

March 29, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. Russia has decided to impose a ban on gasoline exports starting April 1st.

(i) This ban, imposed to meet domestic demand and curb price hikes, will remain in effect until July 31st. Orders have been issued to draft the necessary legislation regarding this measure.

(ii) Russia was prompted to reimpose such restrictions following attacks by Ukraine last year, which damaged several Russian oil refineries and subsequently led to fuel shortages.

(iii) Currently, Russia's 'Urals' crude oil is being sold at a price on par with international 'Brent' crude. However, Russia has clarified that it intends to adhere to a policy prioritizing domestic demand first, followed by contractual obligations to partner nations, and finally, any additional exports.

2. Indonesia bans social media use for those under 16.

3. An agreement was reached in talks between officials of the International Monetary Fund to provide a \$1.2 billion loan to Pakistan, which is facing an economic crisis.

4. Nepal's former Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli has been arrested in connection with the negligence and violent repression that led to fatalities during the youth protests held in the country last year.

(i) As a result of protests organized by the youth in Nepal, last September, against corruption and dynastic politics, the Government led by K.P. Sharma Oli collapsed. During the violent incidents that occurred amidst these protests, 76 people lost their lives. A high-level commission appointed to investigate the matter recommended that criminal proceedings be initiated against the then-Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and the then-Home Minister, Ramesh Lekhak.

(ii) Against this backdrop, in the recently concluded general elections, the Rashtriya Swatantra Party—which garnered significant support from the youth—won 182 seats and formed the Government with an absolute majority. Balendra Shah, a 35-year-old youth who is also a 'Rap' artist and the former Mayor of Kathmandu, assumed office as Prime Minister.

(iii) Subsequently, during the first cabinet meeting of the new Government, a decision was taken to immediately implement the report submitted by the high-level commission regarding the violence during the youth protests. Accordingly, both K.P. Sharma Oli and Ramesh Lekhak were arrested this morning.

5. It has been reported that Tim Cook is preparing to step down as CEO of Apple. It is said that John Ternes, Apple's Senior Vice President of hardware engineering, is likely to take over the role after him.

6. Reports indicate that significant differences of opinion have emerged between India and developed nations regarding the extension of the customs duty moratorium on e-commerce transactions, during the ongoing 14th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) being held in Cameroon.

(i) Countries, including the United States, have been advocating for making permanent the customs duty exemption currently applicable to electronically transmitted software, e-books, and data.

(ii) However, developing nations—including India—have blocked this move, arguing that extending this tax exemption would result in substantial revenue losses for them and impose constraints on their ability to formulate domestic policies.



(iii) Consequently, it appears likely that a compromise solution will be reached to temporarily extend this tax exemption for a period ranging from two to four years.

7. The famous Azteca Stadium in Mexico City, Mexico, is set to reopen for the 2026 World Cup after renovations. Pele's Brazil team won the World Cup here in 1970 and Maradona's Argentina team won the title in 1986.

8. Indian star athlete Tejaswin Shankar topped the decathlon category with 7,947 points at the David Noble Athletics Championships held in Texas, USA.

9. A report published in 'The Lancet: Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Women's Health' journal states that the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) in India has declined by 80 percent over the past 33 years.

(i) Maternal Mortality is defined as the death of a mother during pregnancy, childbirth, or within 42 days postpartum. This rate is calculated based on every 100,000 live births. In this regard, a report published in "The Lancet"—based on a study titled "Global Burden of Disease 2023"—notes the following:

- In India, the Maternal Mortality Rate—which stood at 508 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990—declined to 116 in 2023. In the year 2023 alone, 24,700 mothers lost their lives.
- During this same period, 10,300 mothers died in Pakistan, 11,900 in Ethiopia, and 32,900 in Nigeria.
- In 2023, a total of 2,40,000 mothers died worldwide. Consequently, the global Maternal Mortality Rate stands at 190.5. This represents a significant decline from the rate of 321 recorded in 1990.

(ii) 104 Countries Fail to Meet the Target:

- Under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), nations worldwide have been urged to reduce the Maternal Mortality Rate to 70 by the year 2030. However, reports indicate that out of 204 countries, 104 have not yet achieved this target.

(iii) Global Recognition for India:

- According to the recently released Sample Registration System (SRS) data for the period 2021–2023, the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in India stands at 88.
- Commenting on this, sources within the Union Health Ministry stated: "A recent report released by the UN Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group noted that the Maternal Mortality Ratio in India has declined by 86 percent since 1990, whereas the global decline during the same period stands at 48 percent."
- They further added, "This serves as proof that India's healthcare initiatives have garnered global recognition. In this regard, India is well on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targeted for the year 2030."

