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1. Israel's C-Dome Defense System Successfully Deployed in Eilat for First Time (April 15, 2024)

Israel has introduced its maritime defense system, known as the C-Dome, for the first time in Eilat, Israel's southernmost city.

An Overview of the News

- The C-Dome is essentially a naval adaptation of the Iron Dome, a renowned air defense system designed to safeguard against rocket and missile threats.
- Notably, on April 8, 2024, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) effectively intercepted a suspicious airborne target breaching Israeli airspace using the C-Dome defense mechanism.
- The C-Dome Defense System is a product of Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, a state-owned Israeli defense corporation.

About IDF:

- The Israel Defense Forces (IDF), also known as Tzahal in Hebrew, serves as the national military of the State of Israel.
- Comprising three main service branches, namely the Israeli Ground Forces, the Israeli Air Force, and the Israeli Navy, it covers various aspects of defense.
- As the singular military arm of Israel's security infrastructure, the IDF holds exclusive responsibility for national defense.

2. Roscosmos Launches 1st Angara-A5 Rocket from Vostochny Cosmodrome (April 15, 2024)

Angara-A5 successfully launched on April 11, 2024, from Vostochny Cosmodrome, replacing Proton M as Russia's heavy-lift rocket.

An Overview of the News

- The rocket attained speeds exceeding 25,000 km/hr and placed a test payload into low orbit.
- The launch coincided with Russia's Cosmonaut Day on April 12, commemorating Yuri Gagarin's historic spaceflight in 1961.
- It will replace Russia's heavy-lift rocket Proton-M, which has served in this role since the mid-1960s.

Angara-A5:

- The Angara-A5 stands 54.5 meters tall and comprises three stages, with a hefty weight of approximately 773 tonnes.

- It boasts a payload capacity of up to 24.5 tonnes to lower orbit.
- Notably, the rocket employs a more environmentally friendly fuel combination of oxygen and kerosene, departing from the toxic heptyl used in previous models.
- The Angara series, developed by the Khrunichev State Research and Production Space Centre, derives its name from the Angara River, originating from Lake Baikal in Siberia.

Project Angara Origins:

- Conceptualized in 1991 following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Project Angara aimed to diminish Russia's reliance on the Baikonur Cosmodrome, leased from Kazakhstan until 2050.

About Roscosmos:

- Headed by Director-General Yuri Ivanovich Borisov, Roscosmos operates from its headquarters in Moscow, Russia.
- Established in 1992, the agency has been instrumental in advancing Russia's space exploration endeavors.

3. Israeli Mathematician Avi Wigderson Wins 2023 ACM Turing Award (April 14, 2024)

Avi Wigderson, an Israeli mathematician and computer scientist, was awarded the 2023 ACM A.M. Turing Award.

An Overview of the News

- This award is widely regarded as the "Nobel Prize of Computing".
- He holds the position of Herbert H. Maass Professor in the School of Mathematics at the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) in Princeton, New Jersey, USA.

Reason for Award:

- Wigderson was honored for his foundational contributions to the theory of computation.
- His work significantly influenced the understanding of randomness in computation and mathematics.
- He was recognized for his intellectual leadership in theoretical computer science.
- The ACM A.M. Turing Award carries a prestigious cash prize of USD 1 million.

Contributions and Career Highlights:

- In 1986, Wigderson began his academic career as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Computer Science at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel.

- He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1987 and later became a full Professor at the Computer Science Institute of the Hebrew University.
- In 1993, he assumed the role of Chairman of the Computer Science Institute at Hebrew University.
- In 1999, he joined the faculty as a Professor at the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) in Princeton, New Jersey.

4. Appointment of Vo Thi Anh Xuan as Interim President of Vietnam (April 14, 2024)

Vo Thi Anh Xuan, Vietnam's Vice-President, aged 54, was appointed as Interim President on March 21, 2024.

An Overview of the News

- Vo Thi Anh Xuan succeeded Vo Van Thuong, who resigned from the presidency on March 20, 2024, having served since March 2023.
- Vo Thi Anh Xuan will serve as the acting president until the Vietnamese National Assembly (NA) elects a new president.

Previous Interim Presidency:

- In the 2021-2026 term, Vo Thi Anh Xuan previously held the role of Interim President in January 2023, following the resignation of Nguyen Xuan Phuc. Vo Van Thuong was subsequently elected as President.

