

## **March 19, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits**

1. The Union Cabinet has approved the 'Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA),' with an allocation of Rs.33,660 crore, aimed at developing 100 industrial parks across the country. This approval was granted during a Union Cabinet meeting held in Delhi, presided over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Following the Cabinet meeting, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw briefed the media regarding this initiative as follows:

(i) The Union Cabinet has approved the Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA), backed by an allocation of Rs 33,660 crore. The primary objective of this scheme is to boost the nation's manufacturing capabilities and develop world-class industrial infrastructure.

(ii) These industrial parks will be established in a manner that incorporates all essential facilities required to commence industrial operations immediately—including Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, internal roadways, parking facilities (including basement parking), drainage systems, water treatment plants, testing laboratories, warehousing facilities, and housing for workers.

(iii) Under this scheme, financial assistance will be provided for the development of industrial parks ranging in size from 100 acres to 1,000 acres. Financial support of up to Rs.1 crore per acre will be provided. It is anticipated that this scheme will generate 15 lakh (1.5 million) direct employment opportunities.

(iv) This scheme will yield direct benefits for manufacturing enterprises, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), startups, and global investors.

(v) He further stated that, building upon the success of the initiative to develop smart industrial cities under the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme, the Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA) will also be implemented through the collaborative efforts of state governments and the private sector.

(vi) For Cotton Procurement...

- The Union Cabinet approved an allocation of ₹1,718.56 crore for the procurement operations of the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI).
- A government press release stated that this funding has been allocated to the Cotton Corporation of India with the dual objective of enhancing farmers' welfare and furthering the goal of a 'Self-Reliant India' (Atmanirbhar Bharat).

(vii) Upgrading a National Highway in U.P...

- The Union Cabinet also approved a ₹6,969 crore project to upgrade National Highway 927—spanning from Barabanki to Bahraich in the state of Uttar Pradesh—into a four-lane highway.

(viii) Small Hydro-Power Projects:

- The Union Cabinet approved a scheme for small-scale hydro-power projects with an allocation of ₹2,585 crore.
- Speaking on this matter, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw stated, "This scheme has been approved with the aim of promoting the development of 1,500 MW of renewable energy capacity. The project seeks to undertake such small-scale hydro-power generation on existing river systems without the need to construct dams or displace local populations. This scheme will be implemented over a



five-year period, extending up to the year 2030–31. It is expected that this hydro-power initiative will attract an investment of approximately ₹15,000 crore."

- Under this scheme, the Central Government will provide financial assistance for the establishment of hydro-power stations with capacities ranging from 1 MW to 25 MW. For the Northeastern states, the Central Government will provide financial support amounting to ₹3.6 crore per megawatt of capacity or 30 percent of the total project cost, whichever is applicable under this scheme. For other states, the Central Government will provide Rs.2.4 crore per megawatt of capacity, or 20 percent of the project cost.
- Across the country, there are 7,133 potential sites for implementing such small-scale hydroelectric projects, with a total power generation capacity of 21,000 megawatts. He stated that, currently, small-scale hydroelectric projects with a generation capacity of approximately 5,100 megawatts are operational at 1,196 of these sites.

2. In the recently held presidential election in the Central African nation of the Republic of the Congo, incumbent President Denis Sassou Nguesso secured a landslide victory, receiving 94.82 percent of the votes.

(i) It is noteworthy that Sassou (82), who first assumed power in 1979, has been ruling the country for approximately 42 years.

(ii) Of the other candidates in the fray, one secured one percent of the votes, while the remaining four received less than one percent each.

(iii) World Bank statistics indicate that, despite being an oil-rich nation, more than half of the Republic of the Congo's population lives below the poverty line, lacking access to basic amenities.

3. The requirement for certain foreign travelers to pay a bond of up to \$15,000 (about Rs. 14 lakh) to the US has been extended to 12 more countries, including Mauritius.

(i) This measure is aimed at preventing illegal overstaying in the US. The total number of countries on this list has now increased to 50. Our neighboring countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal are also on this list.

(ii) Similarly, it has been announced that foreigners staying in the United States illegally will be given an incentive of \$2,600 and a free flight ticket if they voluntarily leave.

4. The 16th Hockey World Cup will be held in the Netherlands and Belgium from August 15 to 30. A total of 16 teams from the federations are participating in it. The India-Pakistan clash has been confirmed in the men's Hockey World Cup. Both the teams have been placed in Group 'D'.

