



March 31, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. No consensus was reached at the 14th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) regarding the extension of the moratorium on customs duties for digital transmissions.

(i) During this consultative meeting, held over the past four days in Yaoundé—the capital of Cameroon—several nations, including the United States, sought to make this tax exemption permanent. However, due to strong opposition from developing nations—including India—the conference concluded without a final decision being reached.

(ii) Since 1998, this tax exemption mechanism has been extended without interruption every two years. The current moratorium is set to expire at the end of this month. Given that e-commerce currently accounts for over 50 percent of global service exports, this impasse has created an environment of significant uncertainty within the digital trade landscape.

(iii) Commenting on the matter, WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala stated, "No one would wish to see these efforts end in failure after having come so close to achieving the set objective. Therefore, negotiations regarding the unresolved issues will continue at the headquarters in Geneva."

2. In Israel, the Government led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu successfully passed its annual budget in Parliament.

(i) The budget was approved following all-night debates, amidst a situation where the Government would have collapsed—necessitating early elections—had the budget not been passed by April 1st. Consequently, the Netanyahu Government will now complete its full term in office.

3. The Supreme Court of Nepal has refused to grant interim relief to former Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, who was arrested in connection with the deaths of 76 people during the violent suppression of youth protests.

(i) The Court declined to issue an interim order on a 'habeas corpus' petition filed by K.P. Sharma Oli's wife—in which she argued that his arrest was unlawful—and instead sought an explanation from the Government regarding the legal grounds for the arrest.

(ii) Similarly, the Court also dismissed a petition filed on behalf of former Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak.

4. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing—who seized power in Myanmar five years ago by ousting the democratically elected Government—has resigned from his post.

(i) This decision by Min Aung Hlaing appears to be an attempt to assume the office of the country's next President, capitalizing on the "democratic victory" claimed by the military-backed USDP party in the general elections held in Myanmar last December and January.

(ii) However, the UN and Western nations have criticized the Myanmar general elections, labeling them a "sham" and an attempt to put a democratic mask on military rule.

(iii) Against this backdrop, during a recent session of the country's Lower House of Parliament, Min Aung Hlaing was nominated as a candidate for the Vice Presidency. According to the Myanmar Constitution, both houses of Parliament are required to select one Vice-Presidential candidate each.



(iv) Subsequently, a vote will be held to elect one of the two nominees as President. Political analysts suggest that this entire process has been orchestrated specifically to ensure that Min Aung Hlaing becomes the President.

(v) Min Aung Hlaing has handed over the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces to his trusted commander, Ye Win Oo. Although Ye Win Oo—who has served as the head of the intelligence division since 2020—faced criticism for lacking sufficient field experience, he was entrusted with this responsibility due to his staunch loyalty to Min Aung Hlaing.

(vi) Background:

- A civil war has been raging in Myanmar since February 2021, when the military seized power by overthrowing the democratically elected government led by Aung San Suu Kyi (80). To date, approximately 93,000 people have lost their lives in these conflicts. More than 3.6 million people lost their homes.

5. The World Archery Federation has named India's Sheetal Devi as the Best Para Archer of 2025.

6. In the Men's Singles category of the Miami Open tennis tournament held in the United States, Italy's Jannik Sinner clinched the championship title.

(i) Having also triumphed at the Indian Wells Open just two weeks prior, Sinner earned the distinction of winning the 'Sunshine Double' title.

(ii) Winning the championship in both the Indian Wells Open and the Miami Open—the first two Masters tournaments of the year, held consecutively—within a single season is known as the 'Sunshine Double.'

(iii) Sinner has become the first player in the last nine years to achieve this distinction. The last player to win the 'Sunshine Double' was Swiss star Roger Federer.

(iv) Earlier, in the Men's Singles final, Sinner—the world's number two ranked player—defeated Jiří Lehečka of the Czech Republic, who was seeded 21st in the tournament.

7. Insolvency Amendment Bill Passed in Lok Sabha

(i) The Insolvency Act came into force in 2016. The Select Committee announced that the Insolvency (Amendment) Bill, 2025—which proposes 12 amendments to the Act—has been passed in the Lok Sabha.