Background of Vo Thi Anh Xuan:

- Vo Thi Anh Xuan originates from Tinh Bien District, An Giang Province, Vietnam.
- She is an alternate member of the 11th Party Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), and a member of the 12th and 13th Party Central Committee. Additionally, she is a delegate to the 14th and 15th National Assembly.
- Vo Thi Anh Xuan was elected as Vice President of Vietnam in April 2021, becoming the youngest Vice President at the age of 51.

About Vietnam:

- Prime Minister - Pham Minh Chinh
- Capital - Hanoi
- Currency - Vietnamese dong

5. Bjarni Benediktsson Becomes Iceland's Prime Minister, Replacing Katrín Jakobsdóttir (April 14, 2024)

Benediktsson took office as Prime Minister of Iceland on April 9, 2024, succeeding Katrín Jakobsdóttir.

An Overview of the News

- Before his appointment as PM, Benediktsson served as Minister for Foreign Affairs from October 2023.
- He previously held the position of Prime Minister from January to November 2017.
- Benediktsson's career began as a District Court attorney in 1998, followed by his election to the Icelandic parliament, Althingi, representing Southwest Iceland in 2003.
- Since 2009, he has led the Independence Party.
- Benediktsson also served as Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs from 2013 to 2017 and resumed the position from November 30, 2017, until October 14, 2023.

Katrín Jakobsdóttir's Contributions:

- Katrín Jakobsdóttir, the second woman to hold the position of PM in Iceland after Jóhanna Sigurðardótti, served as PM since 2017.
- She resigned to pursue the presidency and also stepped down as Chairperson of the Left-Green Movement.
- Jakobsdóttir has been a Member of Althingi for the Reykjavík North Constituency since 2007.
- Her previous ministerial roles include Minister of Education, Science, and Culture, as well as Minister of Nordic Cooperation, from 2009 to 2013.

Iceland's Current Landscape:

- Iceland's current President is Guðni Th. Jóhannesson.
- Reykjavík serves as the capital.
- The currency used is the Icelandic Króna (ISK).

6. Simon Harris becomes the youngest new Prime Minister of Ireland (April 11, 2024)

Simon Harris, aged 37 and leader of the Fine Gael party, elected as the new Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of the Republic of Ireland by members of the Dáil (Irish parliament).

An Overview of the News

- Officially installed as Taoiseach on 9th April 2024 after receiving the seal of office from President Michael D. Higgins.
- Succeeds Leo Varadkar, who resigned as Fine Gael leader and Taoiseach in March 2024.

Key Points:

- Harris becomes the youngest Prime Minister in the history of the Republic of Ireland.
- His tenure will extend until the general election scheduled for March 2025.
- Members of the Dáil voted 88 to 69 in favor of Harris as Taoiseach.
- The 3-party coalition government (Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, and the Green Party) has been in power since 2020.
- This marks the third change in Taoiseach within less than four years for the coalition government.

About Simon Harris:

- Elected as the youngest Teachta Dála (TD), a member of Dáil Éireann, in 2011 at the age of 24.
- Held ministerial positions in the Irish government since 2016.

7. RBZ Launches Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG) Currency Backed by Gold and Foreign Reserves (April 9, 2024)

The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) has launched a new currency called "Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG)," which is backed by gold and foreign currencies, aiming to replace the local currency, Zimbabwe dollars (ZW\$) Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) dollar.

An Overview of the News

- RBZ has instructed banks to convert existing Zimbabwe dollar balances into ZiG starting from April 5, 2024.
- Circulation of ZiG notes and coins will commence on April 30, 2024.
- Banks will continue accepting ZW\$ deposits for 21 days after April 5, 2024.

About Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG):

- ZiG is backed by a combination of foreign currency and precious metals, predominantly gold.
- The initial exchange rate of ZiG is set at 13.56 ZiG per US dollar (USD).
- Denominations of ZiG notes and coins include 1ZiG, 2ZiG, 5ZiG, 10ZiG, 20ZiG, 50ZiG, 100ZiG, and 200ZiG.

Background on Currency and Economic Context:

- Zimbabwe adopted the US dollar in 2009 to combat hyperinflation.
- The new Zimbabwe dollar (Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) dollar) was introduced in 2019.

- RTGS dollar experienced a significant devaluation, losing 75% of its value in 2024 and nearly 100% against the US dollar in 2023.

