

## December 22, 2025 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. The new Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme will be superior to the existing Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme; the new scheme will have a financial allocation of over Rs. 1,51,282 crore, said the Union Minister for Rural Development, Shivraj Singh Chouhan.
  - i. The Union Minister Chouhan made this statement after President Droupadi Murmu approved the Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) VB – G RAM G Bill, a new scheme of the Central BJP alliance Government.
  - ii. The scheme, which was introduced during the Congress alliance Government in 2005 and named after Mahatma Gandhi in 2009, has received a new form with a change of name.
  - iii. According to the new law, priority will be given to four key tasks: water conservation (water management), rural infrastructure facilities, livelihood-related infrastructure development, and climate change mitigation measures.
  - iv. Until the Central Government announces the new wage for the 125-day work scheme, the old 100-day scheme wage will remain in effect. Until now, the Central Government provided the entire funding for the 100-day work scheme. However, under the new scheme, State Governments must also share the financial contribution.
  - v. Northeastern and Himalayan states must contribute 10 percent of the funds, while other states and Union Territories must contribute 40 percent.
  - vi. New conditions: Within six months of the new 'VB-G RAM G' Act coming into force, states must create their new employment guarantee schemes in accordance with the legal provisions.
  - vii. To avoid a shortage of laborers during peak agricultural seasons, work should not be provided under the employment guarantee scheme during those times.
  - viii. The new law also includes conditions such as the State Government having to provide appropriate compensation if employment is not provided within 15 days of application.
2. The UN General Assembly recently approved the appointment of former Iraqi President Barham Salih (65) as the head of the UN Refugee Agency.
  - i. With this, for the first time, a former refugee has been elected to head the agency.
  - ii. Salih will serve as the head of the Refugee Agency, one of the UN's key agencies, for a five-year term starting January 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - iii. Antonio Guterres, before becoming the UN Secretary-General, headed the Refugee Agency. He recommended Salih for the position of head of the Refugee Agency. Following this, Salih was elected as the head of the agency, which comprises 193 member states.
3. Acting on the orders of US President Donald Trump, the US Coast Guard has seized another oil tanker in Venezuela.
  - i. President Trump, who has been accusing South American countries, including Venezuela, of smuggling drugs into the US, has been taking various drastic measures under the name of a 'war

against drug terrorism'.

- ii. As part of this, in attacks carried out by the US on boats in the Caribbean Sea and the Eastern Pacific Ocean for allegedly smuggling drugs, more than 100 people were killed.
  - iii. The Trump administration has declared Venezuelan President Maduro a 'drug terrorist'. A reward of \$50 million (approximately Rs.450 crore) has also been announced for those who help in his arrest.
  - iv. In addition, the US deployed a large naval force near Venezuela in the Caribbean Sea. This led to speculation that the US might attack Venezuela.
  - v. In this context, the US forces seized an oil tanker off the Venezuelan coast. As President Trump continues to increase pressure on President Maduro, this is the second oil tanker seized off the Venezuelan coast in two weeks.
4. The Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan stated that meditation is a global practice that transcends cultural, geographical, and religious boundaries. He also noted that meditation is essential for mental peace and social harmony.
- i. World Meditation Day was observed on Sunday. On this occasion, Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan participated in an event held at Kanha Shanti Vanam, a large meditation center in Telangana.
  - ii. Speaking at the event, he recalled India's significant role in the UN General Assembly resolution declaring December 21<sup>st</sup> as World Meditation Day, and said: This is a global recognition of the power of meditation in mental well-being and spiritual development. India, which encompasses centuries-old traditions such as meditation, yoga, and spirituality, continues to impart wisdom to the world.
5. India announced that the visa application center in Chittagong, Bangladesh, would be closed indefinitely.
- i. In Bangladesh, Sharif Usman Hadi (32), a student leader who played a key role in the protests against former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last year, was shot and succumbed to his injuries. This has led to a resurgence of violence in the country over the past few days. Hadi had planned to contest in the Bangladeshi general election scheduled for February 12<sup>th</sup> next year.
  - ii. Meanwhile, Bangladeshi media reported that Faisal Karim Masud and Alamgir Sheikh, who are suspected of shooting Hadi, had illegally crossed the border and escaped to India. Following this, Indian embassies, including the consulate in Chattogram, are being targeted with attacks.
6. The Supreme Court stated that environmental protection is not a voluntary charitable act; it is the fulfillment of a Constitutional obligation of Corporations.
- i. The Supreme Court made this observation while hearing a petition filed in 2019 by Environmental Activist M.K. Ranjitsinh, seeking appropriate orders to prevent the threat posed to the Great Indian Bustard, a bird species on the verge of extinction, due to the operations of non-renewable energy power plants, including Thermal Power Plants, operating in the states of Rajasthan and Gujarat, and to protect this rare bird species. The Supreme Court also issued guidelines regarding the environmental protection obligations of corporations. The order issued by the bench comprising Supreme Court Justices B.S. Narasimha and A.S. Chandurkar stated the following:
  - ii. Article 51A(g) of the Constitution of India lays down the Fundamental Duty of every citizen to protect

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and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures. This also applies to Corporations, which are part of society and legal entities.

