



March 17, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. The 2025 Sahitya Akademi Award has been announced for the book “Tamizh Sirukathaiyin Thadangal” (Traces of the Tamil Short Story), authored by the Tamil writer S. Tamizhselvan.

(i) The Sahitya Akademi Award is the nation's highest literary honor. Instituted by the Central Government, this award is presented annually to literary creators. It comprises a cash prize of ₹1 lakh and a citation. The award is conferred upon writers across 24 languages—including Tamil—in categories such as short stories, novels, literary studies, and criticism. The list of recipients for the 2025 Sahitya Akademi Awards was released on Monday (March 16). The Central Government has announced the Sahitya Akademi Award for writer S. Tamizhselvan for his book “Tamizh Sirukathaiyin Thadangal”, published in the Tamil language.

(ii) “Tamizh Sirukathaiyin Thadangal”—the book selected for the Sahitya Akademi Award—is a significant document spanning over 900 pages that comprehensively examines the evolutionary trajectory of the Tamil short story landscape between 1913 and 1970. Published by Bharathi Puthakalayam, this book delves into the roots, trends, and creators of short stories within the history of Tamil literature.

2. US-China trade talks were held in France. This has paved the way for US President Donald Trump to undertake an official visit to China within two weeks.

(i) The Chinese state news agency reported that these negotiations commenced in Paris, the capital of France, led by US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng. The talks spanned two days.

(ii) Prior to the commencement of the negotiations, Scott Bessent stated that the discussions with China would be conducted with a priority placed on the interests of American farmers, workers, and businesses.

(iii) The Chinese Ministry of Commerce announced that the negotiations would focus on trade and economic issues of mutual interest to both the US and China.

(iv) The United States has initiated a new investigation aimed at determining the extent to which the unfair trade practices of 16 nations have impacted domestic production. Additionally, the US has launched an investigation against countries—including China—that engage in exports utilizing forced labor, compelling individuals to work against their will.

- In a statement issued regarding this matter, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce noted: "China has already expressed its concern regarding the new US investigation. Through these inquiries, the United States is compounding one error upon another. This will severely jeopardize the security and stability of the global supply chain."

3. The Central Government has announced that assistance schemes for exporters—who are facing severe repercussions due to disruptions in shipping and supply chains caused by the conflict in West Asia—will be unveiled this week.

(i) Following attacks by joint US-Israeli forces, Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping lane for cargo vessels. Consequently, the movement of cargo ships has come to a complete standstill, leading to a situation where goods are piling up both on ships and within ports. As a result, exporters are facing severe adverse effects. To assist them, the Central Government is undertaking various measures.



(ii) Commenting on this matter, Union Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal stated, "Details regarding the measures the Union Department of Commerce is undertaking to support exporters during this critical period will be released this week. Specifically, new relief schemes—including insurance support—are set to be introduced." Speaking on the same subject recently, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal remarked, "The Central Government is currently formulating plans for new relief schemes for exporters, which include provisions for insurance support. Consultations regarding this are being held with the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) and other relevant departments. The Government is exploring every possible avenue to assist exporters who are facing difficulties because their cargo has been loaded onto ships but cannot be dispatched. The Government is monitoring the situation around the clock."

4. Under the Prime Minister's e-Drive Scheme, the Central Government has extended the deadline for importing specialized motors (traction motors) used in electric vehicles until August 31. Previously, in an effort to reduce the import of traction motors—which are manufactured in China using rare earth minerals—and to boost domestic production, a ban on such imports had been imposed until September 2025. Subsequently, this ban was extended until March 2026.

(i) Following this, under the Prime Minister's e-Drive Scheme—valued at ₹10,900 crore—the Central Government has granted permission to import traction motors intended for use in electric commercial vehicles (N2/N3) and buses (M2/M3) until August 31.

(ii) The Union Ministry of Heavy Industries issued notifications regarding this matter on March 13. Consequently, a ban on the import of traction motors will come into effect starting September 1.