About Zimbabwe:

- President - Emmerson Mnangagwa
- Capital - Harare
- Currency - Zimbabwe Gold (ZiG)

8. Valerie Adams Named International Ambassador for TCS World 10K Bengaluru 2024 (April 8, 2024)

Valerie Adams, the renowned shot putter and multiple-time World Champion, has been appointed as the International Event Ambassador for the 16th edition of the Tata Consultancy Services World 10K Bengaluru.

An Overview of the News

- Adams, a four-time World Champion and two-time Olympic medalist from New Zealand, is celebrated as one of the most successful female shot putters in history.
- With a remarkable Olympic record, Adams has secured two gold medals (2008, 2012), one silver (2016), and one bronze medal (2020) across five appearances.

The World 10K Bengaluru:

- The World 10K Bengaluru, also recognized as the TCS World 10K Bengaluru due to sponsorship from Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), is an annual road running event held in Bangalore, India.
- Established in 2008, this 10-kilometer competition typically occurs towards the end of May each year.
- Initially sponsored by Sunfeast, a brand under ITC Limited, the event has evolved over the years.
- Participants from various backgrounds come together to compete in this renowned race, showcasing their endurance and athleticism.

9. Peter Pellegrini wins in Slovakia's Presidential Election (April 8, 2024)

Peter Pellegrini, a candidate backed by Slovakia's nationalist-leftist government, won the presidential election, strengthening the influence of Prime Minister Robert Fico, who holds pro-Russian views.

An Overview of the News

- Fico, serving his fourth term as prime minister, has shifted Slovakia's foreign policy toward Russia and reformed criminal law and media regulations, raising concerns about the rule of law.

- Pellegrini received 53.26% of the vote, while his pro-West rival Ivan Korčič received 46.73%, with almost all voting districts reporting.
- Although the powers of the Slovak President are limited, he can veto laws and nominate judges to the Constitutional Court, which could potentially influence political conflicts over Fico's reforms, especially regarding corruption penalties.
- Fico's coalition, which also includes Pellegrini's party, halted official arms shipments to Ukraine, reflecting their stance against Western involvement in the conflict.

About Slovakia

- It is officially known as the Slovak Republic, located in Central Europe.
- It is bordered by Poland to the north, Ukraine to the east, Hungary to the south, Austria to the west and the Czech Republic to the northwest.
- Slovakia is a landlocked country, meaning it has no direct access to the sea.
- Its neighboring countries create a diverse geopolitical landscape within Central Europe.
- The borders with Poland, Ukraine, Hungary, Austria and the Czech Republic define the territorial extent of Slovakia.

Capital - Bratislava

Official language - Slovak

Prime Minister - Robert Fico

Currency - Euro

10. Romania unveils world's most powerful laser (April 6, 2024)

Developed by a research center in Romania as part of the EU Infrastructure Extreme Light Infrastructure (ELI) project.

An Overview of the News

- Operated by French company Thales, this laser claims to have revolutionary potential in a variety of fields, from healthcare to space exploration.
- At the core of this groundbreaking laser technology lies chirped-pulse amplification (CPA), a method developed by Mourou and Strickland.
- CPA facilitates the amplification of laser power while ensuring safe intensity levels by stretching and compressing the ultra-short laser pulse.
- This innovative technology achieves unprecedented levels of intensity, opening the door to myriad applications such as corrective eye surgery and advanced precision instruments in industrial operations.

Nobel Prize Winner Contribution:

- Gerard Mourou and Donna Strickland were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2018 for their pioneering work in laser technology.
- His inventions have led to revolutionary advancements by enabling precision instruments and applications.

Possible Applications:

- Nuclear waste treatment: Laser technology can reduce the radioactivity period of nuclear waste, increasing the safety and manageability of disposal.
- Space debris removal: Laser technology can be deployed to clear space debris, reducing the risk of collisions with satellites and spacecraft.
- Medical Advances: The precision of lasers promises breakthroughs in medical treatments, including targeted cancer treatments and advanced surgical techniques.

Involvement of the ELI Project and Thales Group:

- Part of the European Union Infrastructure Extreme Light Infrastructure (ELI) project, which aims to push laser technology boundaries.
- Operated by Thales Group, a leading global provider of aerospace, defense and security solutions, headquartered in France.