

April 8, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. Two children were killed when militants hurled a bomb at a house in Manipur's Bishnupur district. Their mother sustained severe injuries.

(i) Protesting against this incident, members of the public stormed a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) camp and looted property stored there. During the ensuing gunfire by security forces, two individuals were killed, and five others were injured. These incidents have once again created a tense atmosphere within the state.

(ii) The riots that erupted in Manipur in 2023 between the Meitei community and the Kuki tribes resulted in extensive loss of life and property damage. Although the intensity of the clashes has subsided since last year, sporadic attacks carried out by militants from both groups remain a recurring occurrence.

(iii) To date, more than 260 people have lost their lives in the violence that has swept across the state. Thousands of people have been displaced from their homes and continue to reside in relief camps.

(iv) Following the resignation of the then Chief Minister, Biren Singh (of the BJP), in February of last year, President's Rule was imposed in the State. President's Rule was lifted last February, and Yumkham Khemochand Singh of the BJP assumed office as the new Chief Minister.

2. China and Russia, as permanent members of the UN Security Council, utilized their veto power to block a resolution calling upon Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz.

(i) Eleven nations supported this resolution, which was introduced by Bahrain. China and Russia voted against it, while two nations abstained from the vote.

(ii) China and Russia rejected the resolution, asserting that it was introduced in a manner biased against Iran. Furthermore, China stated that passing a resolution against Iran at a time when U.S. President Donald Trump has issued warnings threatening the complete destruction of the country would set a dangerous precedent.

3. As a ripple effect of the crude oil shortage prevailing in the international market—stemming from war-related tensions in the Middle East—petrol and diesel prices in China have been hiked by approximately 400 yuan per ton for the second time in the last 15 days.

(i) To avert a fuel shortage, the Chinese Government has directed oil companies to ensure uninterrupted production and distribution.

(ii) Conversely, in Sri Lanka, the Government has decided to provide subsidies of 100 rupees (Sri Lankan currency) per litre for diesel and 20 rupees per litre for petrol in an effort to alleviate the financial burden on the public. This concession is expected to incur an additional monthly expenditure of 20 billion rupees for the Government.

(iii) It is noteworthy that since the outbreak of the conflict in the Middle East, fuel prices in Sri Lanka have been raised on three separate occasions—the most recent hike being 25 percent.

4. NASA's Artemis 2 astronauts, who traveled to the moon after half a century, passed by the far side of the moon early Tuesday morning (Indian time) and conducted an investigation.

(i) Comprising four astronauts, including one woman, the crew is currently on its return journey to Earth. Prior to this, the crew set a new record by traveling approximately 252,756 miles (4,06,000 km) into space—a distance unprecedented in human history—to reach the far side of the Moon.

(ii) Previously, the record for the farthest space journey was held by the 'Apollo 13' mission in 1970, which traveled a distance of 3,99,000 km. Having now broken that record, the current crew flew at a distance of approximately 4,070 miles from the lunar surface.

(iii) Meteoroid Impacts on the Moon:

- During a nearly 6-hour probe past the far side of the moon, astronauts were amazed to witness firsthand the 'light ripples' caused by asteroid impacts on the lunar surface.
- As the astronauts peered closely at that part of the moon, which is never visible from Earth, they recorded the lunar surface shaking due to the asteroid impacts.

(iv) Assigning New Names:

- The astronauts assigned temporary names to several previously unnamed craters on the Moon that had been formed by meteoroid impacts. Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen made a heartfelt request that certain lunar craters be named after the mission spacecraft, 'Integrity,' and after 'Carol'—the late wife of Mission Commander Reid Wiseman.

(v) Communication Blackout and Restoration:

- As the spacecraft passed behind the far side of the Moon, communication between Earth and the vessel was completely cut off for approximately 40 minutes. This was considered the most challenging phase of the space mission. Once communication was re-established, the crew members enthusiastically shared their experiences.

(vi) The Next Goal: Lunar Landing

- Even before China sets foot on the Moon, the United States plans to land humans on the lunar surface once again by 2028.
- The Artemis II mission was undertaken as a part of this broader initiative. Scientists have stated that this mission will also serve as a precursor to NASA's future plans to send humans to Mars.

5. Cheng Li-wun, leader of the Kuomintang—Taiwan's main opposition party—has arrived in China for a six-day visit.

(i) At a time when China claims Taiwan as an integral part of its own territory, this marks the first instance in the last ten years that a leader of Taiwan's opposition party has undertaken a visit to China.

(ii) Notably, this visit assumes particular significance as it takes place ahead of the scheduled meeting next month between U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

(iii) Speaking to reporters in Taiwan prior to her departure for China, Cheng Li-wun stated, "Undertaken at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping, this 'peace visit' will help de-escalate tensions prevailing across the Taiwan Strait and facilitate the advancement of peace talks between the two sides."

