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1. Georgia became first American state to pass resolution condemning Hinduphobia (April 2, 2023)

The **Assembly of the US state of Georgia** has passed a resolution condemning **Hinduphobia (Prejudice towards Hinduism)**. Georgia has **become the first US state** to implement such a legal measure.

An overview of the news

- The resolution condemns **Hinduphobia and anti-Hindu bigotry** and states that '**Hinduism is the world's largest and oldest religion**' and **1.2 billion people in more than 100 countries** of the world follow this religion.
- The resolution said that this religion incorporates diverse traditions and faith with values of **acceptance, mutual respect and peace**.
- The resolution states that the American-Hindu community has been a major contributor to fields as diverse as **medicine, science and engineering, information technology, hospitality, finance, education, manufacturing, energy and retail**.
- The proposal was introduced by Representatives **Lauren McDonald and Todd Jones** from Atlanta's Forsyth County.
- A large number of **Hindu and Indian-American communities live in Atlanta**.
- The resolution also states that the contribution of the Hindu community in the fields of yoga, Ayurveda, meditation, food, music and art has enriched the cultural fabric.

What is Hinduphobia?

- Hinduphobia is a set of hostile, destructive and derogatory attitudes towards Hinduism and Hindus that may manifest as prejudice, fear or hatred.
- It is true that Hindu Americans have faced discrimination across America.

About Georgia

- Prime Minister - **Irakli Garibashvili**
- President - **Salome Zurbashvili**
- Capital - **Tbilisi**
- Currency - **Georgian lari (GEL)**

2. Finland became the 31st member of NATO (April 1, 2023)

Finland became the 31st member of NATO

Finland has become the **31st member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** and Turkey's unanimous vote played a key role in Finland's acceptance as a NATO member.

An Overview of the News

- Finland shares a **border of more than 1,300 kilometres with Russia**, and their decision to join NATO was **based on security concerns** following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.
- **Sweden's application to join NATO has been rejected by Turkey and Hungary.**
- With the accession of Finland, NATO now includes countries in **most of Europe and North America.**

About NATO

- **North Atlantic Treaty Organization(NATO)**, is a **military alliance between North American and European countries formed in 1949** and **headquartered in Brussels, Belgium.**
- It was **created during the Cold War** as a defence pact to prevent Soviet expansion and protect member states from possible aggression.
- The founding members of NATO were the **United States, Canada, and ten European countries, including Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United Kingdom.**
- NATO Secretary General- **Jens Stoltenberg**

About Finland

Prime Minister- **Sana Marin**

Capital- **Helsinki**

Currency- **Euro**

3. IMF approves 15.6 billion dollar support package for Ukraine (April 1, 2023)

The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** has approved a **\$15.6 billion support package to aid the economic recovery of conflict-torn country Ukraine.**

An overview of the news

- The Russian invasion has devastated Ukraine's economy, causing **economic activity to shrink** by about **30 percent** last year, according to the IMF.
- War has destroyed capital stock and promoted poverty.

- The **48-month Extended Fund Facility program** approved by the **Fund's Board amounts to approximately \$15.6 billion.**
- It is part of the **IMF's \$115 billion** total support package, which includes debt relief, grants, and loans by multilateral and bilateral institutions.
- If the current conflict were to **continue into 2025**, it would raise Ukraine's financial needs from **\$115 billion to around \$140 billion**, said the IMF.

About Ukraine

- Ukraine, a country located in **Eastern Europe**, is the **second largest country in the continent after Russia.**
- Its capital is **Kiev, located on the Dnieper River in north-central Ukraine.**
- Prime Minister: **Denys Shmyhal**
- President: **Volodymyr Zelensky**
- Capital: **Kyiv**
- Official Language : **Ukrainian**
- Currency : **Rryvnya (UAH)**

About International Monetary Fund (IMF)

- It is an **international organization** that promotes global economic growth and financial stability, encourages international trade, and reduces poverty.
- It was **established in 1944** in the aftermath of the **Great Depression of the 1930s.**
- It is an organization of **190 member countries.**
- It is governed by and accountable to 190 countries.
- **India became its member in December 1945.**
- The IMF's resources come mainly from money that countries pay in as their capital subscriptions (quotas) when they become members.
- The International Monetary Fund's executive board comprises **24 members.**
- Managing Director - **Kristalina Georgieva (Bulgaria)**
- Headquarter (HQ) - **Washington, D.C., US**

4. UK signs deal to join trade pact with 11 Asia and Pacific nations (March 31, 2023)

Britain has signed a deal to join a trade deal with **11 Asia and Pacific countries** on 31 March 2023, three years after officially leaving the European Union.

