

February 19, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Impact Summit at Bharat Mandapam in Delhi on Thursday (February 19).

(i) The inaugural session will be attended by Prime Minister Modi and will be addressed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and French President Emmanuel Macron.

(ii) After inaugurating the conference, Prime Minister Modi will hold bilateral talks with various leaders.

(iii) Following this, Prime Minister Modi and other leaders will visit the AI Technology Expo, which was inaugurated on the 16th as part of the conference.

2. Peru's Interim President, Jose Gerrard, has been removed from office by the country's Parliament just four months after taking office on charges of holding a secret meeting with a Chinese businessman.

(i) A video of Jose Gerrard secretly meeting Chinese businessman Zhihua Yang at night was released and caused controversy. In response, a resolution against Jose Gerrard was passed in the Peruvian Parliament, with 75 votes against him and 24 in favor. He was subsequently removed from office.

(ii) Jose Gerrard, who was the Speaker of Parliament according to the Constitution, took office as President last October, following the dismissal of former President Tina Boluarte on corruption charges.

(iii) Election of a new President:

- With general elections scheduled to be held in Peru in April, the current speaker of Parliament, Fernando Rospigli Yossi, has refused to accept the post of interim President.
- As a result, it has been announced that the Parliament will elect a new leader, who will take over as the country's new interim President. This is the eighth change of Government in the South American country of Peru in the last eight years. Despite such political instability, the country's economy has maintained a growth rate of 3.4 percent.

3. Following the ruling party's landslide victory in the recent general election in Japan, Sane Takaichi was re-elected as the country's Prime Minister.

(i) She has set herself the goal of increasing the country's military strength, promoting arms sales, and implementing strict immigration policies.

(ii) Socially, Sane Takaichi supports conservative views. She has expressed her desire to continue extending the law that only males can inherit the Japanese imperial family and the practice that married women must change their parents' surnames.

(iii) At the same time, Japan is currently facing major challenges such as rising prices, a declining population, and security threats from neighboring countries.

(iv) As a result, her long-term plan to change Japan's pacifist constitution is expected to be temporarily postponed.

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4. Meta's CEO Mark Zuckerberg is appearing in person in a US court to testify in a lawsuit alleging that its social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram, are deliberately enslaving minors and thereby harming their mental health.

(i) A young woman, now 20, has sued Meta and YouTube, claiming that using Instagram as a child led to severe depression and suicidal thoughts.

(ii) This is the first time that Mark Zuckerberg has appeared in person to testify in this ongoing trial in the US state of California. It is noteworthy that he was previously facing a US Congressional Committee investigation into similar complaints.

(iii) Meta has categorically denied the allegations, stating that they prioritize the safety of young people.

(iv) Furthermore, Meta's lawyers have argued that the mental health of the victim was due to her family environment and that it had nothing to do with Instagram.

(v) While companies like TikTok and Snapchat have already reached a settlement in such complaints, only Meta and Google's YouTube are continuing this legal battle.

5. The Supreme Court has decided to list for final hearing in the batch of cases filed against the sections of the Places of Worship Act, 1991.

(i) The Places of Worship Act, 1991 provides that all places of worship shall be maintained in the same condition as they existed on 15th August, 1947. The Act prohibits the conversion of such places of worship into places of worship of any other religion. It also prohibits the filing of fresh cases in any court for conversion of such places of worship into places of worship of any other religion.

(ii) The petitions filed in the Supreme Court against certain sections of the Act came up for hearing before a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Jayamalya Bagchi and Vipul M. Pancholi.

(iii) At that time, Chief Justice Surya Kant said, "The Supreme Court will fix the date for the final hearing of the petitions against the Places of Worship Act. Two benches of 9 judges are already scheduled to hear two cases in March and April.

(iv) After that, the date for the final hearing of the case against the Places of Worship Act will be decided."

6. Google CEO Sundar Pichai announced that a new undersea cable will be built between India and the US to increase connectivity in Artificial Intelligence. He was speaking at a media event in New Delhi to attend the AI Summit. He said:

(i) Google will be building a US-India connectivity initiative. Under this initiative, new undersea cables will be laid between India, the US and various countries south of the equator to increase connectivity in Artificial Intelligence.

