

December 31, 2025 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. Former Bangladesh Prime Minister and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader Khaleda Zia passed away on Tuesday (Dec. 30). The 80-year-old was the first female Prime Minister of Bangladesh and served three terms as Prime Minister.

(i) Khaleda took office with the distinction of being the first female Prime Minister of Bangladesh and the second Muslim woman to hold the position (the first Muslim female Prime Minister was Benazir Bhutto-Pakistan).

2. The Saudi Arabia launched an airstrike on the port city of Mukalla in Yemen, targeting separatist forces operating with the support of the United Arab Emirates. According to a statement issued by the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

(i) Weapons and military vehicles were sent to the Southern Transitional Council (STC) separatist forces via ships that arrived from the port of Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates.

(ii) Since these weapons posed an immediate threat to the peace and stability of Yemen, the airstrike was carried out in the morning. The attack targeted the weapons and vehicles that had been unloaded from the ships, the statement said.

(iii) Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia for the first time directly accused the United Arab Emirates of engaging in highly dangerous activities in support of the Yemeni separatists.

(iv) In 2014, the Iranian-backed Houthi tribal forces seized significant parts of Yemen, including the capital Sana'a. Forces loyal to the UN-recognized Government control only the southern part of the country.

(v) In this civil war, Saudi Arabia has been conducting airstrikes against the Houthi forces. The STC, along with the National Army and other groups, fought together against the Houthis.

(vi) The UAE supports the STC, while Saudi Arabia supports the National Army and other armed groups.

(vii) In this context, the STC forces, which had recently advanced in the south, seized the Hadramaut and Mahra provinces, which were under the control of Government forces. This has led to tension between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

3. The New Year's message for 2026 from UN Secretary-General António Guterres has been released for the first time in 11 languages, including Hindi and Urdu, in addition to the official languages such as English.

(i) In his New Year's message, António Guterres appealed to the world's nations to reduce spending on war and destruction and instead invest in human development programs.

(ii) Importance given to Hindi: In the UN Secretary-General's New Year's message, Hindi has now been given importance alongside the six official languages: English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish.

(iii) This has been made possible under the 'Hindi at the UN' project, which is being implemented based on an agreement reached between the Indian Government and the UN Department of Global Communications in 2018. The Indian Government provides \$1.5 million annually for this project. Recently, the project was extended until 2030. This is seen as a major success for India's efforts to promote multilingualism and a global recognition for the Indian language.

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(iv) Similarly, the message has also been released in Urdu, which is recognized as one of India's 22 official languages. This language is widely spoken among Muslims, particularly in North India and regions like Hyderabad. Urdu is also the official and national language of Pakistan.

4.A special task force constituted by the Union Sports Ministry has reported that there are structural and administrative shortcomings in the Indian sports sector.

(i) The Union Sports Ministry had formed a nine-member special task force last August to examine the problems in the sports sector.

(ii) This committee, headed by former Indian shooter and Olympic medalist Abhinav Bindra, included, among others, the president of the Athletics Federation of India, Adille Sumariwala.

(iii) The committee studied the relevant issues and submitted a 170-page report with recommendations to Minister Mansukh Mandaviya.

5.Union Minister Rammohan Naidu flagged off the maiden flight of the 'Dhruv NG', the next-generation passenger helicopter manufactured by HAL.

(i) Union Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu flagged off the maiden flight of the 'Dhruv NG' helicopter, designed and manufactured with indigenous technology by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), a Bengaluru-based company operating under the control of the Ministry of Defence.

(ii) The Dhruv NG helicopter, manufactured to meet the needs of the passenger market, is built with state-of-the-art technology. This 5.5-ton helicopter has twin engines and is designed to operate in varying terrain and weather conditions. It can travel at a maximum speed of 285 km per hour.

(iii) This enables it to cover a distance of 630 km in 3 hours. It also has the capability to fly at an altitude of 6,000 meters.

(iv) It can carry 14 passengers at a time. It has also been designed for use as an air ambulance. HAL officials stated that it will also be useful for rescuing people during disasters.

