

January 31, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. The Supreme Court, stating that the right to life includes the right to menstrual hygiene, ordered all State and Union Territory Governments to provide free sanitary napkins to female students in Government and Private schools across the country.

(i) Jaya Thakur had filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking the implementation of a menstrual hygiene policy for school students across the country. After the arguments and counter-arguments on the petition were completed, the Supreme Court reserved its judgment on December 10, 2024. In this context, the order issued by the Supreme Court bench comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan is as follows:

(ii) State and Union Territory Governments must ensure that separate toilets for male and female students are available in Government and Private schools in rural and urban areas across all States and Union Territories.

(iii) Existing and newly constructed toilets in schools must be designed, built, and maintained to ensure the privacy of students and their access to toilet facilities. This must also address the needs of children with disabilities.

(iv) All school toilets must always have water and soap available.

(v) State and Union Territory Governments must ensure that environmentally friendly and biodegradable sanitary napkins are provided free of charge in Government and Private schools in rural and urban areas. These napkins should be easily accessible to female students through vending machines located within the toilet premises or in a designated area.

(vi) Private spaces must be established: Private spaces for maintaining menstrual hygiene must be established in Government and Private schools in rural and urban areas across all States and Union Territories. These private spaces should contain spare undergarments, uniforms, disposable sanitary napkins, and other essential items to manage menstruation.

(vii) In accordance with Solid Waste Management Rules –

In accordance with the latest Solid Waste Management Rules, State and Union Territory Governments must ensure that Government and Private schools in rural and urban areas have a safe, hygienic, and environmentally friendly method for disposing of sanitary napkins.

(viii) Every school toilet must have a covered dustbin for disposing of sanitary napkins. The judges ordered that these dustbins must be kept clean and properly maintained at all times.

(ix) To prevent facing permanent inequality...: The judges further stated, 'The denial of adequate access to clean and usable toilets, sanitary napkins, disposal mechanisms, and awareness regarding menstrual hygiene practices will impact the right of girl children to education. It will also hinder their opportunities to compete and progress in society throughout their lives and prevent them from realizing their full potential. Addressing these deficiencies is crucial to prevent them from facing permanent inequality.'

(x) Under Article 21 of the Constitution, the right to life includes the right to menstrual hygiene. It is well known that poor menstrual hygiene can lead to reproductive tract infections and infertility problems.

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(xi) Without clean and usable toilets, girl students cannot manage menstruation privately and with dignity at school. This will cause them constant worry and embarrassment, making them preoccupied with thoughts of menstrual leakage and staining of their clothes. At the same time, if they do not have adequate access to sanitary napkins in schools, it will make it practically impossible for them to stay in school for extended periods and continue their studies. The inability to access menstrual hygiene will perpetuate discrimination and negatively impact the enrollment and learning of girls in schools.

(xii) They stated that, under the Right to Education Act and Article 21A of the Constitution, the Fundamental Right to Education includes free, compulsory, and quality education. This includes all types of fees and expenses that would prevent a child from completing their elementary education.

2. The Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt is set to reopen.

(i) This crossing is being reopened for civilian traffic after approximately one and a half years, following its capture by Israeli forces in May 2024. Israel has taken this decision after the body of the last Israeli hostage from Gaza was recently recovered.

(ii) This will allow people who fled Gaza due to the war to return home. However, it has been stated that obtaining prior security clearance from Israel is mandatory, and this operation will be carried out in coordination with Egypt.

(iii) It is noteworthy that while Israel currently plans to allow only about 150 people per day, a final agreement on this number has not yet been reached with Egypt.

3. In the West African nation of Burkina Faso, which is under military rule, all political parties have been dissolved, and their legal frameworks have been revoked.

(i) The Military Government, which has been in power since 2022, has accused political parties of being the main cause of the divisions and weakening of the social fabric in the country.

(ii) Following approval at a cabinet meeting, it has also been announced that all assets of the political parties will be nationalized.

(iii) With the election commission having been dissolved and democratic elections postponed for several years, social activists have expressed concern that this ban is aimed at suppressing the voices of opposition parties.