(ii) There should be capacity building activities in line with this technological connectivity. It will help Indians to take advantage of the opportunities. With a view to creating those opportunities, a new Google AI Professional Certificate Program will be launched. This program will be launched to benefit students and those in the early stages of their professional careers in India. He also said that 2 crore Government employees and 1.10 crore students will be provided training in Artificial Intelligence technology.

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7. The European leaders including Spanish President Pedro Sanchez, Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orbo, Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic, and Estonian President Alar Karis, who are in Delhi, met Prime Minister Modi separately.

(i) An international summit on the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being held in Delhi. International technology companies, start-ups, research institutions, etc. are participating in this.

(ii) Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google and its parent company Alphabet, who is in Delhi to participate in the Delhi AI Summit, met Prime Minister Modi in Delhi.

(iii) Serbian President Aleksandar Ucin, who is in Delhi to participate in the AI Expo, met Modi on Wednesday. Modi said in a post on his X page that discussions were held on further strengthening ties in sectors including defense, manufacturing, fertilizers, and infrastructure.

8. The Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman met Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gaardstorf.

(i) Jonas Gaardstorf told Nirmala Sitharaman that bilateral relations would further strengthen when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits Norway this year.

(ii) Nirmala Sitharaman, who is on a two-day official visit to Norway, met various ministers, including Commerce Minister Cecilia Mirseth.

(iii) During her meeting with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gaardstorf, detailed discussions were held on the India-European Free Trade Association (EFTA) Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA).

(iv) The EFTA comprises Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The trade agreement with these countries came into effect on October 1 last year.

(v) Nirmala Sitharaman and Jonas Karstor discussed the functioning of this agreement and bilateral cooperation in areas including high-quality manufacturing, carbon sequestration, innovation, semiconductors, renewable energy and waste management.

9. The International Fleet Review (IFR) parade was held in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, with the participation of navies from various countries, led by Indian President Draupadi Murmu.

(i) President Draupadi Murmu, Navy Chief Dinesh Kumar Tripathi and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu participated from the patrol ship INS Sumedha.

10. India wants to diversify its import sources of coking coal, which has higher fuel efficiency than crude oil and coal; especially, India is interested in importing high-quality coal from the United States, said Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.

(i) The Union Minister Piyush Goyal made this announcement while participating in an event held in Mumbai, Maharashtra on Wednesday. He added:

- India is intensifying efforts to diversify its import sources of crude oil and coal. In particular, it is making efforts to import high-quality coal from the United States. Negotiations on prices are underway. Therefore, high-quality coal will come to India soon.

(ii) The United States can also provide other goods that are needed to accelerate Indian economic growth.

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India is also looking to get Graphics Processing Units (GPUs), data center equipment and high-performance computing technologies from the United States, which are required for projects based on Artificial Intelligence Technology.

(iii) India can produce goods that the US cannot compete with. At the same time, the US can be a strong source of technology and capital, he said.

(iv) As the bilateral trade agreement negotiations between India and the US continue, the two countries finalized the roadmap for the interim bilateral trade agreement earlier this month. The two countries jointly issued an announcement in this regard on the 7th. Accordingly, the two countries are going to reduce import duties on a large number of goods to promote bilateral trade.

(v) While the US is going to reduce the 50 percent additional duty imposed on goods imported from India to 18 percent, India is going to significantly reduce duties on many US goods.

(vi) Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that US President Donald Trump has been continuously saying that India has agreed to stop buying crude oil from Russia.

11. The report of the high-level committee constituted by the Tamil Nadu Government has recommended that the law be amended to appoint only those nominated by the State Legislative Assembly as Governors.

(i) The Tamil Nadu Government constituted a high-level committee to study the improvement of the relationship between the Centre and the State Governments. The committee, headed by former Supreme Court judge Joseph Kurien, included retired IAS officer and former vice-chancellor of the Indian Maritime University K.Ashok Vardhan Shetty and former vice-chairman of the State Planning Committee M. Naganathan. The committee has studied federal relations by collecting various levels of information such as consultations with sectoral experts, opinions, and information from national seminars. Its report was presented in the Legislative Assembly by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin. The recommendations put forward in the report to maintain constructive relations between the Central and State Governments.

- A two-thirds majority should be required for all constitutional amendments in Parliament.
- When forming a new state by dividing parts of existing states, the approval of the relevant state legislative assemblies is necessary. If necessary, a public referendum should be held and a two-thirds majority support should be ensured.
- The number of people who truly speak Hindi (25 percent) should be disclosed without classifying Bhojpuri, Rajasthani and others as Hindi regional languages.
- A two-language policy including English and the local language should be adopted instead of the three-language policy. An alternative language should not be imposed in education. It is necessary to provide for the use of the state's official language in High Court proceedings.