6.The Ministry of Defence signed contracts worth Rs. 4,666 crore for the procurement of 4.25 lakh small arms and 48 submarine-launched missiles.

(i) According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Defence, a contract has been signed with Bharat Forge and PLR Systems for the procurement of 4.25 lakh small arms for the Indian Army at a cost of Rs. 2,770 crore.

(ii) A contract worth Rs. 1,896 crore was also signed with WASS, an Italian company, for the procurement of 48 submarine-launched missiles for the Indian Navy and for the INS Kalvari class submarines.

(iii) This will further enhance the combat capability of the six Kalvari class submarines currently in service in India. The delivery of the submarine-launched missiles will commence in 2028 and be completed by 2030.

7.The Prime Minister of Hungary – Viktor Orbán

Prime Minister of Slovakia – Robert Fico President of Serbia – Aleksandar Vučić.

8.A private company, on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Government, conducted a study on abandoned or lost fishing gear, plastic waste, and other debris along the coastline.

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(i) The Tamil Nadu coastline is 1,076 km long, which constitutes 15 percent of India's coastline. Tamil Nadu ranks fourth in fish production. For this study, 52 coastal villages across 13 districts were selected, and the survey was conducted over an average distance of 20 meters in each village, covering a total of 1,040 meters. The study revealed several shocking findings.

(ii) On average, 0.05 kg of waste was collected per square meter in these areas. The highest amount of waste, 0.20 kg per square meter, was collected in Pudukkottai district. Of the waste collected, 47.46 percent consisted of abandoned fishing gear and buoy debris. This amounts to 4,554 tons annually. Similarly, plastic waste accounted for 39.64 percent of the debris, while non-plastic waste constituted 12.9 percent.

(iii) The study revealed that 31 percent of Tamil Nadu's beaches are unsanitary, 46 percent are severely unsanitary, 39 percent have high levels of plastic waste, and 62 percent have hazardous waste.

(iv) Abandoned fishing gear, plastic materials, and other debris pose a significant threat to marine life. Animals that get entangled in the nets suffer injuries, and some even die. In addition to this, single-use plastic bags, bottles, food packaging, ice cream containers, plastic juice bottles, footwear, face masks, and household items are carried into the sea through streams and drainage canals during the rainy season, polluting the water and harming marine life.

(v) Over time, these plastic items break down into microplastics, which marine animals mistake for food and consume. This harms these creatures and also affects humans who consume seafood. Unsanitary beaches not only impact the environment but also tourism.

(vi) This problem is faced not only in our country but in all countries worldwide. A research report submitted to the US Department of the Interior states that between 1997 and 2009, more than 1,000 sea turtles in Florida, USA, became entangled in abandoned fishing gear.

(vii) In our country, the Central and State Governments are undertaking various measures to address these impacts. The Central Government's National Centre for Coastal Research conducts periodic studies in nine coastal states, Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep. Beach cleaning activities, awareness programs, and seminars are conducted through school and college students and NGOs.

(viii) The Central Government has provided an incentive of ₹38 per kilogram to fishermen who hand over abandoned fishing gear, amounting to ₹9.93 lakhs in the past year alone.

(ix) Under the Tamil Nadu Fishing Net Initiative, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board plans to establish collection centers for abandoned nets and other fishing gear in coastal districts. The first such centre was launched in Kasimedu, Chennai, in August 2024. It is noteworthy that 26,101 kg of waste have been collected there in the past year; of this, 23,270 kg of fishing gear have been sent to authorized recycling companies and transformed for reuse.

(x) To address this problem, collection centres for abandoned fishing gear should be immediately established in all 14 coastal districts, as already planned. Recycling centres should also be set up expeditiously. Efforts to remove abandoned fishing nets and other fishing gear, plastic materials, and waste from the coast should be accelerated.

(xi) Above all, creating awareness among the general public and fishermen and bringing about a change in their behaviour will be the permanent solution.