

February 12, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. At least 20 people have died after Cyclone Gezani made landfall near the port city of Domasina in the Indian Ocean island nation of Madagascar last night.

(i) The country's President Michael Randrianirina visited the affected Domasina area to inspect the damage.

2. Voting for the 13th Parliamentary election in neighboring Bangladesh will be held on Thursday (Feb. 12).

(i) The election comes 18 months after former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year rule ended and an Interim Government led by Muhammad Yunus took office.

(ii) Sheikh Hasina resigned from her post in August 2024 following the intensification of student protests and sought refuge in India. Her Awami League party has been barred from contesting the election due to pending cases against her for using violence to suppress the protests.

(iii) This has resulted in a direct contest between the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's son Tariq Rahman, and its former ally Jamaat-e-Islami.

(iv) Elections have been announced for 300 seats in Parliament.

(v) Referendum on July Charter:-

- Along with the Parliamentary elections, a referendum on the 'July National Charter 2025', which includes 84-point democratic reforms, is also being held.
- Key reforms proposed in this charter include limiting the Prime Minister's term to a maximum of 10 years; preventing the party leader from also being the Prime Minister to avoid concentration of power; ensuring the autonomy of the Election Commission and the courts; creating a new Upper House in Parliament to scrutinise laws; and providing legal protection to students who participated in the 2024 protests so that they are not affected by future Governments.

3. The Sports Ministry's Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) has approved an extension of javelin throw star Neeraj Chopra's training in South Africa until April and authorised customised international exposure and coaching for taekwondo and karate athletes.

4. Group Captain Subhanshu Shukla said that the 'Gaganyaan' project to send humans to space should be expedited.

(i) India has decided to implement the 'Gaganyaan' project to send humans to space. ISRO has planned to implement this project by 2027, which will send a team of astronauts into space and bring them safely back to Earth after 3 days.

(ii) In this situation, while attending the Indo-US Space Trade Organization seminar held in Bangalore, while answering the questions of the reporters regarding 'Gaganyaan', Group Captain Subhanshu Shukla of the 'Sukanya' project said:

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(iii) Like the 'Gaganyaan' project, only three countries in the world have sent humans to space. This project is very complex and full of challenges. However, India is trying to implement this project boldly.

5. The Central Government has informed the Parliament that there is no problem in the Fortified Rice Scheme.

(i) Fortified rice grains made from rice flour enriched with iron, folic acid and vitamin B12 are mixed with regular rice in a ratio of 1:100.

(ii) The Central Government is implementing the distribution of Fortified rice through the Public Distribution Scheme to eliminate micronutrient deficiencies such as anemia.

(iii) Under schemes like the National Food Security Act and the Prime Minister's Food Scheme, the rice distribution scheme has been introduced gradually across the country.

(iv) In response to a question raised in the Lok Sabha regarding this scheme, the Union Minister of State for Food Security, Nimuben Jayathibhai Pambaniya, gave a written reply: There is no problem in the Fortified Rice Scheme. He said that the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has announced standards for Fortified Rice (FR), Fortified Rice Kernel (FRK), and vitamin-mineral premix for FRK.

6. Under the India-US Interim Trade Agreement, pulses has been removed from the list of items on which India will reduce or eliminate duties on US exports.

7. The Central Government has rejected Tamil Nadu's request to relax the moisture norms for paddy, stating that procurement of paddy with high moisture content poses significant storage risks. The written reply given by Union Minister of State for Food and Public Distribution Nimuben Jayanthibhai Pambaniya to the questions raised by the Member of Parliament in this regard in the Lok Sabha is as follows:

(i) The Tamil Nadu Government had requested to relax the moisture norms for paddy from 17 per cent to 22 per cent. However, the Tamil Nadu Government's request was not considered due to the following facts.

- Paddy can be dried before milling. Procurement of paddy with high moisture content poses significant operational risks including loss of stock during storage and impaired recovery during milling. Paddy with high moisture content is susceptible to rapid spoilage, fungal growth, discoloration and infection. State Governments have been advised several times to create drainage facilities at the procurement stages.
- Relaxation in moisture content will not have a direct financial impact on the farmers. Therefore, such relaxation will not be considered any more. The Central Government has fixed the target of paddy procurement from the Kharif season of the 2025-26 crop year (July-June) at 16 lakh tonnes in rice terms.
- Regarding relaxation of the norms for sampling of Fortified Rice Kernels (FRK), the Central Government has revised the sample size of Fortified Rice Kernels (FRK) from 10 tonnes to 21 tonnes and the packaging size from 25 kg to 50 kg, the Minister said.

8. The National Song Vande Mataram must be sung or played at Government functions and schools; the Union Home Ministry has ordered that all 6 stanzas of the Vande Mataram song must be sung.

(i) The national song must be sung at all times when the national anthem is sung. It has also been advised

that the national song must be sung first.

(ii) The Congress chose only two stanzas out of the 6 stanzas of the Vande Mataram song composed by Bengali poet Bankim Chandra Chatterjee as the National Song in 1937. The Vande Mataram song, which was a key mantra in the Indian freedom struggle, was composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in 1875. The song was first published in the literary magazine 'Bangadarshan' as part of Chatterjee's novel 'Anandmath'.

(iii) The Vande Mataram song became popular after Rabindranath Tagore sang it at the Calcutta Congress session in 1896.

(iv) Only two stanzas of this 6-stanza song were selected by the Congress as the national song in 1937. It was formally adopted as the national song by the Constituent Assembly on January 24, 1950. On the occasion of the completion of 150 years of the composition of this song, one-year celebrations have been going on since November 7.

