

## March 7, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. The US has granted India a temporary 30-day waiver to resume crude oil purchases from Russia, as the war with Iran has disrupted crude oil supplies from West Asia.

(i) The temporary waiver will reduce pressure on Iran's attempt to close the vital Strait of Hormuz, creating a global energy crisis.

(ii) Following the waiver, Indian refiners have stepped up efforts to resume crude oil purchases from Russia. They plan to purchase over 15 million barrels of crude.

2. In Nepal's Parliamentary elections, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) of rapper and former mayor Balendra Shah Balan (35), who enjoys the support of the youth, took the lead in most seats. At the same time, the country's traditional major parties suffered major setbacks.

(i) The landslide victory in the Parliamentary elections will see young leader Balendra Shah Balan become the Prime Minister.

(ii) In neighboring Nepal, youths took to the streets in September last year to protest corruption, nepotism, and mismanagement. The resulting protests led to the collapse of the Coalition Government led by then Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli; President Ramchandra Paudel dissolved Parliament and appointed Sushila Karki as an Interim Prime Minister.

(iii) Six months later, elections were held for 275 seats in the House of Representatives, the lower house of Parliament, to elect a new Government.

3. Due to the ongoing war in the Middle East, the supply of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from Qatar has been disrupted, and urea production in India has started to decline.

(i) Due to the shortage of Liquefied Natural Gas, which is a very important raw material for urea production, leading fertilizer companies including IFFCO have already reduced production at some of their plants.

(ii) Not only LNG, the prices of other raw materials required for fertilizer production such as ammonia and sulfur have also started to increase in the international market. It is feared that this will increase the overall cost of production manifold.

(iii) Although the fertilizer companies currently have sufficient reserves, if the war continues, there may be a shortage in the supply of fertilizer required by farmers during the monsoon season starting in June.

(iv) Furthermore, if domestic production decreases, India will have to buy fertilizer from abroad at higher prices. This will pose a major challenge to the Government's financial management.

(v) However, the Central Government is actively monitoring the crisis situation. Officials in the Department of Fertilizers have also said that alternative arrangements such as sourcing gas from other countries are being considered so that farmers are not affected.

4. A resolution to reduce President Trump's war powers, which would have led to a US attack on Iran, has failed in the US Congress.

(i) According to the US Constitution, only the Country's Congress can issue a declaration of war. However, the opposition Democratic Party MPs are accusing President Trump of ordering the attack on Iran without obtaining the approval of the Congress.

(ii) Pointing out this issue, the opposition parties recently brought a resolution in the Senate, the Upper House of the US Congress. However, Trump's Republican Party MPs are in the majority in the Senate. Therefore, the opposition party's resolution failed without sufficient support.

(iii) Subsequently, a resolution was brought in the Lower House of the House of Representatives. There too, the Republican Party MPs are in the majority. Therefore, 212 MPs voted in favor of the resolution and 219 MPs voted against it. As a result, the resolution failed to pass in both houses.

5. The first Khelo India Tribal Games will be held in Raipur, Jagdalpur and Surguja from March 25 to April 6.

6. The second phase of the current Budget Session of Parliament will begin on March 9 and will continue till April 2.

(i) The resolution of the opposition parties seeking the removal of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha will be tabled on March 9. Therefore, the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress have issued whip orders to their MPs to attend the proceedings without fail.

(ii) The Budget Session of Parliament began on January 28 with the President's address. The opposition parties continued to cause chaos in the first phase of the session, which ended on February 13.

(iii) Under Article 94C of the Constitution, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha can be removed by passing a resolution with a majority vote.

(iv) In the past, G.V. Mavalankar (1954), Hukam Singh (1966) and Balram Jakhar (1987) who were the Speakers of the Lok Sabha faced similar no-confidence motions. But none of them succeeded. At present, based on the strength of MPs, even a motion against Om Birla is likely to fail.

7. Justice Sushrut Aravind Dharmadhikari took oath as the 55th Chief Justice of the Madras High Court.

(i) The Governor R.N. Ravi administered the oath to him.

(ii) Justice M.M. Srivastava, who was the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, retired.

(iii) Following this, the President appointed Justice Sushrut Aravind Dharmadhikari, a judge of the Kerala High Court, as the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court.

8. Two new State Information Commissioners have taken oath as the Tamil Nadu Information Commission.

(i) Governor R.N. Ravi administered the oath to them.

(ii) In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (3) of section 15 of the Right to Information Act, 2005 (Central Act 22/2005), Governor R.N. Ravi has appointed Atulya Mishra, retired IAS, and Abhay Kumar Singh, retired IPS officer, as State Information Commissioners in the Tamil Nadu Information Commission.

9. Central Government's decision to temporarily halt the distribution of fortified rice :-

- The Central Government has temporarily suspended the nationwide distribution of fortified rice

after identifying significant errors and deficiencies in the implementation of the program.

- Fortified rice is produced by powdering rice and mixing it with iron, folic acid, and Vitamin B12. This mixture is shaped back into rice grains using machines and mixed with regular rice at a ratio of one kilogram of fortified grains to 100 kilograms of normal rice.
- The scheme was launched in 2022 to combat widespread anemia identified in the 2019–21 National Family Health Survey. It was initially planned in three phases to end in March 2024 but was recently extended until 2028.
- Investigations revealed that storing fortified rice for long periods in warehouses reduces the potency of the micronutrients, making it difficult to guarantee the intended health benefits for the public.
- Confidential reports from NITI Aayog and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) suggested that excessive iron intake could be harmful to individuals suffering from conditions like Thalassemia and Sickle Cell anemia.
- Pilot project reviews conducted by NITI Aayog identified flaws in the quality, taste, structure, and appearance of the fortified rice grains.
- The Central Government has spent approximately ₹17,000 crore on the scheme. Allegations have surfaced that foreign companies, who manufacture the micronutrient premix, are using unethical means to capture a market valued at ₹1,800 crores annually.
- In some areas, particularly hilly regions, the appearance of the rice led to rumors that it was "plastic rice," causing many citizens to refuse to consume it.
- Nutrition experts have warned that fortified rice alone is not a complete solution for anemia. They emphasize that promoting a diverse diet and creating awareness about varied food intake is a more effective long-term strategy.
- Despite the Government's stance that the scheme is a cost-effective solution, it has faced legal challenges in the Supreme Court and several High Courts.
- Before the current suspension, the scheme had reached approximately 60% of the target population, which includes roughly 80 to 100 crore people.