

April 12, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. With the Iran-US conflict currently paused for two weeks, negotiations between the two nations have commenced in Pakistan.

(i) The United States launched attacks against Iran with the objectives of preventing the country from developing nuclear weapons, neutralizing its naval forces, and eliminating Iran-backed armed groups operating within the Middle East region. Israel—Iran's arch-rival in the region—has also joined forces with the United States in conducting attacks against Iran.

(ii) In retaliation, Iran launched strikes targeting US military installations located in neighbouring countries, including Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan.

(iii) Consequently, as the conflict between the US-Israel alliance and Iran raged across West Asia, US President Trump recently announced a two-week suspension of hostilities. With Pakistan currently mediating between the US and Iran in an effort to bring a complete end to the conflict, trilateral talks involving the United States, Iran, and Pakistan have begun in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital.

(iv) In the Aftermath of the Islamic Revolution:

- This marks the first instance of direct negotiations between the United States and Iran since the Islamic Revolution took place in Iran in 1979.
- The US delegation conducting these talks is led by Vice President J.D. Vance, while the Iranian delegation is led by the Speaker of the Parliament, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf. The US delegation includes key figures such as President Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and Steve Witkoff, the Special Envoy for the Middle East. The Iranian delegation includes the country's Foreign Minister, Abbas Araqchi, and the Secretary of the National Security Council, Ali Akbar, among others.

(v) Towards a Ceasefire Agreement...:

- Both parties met with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Prior to the commencement of negotiations, Shehbaz Sharif held separate meetings with each of the two delegations. Iranian media reported that these talks are regarded as a significant step towards a ceasefire agreement.

2. After a gap of half a century, NASA's 'Artemis-2' crew returned to Earth, having successfully completed humanity's historic journey to the Moon.

(i) The four astronauts made a safe splashdown in the Pacific Ocean, off the coast of California, USA, at approximately 5:37 AM on Saturday (Indian Standard Time).

(ii) Artemis-2 was conceived as a precursor to NASA's objective of landing humans on the Moon by 2028. The Artemis-2 spacecraft blasted off into space at around 3:54 AM last Thursday from the Kennedy Space Centre in Cape Canaveral, Florida, USA.

(iv) Four astronauts travelled aboard this spacecraft: Americans Reid Wiseman (Commander), Victor Glover (Pilot), and Christina Koch (Mission Specialist), along with Canadian Jeremy Hansen (Mission Specialist). While conducting research on the far side of the Moon, they earned the distinction of being the first humans to view that region firsthand from such close proximity. Furthermore, as the culmination of this 10-day mission, they set a new record by traveling a distance of 4,06,771 kilometres—the farthest

humans have ever ventured into deep space. During this journey, the astronauts captured precise imagery of the Moon's hidden regions as well as a total solar eclipse.

(v) Upon concluding this historic voyage and re-entering Earth's atmosphere, the spacecraft hurtled through the air at a speed 33 times faster than the speed of sound—approximately 40,000 km/h. Traveling at high velocity, the spacecraft withstood the intense heat generated by atmospheric friction and, exactly as planned, splashed down in the ocean near the coast of San Diego.

(vi) The four astronauts recovered from the landed spacecraft were transported by helicopter to the U.S. Navy ship, the USS 'John P. Murtha'. "These are humanity's ambassadors whom we sent to the stars," NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman declared enthusiastically as he welcomed them.

(vii) This mission also reflected various societal shifts. In the history of spaceflight, Christina Koch has earned the distinction of being the first woman to travel to the Moon; Victor Glover, the first Black astronaut; and Canada's Jeremy Hansen, the first non-American astronaut—thereby securing their places in history.

(viii) Undeterred by minor technical glitches in the spacecraft's water supply and waste management systems, the astronauts remained steadfast in their determination to achieve their objective. "Facing certain challenges and making sacrifices during exploration is inevitable. All of it has been amply rewarded," Christina Koch remarked with deep emotion.

(ix) Building upon this success, NASA is now actively working to execute plans to land humans on the Moon within the next two years, and—through the 'Artemis III' mission—to establish a permanent lunar base by 2030.

3. In the Presidential election held in the East African nation of Djibouti, incumbent President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh secured a landslide victory, receiving 97.8 percent of the votes.

(i) With this win, he—who has governed the country for the past 27 years—assumes the Presidency for a sixth term.

(ii) Alleging that the Election Commission operates in a biased manner, major opposition parties have been boycotting elections since 2016. Consequently, President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh faced only one challenger: an independent candidate named Mohamed Farah Samatar.