(iv) The Taiwanese Government is currently seeking to pass a special defense budget, estimated at \$40

billion, to procure advanced weaponry from the United States and to bolster its domestic defense sector.

(v) China, which views Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te—who maintains a firm pro-U.S. stance—as a "separatist," has consistently refused to engage in dialogue with him.

(vi) However, opposition parties—including the Kuomintang—have stalled the Lai Ching-te administration's efforts in Parliament, insisting instead on a reduction in defense expenditures.

(vii) Against this backdrop, political observers believe that Cheng Li-wun's visit to China will pave the way for the upcoming meeting between Xi Jinping and Trump to focus primarily on trade-related negotiations.

6. At the ISSF Shooting World Cup held in Spain, the Indian duo of Palak and Mukesh Nelavalli delivered a stunning performance to win the gold medal.

(i) Competing in the 10m Air Pistol Mixed Team category, the pair secured first place in the final round with a score of 487.7 points, thereby clinching the gold. In this event, Palak scored 243 points, while Mukesh scored 244.7 points. This score established a new world record in both the Senior and Junior categories.

7. "The restriction imposed on women of menstruating age from entering the Sabarimala Ayyappan Temple is a matter falling entirely within the realm of religious faith. It falls under the scope of religious autonomy. Therefore, this is a matter beyond the scope of judicial review," the Central Government argued before the Supreme Court.

(i) At the Sabarimala Ayyappan Temple, only young girls and elderly women are currently permitted to offer worship. Women of menstruating age are not permitted to worship.

(ii) In 2018, a five-judge Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court, while hearing a petition regarding this issue, delivered a verdict by a 4:1 majority, permitting women of all ages to offer worship at the Sabarimala Temple.

(iii) Subsequently, on November 14, 2019, a five-judge Constitutional Bench led by the then Chief Justice of India, Ranjan Gogoi, highlighted instances of discrimination against women in places of worship—specifically citing the denial of entry to women at the Sabarimala Ayyappan Temple, mosques, and Parsi places of worship.

(iv) At that time, the judges observed—by a 3:2 majority—that decisions regarding practices in various religions that restrict women's freedom could not be taken based solely on the context of a single specific issue. Consequently, they recommended that a larger Constitutional Bench—comprising more than five judges—should examine the issue of discrimination against women in religious places of worship.

(v) Women cannot be treated as 'untouchables': Justice Nagarathna

- During the course of the hearings, Justice Nagarathna recalled that when the five-judge Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court delivered its verdict in this case in 2018, it had observed: "Refusing entry to women of menstruating age into the temple constitutes a form of untouchability. This stands in violation of Article 17 of the Constitution, which declares untouchability to be a punishable offense." Tushar Mehta criticized the observation made by the then Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, who had referred to a "patriarchal mindset that places women in a subordinate position." Mehta stated, "India is not as patriarchal or as rife with gender discrimination as Western nations perceive it to be." Responding to this, Justice Nagarathna remarked, "How can one criticize

the comparison drawn to Article 17 of the Constitution in the context of the Sabarimala issue? Viewing this matter as a woman, one cannot treat women as 'untouchables' for three days every month."

- In his rejoinder, Tushar Mehta argued, "There is no connection between the restrictions on women's entry into the Sabarimala Ayyappan temple and menstruation. A restriction based solely on a specific age group is imposed on women; there is absolutely no ambiguity in this regard. Women of all ages are permitted in Ayyappan temples across the country; this specific restriction applies only to the Ayyappan temple at Sabarimala. This is a unique case."

8. It has been reported that a Free Trade Agreement between India and New Zealand is set to be signed on the upcoming 24th.

(i) Leaders from both sides are scheduled to sign this agreement during an event to be held at Bharat Mandapam in Delhi. Through this agreement, Indian manufactured goods can be exported to New Zealand entirely free of tariffs. Furthermore, over the next 15 years, investments amounting to \$20 billion are expected to flow from New Zealand into India.

(ii) Both nations announced last December that negotiations for the Free Trade Agreement had concluded and that the pact had been finalized.

(iii) Under this agreement, India will be able to sell its export products in New Zealand without incurring any tariffs. Similarly, goods such as wool, coal, timber, wine, avocados, and blueberries will be imported from New Zealand. These imports will be eligible for tariff exemptions of up to 95 percent.

(iv) Conversely, no tariff concessions will be granted for milk and various dairy products, onions, sugar, spices, edible oils, or rubber. India has imposed these restrictions with the specific objective of safeguarding its domestic farmers.

(v) In addition to this, New Zealand is set to issue temporary work visas to 5,000 Indian nationals annually. Doctors, engineers, and skilled workers will be eligible for entry under this visa scheme. They will be permitted to reside and work in the country for a period of up to three years. It has been further indicated that professionals from India—including AYUSH medical practitioners, yoga instructors, chefs, and music teachers—will also stand to benefit from this initiative.

