

March 5, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. A US submarine has attacked and destroyed one of Iran's new warships, the Iris Dena, which had set sail from India, near Sri Lankan waters. The Sri Lankan Navy has said that the bodies of 87 people who died in the attack have been recovered.

(i) There is a tense situation in West Asia due to the US-Israel-Iran war. In this situation, an Iranian warship named 'Iris Dena' sank in the sea near Sri Lankan waters. There were 180 people on board, including Iranian naval personnel.

(ii) The Iris Dena ship participated in the international naval exercise 'Milan 2026' held in India last month at the invitation of India. The ship, which participated in naval exercises in the Bay of Bengal, was stationed in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Later, the ship was attacked and destroyed by the US as it was leaving.

2. The Chief Minister M.K. Stalin inaugurated the Tamil Nadu Integrated Drinking Water Grievance Redressal Centre 'Punal' to take action on complaints related to drinking water supply across Tamil Nadu.

(i) The Tamil Nadu Drinking Water Supply and Drainage Board has set up an Integrated Drinking Water Grievance Redressal Centre 'Punal' to enable the public to easily report all types of complaints related to drinking water across Tamil Nadu. The Chief Minister M.K. Stalin inaugurated the functions of this centre through video conferencing from the Secretariat.

(ii) Toll-free number:

- This centre will operate 24 hours a day. The public can register all their complaints regarding availability of drinking water, quality of water, and disruptions in supply at one place.
- The complaints will automatically reach the concerned department officer. Thereafter, action will be taken on each complaint in a prompt and transparent manner. This mechanism will significantly reduce delays between departments and ensure speedy grievance redressal.
- The public can report complaints through the toll-free number '1916'. Complaints can also be sent via SMS to the website punal.tn.gov.in and the WhatsApp number 94999-91916.

3. The Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has become the first public sector bank in the country to achieve this feat by obtaining the 'ISO 31000:2018' quality certification for its Enterprise Risk Management Framework. The bank's CEO Ajay Kumar Srivastava and Executive Directors Joydeep Dutta Roy and T. Dhanaraj received the quality certification at a 'Risk Awareness Day' function held in Chennai.

4. Amidst international tensions including the US-Iran war and the drastic layoffs being carried out in the Chinese military, the China's Parliament session has begun.

(i) The session, which will be held over the next 2 weeks under the chairmanship of Chinese President Xi Jinping, is expected to make important decisions on developing new productive forces, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), to revive the sluggish Chinese economy.

(ii) The start of this important annual political session in China has raised expectations in the context of the trade restrictions imposed by US President Donald Trump and the US military interventions in Venezuela and Iran, which have become major challenges for China.

5. The UK Government has announced that it will ban student visas for students from Afghanistan,

Myanmar, Cameroon and Sudan.

(i) The UK Government has accused students from the four countries of using their student visas to seek permanent asylum in the UK.

(ii) Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood will introduce a bill in Parliament on Thursday (March 5) to amend the immigration rules to allow for the visa ban. She said, "Britain will always provide refuge to people fleeing war and persecution. However, our visa system must not be abused. To prevent this, we have decided to deny visas to nationals of Afghanistan, Myanmar, Cameroon and Sudan in an unprecedented manner."

(iii) According to statistics released by the Home Office, the number of students applying for asylum from these countries has increased by more than 470 percent between 2021 and 2025. Britain has also banned Afghans from obtaining skilled worker visas.

6. Nepal will hold its first general election on Thursday (March 5) since the youth protests that led to a coup last year.

(i) There are 275 seats in the House of Representatives, the lower house of the Nepali Parliament. Of these, 165 seats are to be elected directly and the remaining 110 seats are to be elected through proportional representation.

(ii) 3,406 candidates are in the fray through direct elections and 3,135 through proportional representation. 10,967 polling stations have been set up across the country for over 1.89 crore eligible voters.

(iii) Prime Ministerial Candidates:

- Former Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli is contesting again on behalf of the Nepali Congress-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) and Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prasanta on behalf of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Centre.
- Balendra Shah Balan, the 35-year-old mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City, has been nominated as the Prime Ministerial candidate by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). His contesting against K.P. Sharma Oli in Jhapa-5 constituency has created great expectations.

7. Amid the prevailing war situation in the Middle East, the Union Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said that precautionary measures have been initiated to protect India's maritime assets and personnel.

(i) The Strait of Hormuz, which connects the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea, was recently closed due to the Iran-US-Israel war. A review meeting was held in Delhi under the chairmanship of Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to review the impact of this.

8. Qatar has stopped the production of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). This has created a situation that is affecting the supply of gas to India.

(i) India has entered into a long-term natural gas agreement with Qatar. Qatar plays a key role in meeting India's gas needs.

(ii) In this context, an airstrike by Iran damaged a gas production plant in Qatar. Following this, production there has been stopped. This has created a situation that is affecting the supply of gas to India. This is likely to affect the companies supplying gas through pipelines for industrial use and domestic use in urban areas.

(iii) There is an opportunity to deal with the situation by using slightly more expensive CNG gas instead of LNG in industrial companies.

(iv) Petronet LNG, India's largest LNG importer, is unable to send cargo ships to Qatar. The main reason for this is the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Apart from this, Qatar has also stopped production due to the Iranian attack on the gas hub used to supply India. Both sides have formally exchanged information in this regard.

(v) Qatar exports 27 million tonnes of LNG to India annually. This constitutes 40 per cent of India's total LNG imports.