10. The Central Government has emphasized the need to accelerate the expansion of the Piped Natural Gas (PNG) infrastructure across the country's urban areas. In this regard, a press release issued by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs stated the following:

(i) A roundtable consultation meeting regarding the maintenance of PNG services and other essential services in the country's urban areas was held in New Delhi.

(ii) The meeting was convened to deliberate extensively on accelerating the expansion of the PNG infrastructure in urban India and to ensure the uninterrupted availability of essential services.



(iii) The Union Ministers for Housing and Urban Affairs, Petroleum and Natural Gas, and Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution—along with ministers from various states including Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra, Haryana, and Odisha—participated in the meeting.

(iv) During the meeting, the Union Ministry of Petroleum presented a detailed overview, highlighting the current extent of PNG usage in the country and pointing out the advantages of PNG—including safety, reliability, and affordability—when compared to Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG).

(v) What are the impediments?

- It was identified during the meeting that several factors continue to hinder the timely expansion of the PNG infrastructure; these include delays in granting permissions for PNG connections and in obtaining formal approvals from Government authorities to utilize public land for laying and operating PNG distribution pipelines, as well as the imposition of excessive charges for repairing infrastructure—such as roads—that may be damaged during the pipeline installation process. States and Urban Local Bodies agreed to take appropriate measures in this regard.
- Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister for Housing Manohar Lal Khattar stated, "A critical task is to accelerate the expansion of PNG infrastructure. Priority must be accorded to integrating PNG infrastructure into urban planning, incorporating PNG connectivity frameworks into ongoing urban development initiatives, and ensuring last-mile PNG connectivity."
- The target of providing 5 million new PNG connections was also highlighted during the meeting.
- A consensus emerged during the meeting to facilitate a gradual transition from LPG to PNG usage in areas where PNG distribution infrastructure already exists. It was decided to create awareness among consumers regarding this transition.

11. Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan has constituted a Search and Selection Committee to recommend a suitable candidate for the post of Vice-Chancellor of Punjab University.

(i) In accordance with Section 10 of the Punjab University Act, 1947, Vice President and Chancellor of the University, C.P. Radhakrishnan, has constituted a Search and Selection Committee to recommend a panel of three to five suitable candidates for the position of Vice-Chancellor of the University.

(ii) Madhuri Kanitkar, Vice-Chancellor of the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, has been appointed as the Chairperson of the Search and Selection Committee. Shashikala Wanjari, Vice-Chancellor of the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), and Vibha Tandon, Director of CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Biology, have been appointed as members of the Committee.

(iii) Furthermore, Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan has approved an extension of four months to the tenure of the University's current Vice-Chancellor, Renu Cheema.

12. Adani has supplied 2,000 indigenously manufactured 'Prahar' light machine guns to the Indian Army under the Make in India initiative.

(i) Gwalior is home to a small arms manufacturing plant owned by Adani Defence and Aerobase. The plant manufactures 'Prahar' light machine guns for the Indian Army. The first batch of 2,000 light machine guns were handed over to the Army at a ceremony held here.

(ii) Defense Ministry officials and senior military officers participated in the event and received the machine guns loaded on trucks.



(iii) Ashish Rajwansi, CEO of Adani Defense and Aerospace, said, "This arms procurement started 6 years ago. We have manufactured and delivered the machine guns 11 months ahead of schedule. I assure you that we will manufacture and deliver the remaining machine guns as per the contract within the next 3 years."

(iv) The Defence Ministry official A. Anbarasu said, "The government will stand shoulder to shoulder with companies that manufacture and supply defense equipment."

13. India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met with French President Emmanuel Macron.

(i) The meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the G7 group—comprising Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the US—is currently taking place in Paris, the capital of France. Accepting an invitation from France, India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is participating in this event as an observer.

(ii) On the sidelines of this conference in Paris, Jaishankar met with Macron. Jaishankar stated that, during this meeting, he held discussions with the President regarding various issues.

14. The Central Government has extended the timeframe for availing incentives for electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers registered under the Prime Minister's e-Drive Scheme.

(i) It was previously stated that this scheme would be implemented from October 1, 2024, to March 31, 2026.

(ii) In a press release issued by the Union Ministry of Heavy Industries regarding this extension, the following details were provided:

- Incentives will be provided for electric two-wheelers registered up to July 31, 2026, and for electric three-wheelers registered up to March 31, 2028.
- To avail of the incentive benefits under the Prime Minister's e-Drive Scheme—valued at ₹10,900 crore—the ex-factory price of electric two-wheelers must not exceed ₹1.50 lakh, and the ex-factory price of electric three-wheelers must not exceed ₹2.50 lakh.
- It was further stated that "if the funds allocated for this scheme are fully utilized, the scheme will be discontinued prior to the announced deadline."
- Under the Prime Minister's e-Drive Scheme, plans are in place to provide incentives for 24.79 lakh electric two-wheelers and 39,034 electric three-wheelers.