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1. PM Modi Unveils Cutting-edge Medical Center in Thimphu (March 27, 2024)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bhutanese counterpart Tshering Tobgay jointly inaugurated Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck Mother and Child Hospital in Bhutan's capital Thimphu.

An Overview of the News

- This hospital is an example of the strong development cooperation between India and Bhutan.
- The hospital has a state-of-the-art 150-bed facility built with Indian assistance.
- Built in two phases, the first phase costing ₹22 crore became operational in 2019, while the second phase, completed recently, was undertaken as part of Bhutan's 12th Five Year Plan at a cost of ₹119 crore.

Strengthening Bilateral Ties

- Prime Minister Modi's visit aims to bolster the unique and long-standing friendship between India and Bhutan.
- During his visit, PM Modi met with Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and held talks with Prime Minister Tobgay.

Recognition and Support

- The King of Bhutan confers the prestigious 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo' on PM Modi, making him the first foreign Head of Government to receive this honor.
- India pledges ₹10,000 crore in support to Bhutan over the next five years, reinforcing the enduring partnership between the two nations.

About Bhutan:

Capital- Thimphu

King - Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk

Currencies - Bhutanese Ngultrum, Indian Rupee

Official language- Dzongkha

2. Luis Montenegro Appointed as Prime Minister of Portugal (March 27, 2024)

Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa announced the appointment of Luis Montenegro, leader of the Social Democratic Party (PSD), as the country's new prime minister.

An Overview of the News

- The decision followed political consultations on forming a new government, during which the president consulted with parties and coalitions that secured seats in the March 10 elections for the Assembly of the Republic.
- Montenegro's party, the Democratic Alliance (AD), emerged victorious in terms of seats, leading to his appointment as prime minister.

Election Results and Parliamentary Composition

- Montenegro's AD defeated the incumbent Socialist Party (PS) in the March 10 elections but secured only 80 seats in the 230-seat parliament, falling short of a majority.
- The Socialist Party won 78 seats in the elections.

Commencement of the New Government

- The new government, headed by Luis Montenegro, is scheduled to assume office on April 2.

Montenegro's Political Journey

- Luis Montenegro's political career began in the early 2000s when he joined the PSD.
- He swiftly climbed the party ranks and held various positions within the party over the years.
- In 2011, Montenegro was elected to the Portuguese Parliament as a representative for Aveiro, a city situated on the Atlantic Ocean coast.

3. Simon Harris: Ireland's Youngest Prime Minister (March 26, 2024)

37 year old Simon Harris is going to become the youngest Prime Minister of Ireland.

An Overview of the News

- He came into limelight after the unexpected demise of Leo Varadkar.
- Harris, a prominent figure in Irish politics, emerged as the only candidate to be the next Prime Minister of Ireland.
- At 37, he is set to make history as Ireland's youngest Prime Minister.

Simon Harris's Political and Ministerial Experience:

- A member of Fine Gael, Harris has been actively involved in politics since his youth, and has risen through the ranks of the party's youth organisation.
- Despite not completing her undergraduate degree, she increasingly demonstrated her commitment to politics, holding various positions within Fine Gael.

- Notably, Harris held the position of Health Minister of Ireland from 2016 to mid-2020, and played a key role in managing the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic during that period.
- Currently serving as Minister for Further and Higher Education, her time in these ministerial roles has honed her leadership skills and policy acumen.

Strategic Approach and Social Media Presence:

- With 92,000 followers and 1.8 million likes, Harris' skillful use of TikTok has attracted attention.
- It serves as a platform to promote their political agenda and connect with voters.
- Harris aims to rejuvenate Fine Gael's appeal by taking advantage of his youth and crisis management skills.
- His campaign will emphasize key policy priorities while addressing internal concerns of the party.

4. AUKUS Partnership: Australia building SSN-AUKUS Submarines (March 26, 2024)

The AUKUS partnership has been established by the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia to enhance trilateral security and develop nuclear-powered submarines for the Royal Australian Navy.

An Overview of the News

- This historic agreement represents a major step in defense cooperation between the three countries.

Submarine Construction:

- Collaboration between Australia's ASC and UK-based BAE Systems to build submarines.
- Based on British design incorporating American weapons systems.
- Australia aims to operate eight nuclear-powered submarines by 2050.
- **Capabilities:**
 - Submarines equipped for intelligence, surveillance, undersea warfare and attack operations.
 - Increased privacy and quiet compared to Australia's existing diesel-powered fleet.
 - Focus on maximizing interoperability between AUKUS partners.
- **Funding:**
 - Australia has pledged 4.6 billion Australian dollars to British industry for the SSN-AUKUS submarines.