(ii) While this Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on August 12 of last year, it was referred to the Select Committee in December.

(iii) Subsequently, speaking during the debate on the Bill in the Lok Sabha, Nirmala Sitharaman stated that this Act serves as a crucial pillar for the banking sector and for the recovery of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs).

(iv) She noted that under various regulations, unpaid loans amounting to ₹1.04 lakh crore have been recovered by banks; of this total, ₹54,528 crore (52.3 percent) was recovered through the Insolvency Act.

8. The Central Government has decided to temporarily resume kerosene allocation to 21 States and Union Territories where the distribution of subsidized kerosene under the Public Distribution System (PDS) had



been gradually phased out.

(i) This measure has been taken to address household requirements for cooking and lighting, given the crisis that has arisen in the procurement of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) due to the impact of the conflict in West Asia.

(ii) India meets 60 percent of its cooking gas requirements through imports. Since 85 to 90 percent of this gas is procured from Gulf nations, the fuel supply chain has been disrupted by the conflict involving the US, Israel, and Iran.

(iii) The disruption of the Strait of Hormuz—a vital transit route for the export of crude oil and gas—has led to shortages of petrol and diesel in various countries.

(iv) In the Indian context, a situation has arisen necessitating a reduction in the supply of cooking gas for commercial use. Simultaneously, priority is being accorded to the smooth distribution of cooking gas cylinders for domestic use. Nevertheless, people continue to wait at gas distribution centers, having booked their cylinders in advance out of fear that supplies might run out.

(v) Resumption of Kerosene Allocation:

- Against this backdrop, the Central Government has resolved to temporarily resume kerosene allocation—under the Public Distribution System (PDS) at subsidized rates—to 21 States and Union Territories (including Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Goa, Rajasthan, Chandigarh, and Delhi) where such distribution had previously been gradually phased out.
- These states have attained the status of being "kerosene-free" regions, as the expansion of LPG connections within them has reached full saturation.
- In light of the current global situation, and with the objective of alleviating the pressure on LPG distribution, kerosene allocations are being reinstated.

(vi) Central Government Notification:

- A notification issued by the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas states that a temporary exemption has been granted to these States and Union Territories under the provisions of the Petroleum Act, 1934, and the Petroleum Rules, 2002.
- Accordingly, kerosene distribution will be carried out in each district through two designated petrol stations owned by Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies. These petrol stations will be permitted to stock up to 5,000 litres of kerosene, subject to adherence to prescribed safety norms; it has been further stated that this order shall remain in force for the next 60 days or until a fresh notification is issued.

9. The first phase of the Census—comprising the House-listing and Housing Census operations—is scheduled to commence on Wednesday (April 1). The Central Government has released the list of 33 questions that will be posed to the public during this exercise.

(i) A facility enabling the public to voluntarily fill out their details online via the Census website has also been launched. Provisions have been made to allow users to complete this application online in 16 languages, including Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam.

(ii) The Central Government issued the notification for the Census in June of last year. The first phase—the



House-listing and Housing Census operations—is scheduled to take place this year from April 1 to September 30.

(iii) In Delhi and certain other states—including Goa, Karnataka, Sikkim, and Odisha—this phase will be conducted from April 1 to April 15.

(iv) Subsequently, the second phase—the actual population enumeration—is scheduled to be conducted starting in February 2027. A caste-based census is also slated to be conducted concurrently with the general population census.

(v) The Central Government has released the list of 33 key questions that will be asked of the public during this survey. These questions have been published with the specific aim of providing clarifications regarding any doubts or queries the public may have.

(vi) How should 'Live-in' couples register?

- Regarding the question of whether couples in a 'live-in' relationship (living together without being legally married) would be treated as married couples, a clarification has been issued: if such couples consider their relationship to be stable and enduring, they will indeed be treated as married couples for the purposes of the Census.
- In addition to this, questions regarding the materials used for house construction, the number of married couples residing in the household, the gender of the head of the household, and the vehicles utilized will be asked during the first phase of the census.

