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### **1. 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.

### **2. 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

**3. 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 Sigurðardóttir, 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).

**4. NTPC Launches Latest Edition of GEM Initiative: Empowering Girls Across India ( April 13, 2024 )**

NTPC Limited, formerly National Thermal Power Corporation, unveiled the latest edition of its flagship Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, the Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM), on April 9, 2024.

**An Overview of the News**

- The new phase of GEM will encompass approximately 3000 underprivileged children across 42 locations of NTPC, marking an expansion to benefit a total of 10,000 girls.
- This expansion aligns with the Government of India's "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" campaign, aiming to foster girl empowerment and combat gender inequality.

**Program Progress:**

- Since its inception, GEM has facilitated the empowerment of 7,424 girls, with a consistent increase in participation each year.
- In 2023, the initiative saw 2,707 girls engaging in workshops across 40 NTPC locations spanning 16 states in India.

**Origins and Evolution:**

- GEM originated as a pilot project in 2018, initially spanning three locations. Over the years, it has evolved into a nationwide endeavor.
- GEM aims to empower girls as agents of change, capable of influencing not only their own lives but also those of their families, communities, and the nation at large.

**About NTPC Limited:**

- NTPC Limited is a Central Public Sector Undertaking (CPSU) operating under the Ministry of Power.

- Recognized as a Maharatna company since 2010, NTPC is helmed by Gurdeep Singh, serving as Chairman & Managing Director.
- The company's headquarters are situated in New Delhi, Delhi, with its establishment dating back to 1975.

## **5. 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.

## **6. Paradip Port Achieves Highest Cargo Handling Status in india ( April 12, 2024 )**

The Paradip Port Authority in Odisha overtook the Deendayal Port Authority in Kandla to become India's top major port for cargo handling in the fiscal year 2023-2024.

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

- Paradip Port handled a record-breaking 145.38 million metric tons (MMT) of cargo.
- With a growth rate of 7.4%, this was a noteworthy gain of 10.02 million metric tons over the previous year.

- Paradip Port gained the highest productivity among all major ports in India.
- Observed an increase in berth productivity, which demonstrated operational excellence, from 31,050 MT to 33,014 MT.
- Kept the lowest tariff rates in the nation when compared to all other ports.
- Acted strategically by putting a three-year freeze on cargo handling rates beginning in 2022 as part of its corporate development plan.

**History and Administration of Paradip Port:**

- The Government of India took control of it in 1965 after it was first founded by the Odisha government in 1962.
- Proclaimed a major port on April 18, 1966, and contributed significantly to the maritime infrastructure of India.
- Functions as a separate entity in accordance with the Major Port Trusts Act of 1963.
- Administered by a Board of Trustees appointed by the Government of India, functioning under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways.

**7. Sittwe Port Takeover by India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) ( April 9, 2024 )**

The Ministry of External Affairs of India has given its approval to India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) to assume control of all operations at the Sittwe port situated in Myanmar's Rakhine province.

**An Overview of the News**

- This move marks Sittwe port as the second international port under Indian control, following the Shahid Beheshti Port in Chabahar, Iran.
- Unlike Chabahar, where India controls two terminals, India will have full control over operations at the Sittwe Port.
- The deal includes a long-term lease arrangement, renewable every three years, and IPGL will mobilize resources to further develop the port.

**Sittwe Port Development and Significance:**

- The development of Sittwe port is part of the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project, aimed at enhancing connectivity between Myanmar and India's northeastern states.
- The project involves connecting Sittwe port in Myanmar with Mizoram state in India through multimodal transit connectivity on the Kaladan River.
- India provided a \$500 million grant to Myanmar for the construction of the port.
- The port was inaugurated by the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal on May 9, 2023, marking a significant milestone in India-Myanmar connectivity.

- Sittwe port plays a crucial role in the development strategy for India's northeastern states, aiming to reduce transportation and logistic costs.

**Connectivity Enhancements**

- The Kaladan Multimodal project includes the development of 158 km of waterways on the Kaladan River from Sittwe Port to Paletwa in Myanmar, along with a road network of 109 km from Paletwa to Zorinpui on the India-Myanmar border in Mizoram.
- This infrastructure development is expected to significantly enhance connectivity in India's northeastern states, particularly Mizoram and Tripura.

**Impact on Tripura and Mizoram Connectivity:**

- The project will facilitate the transportation of goods from Shyam Prasad Mukherjee Port in Kolkata to Sittwe Port, then to Teknaf Port in Bangladesh, and finally to Sabroom in Tripura, reducing transportation time and logistics costs.
- It is anticipated to benefit Tripura and Mizoram by improving access to goods and services, thereby fostering economic growth in the region.

**Threats to Sittwe Port:**

- The Sittwe port's development faces potential threats from ongoing conflicts in Myanmar, particularly the civil war between the military government and insurgent groups like the Arakan Army in the Rakhine state.
- The instability in the region poses uncertainties regarding the fate of the Sittwe project, especially if the rebels gain control of the Rakhine province, jeopardizing the port's operations and security.

**8. 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)

**9. 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.

**10. 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