- iii. Under Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, Environmental Protection is inherently included in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of Corporations. Companies cannot claim to be socially responsible while disregarding the equal rights of other living beings in the ecosystem.
  - iv. In that sense, the allocation of funds by Companies for Social Responsibility is an expression of their legal obligation. Similarly, the allocation of funds by Companies to protect the Environment is not merely a voluntary charitable act; rather, it is the fulfillment of the Company's Constitutional obligation.
  - v. It has been legally mandated that the Directors of Companies must act not only in the best interests of the Company's members but also for the benefit of its Employees, Shareholders, Society, and Environmental Protection.
  - vi. The 'polluter pays' principle mandates that Companies whose activities, including mining and power generation, threaten bird species on the verge of extinction, must bear the cost of rescuing those species. Therefore, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds of the Companies concerned should be utilized for the rescue efforts of these bird species in their natural habitats. The Court ordered that the non-renewable energy power generation companies operating in Rajasthan and Gujarat states must always keep this in mind while conducting their operations.
7. The President Droupadi Murmu has given her assent to the 'SHANTI' Bill, which paves the way for allowing the participation of private companies in the country's Nuclear Energy Sector.
- i. The Central Government's notification states that the President has given her assent to the bill, which was passed during the winter session of Parliament.
  - ii. This new law repeals the old laws that were in force regarding the Nuclear Energy sector: the 1962 Atomic Energy Act and the 2010 Nuclear Liability Act. All regulations related to Nuclear Energy have now been consolidated under this single law.
  - iii. The Nuclear Energy sector, which was previously under the complete control of the Central Government, will now allow investments and technological contributions from private companies.
  - iv. Accordingly, private companies or joint ventures with the Government can establish, operate, and maintain Nuclear Power Plants after obtaining the necessary licenses from the Central Government. This is expected to significantly increase the country's Nuclear Power generation capacity.
  - v. At the same time, it has been stated that certain sectors crucial for national security and importance will remain under the control of the Central Government. It has been clarified that only the Central Government or Government-owned Public Sector Undertakings will continue to be involved in key activities such as Uranium and Thorium mining, Nuclear Fuel Enrichment and Reprocessing, and High-Level Radioactive Waste Management.
8. The incident of the Rajdhani Express colliding with a herd of elephants standing on the railway tracks in Hojai district of Assam in the early hours of last Saturday (December 20) has caused great anguish among forest enthusiasts. The train was travelling from Sairang in Mizoram to Delhi and it was reported that the

train hit the elephants as it was not known where the elephants were standing due to heavy fog.

- i. Elephants, which have a direct impact on the structure and density of forests, play a major role in the regeneration of trees in the forest and facilitate the living conditions of other grazing animals. The continuous decline in the number of elephants, which live on land, is a major concern. Conflicts with humans and being hit by trains on the tracks passing through the forest are the main reasons for the loss of elephants.
- ii. India has 60 percent of the world's wild elephants. India is making a great contribution to elephant conservation with 33 elephant sanctuaries and 150 scientifically identified routes. Based on the intensity of wildlife movement, 77 railway lines with a distance of 1,965 km in 14 states are being prioritized and monitored. It is a tragedy that elephant deaths continue despite such measures.
- iii. It is commendable that the Tamil Nadu Forest Department is setting an example for India in elephant conservation, a national heritage animal. According to a report released by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department last October, there are 3,170 wild elephants counted in Tamil Nadu. This is 107 more elephants than the previous census of 3,063.
- iv. This progress has been achieved by adopting a holistic, people-centric approach, including restoring degraded forests, strengthening elephant routes, and using technology to prevent human-elephant conflict. The Forest Department also says that this steady growth in the elephant population in Tamil Nadu is due to science-based wildlife management and community participation.
- v. Cutting-edge Technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Remote Sensing and Geo-Mapping are being used across India to protect elephant habitats. In Tamil Nadu, 6,000 elephant crossing points are being monitored through Artificial Intelligence Technology. In the past, elephants were often killed by trains on the Coimbatore-Madukkarai railway line. Tamil Nadu Forest Department, Additional Chief Secretary, Supriya Sahu says that not a single elephant has died in the last two years due to this technology.
- vi. Thermal cameras that rotate up to 360 degrees have been installed on high towers in the Cholakkarai forest area. These cameras, which are connected to the control room, have been installed up to a distance of about 7 km from the railway track. If the control room detects that elephants are approaching the tracks during the arrival of the train, they are diverted by Forest Department staff before that.
- vii. In this way, 5,260 elephants have safely crossed the Madukkarai railway line from February 2024 to May 2025. In the last six months alone, 750 elephants have crossed. Most of these elephants were diverted by Forest Department staff before they approached the tracks when the train was arriving. These Artificial Intelligence cameras have helped not only elephants, but also leopards, spotted deer, wild buffaloes, etc. to cross the railway tracks safely.