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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. India's first Ayurvedic café unveiled in Delhi ( March 20, 2024 )**

Maharishi Ayurved Hospital at Shalimar Bagh, Delhi has launched Soma - Ayurvedic Kitchen, India's first Ayurvedic Kitchen.

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

- Food with an Ayurvedic touch: Soma – The Ayurvedic kitchen customizes meals based on the health of visitors, offering dishes like pakodas and pav bhaji without onion and garlic.
- Blending Ayurveda with Food: Dr. Himanshu, a physician, at Maharishi Ayurveda Hospital, emphasizes the homely and refreshing nature of Soma's dishes, emphasizing the blend of Ayurvedic principles with food.
- Positive Patron Experience: Many visitors share their delightful experiences with the healthy and delicious Ayurvedic cuisine at Soma – The Ayurvedic Kitchen.

## **10. 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.