(iii) Although it is one of the smallest nations in East Africa, Djibouti is strategically situated at the critical junction where the Red Sea meets the Gulf of Aden—a region dominated by Yemen's Houthi movement. The country hosts military bases belonging to several nations, including the United States, China, France, and Japan.

(iv) Through a constitutional amendment passed by Djibouti's Parliament last October, the upper age limit of 75 for Presidential candidates was abolished. This paved the way for Ismaïl Omar Guelleh to seek re-election.

(v) Having assumed power in 1999—succeeding his uncle—he has focused significantly on the development of the country's infrastructure and ports. However, international human rights organizations have expressed concern regarding alleged human rights violations within the country, as well as the suppression of journalists and political dissidents.

(vi) The Government of Djibouti has categorically denied these allegations. Supporters of Guelleh have

expressed confidence that Djibouti—which serves as a gateway to neighbouring nations such as Ethiopia—will continue to enjoy political stability under his leadership.

4. Amidst a temporary ceasefire established between Russia and Ukraine in observance of the Orthodox Easter festival, the two nations mutually exchanged 175 prisoners of war each.

(i) Ukrainian President Zelenskyy confirmed that, alongside 175 military personnel, seven civilians were also released. It is noteworthy that the majority of these individuals had been held in Russian custody since 2022.

(ii) During this prisoner exchange—facilitated through the mediation of the United Arab Emirates—it was reported that Russia secured the return of 175 of its soldiers, as well as seven Russian civilians hailing from the Kursk region, from Ukraine.

(iii) Although the peace negotiations currently underway between the two nations—initiated through U.S. efforts—have stalled over territorial disputes, humanitarian measures such as the repatriation of the remains of fallen soldiers and prisoner exchanges continue to proceed.

(iv) A 32-hour temporary ceasefire commenced at 4:00 PM on Saturday, coinciding with the Easter festival celebrated on Sunday (April 12) in accordance with the Orthodox Christian traditions observed in Russia and Ukraine.

5. Donald Rukare, President of the Commonwealth Games Federation, met with Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya for consultations.

(i) The Commonwealth Games are scheduled to be held in Ahmedabad, India, in 2030. The Central Government pledged its full cooperation to ensure the successful hosting of the Games. The Union Minister expressed his gratitude to Donald Rukare, President of the Commonwealth Games Federation, for granting India the opportunity to host the event.

(ii) It was noted that the centenary celebrations of the Commonwealth Games Federation would also be a grand success. Furthermore, the Minister highlighted the expansion of the 'Khelo India' sports initiative—specifically mentioning the 'Asmita League' for women and the 'Tribal Khelo India' competitions.

(iii) He also explained that awareness campaigns regarding the significance of the Commonwealth Games are being conducted in schools and colleges.

(iv) Discussions were held regarding the arrangements for hosting the 2030 Commonwealth Games, including timelines, venues, the integration of technology with environmental sustainability, and the existing infrastructure and facilities available in Ahmedabad. The Commonwealth delegation included CEO Katie Sadleir, Sports Director Darren Hall, Anne-Louise Morgan, and Neelgarni.

6. At the Little Andaman Pro 2026 National Surfing Competition, Sekar Pacchai in the Men's category and Aarti in the Women's category clinched the titles in the Stand-Up Paddling event.

(i) This surfing competition is being organized for the first time jointly by the Surfing Federation of India and the Andaman Tourism Department. Top-tier stand-up paddlers from across the country participated in this event. In the Men's category, Sekar Pacchai from Tamil Nadu won the gold medal by completing the 2 km race in a time of 10:05:02. A multiple-time national champion, Sekar Pacchai is regarded as one of the finest athletes in the sport.

7. India's Sujit and Abhimanyu won gold medals at the Asian Senior Wrestling Championships.

(i) In the men's 70 kg category, Abhimanyu Mandal won the gold medal by defeating Mongolia's Tulga Ochir—a two-time World Cup medalist—with a score of 5-3.

(ii) In the 65 kg category, Sujit Kal won the gold medal by defeating Uzbek wrestler Jalolov with a score of 8-1.

8. In the Asian Badminton Championships, India's Ayush Shetty (World Rank 25) qualified for the Men's Singles final by defeating the world's number one player, Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand.

(i) The Asian Badminton Championships are being held in the city of Ningbo, China. The semi-final matches took place on Saturday. Vitidsarn—the world's top-ranked player—faced off against Ayush Shetty, a bronze medalist at the World Junior Badminton Championships. Employing a strategy characterized by excellent attacking and defensive play, Ayush defeated Vitidsarn with a scoreline of 10-21, 21-19, 21-17. Vitidsarn, who won a silver medal at the recent Paris Olympics, is also the reigning 2023 World Champion.

