

February 23, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. The bilateral talks scheduled to be held in Washington on Monday (February 23) to finalize the terms of the interim trade agreement between India and the United States have been postponed, Union Commerce Ministry sources said on Sunday.

(i) The decision comes after the US Supreme Court ruled that the aggressive reciprocal tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump on countries around the world, including India, were invalid and Trump imposed a new uniform 15 percent tariff on countries around the world, effective from Tuesday (February 24).

(ii) In this regard, sources in the Commerce Ministry further said that since time is needed to study the impact of the US Supreme Court's ruling on the tariff and the subsequent measures taken by the US Administration, both countries have decided to postpone the bilateral talks scheduled to be held in Washington on Monday (February 23) to finalize the terms of the Interim Trade Agreement. The talks will be held at a later date convenient to both countries, they said.

(iii) After Trump took office for the second time as the US President, the US Supreme Court ruled on February 20 that the aggressive reciprocal tax imposed on goods imported from 60 countries, including India, was invalid. This was a major setback for the Trump administration.

(iv) In violation of this ruling, Trump imposed a new uniform 15 percent reciprocal tax on goods imported from India and other countries on Friday. In this regard, the White House, the US President's Office, released a declaration signed by Trump.

(v) In this situation, as the country's economic decline continues due to the Supreme Court's ruling on the tax, the 10 percent reciprocal tax on countries around the world will be increased to 15 percent. It is noteworthy that Trump announced on Saturday that the US administration will release details of the new taxes imposed on countries around the world in the next few months.

2. A statue of C. Rajagopalachari, the first and last Governor General of Independent India, will be unveiled on Monday (February 23) at the Presidential Palace in honour of his contributions to Indian Independence and independent India. Special programmes have been organised under the name Rajaji Utsav to reflect his contributions to Indian independence and independent India. An exhibition will also be held as part of them.

(i) Under the Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Centre, the symbols and icons of British glory are being gradually removed and various measures are being taken to honour the leaders and freedom struggle martyrs who were not much appreciated in independent India.

(ii) As part of this, the British-era buildings in the capital Delhi are being gradually demolished and central building projects are being implemented under the name of Central Vista. New buildings under names like Seva Theertham and Kamat Bhavan have been constructed, and the offices of key Departments including the Union Cabinet Secretariat, the Prime Minister's Office, the Home Ministry, and the External Affairs Ministry have already been shifted to them.

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(iii) In this situation, the statue of British architect Edwin Lutyens, who built important Government buildings in Delhi including South Block, North Block, Rashtrapati Bhavan, has been removed from the Rashtrapati Bhavan. A statue of C.Rajagopalachari, the last Governor General who held the post of Governor General during the British rule, has been installed at that place. The inauguration ceremony will be held on Monday at 12 noon.

(iv) President Draupadi Murmu, Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and others will attend it.

(v) Why a statue for Rajaji?:

- Born on December 10, 1878, in Thorappalli village of Hosur taluk in the then Krishnagiri district of Tamil Nadu, Rajaji was one of Mahatma Gandhi's early political confidants. He actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement against the Rowlatt Act and participated in the Vaikom Satyagraha and Salt Satyagraha, raising his voice against British tyranny and rule.

(vi) In 1937, he was elected Chief Minister of the Madras Province and served until 1940. At that time, V.M. Munusamy, a Scheduled Caste, was appointed as the Minister of Hindu Charities. During the British war against Germany, Rajaji opposed Mahatma Gandhi's Quit India movement. After trying to reach a conclusion through negotiations with Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the All India Muslim League, his plan was called 'C.R. Formula' in the political world of that time.

(vii) Rajaji was appointed as the Union Minister for Industries, Education and Finance in the Interim Government formed in 1946 and served as the Governor of West Bengal in 1947-48. Rajaji served as the first and last Governor General of independent India from 21 June 1948 to 26 January 1950.

(viii) He was also the Chief Minister of Madras Province from 1951-54. Rajaji left the Indian National Congress in 1959 due to strong disagreement with Nehru's socialist-style economic policies and founded the Swatantra Party and contested the 1962, 1967 and 1971 elections against the Congress.

(ix) Rajaji played a major role in the formation of the United Front against the Congress under the leadership of Annadurai. Later, a Government was formed in Tamil Nadu (Madras Province) under the leadership of Annadurai in 1967. Rajaji passed away on December 25, 1972, at the age of 94.