(v) Publication of norms:

- The Union Home Ministry issued an order on January 28, containing the first set of norms for singing the Vande Mataram song. Accordingly, all 6 stanzas of the Vande Mataram song, consisting of 3 minutes and 10 seconds, should be sung or played during Government functions such as the visit of the President, the hoisting of the National Flag, and the speeches of State Governors. When the national song is sung, everyone should stand up and pay respect. Proper dignity should be maintained during this song that honors the motherland.
- The National Song should be played before schools begin functioning. Students can begin school activities by singing the National Song as a group. Steps should be taken to encourage the singing of the National Song, the National Anthem and respect for the National Flag in school programs.
- During National Flag hoisting, cultural programs and other Government programs other than parades, the national song should be played and sound system facilities should be made so that everyone can sing in groups. The Ministry of Home Affairs has said that printed publications with the official lyrics of the Vande Mataram song may also be distributed to the participants.

The above order has been issued after the BJP accused the Congress of intentionally excluding other stanzas of the Vande Mataram song because it portrays Mother India as Goddess Durga.

9. The Continuing Death Penalty Debate

(i) Global Trends and Public Opinion

- According to Gallup data, support for the death penalty in the United States dropped to 52% in 2025, down from 80% in 1994.
- Public opposition to the death penalty in the US has climbed to 44%, a significant increase from just 13% in 1995.
- Approximately 145 countries have either legally abolished the death penalty or stopped implementing it in practice.

(ii) Global Execution Statistics (2023)

- According to Amnesty International, the highest numbers of executions in 2023 occurred in Iran

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(853), followed by Saudi Arabia (172) and the United States (24).

- In 2023, death sentences were awarded to over 1,000 people in China, 590 in Egypt, and 248 in Bangladesh.
- Reliable data is often unavailable for countries like Afghanistan, North Korea, and Syria.

(iii) The Indian Context: Trial Court Trends (2016–2025)

- Over the last decade (2016–2025), Indian trial courts have awarded the death penalty to 1,279 individuals.
- As of December 31, 2025, there are 574 people (550 men and 24 women) currently awaiting execution in India.
- Trial courts awarded 128 death sentences in 94 cases during 2025 alone.
- In 2025, the highest number of death sentences were awarded in Uttar Pradesh (20), followed by Karnataka and West Bengal (6 each), and Tamil Nadu (5).

(iv) Judicial Scrutiny and Higher Court Outcomes

- Out of 842 death penalty cases reviewed by High Courts between 2016 and 2025, only 70 (8.3%) were confirmed. Approximately 258 individuals (30.64%) were acquitted entirely.
- For three consecutive years (up to 2025), the Supreme Court has not confirmed a single death sentence.
- In 2025, the Supreme Court commuted or reversed the sentences of 10 people on death row. This year also saw the highest number of acquittals in capital cases since 2016.
- In 2025, the Madras High Court confirmed only one death sentence while reducing the sentences for 8 others.

(v) Legal and Ethical Arguments

- The United Nations General Assembly has noted there is no credible evidence that the death penalty serves as a greater deterrent to crime than life imprisonment.
- Critics argue the death penalty violates the fundamental right to life and undermines human dignity.
- The modern judicial philosophy emphasizes that criminals should be given a chance to reform after serving their sentence, rather than having their lives taken.
- Despite the global shift toward abolition, some still argue that the "rarest of rare" crimes require the ultimate punishment to maintain a sense of social fear and justice.

10. Pioneers of Media

(i) Historical Significance and Origins

- **Invention:** Radio was invented between 1895 and 1896 by Guglielmo Marconi, an Italian who is widely regarded as the "Father of Radio" and was a recipient of the Nobel Prize.
- **Technological First:** Radio was the first medium to utilize electromagnetic waves to transmit information from one location to another.
- **Social Status:** In the previous century, owning a radio was considered a symbol of social status in a household.

(ii) Unique Advantages of Radio

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- **Sensory Relief:** Radio is described as a "feast for the ears" that allows the eyes to rest, unlike visual media.
- **Cost-Effective:** Unlike television, radio does not require a subscription fee for signals and is highly portable, allowing listeners to take it anywhere.
- **Multitasking:** It is a low-maintenance medium; listeners do not need to set aside dedicated time just to listen, as it can be enjoyed while working.
- **Accessibility:** Radio remains an essential companion for the visually impaired, the elderly, and those with limited formal education who rely on audio for information.

(iii) Content and Community Connection

- **Diverse Programming:** All India Radio and local stations (like Chennai) provide a vast range of content, including world and regional news, weather reports, literature, educational programs, and diverse music (Carnatic, folk, and film).
- **Specialized Shows:** The medium hosts specific programs for farmers, women, and children, as well as live sports commentary for events like cricket.
- **Interactive Nature:** Deep bond between presenters and listeners, exemplified by programs like Listeners' Choice (நேயர் விருப்பம்) where people send letters to request songs.

(iv) Radio in the Modern Era

- **Persistence:** Despite the proliferation of television, smartphones, the internet, and social media, radio remains a leader in global information dissemination.
- **Adaptation:** The medium has successfully transitioned into the digital age through FM broadcasting and Internet Radio, ensuring its continued relevance.
- **Global Recognition:** In 2011, UNESCO officially designated February 13 as World Radio Day to recognize its global impact, with the first celebration held in 2012.

Radio remains an inseparable part of human life, adapting its form while maintaining its power as a vital communication tool.