- Significant investment from all AUKUS partners to ensure the success of the programme.
- Trilateral industrial bases will be converged and integrated to support SSN cooperation.

Regional Concerns:

- China has expressed concern over a potential arms race in the Asia-Pacific region due to the AUKUS agreement.
- China's military modernization and assertiveness towards the South China Sea and Taiwan are highlighted.

General Information:

- This is the first time that a country has acquired the capability to build nuclear-powered submarines and continue production indefinitely.
- The Australian funding for British industry comes after a defense and security agreement with the UK aims to tackle issues such as growing Chinese involvement in the South China Sea and the South Pacific.
- Taiwan has spotted 36 Chinese military aircraft around the island, representing the highest number in 2024, which coincides with the unveiling of the AUKUS partnership.

5. Operation Indravati Begins: Evacuation of Indian Citizens from Haiti (March 23, 2024)

Operation Indravati was launched to evacuate Indian citizens from Haiti amid increasing gang violence.

An Overview of the News

- Armed gangs have attacked the suburbs of **Port-au-Prince**, prompting India to intervene.
- The evacuation plan includes relocating Indian nationals to the Dominican Republic.
- More than **15 Americans are being airlifted to Santo Domingo.**
- Haiti is facing a crisis exacerbated by gang violence following the **2010 earthquake.**
- Gangs are **carrying out attacks, burning police stations and spreading anarchy.**
- The airport was closed, prisoners were released, a state of emergency was declared, and a curfew was imposed.
- **Gang leader Jimmy Charizier** demanded the resignation of acting Prime Minister Ariel Henry. Ariel Henry announced his decision to step down but remained in power. Henry is currently in exile in Puerto Rico.

About Haiti:

- Haiti, located in the Caribbean, shares the island of Hispaniola with the **Dominican Republic** to its east.
- Despite ongoing efforts to recover from the devastating 2010 earthquake, Haiti has preserved many sites dating back to the early 19th century.
- These sites include the **Citadelle La Ferriere**, which sits atop a mountain and serves as a fortress.
- The **Sans-Souci Palace**, the Baroque former royal residence of **King Henry I**, is located in nearby ruins, offering a glimpse of Haiti's historic past.

Capital - **Port-au-Prince**

Official languages - **Haitian Creole, French**

Currency - **Haitian Gourde**

Continent - **North America**

6. New Zealand Implements Ban on Disposable E-Cigarettes and Vapes (March 23, 2024)

Following the recent repeal of legislation aimed at phasing out tobacco smoking, the New Zealand government has implemented a ban on disposable e-cigarettes and vapes.

An Overview of the News**Government action:**

- To prevent sales to minors, fines for retailers selling to those under 18 will increase.
- Retailers may face fines of up to NZ\$100,000, while individuals can be fined NZ\$1,000 for the same offence.

Youth Safety Measures:

- The rules also restrict the sale of e-cigarettes with packaging or branding that appeals to youth, with the aim of preventing youth from being attracted to vaping.

Reasoning behind the ban:

- Associate Health Minister Casey Costello says e-cigarettes are recognized as a smoking cessation tool, but the ban is intended to discourage minors from taking up the vaping habit.

Global trend against disposable vapes:

- United Kingdom's ban: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced a ban on disposable vapes in 2022, citing concerns about long-term effects and youth addiction.

- Australia's ban: Joining the global movement to address the popularity and potential health risks of vaping among youth, Australia also implemented a ban on disposable single-use vapes this year.

7. PM Modi Receives Bhutan's 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo' Award (March 23, 2024)

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has created history by becoming the **inaugural non-Bhutanese recipient of Bhutan's prestigious 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo'**.

An Overview of the News

- PM Modi received this prestigious honor from **King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck** of Bhutan during his two-day official visit to Thimphu.

Importance of Award:

- The 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo' is Bhutan's premier civilian honor recognizing lifetime achievements.
- It has the distinction of being the highest civilian honor given in Bhutan.
- This prestigious award takes precedence over all other orders, decorations and medals of the country.
- To date, only **four distinguished individuals** have been honored with this prestigious award.

Previous Award Winners:

- Her Royal Queen Grandmother **Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck** was awarded this honor in 2008.
- The 68th Je Khenpo of Bhutan, His **Holiness Je Thrizur Tenzin Dendup**, also received the award in 2008.
- His Holiness Je Khenpo **Trulku Ngawang Jigme Choedra** was awarded the award in 2018.
- Recipients include **Je Khenpo**, who holds the position of chief abbot of Bhutan's central monastic body.