(ii) Governor

- Article 155 of the Constitution should be amended to appoint one of the three persons approved by the majority of the members of the state legislative assembly as the Governor and to act as the President.
- The Governor should be given a term of office that cannot be extended beyond five years. After that, he should not be allowed to hold any other position except the post of President or Vice President.
- The Governor should be removed through a resolution of the Legislative Assembly. The President

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should take mandatory action on that resolution within 14 days.

- Those who take oath as Governor should not have held any office in any political party, administration, judiciary or assembly for the last five years.
- When there is no majority in the assembly, the Legislative Assembly should be convened only on the advice of the Cabinet. Similarly, the Legislative Assembly should be dissolved only on the advice of the Cabinet.
- The Governor should not criticize the state government or the Legislative Assembly in public.
- As per the guidelines given by the Supreme Court, a law should be amended to provide for a specific time limit for approving bills and if that time limit is exceeded, it should be deemed that the approval has been given.
- The Governor or the President should not use their special powers to block a law passed in the Assembly.
- Central and State Commissions should be set up to carry out the redelineation of parliamentary and assembly constituencies.
- The Election Commission of India should conduct only parliamentary elections, presidential elections and by-elections. State Legislative Assembly elections should be conducted by the State Election Commission.
- The bill related to one nation, one election should be withdrawn as it is against the federal principle. Members of the Parliament who defect party lines should be barred from contesting elections for six years.

(iii) Education:

- In the first phase, 100 universities should be freed from the control of the University Grants Commission to regulate educational activities.
- Education, including medical education and technical education, should be brought from the concurrent list to the state list.
- The Governor should be relieved from the post of Chancellor of state universities and a neutral person should be appointed to that post.
- It includes recommendations such as abolishing the NEET exam for medical courses and giving the right to admit students to the states.

12. Environmental and biological threats posed by plastic :-

(i) The Global Scale of Plastic Pollution

- According to the UN Environment Program, between 19 and 23 million tons of plastic waste enter global water bodies (lakes, rivers, and oceans) every year.
- Since 1950, approximately 9.2 billion tons of plastic have been produced globally, of which 7 billion tons have become waste.
- The world currently produces 430 million tons of plastic annually; notably, two-thirds of this production consists of short-term use products that quickly turn into waste.
- Plastic waste interferes with natural ecosystems and reduces the environment's ability to adapt to climate change, directly impacting food production and livelihoods.

(ii) Contamination of Daily Essentials

- Research has confirmed that microplastics and nanoplastics have infiltrated products previously

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thought to be safe, specifically bottled water, salt, and sugar.

- A joint study involving FSSAI and CSIR-IITR tested samples from Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Haryana, Karnataka, and Maharashtra.
- The study found microplastics in all tested essentials, with the highest concentration found in iodized salt.

(iii) Human Health Hazards

- Microplastics (particles smaller than 5mm) and nanoplastics (significantly smaller) have been detected in human blood, lungs, stomach, kidneys, and saliva.
- In 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) noted that while the presence of these particles is confirmed, the technology to fully measure their long-term health impact is still being developed.
- As these particles are entering vital organs, further intensive research into their specific health risks is an urgent necessity.

(iv) Judicial Directives and Mandatory Warnings

- A special bench of the Madras High Court, comprising Justices N. Sathish Kumar and D. Bharatha Chakravarthy, issued a landmark judgement to address these risks.
- The court directed that all companies selling bottled water, salt, and sugar in plastic packaging (including PET bottles) must print a warning in red ink.
- The label must state that the product may contain microplastics or nanoplastics, ensuring consumers are informed of the potential risks.
- The Union Health Ministry and FSSAI have been instructed to ensure these labeling requirements are strictly implemented.

(v) Remedies and Individual Actions

- A global movement to strictly control or ban single-use plastics to stop waste at its source.
- Consumers are urged to stop eating food directly from plastic containers to minimize direct ingestion of plastic particles.
- Recommend avoiding bottled water and soft drinks packaged in plastic.
- Ultimately, avoiding the "plastic culture" and making informed choices is the only way for individuals to protect their health from this invisible threat.