December 17, 2025 - Dinamani Newspaper - Tit bits

1. Amidst strong opposition from the opposition parties, a bill allowing for an increase in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to 100 percent in the Insurance sector was approved in the Lok Sabha.

   i. This bill, titled 'Insurance Amendment Act 2025 (Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha)', which provides for amendments to the Insurance Act 1938, the Life Insurance Corporation Act 1956, and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act 1999, was introduced by the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

   ii. The introduced bill allows for increasing the Foreign Direct Investment in the Insurance sector from the current 74 percent to 100 percent and also facilitates the merger of a non-insurance company with an insurance company.

   iii. Even with the increase in FDI to 100 percent, the bill mandates that one of the three top positions – Chairman, Managing Director, or Chief Executive Officer – of the concerned insurance company must be held by an Indian citizen.

2. The US President Donald Trump has stated that an agreement to end the war in Ukraine is closer than ever before, and announced that Ukraine would be given security guarantees equivalent to those of NATO member states.

   i. Regarding this, US officials said that a strong security guarantee, similar to NATO's 'Article 5', would be provided to Ukraine in the peace agreement.

   ii. Under Article 5 of the NATO alliance rules, if any of its member states is attacked, it is considered an attack on all 32 member states, and all countries must retaliate. Ukrainian President Zelenskyy had expressed his desire to join NATO precisely to obtain this kind of security. This was the reason for Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

3. Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus won the WTA Player of the Year award for 2025 for the second consecutive time.

4. On the occasion of the day commemorating India's victory in the 1971 war with Pakistan, President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Modi, and others paid tribute to the soldiers who laid down their lives in that war.

   i. At the end of the 1971 India-Pakistan war, 93,000 soldiers under the command of Pakistani Army General A.A. Khan Niazi surrendered to the Indian forces, laying down their arms. This was the largest surrender since World War II. This historic victory paved the way for the liberation of Bangladesh.

   ii. To mark the end of this war and to commemorate the sacrifice of the soldiers who fought for India, Victory Day (Vijay Diwas) is observed every year on December 16. (56th Victory Day)

   iii. A 'Param Vir' gallery, featuring the portraits of those who were honoured with the highest 'Param Vir Chakra' award for sacrificing their lives in the service of the nation, was inaugurated at the Rashtrapati Bhavan (Presidential Palace).

   iv. The President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated this gallery, which features the portraits of 21 Param Vir Chakra awardees.

5. The ' Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB – G RAM G). Bill', which seeks to amend the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, was introduced in the Lok Sabha.
   What are the features?
   i. The new bill focuses on four priority areas: water conservation, critical rural infrastructure, livelihood-related infrastructure development, and mitigation of adverse weather events.
   ii. While the current 100-day employment scheme is implemented with 100 percent Central Government funding, under the new bill, the Central Government will share the financial burden with the states. Within 6 months of the new law coming into effect, states must formulate the employment scheme in accordance with its provisions.
   iii. To ensure the availability of sufficient agricultural laborers during peak agricultural seasons, no work will be undertaken under the 125-day employment scheme during that period.
   iv. The Union Ministry of Rural Development has stated that this bill is a significant reform that will improve employment, transparency, planning, and accountability, while also addressing systemic weaknesses.

6. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his desire to double the India-Jordan bilateral trade to $5 billion (₹45,483 crore) in the next 5 years. He invited Jordanian companies to benefit from India's high economic growth.
   i. The Prime Minister Modi, who began his four-day official visit to three countries – Jordan, Ethiopia, and Oman – arrived in Amman, the capital of the Arab nation of Jordan, in the first leg of his tour. He met with King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein of Jordan and held extensive discussions on bilateral relations.
   ii. India is Jordan's third-largest trading partner. The goal is to double the bilateral trade to $5 billion in the next 5 years (current value is $2.3 billion).
   iii. Reflecting the excellent relations between India and Jordan, the Crown Prince Al-Hussein bin Abdullah himself drove Prime Minister Modi to a historic museum in Amman. He is a 42nd generation direct descendant of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).
   iv. Following the meeting between Prime Minister Modi and the King of Jordan, five Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed regarding renewable energy, water resource management and development, cultural and tourism cooperation between Petra (Jordan) and Ellora (India), sharing of digital solutions, and cultural exchange cooperation.
   v. The Prime Minister Modi received a warm welcome upon his arrival in Ethiopia, an East African nation, from Jordan. Upon his arrival at the Addis Ababa airport in the capital city, he was personally received by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali. This is Prime Minister Modi's first visit to Ethiopia. During this visit, Prime Minister Modi will hold bilateral talks with Abiy Ahmed Ali and will also address the Ethiopian Parliament.

7. The bill introduced to establish a single Higher Education Commission as a replacement for the three existing bodies—the University Grants Commission (UGC), the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)—was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee for review.

i. The Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan introduced a resolution in the Lok Sabha for this purpose. It stated that a Joint Committee comprising 21 members from the Lok Sabha and 10 members from the Rajya Sabha would be constituted to examine the ' Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill '; this committee would study the bill and submit its report on the last day of the first part of the 2026 Budget Session.

ii. This Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) has been proposed with the aim of addressing the challenges faced by higher education institutions due to multiple regulatory bodies and unregulated accreditation procedures.

iii. The Chairman of this Commission will be appointed by the President.

iv. The bill states that Central Universities, their affiliated colleges, and institutions of national importance operating under the administrative purview of the Ministry of Education, including IITs, NITs, IISc, IISERs, IIMs, and IIITs, will come under the authority of the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI).

v. This single body for higher education will be responsible for tasks such as granting accreditation to universities and regulating them. However, the responsibility for funding educational institutions will remain with the Ministry of Education. Medical and law colleges have not been brought under the purview of this body.