4. The 'New START' treaty, the last remaining nuclear arms control agreement between the United States and Russia, is set to expire on February 5th.

(i) If this treaty expires, there is a risk that, for the first time since the Cold War, the two countries will engage in an unrestricted arms race to accumulate nuclear weapons.

(ii) Russian President Putin has proposed a temporary agreement to maintain nuclear arms control. However, US President Donald Trump has not yet officially responded to this.

(iii) The New START treaty was signed in 2010 between then-US President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. According to this agreement, both countries can possess only 1,550 nuclear weapons each.

(iv) Speaking on this matter earlier this month, President Trump said, "Let the treaty expire. We will create

(v) Trump wants China to also participate in new nuclear arms reduction talks with the US and Russia. However, China is refusing to join these talks, citing that it possesses significantly fewer nuclear weapons than the US and Russia.

(vi) Because China is focusing on developing its nuclear arsenal, domestic politicians are pressuring Trump to increase the US weapons stockpile.

(vii) In this situation, experts warn that if this treaty lapses, it will lead to a climate of suspicion between the US and Russia. This will result in unnecessary economic costs and a sense of insecurity globally.

(viii) The world's attention is now focused on the White House in the United States regarding this issue. Whether President Trump's decision will lead to another nuclear arms race or extend the period of world peace will become clear in the coming days.

5. The Venezuela's Interim President, Delcy Rodriguez, signed a new amendment to the law that relaxes the Government's complete control over the country's oil resources and aims to attract investments from private companies.

(i) This drastic measure has been taken with the aim of reviving the country's economy, abandoning the strict socialist policies that have been followed for more than 20 years.

(ii) It is noteworthy that this amendment was approved by the Parliament amidst the political changes that occurred after President Nicolás Maduro was detained by the United States on charges of complicity in drug trafficking.

(iii) Following this important decision, the United States has begun to ease economic sanctions against Venezuela. This has paved the way for American energy companies to expand their operations in Venezuela once again.

6. The President Donald Trump nominated Kevin Warsh as the next head of the US Federal Reserve, Central Bank.

(i) The term of the current Chairman, Jerome Powell, ends in May. This important announcement comes amidst Trump's long-standing dissatisfaction with Jerome Powell for delaying interest rate cuts.

(ii) Kevin Warsh is a former Governor of the Federal Reserve. He is the son-in-law of Ronald Lauder, a close friend of Trump and heir to the renowned 'Estée Lauder' company. He was considered for this position during Trump's first term, but Jerome Powell was chosen at that time.

(iii) Currently, the interest rate in the US is approximately 3.6 percent. Kevin Warsh's support for Trump's stance of reducing this to 1 percent is seen as a key reason for his nomination.

7. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has granted permission to the National Stock Exchange (NSE), India's largest stock exchange, to sell its shares to the public through an Initial Public Offering (IPO). This brings an end to a long wait of over 10 years.

(i) The National Stock Exchange (NSE) first applied for its IPO in 2016, aiming to raise approximately ₹10,000 crore. However, permission was repeatedly denied due to certain procedural issues in its management and allegations of irregularities involving preferential treatment given to some stockbroking firms.

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(ii) SEBI constituted an expert committee on this matter in March of last year. Based on the committee's recommendations, SEBI has now granted permission after accepting the settlement application filed by the NSE last June.

(iii) According to Indian stock market regulations, a Stock Exchange cannot list its own shares on its own platform. The Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) has already issued an IPO, and its shares are currently traded on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). Similarly, with this current approval, it is expected that NSE shares will be listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange.

8. As President's Rule in the northeastern state of Manipur is set to complete one year next month, the question arises whether a democratically elected government will be established there.

(i) More than 260 people died in the months-long clashes between the Meitei and Kuki communities in Manipur. Following this, President's Rule was imposed in the state on February 13th last year. The State Legislative Assembly was suspended at that time.

(ii) With President's Rule in Manipur completing one year next month, the question arises whether the central BJP government will take steps to establish a democratically elected government there. The term of the 60-member State Legislative Assembly is set to end in March of next year (2027).

