

April 21, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. The country's first new integrated crude oil refinery–petrochemical complex, set up at Pachpadra in Balotra district of Rajasthan, was scheduled to be dedicated to the nation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday (April 21). However, a fire accident broke out at the complex, leading to the postponement of the inauguration ceremony.

(i) It is reported that the fire occurred in the crude oil distillation unit of the complex. Emergency response teams immediately rushed to the spot and engaged in efforts to bring the fire under control.

(ii) In view of the Prime Minister's visit, Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma was also scheduled to inspect the complex. This visit too was cancelled due to the fire incident. Officials stated that an assessment of the damage caused by the fire is currently underway.

(iii) Postponement of the inauguration:

- "Following the fire accident, the event scheduled for Tuesday (April 21) to inaugurate the complex by the Prime Minister has been postponed.
- The fire has been brought under control. No casualties have been reported. An inquiry has been ordered into the incident," the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said in a post on its X (formerly Twitter) page.
- With an investment of over ₹79,450 crore, this new integrated refinery–petrochemical complex is expected to be a significant milestone in India's energy and petrochemical sector.
- The refinery and petrochemical complex, with a capacity of 9 million metric tonnes per annum, has been developed as a joint venture between Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited and the Government of Rajasthan.
- The project is expected to play a key role in strengthening India's energy security, expanding petrochemical self-reliance, and promoting industrial growth.
- It is also expected to facilitate the development of a petrochemical and plastic manufacturing hub in Pachpadra, while encouraging ancillary industries and allied sectors, according to the Government press release.

2. Powerful Earthquake off Northern Coast of Japan

(i) A powerful earthquake struck off the Sanriku coast at a depth of about 19 km. It registered a magnitude of approximately 7.7 on the Richter scale. Following the quake, a tsunami warning was issued to people living in coastal areas.

(ii) As a precautionary measure, around 1.8 lakh (180,000) people residing in five prefectures from Hokkaido to Fukushima were advised to move to safer locations.

(iii) The tsunami warning was completely withdrawn after a few hours. However, the Japan Meteorological Agency and the Cabinet Office jointly warned that there is a 1% chance of a "mega earthquake" occurring within the next week. Under normal circumstances, this probability is only 0.1%, indicating a tenfold increase in risk.

(iv) Speaking to reporters, Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi urged the public to check their emergency food supplies and evacuation routes, assuring that the government would do everything possible during emergencies.

(v) Due to the earthquake on Monday, subway and Shinkansen bullet train services were temporarily suspended, leaving thousands of passengers stranded at railway stations.

(vi) Reports indicate that two people were injured in Aomori and Iwate prefectures. Fortunately, there was no damage to nuclear power plants in the affected region.

(vii) Earthquakes have become increasingly frequent in Japan. A similar “mega earthquake” warning had been issued during a 7.5 magnitude quake in December last year.

(viii) Notably, the mega earthquake in March 2011 and the subsequent tsunami caused around 22,000 deaths.

3. Parliamentary Election in Bulgaria

(i) In the parliamentary election held in Bulgaria, a Southeast European country, former President and pro-Russia leader Rumen Radev has secured a landslide victory.

(ii) Bulgaria, a member of the European Union and NATO, witnessed massive anti-corruption protests in December last year against the ruling centre-right government.

Radev, who supported these protests, resigned from his presidential post in January. He then launched a new political party named “Progressive Bulgaria” and contested the election, securing about 43.91% of the vote and coming to power.

(iii) This election marks the 8th time in the past five years that Bulgaria has gone to the polls. The GERB party led by former Prime Minister Boyko Borisov, which had dominated for years, secured about 13% of the vote, while the pro-European PP-DB alliance received 12.6%, both suffering defeat.

(iv) Rumen Radev, a former air force officer, has strongly opposed providing military aid to Ukraine. He emphasizes maintaining uninterrupted oil and gas supplies from Russia and strengthening ties with the country. At the same time, his victory has been welcomed by both the European Union and Russia.

4. Decline in Output of India's Core Infrastructure Sectors

(i) The output of eight core infrastructure sectors in India recorded a 0.4% decline in March, marking the steepest fall in the last 19 months. According to Central Government data, these sectors—coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilizers, steel, cement, and electricity—had grown by 2.3% in February, but slipped into negative territory in March, raising concerns in economic circles.

(ii) The sharp decline is mainly attributed to a fall in crude oil production, which dropped by 5.7% compared to March 2025.

(iii) Fertilizer production plunged from 3.4% growth in February to a sharp 24.6% contraction in March. Similarly, coal production, which grew by 2.3% in February, declined by 4% in March.

(iv) Cement production grew by 4%, but this reflects a slowdown compared to 9.3% growth in the previous month. Steel production registered a 2.2% increase.

(v) These eight core sectors contribute about 40% to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). The crucial petroleum refining sector recorded a marginal 0.1% growth, recovering from a 1% decline in February.

(vi) Despite weakness in infrastructure sectors, overall industrial output growth (IIP) for February rose to 5.2%, supported by strong performance in the manufacturing sector.

(vii) Manufacturing growth of 6% helped offset the decline in electricity generation. However, due to the March slowdown in core sectors, overall industrial growth is expected to drop to 1–2%.

(viii) For the financial year 2025–26, growth in these eight core sectors stood at 2.6%, compared to 4.5% in the previous year, indicating a moderate slowdown.

5. Junior World Cup Shooting Championship

The Junior World Cup Shooting Championship begins on Tuesday (April 21) in Cairo, Egypt. A 71-member Indian team is participating in the event.

6. Indian Driver Excels in Karting

In the World Series Karting race held in Italy, India's Athika Mir (11) delivered an impressive performance by securing second place in Race 1 of her age category.