5. Amidst the prevailing war situation in West Asia, yet another crude oil tanker has safely arrived in India after traversing the contentious Strait of Hormuz.

(i) Officials stated that this Indian-flagged vessel, named 'Jag Laadki', arrived at the Mundra port in Gujarat carrying approximately 80,886 tons of crude oil loaded at the port of Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates.

(ii) Prior to this, a Liberian-flagged vessel named 'Shenglong Supramax'—owned by the Athens-based Shenglong Shipping Company—arrived at the Mumbai port on March 11th, having loaded 135,000 metric tons of crude oil at Saudi Arabia's Ras Tanura port. This marked the first crude oil tanker to reach India

following the outbreak of the war.

(iii) Subsequently, two vessels carrying Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)—the 'Shivalik' and the 'Nanda Devi'—successfully crossed the Strait of Hormuz and arrived at ports in Gujarat on Monday and Tuesday, respectively. A combined total of approximately 92,712 metric tons of LPG was transported aboard these two vessels.

(iv) Now, another vessel carrying 80,886 tons of crude oil has arrived in India. In this regard, officials from the Union Ministry of Shipping stated the following:

- Due to the conflict in West Asia, 28 Indian cargo vessels became stranded in the Strait of Hormuz, unable to proceed further on their voyages. Of these, 24 vessels were stranded in the western sector of the strait, while 4 were stranded in the eastern sector. Following this situation, India engaged in continuous diplomatic dialogue with Iran.
- As a result, a total of four ships—two in each sector—have safely transited the Strait of Hormuz. Currently, 22 ships are positioned in the western sector of the Strait of Hormuz, while two ships are located in the eastern sector.
- Among these, of the 22 Indian-flagged ships currently in the western sector, six are carrying Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), one is carrying Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), and another is carrying chemicals. In addition to these, the group includes one dredging vessel, one empty cargo ship, and three maintenance vessels, he stated.

6. The Central Government has stated that 3,142 Telegram channels and 800 websites containing pirated content have been blocked. Responding on Wednesday to a question raised in the Lok Sabha regarding this matter, the Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, L. Murugan, provided the following details:

(i) Legal provisions aimed at preventing the unauthorized recording of films have been strengthened under Sections 6AA and 6AB of the Cinematograph (Amendment) Act, 2023. These sections prohibit the unauthorized recording and sharing of films.

(ii) If any individual violates these provisions, they are liable, under Section 7(1A) of the Act, to a minimum imprisonment of three months along with a fine of ₹3 lakh. This prison term may be extended up to three years, and a fine amounting to 5 percent of the total production cost of the film may be imposed.

(iii) In this context, on March 11, a directive was issued to Telegram—under Section 79(3)(b) of the Information Technology Act—to block 3,142 channels that had published content owned or licensed by entities such as OTT platforms and producers, without their consent and in violation of the Copyright Act, 1957. For the same reasons, approximately 800 websites were blocked through Internet Service Providers.

(iv) All advertisements broadcast on private television channels must adhere to the advertising codes prescribed under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995.

(v) He further stated that the Central Government has constituted an Inter-Ministerial Committee to investigate complaints regarding violations of the Programme Code and the Advertising Code.

7. Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State for Atomic Energy, has announced that approval is expected to be granted soon for two new uranium mining projects in the country. In a written response submitted to the Lok Sabha on Wednesday regarding a question raised on this matter, he stated the following:



(i) Uranium mining facilities with a daily processing capacity of 2,500 tonnes are set to be established in the Sikar district of Rajasthan and the Jaduguda district of Chhattisgarh. The process of obtaining the necessary statutory approvals for these projects is currently proceeding through various stages.

(ii) The Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL)—a Public Sector Undertaking operating under the Department of Atomic Energy—is undertaking initiatives to enhance indigenous capabilities for uranium mining. He noted that UCIL is planning these new uranium mining projects with the objective of realizing India's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

(iii) It is noteworthy that UCIL is already operating uranium mines in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand. Uranium is utilized to generate electricity in nuclear reactors.