(vi) Private companies distributing LNG through pipelines for domestic use have written to the state-owned gas company GAIL regarding the supply issues they are facing.

9. The Finland President Alexander Stubbs arrived in India on a 4-day state visit.

(i) He will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on enhancing bilateral cooperation in areas including trade, investment, key technologies, and regional and international issues of mutual interest.

(ii) Raisina Conference...:

- The three-day Raisina Conference, which will discuss geopolitics and geo-economics, will begin in Delhi on Thursday (March 5). Finnish President Alexander Stubbs will address the inaugural session.
- After the talks with Prime Minister Modi, various agreements are expected to be signed between the two countries.

10. The Ashmolean Museum of Oxford University, UK, has returned to India a 16th-century metal statue of Thirumangai Azhwar, which was smuggled from the famous Soundararaja Perumal temple in Thadikombu, Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu.

(i) The statue, which was handed over to the Indian Embassy in London, will soon be sent to Tamil Nadu. This is the first time that the Ashmolean Museum, which is centuries old, has returned an ancient statue in its possession to India.

(ii) The statue, which was acquired by the Ashmolean Museum from an auction house in 1967, was smuggled from a temple in Tamil Nadu and was reported to the museum by a researcher in 2019.

(iii) Subsequently, the Ashmolean Museum asked the Indian Embassy in London to confirm the origin of the statue. Following this, an investigation conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India confirmed that the statue was stolen from a temple in Tamil Nadu.

(iv) Following this, the Indian Embassy formally requested the museum to return the statue.

(v) In this context, the Indian Embassy has stated that the Thirumangai Azhwar statue was formally handed over to the Indian side at a function held in London.

11. The Chief Minister MK Stalin laid the foundation stone for the first phase of the eco-park to be set up in Guindy.

(i) An eco-park is planned to be set up on 118 acres of land belonging to the Tamil Nadu Horticulture

Department in Guindy, Chennai.

(iii) Gardens, children's playgrounds, bird sanctuaries, exhibition platforms, etc. will be set up in this park.

(iv) Of these, Chief Minister MK Stalin laid the foundation stone for the first phase of the 25-acre project at a cost of Rs. 37.85 crore at the Chennai Secretariat through video conferencing.

(v) Subsequently, he also inaugurated the first 9-storey 'high tree tower' with a 30-meter-high vertical garden at the Kalaingar Centenary Park in Chennai, which is the first in India at a cost of Rs.11.84 crore.

(vi) He also released the 'Tamil Nadu Agroforestry Policy 2026', which has various features including growing high-value trees on agricultural lands, facilitating the procedures for cutting, transporting and selling them, establishing special agroforestry zones and providing training on agroforestry.

12. Air Pollution: Analysis of the air quality crisis in India, specifically focusing on Delhi and the surrounding regions.

(i) Global and National Impact Statistics

- A World Bank study indicates that rapid urbanization in South Asia has led to most major cities being severely affected by air pollution.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies India and China as the nations with the highest levels of air pollution due to their massive populations.
- According to a report by Greenpeace India, approximately 12 lakh (1.2 million) people die annually in India due to complications arising from air pollution.

(ii) The Severity of Pollution in Delhi

- Among global major cities, Delhi has the highest level of air pollution, with a significant accumulation of fine dust particles in the air.
- In many parts of Delhi, the air quality index (AQI) remains at "severe" levels, far exceeding permissible safety limits.
- Health Hazards: Residents face a wide range of illnesses, including:
 - Respiratory disorders, asthma, and lung cancer.
 - Eye irritation, throat inflammation, and skin dryness.
 - Increased risks of stroke and heart-related problems.

(iii) Primary Causes of Air Poisoning

- Research shows that vehicles, power plants, and industries are the primary sources of toxic smoke in Delhi.
- The air is contaminated with nitrogen oxide, sulfur oxide, hydrocarbons from refineries, carbon monoxide from vehicles, and organic compounds from chemical factories.
- An American research study highlights four seasonal factors that worsen Delhi's air in winter:
 1. High humidity traps smoke.
 2. Increased dust accumulation.
 3. Crop residue burning in agricultural fields.
 4. Firecrackers used during the Diwali festival.
- Open-air burning of plastics, rubber, and aluminum waste at the Bhalswa landfill contributes

significantly to toxic fumes.

(iv) Delhi Government's 5-Point Strategy

The Delhi government has decided to implement a five-pronged approach to tackle the crisis:

- Scientific management of dust and solid waste.
- Strict action against polluting industries.
- Reduction of vehicle emissions.
- Long-term commitment to making Delhi a "Green City".
- Long-term commitment to making Delhi a "Healthy City".

(v) Proposed Remedial Measures

- Afforestation: Increasing the planting of trees that provide high levels of oxygen.
- Removing Karuvelam trees (*Prosopis juliflora*) because they absorb air moisture and contribute to environmental dryness.
- Giving priority to and encouraging the use of electric vehicles.
- Promoting a new liquid discovery by the Pusa Institute in Delhi that can decompose crop residue, providing an alternative to burning it.

(vi) The Stubble Burning Debate

- The Central Air Pollution Research Center claims that stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana accounts for 32% of Delhi's pollution.
- Questioning Logic: Why smoke from distant Rajasthan and Haryana is blamed for maintaining its density precisely over Delhi while ignoring more local industrial factors like brick kilns.
- Using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to monitor smoke origins to determine whether the pollution is truly caused by farmers' crop burning or industrial smoke.