It is noteworthy that the Central Government continues to make concerted efforts to reduce the import from China of rare earth minerals used in electric vehicles, electronic goods, aerospace applications, and green energy sectors.

5. The United States has stated that the state of religious freedom in India is in a dire condition. The annual report released by the U.S. Government's Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) regarding this matter notes the following:

(i) In 2025, religious freedom in India continued to deteriorate. The Indian Government enacted and implemented laws specifically targeting religious minorities and their places of worship. Various states introduced—and subsequently strengthened—anti-conversion laws, which include provisions for severe penalties.

(ii) Across the country, Government officials illegally deported religious refugees and subjected them to arrest. Attacks against religious minorities were tacitly tolerated.

(iii) In April of last year, a terrorist attack carried out by Lashkar terrorists targeting Hindu tourists in Pahalgam—located in the Muslim-majority region of Kashmir—resulted in the deaths of 26 people. This incident triggered a five-day conflict between India and Pakistan. Furthermore, it fueled anti-Muslim sentiment within India and paved the way for attacks against the community.

(iii) Incidents of mob violence have increased in India. Consequently, India should be designated as a "Country of Particular Concern." The report recommends imposing sanctions on organizations—such as the RAW (India's intelligence agency) and the RSS—deemed responsible for attacks against minorities. It further suggests taking measures such as freezing their assets or imposing travel bans on individuals



associated with these organizations, barring their entry into the United States.

(iv) The USCIRF is an independent body established by the U.S. Government. This commission monitors religious conditions across the globe and provides recommendations to the U.S. President, the Secretary of State, and the U.S. Congress regarding the formulation of relevant policies.

(v) India's Rebuttal: The Ministry of External Affairs has responded to the allegations made by the USCIRF. Commenting on the matter, Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated, "India has taken note of the recent report released by the USCIRF. The information contained therein is one-sided and politically motivated."

6. Union Minister for Telecommunications Jyotiraditya Scindia is launching the '24 Speed Post' service, which guarantees the delivery of mail within 24 hours.

(i) In the first phase, this service is being introduced in the cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad.

(ii) In a press release issued regarding this initiative, the Union Ministry of Telecommunications stated: "On March 17, the Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and Minister of State Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani are launching the '24 speed Post' service, which ensures that critical and urgent mail reaches its destination by the very next day. Additionally, the '48 speed Post' service—which guarantees mail delivery within two days—is also being introduced across these six major cities."

(iii) The service incorporates features such as One-Time Passwords (OTP), end-to-end encryption for SMS notifications, a 'Pay Later' (BNPL) facility for business customers, complimentary offers for bulk bookings, API integration and billing capabilities, and a money-back guarantee in the event of delivery delays.

7. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated that four Special Lok Adalats have been planned for the current year to resolve pending cases in Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRTs) and Debt Recovery Appellate Tribunals (DRATs).

(i) Responding to a question raised in the Lok Sabha regarding this matter, she observed the following:

- The majority of cases pending before Debt Recovery Tribunals and Debt Recovery Appellate Tribunals involve claims valued at ₹100 crore and above. Approximately 71 percent of these cases are high-value cases.
- The Central Government has adopted a two-pronged strategy to resolve these pending cases. First, dedicated Debt Recovery Tribunals have been designated specifically to adjudicate cases valued at ₹100 crore and above.
- Second, banks and financial institutions are being encouraged to resolve issues through alternative mechanisms—specifically, platforms such as the Lok Adalat.
- As part of these measures, the Central Government is currently consulting with the National Legal Services Authority of India (NALSA) regarding the organization of Special Lok Adalats exclusively for debt recovery cases.
- In addition to the National Lok Adalat, the Central Government plans to conduct four Special Lok Adalats during the current year to resolve debt recovery cases. Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman noted that this initiative would facilitate the speedy resolution of pending cases.