8. Analysis of the emerging "El Niño" weather threat and its potential impact on the Indian economy :-

(i) Current Forecast and Emerging Threat :-

- Weakening of La Niña: World Meteorological Organisation's March report indicates that the "La Niña" condition, which typically brings good rains to South Asia, is currently weakening.
- Rising Ocean Temperatures: As La Niña fades, sea surface temperatures are rising, creating conditions favorable for the formation of "El Niño".
- Research agencies state there is a 40% probability of El Niño conditions developing between May and July 2026.
- The European Centre for Short-Range Weather Forecasts has issued a specific warning for this year, predicting:
  - A 22% chance of a "Super El Niño".
  - An 80% chance of a "Strong El Niño".
  - A 98% chance of a "Moderate El Niño".

(ii) Scientific Definitions and Impact Patterns

- El Niño - It is a climate pattern caused by the warming of surface waters in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean.
- During El Niño years, the Indian subcontinent typically experiences lower than usual or significantly deficient rainfall.
- Conversely, "La Niña" refers to the cooling of the Pacific Ocean surface, which usually results in increased monsoon rainfall in South Asia.
- Since 1950, India has faced 15 drought years due to climate shifts; notably, 10 of those years (66%) coincided with severe El Niño conditions.

(iii) Economic and Agricultural Consequences

- During moderate to strong El Niño years, monsoon rainfall has historically decreased by approximately 15% compared to the long-term average.
- Severe El Niño years can lead to a reduction in Kharif crop production by 6% to 12%.
- For the current fiscal year, agricultural growth is already projected to be a low 2.4%.
- A second consecutive year of poor agricultural performance would lead to food production shortages, rising food prices, and a decline in rural employment and income.
- The threat is intensified by the ongoing global war climate (e.g., Ukraine), which has already disrupted international grain production, shipping, and fertilizer supplies.

## (iv) Government Strategy and Future Outlook

- To manage El Niño impacts, the Government typically releases food grains from central stocks, imposes export bans, and permits the import of scarce agricultural commodities.
- Final clarity on the monsoon outlook will only be available in April, when the India Meteorological Department (IMD) releases its official forecast.
- The Government should be alert and proactive now rather than waiting for the crisis to manifest, emphasizing that the Indian economy faces severe setbacks if these warnings prove true.

## 9. Analysis of the state of democracy in India and the world.

### (i) Constitutional Foundation and Definitions

- The Indian Constitution's preamble defines India as a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic committed to upholding social justice.
- Since gaining independence from British rule, the fundamental objective has been for India to exist as a "Full Democracy".
- Elections play a primary role in keeping Indian democracy alive, especially in a nation with such a large population.

### (ii) Global Monitoring and Metrics (1946–2006)

- The "Economist Intelligence Unit" (EIU) began operating in 1946, analyzing global electoral processes, media freedom, and citizen participation.
- In 2006, the EIU introduced the annual "Democracy Index," which rates nations on a scale of 0 to 10 based on democratic characteristics.
- Classification Categories:
  - 8 to 10: Full Democracy.
  - 6 to 7.9: Flawed Democracy (குறைபாடுகளுடன் கூடிய ஜனநாயகம்).

### (iii) India's Statistical Decline (2010–2025)

- 2010 Milestone: India previously held a high score of 8.15, placing it in the "Full Democracy" category.
- 2024 Data: India's score has dropped to 7.81, officially shifting its status toward that of a "Flawed Democracy".
- 2025 Global Report: The latest report (based on 2024 data) shows that out of 167 countries, only 25 have full democracy and 46 have flawed democracy.
- Widespread Regression: India is not alone; countries like the USA, France, South Korea, Spain, and Chile have also recently slipped from "Full" to "Flawed" status.

### (iv) Reasons for India's declining democratic index:

- Increased limitations and threats regarding freedom of speech and the right to protest.
- Actions that impact the secular constitutional structure and the rights of minorities.
- Growing pressure on news organizations and the perceived weakening of the Election Commission and investigative agencies.
- Increasing corruption within Government administration and challenges to federalism (Central-State coordination).



## (v) The Changing Nature of Electoral Influence

- Political tactics have shifted from traditional distributions (food/clothing) to more high-value inducements like cash, jewelry, and temple donations.
- A recent trend has emerged where ruling parties use Government funds to transfer thousands of rupees directly to voters' bank accounts 1–2 months before an election, which is a sign of a flawed democratic process.

## (vi) Conclusion on Democratic Integrity

- Holding elections alone does not guarantee a full democracy; it requires fair processes, equal opportunities for all parties, and an independent media.
- The survival and stability of democracy rely heavily on the Election Commission, the Judiciary, and the Media performing their duties without bias.