7. India–Russia Military Logistics Agreement Comes into Force

(i) The Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS) between India and Russia, signed in Moscow in February last year, has now come into effect.

(ii) Under this agreement, 3,000 Russian troops will be stationed in India for up to five years, along with 5 warships and 10 fighter aircraft. This arrangement applies during both peacetime and wartime.

(iii) Similarly, 3,000 Indian troops will be stationed in Russia, along with 5 Indian warships and 10 fighter aircraft for the same duration. Both countries will also allow each other access to their military, naval, and air bases.

(iv) The agreement provides an option to extend the arrangement by another five years if both sides agree.

(v) The primary objective of this pact is to deepen military cooperation and enhance logistics support between the two nations. It is also expected to help India expand its presence in strategically important regions like the Arctic, while enabling Russia to access fuel, spare parts, and maintenance support for its aircraft and ships. Additionally, Russian naval and commercial vessels operating in the Indian Ocean Region can benefit from logistical assistance.

(vi) India has previously signed a similar logistics agreement (LEMOA) with the United States. However, that agreement does not permit the stationing of troops, warships, or aircraft in each other's territory.

(vii) Russia, being a long-standing and trusted strategic partner of India, has been granted this deeper level of military access, making this agreement particularly significant.

Here is a clear, structured English translation of section 8 with key entities identified:

8. India–South Korea Agree to Upgrade Economic Partnership Talks

(i) Narendra Modi and Lee Jae-myung agreed on Monday to begin discussions to upgrade the economic

partnership agreement between the two countries. This decision comes amid rising global trade disruptions due to geopolitical tensions.

(ii) After the meeting, Prime Minister Modi stated that both sides have decided to transform their trusted partnership into a future-oriented collaboration.

(iii) Since the signing of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement in 2010, bilateral trade and economic engagement between the two nations have expanded significantly.

(iv) Cooperation opportunities have emerged across a wide range of sectors—from semiconductors and shipbuilding to skilled professionals and advanced technologies, and from environmental initiatives to energy. Both countries also reaffirmed their commitment to peace and development in the Indo-Pacific region.

(v) The discussions also focused on expanding ties in areas such as bilateral trade, investments, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, critical and emerging technologies, and people-to-people exchanges.

(vi) According to Piyush Goyal:

- Both sides reviewed ways to upgrade, resume, and modernize the existing CEPA.
- Opportunities to deepen cooperation in industrial collaboration, green energy, and digital trade were also discussed.
- So far, 10 rounds of negotiations have been completed regarding the CEPA upgrade.

(vii) Free Trade Agreement Consideration:

- During talks with Yeo Han-koo, India urged South Korea to consider a new bilateral free trade agreement that reflects current economic realities and addresses concerns over the trade deficit.
- Both sides discussed ensuring a more balanced trade relationship and increasing bilateral trade from about ₹2.5 lakh crore (\$27 billion) to ₹5 lakh crore (\$54 billion) by 2030.

(viii) Proposal for a “Korean Zone” in India:

- Discussions also explored expanding cooperation in advanced technologies and infrastructure development.
- A proposal was considered to establish a dedicated “Korean zone” in India, modeled on modern urban planning (similar to Japanese-style townships). This zone would include schools, colleges, hotels, restaurants, and ready-to-use industrial infrastructure, aimed at attracting large-scale investments.
- Several MoUs were also signed between private sector entities from both countries during the discussions.

9. Historic achievement of 24-year-old Chennai-based chess player R. Vaishali, who won the Candidates Chess Tournament held in Cyprus.

(i) Overview of the Dramatic Victory

- Vaishali won the title on April 15, 2026, making her the first Indian woman to win the Candidates tournament in its history, which dates back to 1952.
- By winning this tournament, she has earned the right to challenge the current World Women's

Chess Champion, China's Ju Wenjun, for the world title.

- The victory was described as "dramatic" because Vaishali did not start the 14-round tournament favorably; she drew her first four matches and lost her fifth match.

(ii) India-Wise Facts

- Vaishali is only the third Indian woman to achieve the Grandmaster (GM) title, following in the footsteps of Koneru Humpy and Harika Dronavalli.
- Previous Indian female success at the Candidates included Koneru Humpy securing second place in 2024, but Vaishali is the first to take the top spot.
- She was trained at the WestBridge Anand Chess Academy, established by five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand.
- Past Laurels:
 - She is a two-time World Youth Champion (Under-12 and Under-14).
 - She won individual and team bronze medals at the 2022 Mamallapuram Chess Olympiad.
 - She was part of the Indian team that won Gold at the 2024 Chess Olympiad.

(iii) World-Wise Facts

- Elite Competition: Vaishali competed against an elite field of eight players, including:
 - Anna Muzychuk (Ukraine): Former World Blitz and World Rapid Champion.
 - Tan Zhongyi (China): Winner of the 2024 Candidates tournament.
 - Alexandra Goryachkina (Russia): Winner of the 2019 Candidates tournament.
- Global Ranking: Before the tournament, Vaishali was ranked at the bottom of the eight participants, making her victory an unexpected upset for the global chess community.

IV. Analysis of India's Current Chess Era (2024–2026)

- In September 2024 Chess Olympiad, India made history in Budapest by winning team gold medals in both the Open and Women's sections. In that same Olympiad, Indian players Gukesh, Arjun Erigaisi, Divya Deshmukh, and Vantika Agrawal won individual gold medals.
- In December 2024, 18-year-old D. Gukesh became the World Chess Champion in Singapore.
- Divya Deshmukh won the Women's World Cup in Georgia in July 2025, and Koneru Humpy won the World Rapid title in New York in December 2024.

With Gukesh currently holding the Open World Title and Vaishali now challenging for the Women's World Title, India has firmly established itself as the leading superpower in global chess.