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1. India, Cyprus signs three agreement during S. Jaishankar visits to Nicosia (Dec. 29, 2022)

Nicosia on 29 December 2022. This is the first visit of S. Jaishankar to Cyprus.

External Affairs Minister **S Jaishankar** who is on a three day visit (29-31 December 2022) to Cyprus signed a number of agreements with his Cypriot counterpart **Ioannis Kasoulides** in the capital **Nicosia** on 29 December 2022. This is the first visit of S. Jaishankar to Cyprus.

Three agreement signed

Both the ministers signed agreements to;

- Increase defence and military cooperation between the two countries ,
- Letter of Intent on immigration and mobility to check illegal migrations , as well as the agreement on
- Cyprus joining the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

S. Jaishankar also released the **commemorative stamp** on the **75 years of Indian Independence** and **60 years of establishing diplomatic ties with Cyprus**.

The minister said India and Cyprus were collectively working on pressing issues such as food and energy security, maritime security, as well as on sustainable environment.

During his three-day visit to Cyprus, Jaishankar will call **Annita Demetriou**, President of the Cyprus Parliament's House of Representatives.

He will also address the business and investment community of Cyprus, apart from an interaction with the Indian Diaspora.

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: **Nicos Anastasiades**

2. US Vice-President Kamala Harris names Indian-American Rajeev Badyal to the National Space Council Advisory Group (Dec. 29, 2022)

The American Vice President Kamala Harris has named Indian American Rajeev Badyal

The American Vice President **Kamala Harris** has named Indian American **Rajeev Badyal** to the National Space Council's Users Advisory Group (UAG). The UAG is tasked to maintain a robust and responsible US space enterprise and preserve space for current and future generations. The UAG is headed by US Air Force Rtd General Lester Lyles.

Rajeev Badyal is currently the vice-president of **Project Kuiper** of Amazon. Under Project Kuiper a number of Low Earth Orbit satellites will be launched by Amazon that will provide low-latency, high-speed broadband connectivity to unserved and underserved communities around the world.

The UAG will provide the National Space Council advice and recommendations on matters related to space policy and strategy, government policies, laws, regulations, treaties, international instruments, programmes, and practices across the civil, commercial, international, and national security space sectors.

Kamala Harris

She is the first **woman to be elected as the Vice-President of the United States.**

She was elected as the Vice President in 2020 and Joe Biden was elected as the President of the United States of America.

Her mother Shyamala Gopalan was a Tamilian who immigrated to the United States and married a Jamaican Donald Harris.

3. Benjamin Netanyahu sworn in as the Prime minister of Israel for a record 6th time (Dec. 29, 2022)

Benjamin Netanyahu sworn in as the Prime minister of Israel for a record 6th time

Benjamin Netanyahu was sworn in as the Prime Minister of Israel for the **sixth time** on 29 December 2022. 73 years old Netanyahu was ousted from power 18 months ago. He replaced Yair Lapid whose party failed to win a majority in the Israeli Parliamentary election held on 1 November 2022. This was the 5th general election in Israel in the past four years.

The longest serving Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu heads a coalition government which is considered to be one of the most right wing governments in the history of the country.

The Israeli Parliament is called the **Knesset**. It is a unicameral house which has a term of **four years**. It has 120 members.

In the 120 member Israeli Parliament called as Knesset, Netanyahu has the support of 64 members. It included his **Likud party** supported by the ultra-orthodox Shas, United Torah Judaism, the far-right Otzma Yehudit, Religious Zionist Party, and Noam.

However the controversial leader is already facing protest in the country. During his speech to the Knesset thousands of people gathered outside the Knesset to protest against his government.

The Israeli Parliament is called the Knesset. It is a unicameral house which has a term of four years. It has 120 members.

State of Israel

It is a small country located in West Asia. It is the only Jewish nation in the world with the Jews constituting $\frac{3}{4}$ population of the country.

Israel was created by dividing the Palestine region into two. The Arab part was called Palestine and the Jewish part was called Israel.

It came into being on 14 May 1948.

Capital: Jerusalem (But it is not recognised internationally). The Government of India also doesn't accept Jerusalem as the capital of Israel .

Currency: Israeli shekel

Parliament: **Knesset**

President: **Isaac Herzog**

4. India-assisted Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Project handed over to Bhutan's Druk Green Power Corp (Dec. 29, 2022)

India-assisted Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Project handed over to Bhutan's Druk Green Power Corp

The **720 MW Mangdechhu Hydropower Project** built with India's assistance in **Bhutan** was **handed over** to **Bhutan's Druk Green Power Corporation (DGPC)** on 27 December.