About Bhutan

Capital- **Thimphu**

King - **Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk**

Currencies - **Bhutanese Ngultrum, Indian Rupee**

Official language- **Dzongkha**

8. Vaughan Gething elected the first black leader of a European country (March 21, 2024)

Vaughan Gething, the current Economic Minister of Wales, has been elected as the new leader of the Welsh Labor Party.

An Overview of the News

- Vaughan Gething has become the first black person to lead a European country.

Early Life :

- Gething was born in 1974 in Zambia.
- Despite relocating to England due to discrimination, he was educated at Aberystwyth and Cardiff universities.
- Gething worked as a trade union lawyer and became the first black president of both the Welsh Trades Union Congress and the Welsh National Union of Students.

Vaughan Gething's political journey:

- After joining the Welsh legislature in 2011, Gething became the first black minister in any of Britain's devolved countries in 2013.
- Notably, he served as Wales's Health Minister and later as its Economy Minister during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Gething won a close election with 51.7% of the vote to become the new leader of Welsh Labour, following his recent tenure as Economy Minister.

About Wales:

- This country is a part of the United Kingdom.
- Located in the western part of Great Britain, Wales is bordered by:
 - Irish Sea to the north and west
 - England in the East
 - Bristol Channel to the south
 - Celtic Sea to the south-west

Capital - **Cardiff**

Official languages - **Welsh, English**

Currency - **Pound Sterling**

9. Pokhara named as Nepal's new Tourism Capital (March 20, 2024)

On 17 March, the Government of Nepal officially designated Pokhara as the country's tourism capital during a ceremony at Barahi Ghat.

An Overview of the News

- Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' presided over the event, which featured cultural performances by renowned artists.
- Nepal announced to seek China's assistance in the development of Pokhara International Airport, which was constructed by China and was considered ready for commercial operations in January 2022.
- Despite operations, it is not being used as a result of disputes between Nepal and China over the airport's status under the Belt and Road Initiative.
- Concurrently, Nepal is preparing to seek Chinese assistance to build the Nepal-China Industrial Friendship Park, spread over about 4,000 acres in Jhapa in eastern Nepal, and potentially extending up to 6,600 acres along the Nepal-Bengal border.
- The Industrial Friendship Park and the 327-MW Upper Marsyangdi hydropower project are expected to be formalized at the Kathmandu investment summit on April 29-30.

About Pokhara

- It is known for its natural beauty and serene environment, situated on the banks of Phewa Lake with the majestic Annapurna mountain range as a stunning backdrop.
- Boating on Phewa Lake with its reflection of snow-capped peaks is a favorite activity for tourists seeking peace and adventure.
- Serving as the gateway to popular trekking routes like the Annapurna Circuit and Jomsom Trek, Pokhara offers ample opportunities for outdoor exploration.
- Cultural attractions such as the Bindhyabasini Temple and the World Peace Pagoda provide insight into the rich heritage of the region.

About Nepal

- Location: Nepal is located in South Asia, bordered by China to the north and India to the south.
- Government: It follows a federal democratic republic government.
- Capital: Kathmandu
- Currency: The official currency used in Nepal is the Nepalese Rupee.
- Major Mountain Ranges: Nepal is famous for its majestic mountain ranges including the Himalayas and Annapurna.
- Major Rivers: The country is surrounded by important rivers like Karnali and Koshi.

10. North America's first Gandhi Museum opens in Houston, Texas (Oct. 10, 2023)

North America's first Gandhi museum, the Eternal Gandhi Museum Houston (EGMH) was inaugurated in Houston, Texas, USA.

An Overview of the News

- The inauguration ceremony took place on 2 October 2023, coinciding with Gandhi's 154th birth anniversary.
- The museum officially opened to the public on August 15, 2023.

Special guest at the inauguration ceremony:

- The event was attended by prominent personalities, including Dr. Rajmohan Gandhi (grandson of Mahatma Gandhi), Isaac Newton Farris Jr. (nephew of Martin Luther King), and Consul General of India (CGI) in Houston D. Manjunath.

Architectural Features and Design:

- The architecture of the museum is inspired by Gandhi's iconic twenty-four-spoke Chakra Charkha.
- A prominent statue of Gandhiji is prominently displayed in front of the museum.
- The museum's semicircular exterior walls depict notable peace activists including Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr., and Betty Williams.

Interactive Display:

- Inside the museum, visitors can see interactive exhibits that narrate Gandhi's life story in three different parts: "His Journey," "Our Journey," and "My Journey."