An overview of the news

- According to the government's own estimates, joining the **bloc would increase the size of the UK economy by only 0.08 per cent.**
- The trade area covers a market of around **500 million people.**
- The UK said it is the **country's biggest post-Brexit trade deal** and is the **first European country** to join the CPTPP since it came into force in **2018.**
- The agreement is expected to be formally signed by the end of this year following approval by **Parliament and 11 member states.**
- The deal would cut tariffs on exports of **food, drink and cars, and provide access to a market of some 500 million people.**
- The UK will be worth 15% of global GDP once it joins the trade bloc.

About Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)

- It was **established in 2018.**
- **It includes 11 countries** - Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.
- Membership of the CPTPP lowers restrictions on trade between members and also lowers customs duties on goods.

5. Spouses of H-1B visa holders allowed to work in US (March 31, 2023)

Spouses of H-1B visa holders allowed to work in US

In a major relief to foreign workers in the US technology sector, a court there has ruled that the **spouses of H-1B visa holders can now work in the United States.**

An overview of the news

- The petition by '**Save Jobs USA**' sought to quash the **employment authorization cards** given to the **spouses of H-1B visa holders.**
- **Save Jobs USA** is an **organisation of IT workers** who claim they lost their jobs because of H-1B workers.
- Tech companies like **Amazon, Apple, Google and Microsoft** opposed this petition.
- **US District Judge Tanya Chutkan** rejected the plea.
- The US has so far issued work rights to the spouses of **nearly 100,000 H-1B workers**, a sizable number of whom are Indians.

About H-1B Visa

- The H-1B visa is a **non-immigrant visa** that allows **US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations.**
- It is designed to allow **skilled foreign workers to come to the United States and work for American companies.**
- This requires **theoretical or technical expertise.**

Other Visa Categories

- **L-1B** - for specialised workers
- **L-1A** - for managers and executives
- **E-2** - Treaty Investor visa
- **E-1** - Treaty Trader visa
- **E-3** - for Australians etc.

6. Sheikh Mansour Bin Zayed Al Nahyan appointed as Vice-President of UAE (March 30, 2023)

Sheikh Mansour Bin Zayed Al Nahyan appointed as Vice-President of UAE

The President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), **Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan**, has appointed **Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan**, his brother, as the **Vice President of the country.**

An overview of the news

- The appointment is approved by the **UAE Federal Supreme Council.**
- The incumbent Vice president **Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum**, will also continue in the same role.
- Sheikh Mansour has been active in UAE politics since 2004, when he was appointed as **Minister of Presidential Affairs.**
- He has overseen the **Presidential Court** and the **Ministry of Presidential Affairs**, as well as presiding over several government institutions, including the **Ministerial Development Council and the Emirates Investment Authority.**
- He is also the chairman of the **Abu Dhabi Fund for Development** and a **member of the Abu Dhabi Supreme Petroleum Council.**
- He has served on the boards of several investment institutions, including the **National Archives, the Abu Dhabi Development Fund, the Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority Board, and the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department.**

About UAE

- Official Language : **Arabic**
- Capital of UAE : **Abu Dhabi**
- Currency : **Emirati Dirham**
- President of UAE : **Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan**
- Prime Minister: **Sheikh Mohammed ibn Rashid Al Maktoum**

7. Japan to provide USD 1.24 billion line of credit to Bangladesh for road, railway and port projects (March 30, 2023)

Japan to provide USD 1.24 billion line of credit to Bangladesh for road, railway and port projects

Japan will provide an **Official Development Assistance (ODA) loan of USD 1.24 billion to Bangladesh** for **infrastructure and connectivity projects** and the second tranche of the 43rd Japanese Yen loan package was signed at the exchange of notes between the two countries.

An Overview of the News

- The loan package includes three projects: **Chattogram-Cox's Bazar Highway Improvement Project, construction of a dual gauge rail line between Joydebpur-Eshwardi section, and Matarbari Port Development Project, Phase 2.**
- The first tranche of loan was almost the same amount, making the total package around **US\$ 2.48 billion.**
- Japan has been the largest bilateral donor to Bangladesh since 2012, assisting various mega-infrastructure projects.

About Official Development Assistance (ODA)

- It is financial aid provided by developed countries to developing countries **to support economic growth and reduce poverty.**
- It can be given in the form of **grants or loans, and is provided by governments, international organisations and non-governmental organisations.**
- It can be used for a variety of purposes, including **building infrastructure, promoting economic development, and providing emergency relief.**
- The **Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** monitors and reports on ODA flows between its member countries.

- ODA is important for supporting economic growth and reducing poverty in developing countries.