Important facts

- It was handed over during a program held in the capital of Bhutan which was attended by **Lyonpo Loknath Sharma**, Bhutanese Minister for Economic Affairs and **Sudhakar Dalela**, Ambassador of India to Bhutan.
- With the handing over of this project, India and Bhutan have successfully completed four major hydroelectric projects.

About Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Power Project

- This 720 MW Project was jointly inaugurated by Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** and his Bhutanese counterpart **Lotay Tshering** in 2019.
- The Mangdechhu hydroelectric power plant has been established on the **Mangdechhu River** in the **Trongsa district of central Bhutan**.
- The commissioning of the project has increased Bhutan's Electrical Power Generation Capacity by **44 per cent** and it is now at **2,326 Mega Watts**.

- It is a benchmark hydroelectric project completed in an efficient manner at optimum cost, while maintaining high quality and performance standards.
- Since commissioning, the project has generated over **9000 million units of energy**, reducing emissions by **2.4 million tonnes** annually.
- The project received the **Brunel Medal 2020** from the Institute of Civil Engineers, London.
- It was recognized for its excellence in civil engineering and for its social and environmental credentials.
- The project increased Bhutan's hydropower revenue by **31 percent in 2020**.

5. India grants permission to NEA to export additional 40 megawatts of electricity (Dec. 29, 2022)

Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA)

India has allowed the **Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA)** to export an additional **40 MW** of power from two more hydroelectric projects.

Important facts

- The **Central Electricity Authority of India** has approved the sale of surplus power from two more hydro projects - **25 MW Kabeli B-1 and 20 MW Lower Modi** - at competitive rates in the Indian energy market.
- With this, **452.6 MW** of surplus power can be exported to India from **10 hydropower projects**.
- NEA has stopped the export of surplus power to India from 19 December as generation from river-based hydroelectric power stations has reduced.
- NEA has generated a net income of **Rs 11.16 billion** by trading **1.36 billion units of surplus power** at a competitive rate in the Indian energy market till 18 December.
- The current electricity demand of Nepal stands at around **1,680 MW**, while the domestic production is **1,000 MW**.

6. India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement comes into force (Dec. 29, 2022)

India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement comes into force

India, Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement comes into force from 29 December, 2022.

Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)

- India and Australia signed the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) on the **2nd of April 2022**.
- ECTA is the **first trade agreement of India with a developed country** after more than a decade.
- The agreement covers cooperation in the entire gamut of bilateral economic and commercial relations between the two friendly countries.
- This will benefit **labour-intensive sectors** of India such as gems and jewellery, textiles, leather, furniture, food and agriculture products, engineering products and medical devices.
- On the other hand, India has granted preferential access to Australia on more than **70 per cent of its tariff lines**, mainly in raw materials.
- As a result of this agreement, 10 lakh jobs are expected to be created in the country.

India-Australia Trade Relations

- Australia is the **17th largest trading partner** of India and India is Australia's **9th largest trading partner**.
- India-Australia bilateral trade in goods and services is pegged at **US\$ 27.5 billion in 2021**.
- India's merchandise exports to Australia grew by **135% between 2019 and 2021**.
- **India's exports to Australia** - Manufactured goods such as petroleum, medicaments, diamonds, jewellery, railway coaches and vehicles, milled rice and herbicides.
- **India's imports to Australia** - 82% of its imports from Australia are coal, gold, copper ore, aluminium oxide, liquified natural gas, manganese ore, aluminium waste, pigments, lentils, etc.

7. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to visit Cyprus, Austria from December 29 to 3 January (Dec. 28, 2022)

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to visit Cyprus, Austria from December 29 to 3 January

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, External Affairs Minister **S Jaishankar** will visit the Republic of Cyprus and Austria from December 29 to 3 January 2023.

Minister S.Jaishankar will be in the Republic of Cyprus from December 29 to December 31, 2022. This year marks **60 years of diplomatic relations between India and Cyprus**.

During his visit, Jaishankar will meet Cyprus foreign minister **Ioannis Kasoulides**. He will also address the Cyprus business and investment community and interact with the Indian diaspora.

Jaishankar visit to Austria

In Austria, the External affairs minister will meet Austrian Federal Minister for European and International Affairs, **Alexander Schallenberg**. This will be the first visit of an Indian foreign minister to Austria in the last 27 years. 2023 marks **75 years of diplomatic relations between India and Austria**.

S.Jaishankar will also meet the foreign ministers of Austria, Czech Republic foreign minister Jan **Lipavský** and Slovakia foreign minister **Rastislav Káčer** who will be there in the Austrian capital **Vienna** for the **Slavkov format meeting**.

Slavkov is a place in the Czech Republic. The Slavkov format was created in 2015. It is a cooperation format between **Austria, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic**.

