

February 13, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. The Chief Minister M.K. Stalin laid the foundation stone for new manufacturing projects of 71 private companies that have signed MoUs with the Tamil Nadu Government. These projects with an investment of Rs.36,968 crore will provide employment to 60,823 people.

(i) At the MoU Implementation Conference held in Chennai on Thursday on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Government's Department of Industry, Investment Promotion and Commerce, the Chief Minister M.K. Stalin laid the foundation stone for new projects with an investment of Rs.36,968 crore and also inaugurated 52 completed projects with an investment of Rs.31,934 crore, providing employment to 82,664 people.

(ii) Foundation stone for private companies was laid through some of the MoUs signed during the Thoothukudi and Coimbatore Investors' Conference, the 2024 Global Investors' Conference, and the Chief Minister's visit to Britain and Germany. Some companies were also inaugurated.

(iii) These companies will operate in various districts including Ramanathapuram, Thoothukudi, Trichy, Villupuram, Dharmapuri, Ranipet, Tirupattur, Coimbatore, Namakkal, Erode.

(iv) One trillion dollar economy:-

Chief Minister Stalin said at the conference:

- All statistics show that Tamil Nadu is the number one destination for investors.'
- Tamil Nadu's economic growth is 11.19 percent. This is higher than the national average. Last year, India's manufacturing sector growth was 4.5 percent. Tamil Nadu's growth is three times higher (14.7 percent).
- Tamil Nadu's share in the country's electronics exports is 41 percent. In the electronic components manufacturing program, almost 60 percent of the approvals given by the Central Government are for investments in Tamil Nadu.
- In the last 5 years, 55,278 acres of land have been selected through SIPCOT and work is underway to set up industrial parks in 35 districts.
- Steps have been taken to set up tourism investment parks in Kanyakumari-Mayiladuthurai-Nilgiris districts.
- In the last 5 years, we have opened 7 Tidal and Mini-Tidal parks. Another 11 Tidal and Mini-Tidal parks are being set up.
- Tamil Nadu is also making a strong mark in emerging new sectors such as Semiconductors, AI-Deep tech etc. The target has been set to achieve a trillion dollar economy by 2030, said Chief Minister Stalin.

(v) Two MoUs:

- An MoU with Bharat Biotech for a biopharmaceutical manufacturing project to be set up in Kanchipuram district with an investment of Rs.5,000 crore and employment for 5,000 people and a MoU with Hyundai Motor India Foundation for a project to provide skill training to 7,000 students were signed in the presence of Chief Minister Stalin.

2. Kim Ju-ae, the daughter of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, is likely to be officially announced as the

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country's future leader soon, South Korea's intelligence agency NIS has said.

(i) According to a report submitted by the NIS to a South Korean Parliamentary Committee, Kim Ju-ae, who is about 13 years old, has already completed training to become the next political heir.

(ii) She has been participating in missile tests and military parades with her father since 2022. She attracted a lot of attention from the world during her recent trip to China.

(iii) North Korea's most important political event, the Workers' Party Congress, is taking place later this month. It is expected that Kim Ju-ae may be given important party responsibilities at this Conference or that indirect announcements will be made that she is the future leader.

3. Bangladesh's 13th Parliamentary elections and a Referendum on democratic reforms were held amid some violence.

(i) As the counting of votes began immediately after the Parliamentary elections, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's son Tariq Rahman, was leading in 175 seats and Jamaat-e-Islami in 30 seats, according to the first round of results.

(ii) The general elections are held 18 months after Sheikh Hasina was overthrown and an Interim Government led by Muhammad Yunus took office.

(iii) With Sheikh Hasina's Awami League party banned, the BNP and its former ally Jamaat-e-Islami were in a direct contest.

(iv) July Charter Referendum:

- Along with the Parliamentary elections, a referendum on the 'July National Charter 2025' to bring about changes in the country's governance system was also held. The results of this will also be announced on Friday.

4. The Central Government has made major changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which measures the country's retail inflation.

(i) According to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Thursday, retail inflation for January was 2.75 percent and food inflation was 2.13 percent in the new method.

(ii) Till now, retail inflation was calculated based on the year 2012. Now, 2024 will be taken as the Base Year.