About Japan

Prime Minister- **Fumio Kishida**

Capital- **Tokyo**

Currency - **Yen**

Ambassador- **Iwama Kiminori**

About Bangladesh

Prime Minister- **Sheikh Hasina**

Bangladesh currency - **Bangladeshi taka**

Capital- **Dhaka.**

8. Saudi Arabia's cabinet approves joining Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a dialogue partner (March 30, 2023)

On March 29, 2023, **Saudi Arabia agreed to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a dialogue partner.** The cabinet approved the decision in a meeting chaired by **King Salman bin Abdul Aziz.**

An Overview of the News

- As a dialogue partner, **Saudi Arabia** will participate in **SCO meetings and activities**, but **will not be a full member of the organisation.** This status allows increased cooperation between **Saudi Arabia and SCO members** on issues such as security, economic development and cultural exchange.
- The decision to join the SCO has been taken by Saudi Arabia to diversify its **economy and reduce dependence on oil exports.** The country has announced several initiatives aimed at boosting economic growth and attracting foreign investment, including its **Vision 2030 plan.**
- **King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud** has been a strong advocate of increasing Saudi Arabia's relations with other countries. During his reign, he has worked to strengthen ties with countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa, with a focus on promoting economic development and cultural exchange.

About Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

- It is a **regional intergovernmental organisation established in 2001.**
- The organisation consists of **eight member states, including China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Pakistan.**

- The **primary objective** of the SCO is to promote regional cooperation among its members in various fields such as security, economy, culture and education.
- The main objective of the SCO is to **enhance regional security through joint efforts to combat terrorism, separatism, extremism, drug trafficking and transnational organised crime.**
- The SCO holds annual summits and meetings of heads of state, as well as regular meetings of its various working groups and committees.

9. Dilma Rousseff appointed as new President of BRICS New Development Bank (March 29, 2023)

Dilma Rousseff appointed as new President of BRICS New Development Bank

Former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff has been elected as the **new President of the New Development Bank (NDB)**, also known as the **BRICS Bank**.

An Overview of the News

- She replaced **Marcus Troyjo** as the President of NDB.
- Rousseff is an **economist** who served as the **President of Brazil for two consecutive terms from January 2011 to August 2016.**
- During her presidency, Rousseff prioritised social policies, including poverty reduction and increased access to education and healthcare.
- The NDB has so far **approved \$23 billion in loans** for projects including renewable energy and transportation infrastructure in its member countries.

About New Development Bank (NDB)

- It is a **multilateral development bank established in 2014** by the **BRICS countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.**
- It was created with the aim of **mobilising resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects** in emerging economies.
- It is **headquartered in Shanghai, China** and has regional offices in **Johannesburg, South Africa and São Paulo, Brazil.**
- Its authorised **capital is \$100 billion**, with each founding member contributing **\$10 billion.**
- Its main focus is on **financing infrastructure projects** including **energy, transport and water supply.**
- It operates on the principle of "**co-ownership, governance and shared benefit**", which means that member states have equal representation and decision-making power.

- It is seen as an alternative to established financial institutions such as the **World Bank and the International Monetary Fund**, which are dominated by Western countries.

10. Tanzania announces outbreak of deadly Marburg virus disease (March 28, 2023)

outbreak of the highly contagious and deadly virus Marburg virus, which causes viral hemorrhagic fever.

Tanzania recently declared an **outbreak of the highly contagious and deadly virus Marburg virus**, which causes **viral hemorrhagic fever**.

An overview of the news

- According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, through contact tracing in the country, around 161 people have been identified as at risk of infection.
- The government has deployed an emergency response team to the area as well as neighboring countries have increased surveillance.

What is Marburg Virus Disease?

- According to the World Health Organization, Marburg is a **highly contagious viral disease** that leads to **hemorrhagic fever, with a mortality rate of up to 88%**.
- Marburg is as deadly as **Ebola and no suitable drug or vaccine has yet been discovered to treat and prevent the disease**.
- Outbreaks of this disease have been reported in many African countries in the past, including **Kenya, Congo, Angola, South Africa, and Uganda**.
- These outbreaks have also resulted in a large number of deaths, most of which have occurred in **southern and eastern Africa**.

Symptoms of Disease

- High fever, severe headache, muscle pain, abdominal pain, and cramping.
- Nausea and vomiting may also begin on the third day after infection.

Transmission

- Human infection initially results from **prolonged exposure to mines or caves inhabited by Rousettus bat colonies**.
- Once a human has been infected with Marburg virus, it can be spread to others through **direct contact with their blood, secretions or other bodily fluids**.
- Another route of transmission may be through **sexual contact**.

- This virus is secreted in our body fluids such as **saliva, sweat, nasal secretions and**
- **semen.**

Diagnosis and Treatment

- Antibody enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA),
- Antigen detection tests,
- Serum neutralization tests,
- Reverse-transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) assay,
- Virus isolation by cell culture.
- There is no specific treatment for Marburg virus disease yet.