9. The World Bank announced that it is prepared to provide India with loans ranging from ₹73,000 crore to ₹91,000 crore annually for the next five years.

(i) This decision was made based on discussions held jointly by the World Bank Group and India under the framework of a new country partnership strategy. It has been stated that this financial assistance will be highly beneficial in taking India's development to the next level and positioning India as a developed nation.

(ii) A team led by World Bank President Ajay Banga met and held discussions with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi.

10. According to data released by the Central Government, the Central Government's fiscal deficit for the current financial year (2025-26) reached 54.5 percent by December 2025.

(i) The central government had projected the fiscal deficit for the current financial year to be 4.4 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), or Rs. 15.69 lakh crore. However, according to a report released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA), the fiscal deficit reached 54.5 percent of the projected amount, or Rs. 8.55 lakh crore, as of December 2025.

(ii) The report included various data, including tax revenue received during the April-December period of the current financial year, tax devolution to states, and central government expenditures.

(iii) It further stated that: As per the budget estimates for the current financial year, the central government has received 72.2 percent of the projected revenue, or Rs.25.25 lakh crore, until December 2025. This includes Rs. 19.39 lakh crore in tax revenue, Rs. 5.39 lakh crore in non-tax revenue, and Rs. 46,047 crore in non-debt capital receipts.

(iv) During the April-December 2025 period, the central government provided Rs.10.38 lakh crore to the states as tax devolution. This is Rs.1.37 lakh crore more compared to the same period of the previous financial year.

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(v) During the April-December 2025 period, the central government spent a total of Rs.33.8 lakh crore, comprising Rs.25.93 lakh crore in revenue expenditure and Rs.7.87 lakh crore in capital expenditure. This represents 66.7 percent of the budget estimates.

(vi) It was stated that the Central Government has spent ₹9.11 lakh crore for interest payments and ₹3.17 lakh crore for subsidies.

11. On the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's 78th death anniversary, President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, and other leaders paid floral tributes at Rajghat, his memorial in Delhi.

(i) The Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, was shot dead by Nathuram Godse in Delhi on January 30, 1948. His 78th death anniversary was observed.

(ii) It is noteworthy that his death anniversary is observed as Martyrs' Day to honour the life, legacy, and sacrifices of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, for justice, peace, and freedom.

(iii) Mahatma Gandhi's memorial in Delhi - Rajghat

12. President - Droupadi Murmu,

Vice President - C.P. Radhakrishnan

Speaker of the Lok Sabha - Om Birla

Defence Minister - Rajnath Singh

Chief of Defence Staff - Anil Chauhan

Chief of Army Staff - Upendra Dwivedi

Chief of Naval Staff - Dinesh K. Tripathi

Chief of Air Staff - Amar Preet Singh.

13. A Free Trade Agreement between India and Chile will be concluded soon. This will enable India to obtain rare earth elements, said Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.

(i) The South American country of Chile is rich in rare earth elements including lithium, copper, cobalt, rhenium, and molybdenum. These play a crucial role in the manufacturing of electronic goods, automobiles, medical equipment, and solar energy devices. An agreement with Chile will provide India with the opportunity to acquire these elements in large quantities.

(ii) Speaking at an event held at the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India in Greater Noida, near Delhi, Minister Piyush Goyal said: India and Chile signed a Preferential Trade Agreement in 2006. Discussions are now underway to further enhance bilateral trade and economic relations. This has increased the likelihood of a Free Trade Agreement between the two countries in the near future. This trade agreement will focus on digital services, investment promotion, cooperation in small, medium, and micro enterprises, and rare earth elements.

14. With the spread of monkey fever in Karnataka, the Public Health Department has instructed that medical surveillance be intensified in the border districts of Tamil Nadu.