(iii) In the new calculation method, the number of goods has been increased from 259 to 308 and services from 40 to 50. New data including rural house rent, fuels like CNG, PNG, telephone bills, train and air fares, postal charges, OTT subscriptions have been included.

(iv) The Ministry of Statistics said that this change has been made to accurately reflect the actual daily expenses of the general public in the current economic environment.

(v) Earlier, retail inflation was 1.33 percent in December last year. This was calculated using the old method with 2012 as the Base Year.

5. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva will arrive in India on a 5-day state visit on February 18.

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(i) He will hold bilateral talks with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 21 and will also participate in the International Artificial Intelligence (AI) Summit in Delhi, according to a press release from the Indian Ministry of External Affairs.

(ii) The International AI Summit will be held in Delhi from February 19 to 20. Leaders of various countries, high-level representatives, heads of industry bodies and others will participate in it.

(iii) India and Brazil, two large democracies, have been strategic partners since 2006. Brazil is India's largest trading partner in Latin America.

6. The discovery of 2,000-year-old Tamil Brahmi inscriptions in the Egyptian pyramids is a reminder of how deeply the footprint of Tamils was imprinted on the world trade map, Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu has said.

(i) He posted a post on his X site regarding this:

2,000-year-old Tamil Brahmi inscriptions have been discovered in the stone walls of the Egyptian pyramids. It is also known that the name of a Tamil merchant named 'Sikai Kotran' appears eight times in five different pyramids. This is a reminder of how deeply the footprint of Tamils was imprinted on the world trade map.

7. The Tamil Nadu Government has given permission to build one lakh more houses under the Kalaigiar Kavanu Illam project.

(i) In order to achieve the goal of 'Slum-Free Tamil Nadu', the Tamil Nadu Government is implementing a project to build 8 lakh concrete houses in rural areas of Tamil Nadu by 2030. Out of this, permission has been given to build 2 lakh houses so far and one lakh houses have been fully constructed. Construction work is underway on the remaining one lakh houses.

(ii) The Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, responding to the debate on the motion of thanks to the Governor's address in the Assembly, announced that one lakh more houses would be built under the Kalaigiar Kavanu Illam project.

8. The Ministry of Defense to procure an additional 114 Rafale fighter jets from France to strengthen the country's aerial combat capabilities.

(i) Approval and Scope of the Deal

- The Defense Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defense Minister Rajnath Singh, has granted approval for the procurement of 114 Rafale multi-role fighter aircraft.
- The jets are part of a larger ₹3.60 lakh crore military procurement package that includes anti-tank weapons, recovery vehicles, T-72 tanks, and P8I surveillance aircraft for the Navy.
- The estimated cost for the 114 Rafale jets alone is projected to be between ₹2.90 lakh crore and ₹3.15 lakh crore.

(ii) Manufacturing and Localization ("Make in India")

- Under the current plan, the French manufacturer Dassault Aviation will build the first 18 jets in France and deliver them to India.
- The remaining 96 aircraft are to be manufactured in India with a mandate for 50% indigenous

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content (local spare parts and components).

- The Government has already planned an allocation of ₹12,511 crore to establish the necessary infrastructure, testing facilities, and certification processes for domestic aircraft production.

(iii) Strategic Necessity and Air Force Strength

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) is currently facing a critical shortage; while it has an authorized strength of 42 squadrons, only 31 squadrons are currently operational.
- India previously purchased 36 Rafale jets, which are already in active service with the IAF.
- Initiating local production now is essential for India to reach a status similar to China within the next decade, where it can manufacture its own advanced aircraft.

(iv) Timeline and Diplomatic Context

- The approval comes just ahead of French President Emmanuel Macron's scheduled visit to India on February 17, 2026.
- While the DAC has given the go-ahead, the formal contract is expected to be signed toward the end of 2026 following detailed price negotiations with Dassault Aviation.

(v) Technical and Industrial Challenges

- Critical parts such as engines, landing gear, radar, and propellers require sophisticated technology that India must integrate through partnerships.
- Any aircraft produced must meet international safety certifications from agencies like the European Union Aviation Safety Agency or the US Federal Aviation Administration to be globally viable.
- Because some Rafale components are sourced from US-based companies, the sale and production of these jets also fall under US international arms trade regulations, requiring coordination with American authorities.