3. The first border pillar was erected between the northeastern states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

(i) This is a significant step in the implementation of the Namsai Declaration to resolve the border dispute between the two states.

(ii) The Namsai Declaration was signed in 2022 to resolve the long-standing border dispute between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Accordingly, regional committees comprising ministers and officials of the two states have been formed and steps have been taken to reach an amicable solution through field surveys, historical document review and discussions with the local people. As a result, the first border pillar between the two states was erected in the Seijosa border area. This pillar was installed in the presence of Government officials, police personnel, community leaders and village heads of both states.

(iii) Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu said that this is a historic milestone in the process of resolving the border dispute.

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4. The Supreme Court will hear the plea filed by technology companies Meta and WhatsApp against the Rs 213.14 crore fine imposed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) for its privacy policy on Monday (February 23).

(i) The CCI had imposed a fine of Rs.213 crore on WhatsApp for its privacy policy of sharing user data with its parent company Meta for advertising purposes for 5 years.

(ii) The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) hearing the appeal filed against this had set aside the ban imposed by the Competition Commission of India. However, it ordered that the fine be paid. The NCLAT explained that WhatsApp's privacy and consent issue applies to the collection of user data for advertising and non-advertising purposes as well.

(iii) The petition filed by the two technology companies against the CCI's imposition of fine is coming up for hearing before a bench of Chief Justice Suryakanth, Justices Jayamalya Bagchi and Vipul M. Pancholi.

(iv) Earlier, during the hearing held on February 3, the Supreme Court had severely criticized the two technology companies, accusing them of 'playing with the right to privacy of citizens in the name of sharing data. They are creating a monopoly in the market and stealing the personal information of customers'.

(v) In this case, the court ordered the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology to be added as a petitioner during the hearing held on February 9.

(vi) The Supreme Court is hearing the appeal filed by the CCI against the order issued by the NCLAT allowing the sharing of data of WhatsApp and Meta users.

5. U.S. President Donald Trump – Aggressive trade policies :-

(i) Imposition of New Global Tariffs

- President Trump has signed a new declaration imposing a 10% reciprocal tax on goods imported into the U.S. from various global nations, including India.
- This new tax is scheduled to come into effect on February 24, 2026 (Tuesday).
- The initial declaration specifies that this tax will be applied for a period of 150 days.
- Trump invoked his authority under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974 to bypass traditional legislative hurdles.

(ii) The declaration excludes several critical categories of goods from the 10% tax, including:

- Essential Minerals and Energy: Specific minerals, gold, silver, and energy products/fuels.
- Food and Health: Beef, tomatoes, oranges, medicines, and raw materials for medicines.
- Transportation: Passenger vehicles, light and heavy vehicles, buses, and specific aircraft parts.

(iii) Judicial Conflict and Supreme Court Ruling

- Court Verdict: The U.S. Supreme Court, in a 9-judge bench ruling, declared Trump's unilateral tax imposition invalid.
- Constitutional Basis: Six of the nine judges ruled that the power to impose taxes rests solely with the U.S. Congress, and the President cannot act unilaterally in this regard.
- Trump criticized the verdict on his "Truth Social" platform, labeling it as "hostile" and "unfair" toward

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the United States.

- Despite the verdict, Trump asserted that "nothing will change" and that he would utilize other legal methods and procedures to ensure the taxes are implemented as planned.

(iv) Impact on Indo-U.S. Trade Relations

- Earlier, Trump had threatened a 25% tax on Indian goods.
- Following prolonged negotiations, an interim trade deal was announced on February 7, which proposed reducing the reciprocal tax on Indian goods to 18%.
- Trump maintains a "fair trade" stance, stating that India will pay taxes to the U.S., but the U.S. will not pay similar taxes to India, describing it as a reversal of previous "unfair" practices.

(v) Reaction from the Indian Government

- The Union Ministry of Commerce has stated that it is closely monitoring the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling and Trump's subsequent interviews to assess the potential impact on Indian exports.
- The Indian Government is currently analyzing all aspects of these developments to determine its next diplomatic and economic steps.

While the U.S. judicial system has attempted to check the President's power, Trump remains committed to his "America First" economic agenda, creating significant uncertainty in global trade.