(vii) Personal Information Must Not Be Used for Government Schemes:

- Mr. Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan, the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, stated that personal information collected during the census must not be utilized for Government schemes.
- Speaking further to reporters on this matter, he said: "Information collected for the purpose of the census—whether by Government or private entities—must not be shared externally for any purpose whatsoever, including as evidence in court proceedings or under the Right to Information (RTI) Act."
- Therefore, officials engaged in census operations must safeguard the information collected from the public with the utmost care.

(viii) Release of Various Data Sets in 2027:

- For the first time, a digital facility has been introduced allowing members of the public to voluntarily submit their information online.
- Consequently, it will be possible to release certain data sets as early as the year 2027. Members of the public are not required to submit any documents during the census enumeration process.
- He further noted that no decision has yet been taken regarding the updating of the National Population Register (NPR). He also clarified that there is no link between the National Population Register and the Special Summary Revision exercise conducted by the Election Commission of India.

(ix) Census Enumeration in Tamil Nadu: July 17 to July 31 of This Year

- Members of the public may voluntarily register their details on the official website. The house-listing



and housing enumeration operations, to be conducted by census officials, are scheduled to take place from August 1 to August 30. It is noteworthy that no notification has yet been issued regarding the conduct of the census in the state of West Bengal.

10. NASA's Artemis II mission :-

(i) Historical Context

- **The 54-Year Gap:** This mission marks the first time humans will travel to the Moon's surface area since 1972, ending a 54-year hiatus in crewed lunar exploration.
- **Artemis I (November 2022):** The first phase of the program was successfully completed as an uncrewed test flight.
- **Etymology:** The program is named "Artemis" after the Greek goddess of the Moon and the twin sister of Apollo, honoring the legacy of the original Apollo missions while looking toward the future.

(ii) The Artemis II Mission (April 2026)

- The mission is set to launch on Wednesday, April 1 (6:24 PM US time), which corresponds to April 2 at 3:54 AM IST.
- The launch will take place from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.
- Four astronauts will man the Orion spacecraft:
 - **Commander Reid Wiseman:** An American Navy pilot leading the mission.
 - **Pilot Victor Glover:** The first Black astronaut to participate in a lunar mission.
 - **Mission Specialist Christina Hammock Koch:** The first woman to go to the Moon; she also holds the record for the longest continuous spaceflight by a woman (328 days).
 - **Mission Specialist Jeremy Hansen:** Representing the Canadian Space Agency (CSA), he is the first non-American to join a lunar mission.

(iii) Mission Objectives and Scientific Focus

- **The South Pole:** Following the discovery of ice by India's Chandrayaan-1, NASA aims to land humans in the lunar South Pole to study frozen water.
- **Resource Utilization:** This ice is critical as it can be melted for drinking water or split to create oxygen for breathing and hydrogen for rocket fuel.
- **Solar Power:** Certain high-altitude areas of the South Pole receive constant sunlight, which will be used to generate solar electricity for the astronauts.
- **Long-term Goal:** The primary objective is to establish a sustainable human presence on the Moon and test the new technologies of the Orion spacecraft for future deep-space exploration.

(iv) Technical Specifications

- **SLS Rocket:** The mission utilizes the Space Launch System (SLS), the world's most powerful rocket. It stands 322 feet tall (approx. 30 stories) and generates 8.8 million pounds of thrust, making it 15% more powerful than the Saturn V.
- **Orion Spacecraft:** A modern vessel designed for a 10-day journey covering approximately 11 lakh km (including the return).
- **Speed:** The rocket will propel the Orion at 39,400 km/h toward the Moon. Upon re-entry, the spacecraft will travel at 40,000 km/h.



(v) Mission Progression and Return

- Preparation: Astronauts have undergone 18 months of intensive training, including computer simulations for emergency scenarios and underwater training in massive pools to simulate weightlessness.
- Landing Sequence: To safely return, a series of parachutes will deploy to reduce the spacecraft's speed from 40,000 km/h to just 30 km/h.
- Splashdown: The Orion is scheduled to land in the Pacific Ocean near the California coast, where US Navy and NASA teams will be stationed for recovery.

(vi) Future Roadmap

- Artemis III (2027): Following the success of the crewed orbit in Artemis II, NASA plans to land humans on the lunar surface in 2027.