9. Global Order Crisis—'Board of Peace'

(i) Overview and Purpose

- The "Board of Peace" is an international organization spearheaded by U.S. President Donald Trump.
- Its primary objectives are to manage Gaza in the post-war period and to resolve global conflicts.
- This board is seen as a calculated move to restore absolute U.S. dominance in global decision-making, bypassing the multipolar world order that emerged after the Cold War.

(ii) Organisational Structure and Membership

- The board is described as a personal empire rather than a traditional international body. Trump serves as the "Life Chairman" with the power to appoint members, set agendas, and issue binding resolutions.
- The membership includes controversial figures associated with militarism and regime-change politics, such as Marco Rubio, Jared Kushner, and Tony Blair.
- To be a member, a contribution of one billion dollars is required. This effectively institutionalizes global inequality by excluding poor nations from Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

(iii) Impact on Global Governance (The UN Challenge)

- The Board of Peace is positioned as a direct rival or replacement for the United Nations (UN).
- While Trump labels the UN "ineffective," but U.S. actions, such as vetoes and unilateral military interventions, are what have historically paralyzed the UN.
- The organization rejects multilateral, democratic processes in favor of a "minilateral" approach controlled by a small, high-level elite group.

(iv) Geopolitical and Ethical Concerns

- The board is accused of sidelining the core issue of Palestinian self-determination. Instead of addressing illegal occupations, it reframes the conflict as a matter of "management" and "stability".
- The U.S. reportedly uses economic threats, such as tariffs and financial pressure, to force sovereign nations to join or comply with the board.
- Even traditional U.S. allies in Europe view the board with suspicion, fearing that an organization centered on the whims of a single leader is inherently unstable and could turn against them.

(v) The Indian Context

- Joining such a board would be a historical betrayal of India's long-standing support for Palestinian rights and its commitment to strategic autonomy.
- Compliance with a U.S.-controlled "peace mechanism" would limit India's ability to act independently on the global stage.

The Board of Peace is not a solution for stability but a dangerous proposal that fosters division, ignores international law, and risks creating further global chaos.

10. Analysis of the shift toward contractual employment in both Government and Private sectors

(i) Reasons for the Shift to Contractual Labor

- Both Government and Private entities increasingly prefer contract labor to avoid the long-term financial commitments of permanent staff.
- Contract workers are generally unable to legally strike, form influential trade unions, or monitor the actions of senior management.
- Because contracts are typically short-term (two to three years), there is no provision or discussion regarding periodic salary hikes.

(ii) Nature of Contractual Work

- Contract labor is often used for jobs that people in higher socio-economic strata are reluctant to perform.
- This includes cleaning offices, factories, and streets; collecting and segregating garbage; maintaining toilets and sewage lines; and handling hazardous chemicals in factories.
- Contract workers are frequently assigned to high-altitude labor or other dangerous manual tasks.

(iii) Exploitation in Wages and Payments

- Although minimum wages are mandated, there is often a significant difference between the salary stated in the contract and the amount actually paid to the worker.

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- Some employers pay the full amount in the presence of overseeing officials but use "back-door tactics" to take a portion of the money back from the workers later.
- Despite the rule to pay salaries via bank accounts to ensure transparency, some contractors (particularly those employing North Indian laborers) keep the workers' ATM cards to maintain control over their funds.
- Many workers have stopped complaining about these issues, adopting a mindset that "some income is better than no job at all".

(iv) Workplace Safety and Accidents

- Safety gear is often not fully provided to contract workers. Management frequently compromises on safety because the penalties for violations are negligible compared to the cost of the equipment.
- Many workplace accidents involving contract laborers are never officially recorded.
- Contractors are required to provide safety training and submit certificates to the primary employer, but this is often neglected.

(v) Proposed Reforms and Recommendations

- If safety compromises are discovered, the contract should be terminated immediately and the contractor's entire security deposit should be forfeited.
- Contractors who violate safety or wage rules should be disqualified from bidding for any contracts for several years.
- Workplace safety for contract laborers will remain a "name-only" protection until the Central Labor Welfare Department issues and enforces strict orders.