During his visit, Jaishankar will call on Austrian **Chancellor Karl Nehammer**. He will also meet **Rafael Mariano Grossi**, Director General of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Republic of Cyprus

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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: **Nicos Anastasiades**

8. 'Bomb cyclone' hits US, more than 200 million people affected (Dec. 28, 2022)

'Bomb cyclone' hits US, more than 200 million people affected

Recently a powerful "**Bomb Cyclone**" has hit the **United States**, affecting at least 200 million people. At least **64 people have died**.

Important facts

- Temperatures are predicted to **plunge -57 degrees Celsius** in certain locations due to the largest winter storm to hit the country in decades.
- Temperatures dropped across the United States and heavy snow caused power outages in cities, thousands of flights were cancelled and people were stuck in their homes without food.
- New York's **Erie County**, which includes **Buffalo**, is one of the areas most affected by the winter storm, which stretches from the **Canadian to the Mexican border**.

What is a 'Bomb Cyclone'?

- Bomb cyclone is used by meteorologists to denote a **mid-latitude cyclone** that rapidly intensifies.
- It is a giant winter storm that hits the coast and brings **strong winds, flooding, snow and ice.**
- It consists of a combination of rapidly decreasing pressure and **extreme cold.**
- This particular storm is the most explosive ever seen on the **East Coast.**
- It is called a bomb cyclone because in this the **storm strengthens** explosively while the pressure subsides.

Formation of 'Bomb Cyclone'

- Storms form when a **mass of low pressure air** (warm air mass) meets a **high pressure mass** (cold air mass).
- The lower the pressure, the stronger the storm.
- This occurs when a mid-latitude cyclone intensifies rapidly, dropping at least **24 millibars** (millibar measures atmospheric pressure) in 24 hours.
- This rapidly increases the pressure difference, or gradient, between the two air masses, causing the winds to be stronger.

9. Former Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen sentenced to 11 years in prison for money laundering and bribery (Dec. 26, 2022)

Former Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen sentenced to 11 years in prison for money laundering and bribery

The **Maldives criminal court** on 25th December sentenced former president **Abdulla Yameen** to **11 years in jail** and fined him \$5 million after he was found guilty of **money laundering and accepting bribe.**

Important facts

- The court found Yameen guilty of accepting money to lease an island owned by the government.
- The court sentenced the former leader to seven years in the money laundering case and four years in the bribery case.
- Yameen was accused that he had given permission to develop a resort on **V Ara's land** by taking money during his tenure.
- Yameen was accused of misusing his position to get the Ara's land to ex-parliamentarian Yusuf Nai by taking **US \$ 1 million.**

- Yameen was also fined US \$ 5 million in this case.
- According to the court's decision, Yameen will have to deposit the fine amount to the **Maldives Inland Revenue Authority (MIRA)** within six months.

About Maldives

- It is also called **Maldiv Islands**, an independent island country in the north-central Indian Ocean.
- It extends more than 510 miles (820 km) from north to south and 80 miles (130 km) from east to west.
- Basis of economy - **fisheries, tourism**
- Industries - handicraft or cottage including the making of coir (coconut-husk fibre) and coir products, fish canning, and boatbuilding.
- Capital - **Male**
- President - **Ibrahim Mohamed Solih**
- Official Language - **Dhivehi (Maldivian)**
- Official Religion - **Islam**
- Currency - **Rufiyaa**

10. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' appointed as the Prime Minister of Nepal for the third time (Dec. 25, 2022)

Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' appointed as the Prime Minister of Nepal for the third time

President **Bidya Devi Bhandari** of Nepal has appointed **Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'** as the new prime minister of Nepal on 25 December 2022. Prachand will become the prime minister for the third time.

In the recently held parliamentary election no party got any clear majority. Prachand's **Maoist Center Party** won 32 seats in Nepal's 275-member House of Representatives.

He has formed a coalition government with the support of the Communist Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML) party, Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), Rastriya Prajatantra Party and other smaller parties. Prachanda has the support of 165 lawmakers in the 275-member House of Representatives.

According to the deal with the UML party he will remain prime minister for the **first half of the five-year term** and later will be replaced by a candidate from the UML party.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal will replace **Sher Bahadur Deuba** of the Nepali Congress party as the Prime Minister.

Nepal's Parliament

The Federal Parliament of Nepal is called **Sanghiya Sansad**. It is a bicameral house.

The Upper house is called the **National Assembly or Rastriya Sabha**. It consists of 59 members. It is a permanent body and the term of a member of the house is **six years**.

The lower house is called the **House of Representative or Pratinidhi Sabha**. It consists of 275 members with a term of five years.

Currency of Nepal: **Nepalese Rupees**

Capital: **Kathmandu**

President: Vidya **Devi Bhandari**