 12th World Hindi Conference to be held in Fiji (Feb. 11, 2023)

The three-day **12th World Hindi Conference** will be held in **Fiji** from February 15.

An overview of the news

- The conference is being organised by the **Ministry of External Affairs of India** in collaboration with the **Government of Fiji**.
- The main **theme of the conference** is "**Hindi - Traditional Knowledge to Artificial Intelligence**".
- The Conference will be inaugurated by Fiji's Prime Minister **Sitiveni Rabuka** along with External Affairs Minister **Dr S Jaishankar**.
- Apart from one plenary session based on the main theme, 10 parallel sessions will be held.
- Representatives of **50 countries** are likely to participate in the World Hindi Conference.
- The event will be used to promote Hindi as a global language.

World Hindi Conference

- The first World Hindi Conference was held in **Nagpur in 1975** to popularise Hindi as a global language. At that time **Indira Gandhi** was the Prime Minister of India.
- **11th World Hindi Conference** was held at **Port Louis, Mauritius** between 18-20 August' 2018.

Hindi Diwas

- Every year **14 September** is observed as **Hindi Diwas** in India.

- On this day in **1949 the Constituent Assembly** adopted **Hindi as the official language** of the country.

Republic of Fiji

- It is an archipelago consisting of around 300 islands in the **South Pacific Ocean**.
- Capital: **Suva**
- Currency: **Fijian Dollar**
- Prime Minister: **Sitiveni Rabuka**

6. US introduces bill to promote peaceful resolution of conflict between China and Dalai Lama (Feb. 11, 2023)

US lawmakers have introduced a bill in the House of Representatives and the Senate that outlines US policy for open dialogue between China and Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama.

An overview of the news:

- The Bill calls for the independence of the Tibetan people and the peaceful resolution of their differences regarding Tibet.
- Congressman Jim McGovern and Michael McCaul introduced a bill promoting the Tibet-China Conflict Legislation in the House of Representatives, while it was introduced in the Senate by Senators Jeff Merkley and Todd Young.
- In this bill, emphasis has been laid on peaceful settlement of differences through dialogue.

7. 11th India-Mongolia Joint Working Group Meeting Held in New Delhi (Feb. 11, 2023)

The 11th meeting of the India-Mongolia Joint Working Group was held on 10 February 2023 in New Delhi.

An overview of the news

- Co-chaired by Dr. Ajay Kumar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Defence, India and Brigadier General Gankhuyag Davgdorj, State Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Mongolia, the meeting of the Joint Working Group took place for the first time since the pandemic.
- Both the countries reviewed the progress of various bilateral defense cooperation initiatives and identified measures to further enhance the existing areas of cooperation.
- Both sides reviewed the progress of various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives and expressed satisfaction at the efforts made in this direction despite the restrictions imposed by the COVID pandemic.

India -Mongolia Relation

- India established diplomatic relations with Mongolia **in 1955** and upgraded relations with Mongolia to a strategic partnership.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Mongolia in 2015 upgraded it to a "**strategic partnership**" and declared it as an essential component of the '**Act East Policy**'.
- Mongolia has publicly voiced its support for India's membership for a permanent seat on the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**.
- Both the countries are members of the **Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the World Trade Organization (WTO)**.

Mongolia

- It is located in **North Central Asia**.
- Capital: **Ulaanbaatar**
- Currency: **Tugrik**
- President: **Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh**

8. South Africa declares 'State of Disaster' over electricity crisis (Feb. 10, 2023)

Recently South African President **Cyril Ramaphosa** declared a "**state of disaster**" due to the **country's power crisis** during his annual State of the Nation address in Cape Town.

An overview of the news

- This follows just 10 months after the Covid-induced "**State of Disaster**" was lifted.
- South Africa is currently facing several crises, including issues such as **power crisis, unemployment, increase in crime and violence**.
- The electricity supply company in the country for almost 10 years has become financially weak amid large-scale looting and corruption, due to which the power crisis has arisen.
- The President announced that a **Minister of Power** would be appointed to deal with the matter more effectively and promptly.
- The new minister will assume overall responsibility for overseeing all aspects of the power crisis response, including the National Energy Crisis Committee.

South Africa

- President: **Cyril Ramaphosa**

- Capitals: **Cape Town** (Legislative), **Pretoria** (Executive), **Bloemfontein** (Judicial)
- Currency : **Rand**

9. Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina inaugurates Indian LOC funded part of Joydebpur-Tongi rail line (Feb. 10, 2023)

On 10 February, Bangladesh Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina** opened traffic operations on the rail line between **Joydebpur and Tongi**.

An overview of the news

- This is the initial section of the Dhaka-Tongi-Joydebpur rail line project, funded under a concessional line of credit provided by India.
- It is a '**testimony of the strong and abiding friendship**' between the two countries.
- Operation of more trains will be possible on this section of 11 kilometre long double line rail route from Tongi to Joydebpur.
- Acting High Commissioner of India **Binoy George** was also present on the occasion.
- Hasina also inaugurated a total of 69.20 km of rail lines under three projects, including the operation of trains on **Rooppur and Shasidal routes of Bangladesh Railway**.
- The Rooppur section of the railway will facilitate transportation of goods and equipment to the **Rooppur Atomic Power Plant**.

Joydebpur-Tongi rail line Project

- **Bangladesh Railways (BR)** launched the project in **November 2012** to improve the capacity of a vital section connecting the capital with most of the country's rail network.
- The project, aimed at building the **third and fourth dual-gauge railway lines** on the Dhaka-Tongi route and the second dual-gauge line on the Tongi-Joydebpur route, is expected to cost Tk 848.60 crore.
- The 11.09 km Tongi-Joydebpur section, which connects the capital to the North-Western region, is a dual-gauge single line with a capacity to handle 44 trains per day.

Rail Links Between India and Bangladesh

- Agartala (India)- Akahaura (Bangladesh)
- Radhikapur (India)-Biroi (Bangladesh)
- Haldibari (India)-Chilahati (Bangladesh)
- Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh)
- Petrapole (India)-Benapole (Bangladesh)

10. Operation "DOST" (Feb. 10, 2023)

India is carrying out a **rescue operation named 'Operation Dost' with National Disaster Response Force personnel, essential items and medical equipment to help after the earthquake in Turkey.**

An overview of the news:

- **On February 6, 2023**, an earthquake **measuring 7.7 on the Richter scale affected Turkey and Syria**, causing massive devastation along with loss of life and damage to infrastructure in both countries.
- A field hospital has been set up by the Indian Army in Turkey's Hatay province under Operation Dost.
- **C17 Globemaster aircraft** of the Indian Air Force has been **put into operation**.
- Operation Dost is a symbol of the fact that India is a friend of Turkey, that is, both should strengthen their relations more.

Other operations carried out by the Government of India in the past:

Operation Ganga 2022

- It was operated by the Government of India to provide humanitarian aid and to evacuate Indian nationals from Ukraine amid the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Operation Dev Shakti 2021

- It was launched by the Indian Air Force and Air India to bring back Indians from Afghanistan after the Afghan capital Kabul was captured by the Taliban on 15 August 2021.

Vande bharat mission

- In the year 2020, the Government of India launched 'Vande Bharat Mission' campaign to evacuate Indians trapped in other countries due to Coronavirus.

Operation Rahat 2015

- It was launched by the Indian Navy, Air Force and Air India to rescue and bring back Indian and foreign nationals from Yemen following the intervention of Saudi Arabia-led coalition forces in the Yemen Civil War.

Operation Maitri 2015

- This operation was launched by the Government of India after the 2015 earthquake in Nepal.