

January 29, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. President Droupadi Murmu addressed the joint session of Parliament at the start of the Budget session, detailing the government's achievements over the last decade and outlining the vision for a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India).

The following are the key facts and achievements from her address:

Poverty Alleviation and Social Welfare

- Poverty Reduction: Over the last decade, 25 crore people have been lifted out of poverty.
- Social Security: Approximately 95 crore citizens are currently benefiting from various government social security schemes.
- Healthcare: More than 11 crore people have received benefits under the Ayushman Bharat free medical insurance scheme.
- Employment: Under various Rozgar (employment) schemes, more than 3.5 crore new jobs have been created.

Agriculture and Food Security

- Record Production: India achieved a historic high of 35 crore tonnes of food grain production last year.
- Global Leadership in Rice: India has become the world leader in rice production, reaching a milestone of 15 crore tonnes.
- Direct Support to Farmers: Under the PM-Kisan scheme, more than ₹4 lakh crore has been directly deposited into the bank accounts of farmers.

Infrastructure and Connectivity

- Massive Investment: In recent years, more than ₹50 lakh crore has been invested in the nation's modern infrastructure.
- Metro and Railways: India now has the third-largest metro network in the world, exceeding 1,000 km in length. Additionally, over 150 Vande Bharat trains are operational, connecting regions from Jammu-Kashmir to Kerala.
- Engineering Milestones: Key projects highlighted include the Chenab Bridge (the world's highest railway arch bridge) and the new Pamban Bridge in Tamil Nadu.
- Rural Access: Nearly every village in the country has now been connected via roads.

Manufacturing and Technology

- Mobile Phone Hub: India has emerged as the second-largest mobile phone manufacturer globally. In the first five months of the last financial year alone, mobile exports exceeded ₹1 lakh crore.
- Electric Vehicles (EVs): India has commenced the export of electric vehicles to more than 100 countries.

Economic Reforms and Taxation

- GST Savings: Reforms in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) have resulted in savings of ₹1 lakh crore for citizens.
- Income Tax Relief: Following reforms to the Income Tax Act, individuals with an annual income of up to ₹12 lakh are now exempt from paying income tax.

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- **Administrative Integrity:** The President emphasized the establishment of a corruption-free administration where public funds are spent transparently and effectively.

International Relations

- **Global Bridge:** In a complex and conflict-ridden world, India is positioned as a "bridge," with even warring nations expressing trust in India's balanced foreign policy.
- **Foundational Strength:** The President noted that the foundations of every sector have been significantly strengthened over the last 11 years, enabling India to progress rapidly despite global challenges.

2. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the European Union (EU), a significant milestone in India's strategic trade policy.

(i) Historical Context and Timeline

- **18-Year Negotiation:** The talks for this landmark deal originally began in 2007.
- **Delays and Resumption:** Progress was stalled in 2013 due to global economic shifts but was revived in 2022 following the COVID-19 pandemic and changing geopolitical dynamics.
- **Recent Momentum:** This agreement follows a series of successful trade deals India has signed in the last four years, including those with Britain and New Zealand.

(ii). Strategic Drivers for the Deal

- **Global Instability:** The need for economic stability in a world troubled by international conflicts and shifting trade rules.
- **The "China Plus One" Strategy:** A desire to reduce over-reliance on China for manufacturing and supply chains.
- **Response to US Policy:** Strategic adjustments made following the shock of import duties imposed during the Trump administration.

(iii). Economic Impact and Trade Volume

- **Largest Trade Partner:** The EU is currently India's largest trade partner, with a total trade value of \$200 billion.
- **Export Growth:** India currently exports \$76 billion (17% of its total exports) to the EU. This deal is projected to increase that figure by \$50 billion by 2031.
- **Trade Balance:** Notably, the current trade balance in both goods and services is in India's favor.

(iv). The agreement is built on a foundation of mutual tax exemptions to facilitate smoother commerce:

- **Tax Exemptions:** India has agreed to provide tax exemptions for 90% of EU products, while the EU will provide exemptions for 93% of Indian products.
- **What India Exports:** Key commodities include garments, footwear, auto parts, basic pharmaceuticals, and polished diamonds.
- **What the EU Exports:** Primary goods include machinery, aircraft, electronic components, and medical equipment.

(v). Future Steps

It must now be approved and ratified by the Parliaments of all 27 EU member nations before it can be formally implemented.

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3. The Supreme Court has appointed retired Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul as a mediator to resolve the 200-year-old Tenkalai-Vadakalai dispute regarding rituals at the Kanchi Varadaraja Perumal Temple.
4. The Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar (66) was traveling in a small Learjet 46 plane that lost control while landing at Pune's Baramati and crashed into the ground. Five people, including Ajit Pawar and the two pilots, died in the crash.