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- (i) Instructions have also been issued to monitor and conduct tests daily for fever and diarrhea cases in villages bordering Karnataka.
- (ii) Several people in Karnataka have been affected by monkey fever, also known as Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD). Reports indicate that one person has died from the disease.
- (iii) This fever is caused by a viral infection first identified in the Kyasanur forest area in 1957. Annually, 400 to 500 people are affected by this disease.
- (iv) This type of virus is spread through monkeys and livestock bitten by infected ticks. The infection also spreads rapidly from monkeys that have died from the disease. Fever, body aches, headache, vomiting, digestive system problems, and bleeding are its main symptoms.
- (v) In this situation, the Public Health Department is taking precautionary measures to prevent the spread of this disease to the Tamil Nadu districts bordering Karnataka.
- (vi) The Public Health Department has stated that there is no need to panic as this infection does not spread from person to person, but that caution should be exercised.
15. The current Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who holds the distinction of being the longest-serving Finance Minister of the country, is set to create a new record by presenting the budget for the ninth consecutive time.
- (i) Having assumed office on May 31, 2019, as the country's first full-time female Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman has steered the nation's economy through the COVID-19 pandemic and global geopolitical turmoil, positioning the country as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies.
- (ii) Completing 6 years and 8 months in office on Saturday (January 31), the last day of this month, Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present and address the Union Budget for the 2026-27 financial year in Parliament on Sunday (February 1) amidst high expectations. This will be the ninth consecutive budget she presents (including two interim budgets).
- (iii) In 2024, when Nirmala Sitharaman presented the budget for the seventh consecutive time, she surpassed the record of the late former Finance Minister Morarji Desai (6 consecutive times). Her record-breaking journey continues with the 8th consecutive budget in 2025 and now the 9th.
- (iv) Morarji Desai holds the record for presenting the budget the maximum number of times (10 times), though not consecutively. P. Chidambaram is in second place with 9 times. It is expected that Nirmala Sitharaman will break these records in the coming years.
- (v) The Prime Minister Modi praised Nirmala Sitharaman for presenting the budget for the 9th consecutive time, calling it a proud moment in the history of the Indian Parliament.
- (vi) 'Longest-serving' Finance Minister: Similarly, Nirmala Sitharaman holds the distinction of being the longest-serving Finance Minister of the country. The second on this list is the late former Finance Minister C.D. Deshmukh. He assumed office on June 1, 1950, and served for 6 years and 2 months.
- (vii) The late former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who spearheaded economic liberalization, served as Finance Minister for 5 consecutive years from June 21, 1990 (during the Narasimha Rao government). After becoming Prime Minister, he briefly held the additional charge of Finance Minister twice, in 2008 and 2012.

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(viii) Former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram has served as Finance Minister for 8 years across various periods. Besides him, those who have served as Finance Minister for a long duration, though not consecutively, include Morarji Desai (7 years, 9 months), Pranab Mukherjee (6 years, 4 months), Arun Jaitley (4 years, 8 months), Yashwant Sinha (4 years, 4 months), and Y.B. Chavan (4 years, 3 months). The first Finance Minister of independent India was R.K. Shanmugam Chetty.

Central Budget to be presented on Sunday: A first since Independence

(i) The general budget for the financial year 2026-27 is scheduled to be presented on Sunday (February 1). Previously, the budget has been presented on a Saturday, the last day of the week, on a few occasions. However, this is the first time since the country gained independence that the budget is being presented on a Sunday.

(ii) Until 2016, it was customary for the annual budget to be presented on the last working day of February. Reforming this practice, the then Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, in the 2017-18 financial year, fixed February 1st as the budget presentation date.

(iii) The Central Government explained at the time that this was to provide more time for central government departments and Union Territories to plan and implement their annual expenditures before the start of the new financial year in April. Accordingly, despite February 1st falling on a Sunday this year, the Central Government has remained firm in presenting the budget on the same day.

(iv) Similarly, the time of the budget presentation was changed during the tenure of Prime Minister Vajpayee. The budget for the 1999-2000 financial year was presented by the then Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha. Until the previous year, following British colonial practice, the budget was presented in Parliament at 5PM. Changing this, the then Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha introduced the practice of presenting the budget directly after the commencement of proceedings in the Lok Sabha, without a question hour. This practice is still followed today.