

January 28, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. A Free Trade Agreement between India and the European Union has been finalized. According to this Agreement, no tariffs will be imposed on 93 percent of goods exported from India to European Union countries;

(i) Similarly, India will not impose any tariffs on 90 percent of goods imported from European Union countries for a period of 10 years.

(ii) India invited European Union leaders to participate as special guests at the country's 77th Republic Day celebrations in Delhi and also organized a summit to finalize the Free Trade Agreement negotiations with the EU.

(iii) European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa, who arrived in India with a high-level delegation to participate in this summit, attended the Republic Day celebrations as special guests.

(iv) **What are the benefits of the agreement?:**

1. The Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal said: When the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement comes into effect, more than 99 percent of goods exported from India, based on value, will receive unprecedented market access.

2. All other goods exported from India (93%), except for automobiles and iron and steel products, will receive duty-free access to the European Union market. Furthermore, the European Union will provide tax reductions and quota-based tax concessions for the remaining 6 percent of Indian export products, including automotive parts, he added.

3. Currently, the European Union levies an average tax of 3.8 percent on goods imported from India, but under this agreement, this tax will be reduced to 0.1 percent.

4. The European Union currently imposes additional taxes on some goods imported from India. Specifically, it levies up to 12.8 percent on chemical products, 6.5 percent on plastics and rubber products, 17 percent on leather and footwear, 12 percent on textiles and ready-made garments, 4 percent on gems and jewellery, 7.7 percent on railway, aircraft, ships and boats, 10.5 percent on wood products and light consumer goods, 4.7 percent on toys, and 4.7 percent on sports goods. The European Union is now set to abolish all these taxes.

5. However, the European Union has not offered any concessions to Indian exporters under this agreement regarding the Carbon Tax imposed to mitigate environmental impact. Meanwhile, officials stated that the agreement includes an assurance that any concessions granted by the European Union to other countries in this Tax regime will automatically be extended to Indian exporters as well.

Concessions for 90% of EU products

1. According to the Free Trade Agreement, India will provide tax-free access to 90 percent of products from European Union countries in the Indian markets. However, India will remove the tax on only 30 percent of EU products on the first day the agreement is signed. Subsequently, it will be gradually removed for other products.

2. Specifically, India will provide tax concessions on EU products including vehicles, wines, spirits, beer, olive oil, kiwi and pears, fruit juices, bread, biscuits, pasta, processed foods including chocolates, pet food, and

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other meat products including lamb. Currently, India levies taxes ranging from 33 to 150 percent on these products.

3. Due to the tax concessions, the prices of leading luxury cars such as BMW, Mercedes, Lamborghini, Porsche, and Audi are likely to decrease in the Indian market. Officials also stated that India will provide quota-based tax concessions for EU products.

4. According to the agreement, while the European Union will gradually reduce the tax on Indian vehicles, India will reduce the tax on European Union cars by 10 percent. India will implement this tax reduction on a quota basis of 250,000 cars per year. India is set to provide duty-free market access for goods imported from the European Union, including machinery, electrical equipment, aircraft, medical and surgical instruments, glass, plastics, chemicals, iron and steel, and pharmaceuticals.

5. This Free Trade Agreement will also facilitate short-term business travel between India and the European Union for professionals in various sectors, including information technology, business services, education, financial services, tourism, and construction. Officials from the Ministry of Commerce stated that steps have also been taken to ensure that Indian students pursuing higher education in EU countries receive post-study work permits from the European Union.

2. Amidst a tense political climate, the Parliament's Budget Session is set to begin on Wednesday (January 28) and will be held in two phases. As this is the first session of the year, President Droupadi Murmu will address a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament on the opening day.

(i) The Union Budget for the year 2026-27 will be presented on February 1st (Sunday). Presenting the budget on a Sunday is a very rare occurrence in the history of the Indian Parliament.

(ii) The Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget for the ninth consecutive time.

(iii) The Economic Survey will be tabled on Thursday (January 29).

3. The Chief Minister inaugurated the Global Women's Summit at the Nandambakkam Trade Centre in Chennai.

(i) Addressing the summit, the Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin stated that the Chief Minister has launched the 'Tamil Nadu WE Safe' scheme at a cost of Rs.5,000 crore to ensure that the development of women in Tamil Nadu is taken to the next level.

(ii) Impressed by the schemes implemented by the Tamil Nadu Government for women's empowerment, the World Bank is providing a loan assistance of approximately Rs.1,250 crore.

(iii) This scheme has been launched to ensure the safety and development of women from all walks of life, including newborn girls, school and college students, working women, homemakers, and elderly women.

4. The British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is traveling to China on an official visit on Wednesday (January 28).

(i) This is the first visit by a British Prime Minister to China since 2018. During this trip, Keir Starmer will meet and hold discussions with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang.

(ii) The British Trade Secretary Peter Kyle and several leaders of leading British companies are accompanying him on this trip.

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(iii) While US President Trump is imposing tariffs on allied countries, Britain wants to use this trip to strengthen its economy. Keir Starmer's primary objective is to attract significant Chinese investments in the automotive, financial services, and technology sectors.