9. In a significant milestone for the nation's nuclear power program, it has been reported that the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR)—which possesses a power generation capacity of 500 megawatts—has attained its 'First Criticality' (the initial stage of the nuclear fission process for power generation). In this regard, a press release issued by the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) states the following:

(i) Under the aegis of the Department of Atomic Energy, the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor was designed by the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR)—a research and development center located in Kalpakkam, Chennai—and was constructed by the Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam (BHAVINI).

(ii) This initiative represents a strategic step toward long-term nuclear power generation. Unlike conventional thermal nuclear reactors, these breeder reactor configurations utilize a mixed uranium-plutonium oxide fuel. This design enables the reactor to generate more fuel than it consumes. Ultimately, this reactor is designed to utilize Thorium-232. This 500-megawatt Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor achieved its 'First Criticality' (the initial stage of the nuclear fission process) at 8:25 PM on April 6th. This marks the first stage of nuclear power generation. It is a historic milestone in ensuring long-term energy

security and enhancing indigenous nuclear technology capabilities, representing a significant achievement within the nuclear power program.

(iii) Following a comprehensive safety review of the nuclear power plant's infrastructure by the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, the Secretary of the Department of Atomic Energy and Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, Ajit Kumar Mohanty—along with Srikumar, Director of the Atomic Energy Commission of India, and G., Director of the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research. This initiative was implemented in the presence of Mr. Pillai, Mr. Allu Anand (Chief Managing Director of BHAVINI), and Mr. K.V. Suresh Kumar (former Chief Managing Director of BHAVINI and Homi Sethna).

(iv) This nuclear reactor facilitates advanced safety systems, high-temperature liquid sodium coolant technology, and the recycling of nuclear materials. Furthermore, this breeder reactor will prove instrumental in transmuting Thorium into Uranium-233.

(v) Beyond energy generation, the Fast Breeder Reactor project strengthens strategic capabilities in nuclear fuel cycle technologies, advanced materials, reactor physics, and large-scale engineering.

(vi) It has been stated that this project reflects the dedication of a significant number of scientists, engineers, technologists, and various other stakeholders who contributed to the design and development of the nuclear reactor, utilizing predominantly indigenous technologies and associated components.

10. Analysis of the escalating West Asian war and its catastrophic impact on the global economy.

(i) Geopolitical Context and Threats

- US President Donald Trump has issued a final warning to Iran, stating that if they do not comply with US conditions (including opening the Strait of Hormuz), Iran will be "completely destroyed" and its infrastructure reduced to the "Stone Age".
- Iranian President Pezeshkian responded that 1.4 crore (14 million) Iranians are ready to face the US and urged citizens to prepare for voluntary participation in the conflict.
- The war involving the US, Israel, and Iran has paralyzed global trade routes, particularly the Strait of Hormuz, causing severe shortages of crude oil and natural gas.

(ii) Country-Wise Impacts :-

- Australia: Due to the skyrocketing price of fertilizers (one-third of which pass through Hormuz), farmers have significantly reduced wheat cultivation.
- South Korea: Heavily dependent on West Asian energy, the Government has officially requested citizens to use less hot water for bathing to conserve fuel.
- Thailand: The Prime Minister and top officials have abandoned traditional suits and ties for t-shirts and shorts to reduce the need for air conditioning in Government offices.
- Philippines: To save electricity, Government employees are now prohibited from using elevators.
- Egypt: Shops and commercial establishments are now mandated to operate only five days a week.
- Sri Lanka: The Government has declared every Wednesday a public holiday specifically to reduce the consumption of petrol and diesel.
- Laos: Schools are currently operating only three days a week due to energy shortages.
- Bangladesh: A massive backlog of ready-made garments is stuck at airports (Dhaka and Chittagong) because international flights have been disrupted.
- Brazil: As a major sugar producer, Brazil is shifting its focus to bio-fuel production to manage the

gas price hike.

- USA: Facing high inflation, rising interest rates, and soaring gas prices, making home ownership increasingly difficult.

(iii) Global Medical and Energy Crisis

- Medicine Shortage: Global supply chains for life-saving drugs (including cancer treatments) are broken. Medicines are rotting in export hubs like Dubai and Doha because they cannot be shipped and cold storage facilities are failing.
- Crude Oil Inflation: Since the start of the war in March, "Brent" crude oil prices have surged by 51%. This price spike is more severe than the 1990 Gulf War, where prices increased by 46%.

(iv) India's Strategic Position

- Energy Reserves: India currently maintains a crude oil reserve sufficient for approximately 50 days.
- Diplomatic Advantage: As a "friendly nation," Iran is currently allowing Indian ships carrying oil and gas to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, which provides a temporary cushion for the Indian economy.
- Economic Vulnerability: Despite the friendly passage, for every dollar increase in crude prices negatively impacts India's fiscal deficit, currency value, and inflation rate.

While India has managed to withstand the initial shocks better than many neighbors, the global economy is on the brink of a collapse. It warns that if the current state of war and blockades continues, the world will face a crisis for which there may be no immediate answer.