

January 1, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. Thailand released 18 Cambodian soldiers who were arrested last July as the new ceasefire agreement between Thailand and Cambodia lasted for more than 72 hours.

(i) The agreement stipulated that Thailand would release 18 Cambodian soldiers if the ceasefire lasted for 72 hours. Accordingly, Thailand has now released those soldiers following a 72-hour ceasefire.

(ii) Under the agreement signed between Thailand and Cambodia on Saturday (Dec. 27), both sides agreed to various conditions, including a cease-fire, cessation of military operations, and cooperation in clearing landmines along the border.

(iii) There is an ongoing border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia centered on areas including Preah Vihar, home to an 11th century Hindu temple. The International Court of Justice ruled in 2008 that the temple belongs to Cambodia. However, there have been occasional clashes between the two countries due to border disputes.

2. Japan's Kazuyoshi Miura (58) is set to become the world's oldest professional footballer.

(i) Miura made his debut in Brazil's famous club San Dos FC in 1986 and has since played for clubs in Italy, Croatia, Australia and Portugal.

(ii) Former England player Stanley Matthews holds the distinction of being the oldest footballer in the world who played football till the age of 50 (1965). Miura, who broke that record in 2017, is still playing at the age of 58.

3. Vijay Hazare Trophy is associated with Cricket.

4. Norway's Magnus Carlsen became the champion at the World Blitz Chess Championship held in Qatar. India's Arjun Erigaisi lost in the semi-finals to take the bronze medal.

(i) Carlsen, the world's No. 1 chess player, became the Blitz champion for the 9th time in a row, extending his record for the most titles.

5. The National Narcotics Control Bureau has unearthed an international drug smuggling network of 'khat' which was operating from Bangalore.

(i) Khat leaves, widely grown in East African countries and South Yemen, are a visual narcotic similar to tea. Many countries in the world have banned the production, distribution and sale of this type of plant leaves.

(ii) Similarly, India has also included 'Khat' leaves in the list of narcotic substances under the Narcotics Control Act of 2018.

(iii) In this context, the National Narcotics Control Department has discovered the presence of 'Khat' drug leaves in Bangalore. On the basis of reliable information provided by the Intelligence Unit, in a raid conducted by the Narcotics Control Department, Rs.8 crore worth of 'khat' drug leaves have been seized in Bangalore. This is said to be a large-scale 'Khat' drug leaf poaching that has taken place since the Prohibition of Narcotic Drugs Act 2018 came into force.

6. The Central Government announced that additional excise duty would be levied on tobacco products and a new cess tax on pan masala from February 1st.

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(i) In a notification issued in this regard, the Union Finance Ministry stated that from February 1st, a 40 percent Goods and Services Tax (GST) would be levied on pan masala, cigarettes, tobacco, and similar products, and an 18 percent GST on beedis. It further stated that additional excise duty would be levied on tobacco and related products, and a new cess tax on pan masala.

(ii) The Union Finance Ministry also announced the Chewing Tobacco, Zarda, Scented Tobacco and Gutkha Packing Machines (Capacity Determination and Collection of Duty) Rules, 2026.

7. Youth Welfare and Sports Development Minister and Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin laid the foundation stone for the construction of an international-standard trap and skeet shooting training academy at Keerapakkam in Vandaloor taluk, Chengalpattu district, at a cost of Rs. 17.01 crore, through a video conference from his camp office in Chennai.

8. The Union Cabinet Committee has approved the construction of a six-lane greenfield highway between Nashik and Akkalkot in the Solapur district of Maharashtra. This will reduce travel time between Chennai and Surat in Gujarat by 45 percent.

(i) The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Modi, approved the construction of a six-lane greenfield highway between Nashik and Akkalkot in Maharashtra at a cost of Rs. 19,142 crore. The Nashik-Akkalkot six-lane highway will be part of the Chennai-Surat expressway, connecting the southern and western parts of the country.

(ii) The construction of this 374 km long highway will be completed in two years. This road will reduce travel time between Chennai and Surat by 45 percent. It will also improve connectivity between Chennai Port and Hazira Port near Surat.

9. Telecommunication companies must pay license fees and spectrum fees to the Central Government as a share of their revenue. The revenue amount used to calculate this revenue share is called AGR (Adjusted Gross Revenue).

(i) In this context, the Union Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Modi, has approved a five-year deferral for Vodafone Idea, a company facing financial difficulties, on the payment of its outstanding AGR dues of ₹87,695 crore to the Central Government. Arrangements have been made for the company to pay this amount starting from the 2031-32 financial year and completing the payments by the 2040-41 financial year.

(ii) Informed sources stated that this approval was granted considering the Government's stake of approximately 48.9 percent in Vodafone-Idea, the welfare of the company's 20 crore customers, and with the objective of ensuring continued competition in the telecommunications sector.

10. A drug control inspection report states that 364 safety violations were found in the manufacturing of the 'Coldriff' medicine.

(i) Following reports of 22 children dying in Madhya Pradesh after consuming 'Coldriff' cough syrup, the license of Srisan Pharma, the Kanchipuram-based company that manufactured it, was revoked and legal action was initiated. Meanwhile, analysis of the medicines found that they contained the chemical toxin diethylene glycol. This is a solvent compound typically used to liquefy resins, oils, paints, and inks.

(ii) Propylene glycol is usually used as a solvent in liquid medicines. However, the presence of diethylene glycol was detected in the 'Coldriff' medicine.

11. Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor - Sanjay Malhotra

12. Important events that took place in 2025:

- (i) The 50% additional tariff imposed by Trump on Indian goods
- (ii) The Pahalgam terrorist attack and 'Operation Sindoor'
- (iii) Increased tensions between China and Taiwan
- (iv) The Thailand-Cambodia military conflict
- (v) Clashes between Pakistani and Afghan forces
- (vi) The earthquake in Afghanistan that claimed thousands of lives
- (vii) The Gen Z youth protests in Nepal
- (viii) Increased violence against minorities in Bangladesh
- (ix) Protests by indigenous people against immigrants in countries including Australia, New Zealand, and Britain.