(iv) Already, Canada and Germany have shown interest in strengthening their ties with China. In the same vein, Britain is now attempting to establish closer economic relations with China.

5. The Adani Group is establishing India's regional transport aircraft manufacturing plant in collaboration with Embraer, a leading global aircraft manufacturer from Brazil.

(i) A Memorandum of Understanding for this was signed in the presence of the Union Minister of Civil Aviation.

(ii) Embraer is the third largest company in the aerospace industry, after Boeing and Airbus. This company primarily manufactures small aircraft, medium-range passenger aircraft, and aircraft for the defense and agricultural sectors.

(iii) Currently, more than 50 Embraer aircraft are already in use in India by the Indian Air Force and airlines such as 'Star Air'.

(iv) Through the current Adani-Embraer agreement, a final assembly plant for the complete manufacturing of small aircraft will be established in India under the 'Self-Reliant India' initiative.

(v) It is estimated that India will require approximately 500 aircraft with 80 to 146 seats over the next 20 years. The primary objective of this collaboration is to meet this demand and facilitate air connectivity between the country's Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.

6. In the WSK Super Master Karting Series held in Italy, 11-year-old Attika Mir from India, participating for the first time, made history by becoming the first Indian to secure second place. It is noteworthy that Attika was the only female racer among the 37 competitors in this race.

7. The Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman participated in the halwa-making ceremony, which signifies that the preparation of the Union Budget has reached its final stage.

(i) Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Union Budget for the financial year 2026-27 in the Lok Sabha on February 1st.

(ii) Budget preparation work began at the old office of the Union Finance Ministry in New Delhi. Although the Union Finance Minister and most of her Department staff started working in the modern Central Secretariat office at Kartavya Path last September, there is no printing press there. Therefore, the budget preparation work commenced at the old office complex where the printing press is located.

(iii) What is the reason for the halwa-making ceremony?

The officers and staff involved in the budget preparation process stay in the building where the printing press is located, without any contact with the outside world, until the work is completed. To maintain secrecy regarding the budget documents, they remain within that building. They leave the building only after the Finance Minister concludes her budget speech in the Lok Sabha.

(iv) The halwa-making ceremony is traditionally held in the building where the officers and staff are staying, both to bid them farewell from the budget preparation work and to signify that the budget preparation has reached its final stage.

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(v) During this ceremony, the Minister Nirmala Sitharaman participated and reviewed the budget preparation work. The Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary and the secretaries of all Departments under the Union Finance Ministry also participated with her.

8. 131 Padma Awards announced for 2026.

- **Total Awards:** A total of 131 individuals were selected for the Padma awards across various fields including literature, sports, and social service.
- **Focus on Unsung Heroes:** The Central Government prioritized recognizing lesser-known individuals who have made significant contributions, with more than one-third of the total awardees falling into this "non-famous" category.
- **Prominent Awardees:** Notable public figures recognized include former Kerala CM V.S. Achuthanandan, actors Dharmendra and Mammooty, tennis star Vijay Amritraj, and cricketer Rohit Sharma.
- **Regional Rankings for Unsung Heroes:** West Bengal ranks first with six "unsung hero" awardees, followed by Tamil Nadu in second place with five.

Tamil Nadu and Puducherry Highlights

- **State Total:** Tamil Nadu received a total of 13 awards, consisting of two Padma Bhushan and 11 Padma Shri awards.
- **Padma Bhushan (Tamil Nadu):**
 - Dr. K.R. Palanisamy (Medicine) and S.K. M. Maeilanandhan (Social Service) were honored with the Padma Bhushan.
- **Notable Padma Shri Recipients:**
 - Dr. H.V. Hande: Recognized for his medical service even at the age of 98.
 - Sivasankari: Honored for her contributions to literature.
 - Krishnan Kitna (Posthumous): A tribal painter from the Kurumba tribe in the Nilgiris whose traditional artwork reached international markets.
 - Raja Sthapathy: A sculptor from Salem recognized for 50 years of crafting lifelike metal and bronze idols without modern machinery.
 - N. Swaminathan: An Othuvur from Tiruttani recognized for his 46 years of service in preserving Tamil music and Devaram.
 - Dr. Thayukarniyamurthi: A veterinarian from Thanjavur who promotes Siddha medicine and herbal remedies for cattle.
 - K. Palanivel (Puducherry): A martial arts expert who has provided free Silambam training to over 30,000 people, including 500 foreigners.

Inspiring Stories from Across India

- **Anke Gowda (Karnataka):** A former bus conductor who established the world's largest free library with 20 lakh books.
- **Dr. Armida Fernandez (Maharashtra):** A pediatrician who founded Asia's first breast milk bank.
- **Putri Dadi (Chhattisgarh):** Recognized for building schools in Naxal-affected regions.
- **Bikilya Ladakya Dhinda (Maharashtra):** A 90-year-old tribal musician honored for preserving traditional arts.

Significance of the Awards

- By recognizing the extraordinary contributions of ordinary citizens, these awards not only bring their work into the limelight but also inspire the wider public to contribute to social welfare.