(ii) Since 1965:

- Prior to this, Dinesh Khanna was the only Indian player to have qualified for the final of the Asian Badminton Championships, where he went on to win the gold medal.
- Since then, no other player had managed to reach the final. Ayush has now earned the distinction of becoming only the second Indian player—since approximately 1965—to qualify for the final of this prestigious tournament.

9. On Saturday, the Central Government took measures to increase the export duty on diesel. Similarly, the export duty on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) has also been raised once again.

(i) The Central Government has undertaken this measure with the objective of ensuring domestic supply and curbing price hikes, amidst a situation where imports have been disrupted due to the conflict in West Asia, and the price of crude oil per barrel in the international market has surged to unprecedented levels.

(ii) Previously, on March 26, the Central Government had imposed an export duty of ₹21.50 per litre on diesel and ₹29.50 per litre on aviation fuel.

(iii) Currently, it has announced an increase in the export duty on diesel to ₹55.50 per litre and on aviation fuel to ₹42 per litre.

(iv) A notification issued by the Union Ministry of Finance states that these tax hikes come into effect immediately. The status quo—where no export duty is levied on petrol—continues.

10. The All-India Kisan Sabha (All India Farmers' Association) has stated that if India enters into a Free Trade Agreement with the United States, it will lead to a situation where India is compelled to import agricultural products.

(i) The 90th-anniversary inaugural ceremony of the All-India Kisan Sabha was held in Delhi. Speaking at the event, Prakash Karat, a senior leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)], noted that the farmers' association has long been raising issues concerning land acquisition, Minimum Support Price (MSP), and debt relief.

(ii) He further warned that if India were to enter into a Free Trade Agreement with the United States, Indian farmers would be severely adversely affected.

(iii) Speaking on the occasion, Ashok Dhawale, President of the All-India Kisan Sabha, stated: "In accordance with the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission, the Minimum Support Price for agricultural produce must be fixed at 1.5 times the cost of production. Furthermore, agricultural loans must be waived."

(iv) "The protest organized by farmers' organizations against the Central Government's agricultural laws stands as one of the largest protests ever witnessed in independent India."

(v) "It was precisely because of that protest that the Central Government eventually repealed those laws. The All-India Kisan Sabha will continue to stage protests to press for demands such as halting land acquisition, waiving agricultural loans, and ensuring the procurement of agricultural produce," he added.

11. Indian Air Force Chief of Air Staff Amar Preet Singh, currently visiting the United States, held discussions with his U.S. counterpart, General Kenneth Wilsbach, regarding the strengthening of bilateral defense ties.

(i) Earlier, at an Air Force base in the capital, Washington D.C., Amar Preet Singh received a ceremonial Guard of Honor presented by U.S. Air Force personnel. Subsequently, at the Pentagon—the headquarters of the U.S. military—he met with and held consultations with Air Force Secretary Troy and Air Force Chief of Staff Kenneth Wilsbach.

(ii) Later, he visited the Peterson Space Force Base in the State of Colorado. U.S. Air Force officials briefed him on how aerospace warnings, air traffic control, and maritime alerts for North America are generated and disseminated from that facility.

(iii) According to a press release issued by the U.S. Air Force, A.P. Singh also visited Nellis Air Force Base in the state of Nevada, where he toured the U.S. Air Force Warfare Centre and experienced a flight aboard an F-15EX Eagle II fighter jet.

12. A UN report indicates that the gap between developed and poor nations is widening.

(i) The UN is taking measures—through various organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund—to narrow the economic disparity among nations and to foster development across all countries.

(ii) The UN has also set a target to achieve global development by the year 2030.

(iii) In this context, the UN has prepared a report regarding the development of nations. This report states that the gap between developed and poor countries is increasing. It notes that 25 developed nations have reduced the aid provided to poor countries; specifically, compared to the funding allocated in 2024, these nations have cut their financial contributions by 23 percent in 2025. In particular, the report highlights that the United States has reduced its funding by as much as 59 percent.

(iv) The report further indicates that this funding is likely to be reduced by an additional 5.8 percent during the current year. It also states that the additional tariffs imposed by U.S. President Trump have had a significant impact on the economies of developing nations.

(v) The report emphasizes the need to increase investments in developing nations and calls for reforms

within international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

13. Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act, 2025
- Allows private participation in the nuclear energy sector.

