

March 26, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. The Supreme Court has stated that the circular issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs does not make the singing of 'Vande Mataram' mandatory at Government events or in schools.

(i) On January 28, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs issued a circular regarding the singing of all verses of 'Vande Mataram' at Government events and in schools, as well as the protocols to be observed while rendering the song.

(ii) A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant, Justice Jayamalaya Bagchi, and Justice Vipul M. Pancholi heard a petition filed in the Supreme Court by one Mohammed Saeed Noori, challenging this circular.

(iii) During the proceedings, the Bench observed the following:

- The circular issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs merely provides an advisory stating that 'Vande Mataram' "may" be sung at Government events and in schools; it does not mandate that the song "must" be sung. Previously, there existed specific rules regarding the National Flag; those rules outlined the protocols to be followed during the hoisting of the National Flag. The rules issued regarding 'Vande Mataram' are analogous in nature.
- The circular does not issue any directive mandating legal punishment in the event that 'Vande Mataram' is not sung. Should any punitive legal action be initiated on such grounds, the petitioner is at liberty to approach the Supreme Court. Noting that the petition had been filed out of apprehension regarding a hypothetical future event, the Court dismissed the plea.

2. During an all-party meeting held in Delhi, the Central Government categorically affirmed that there are adequate stocks of petrol and diesel available within the country.

(i) Amidst this tense atmosphere, an all-party meeting was convened in Delhi—organized by the Central Government—to deliberate on West Asian affairs. Participating opposition parties criticized the Government, alleging that India had maintained a silence following the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, and argued that this demonstrated the Indian Government's weakness. Furthermore, the opposition parties drew attention to the fact that Pakistan was playing a mediating role in the Iranian situation.

(ii) The opposition parties expressed dissatisfaction with the Central Government's response during the all-party meeting. They insisted that a debate regarding the situation in West Asia be conducted in both the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha (the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament). Speaking on this matter, Congress MP Tariq Anwar stated, "Pakistan is playing a mediating role in West Asian affairs, while our country remains a silent spectator. A debate on the West Asian situation must be held in the Lok Sabha under Rule 193, and in the Rajya Sabha under Rule 176."

3. Former IDAS officer K.V. Ramana Murthy has been appointed as a full-time Member of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

(i) An IDAS officer, belonging to the 1991 batch, retired after serving as the Additional Controller of Defence Accounts under the Union Ministry of Defence.

(ii) K.V. Ramana Murthy will hold the post of SEBI as full-Time Member for a period of three years or until further orders are issued. With his appointment, all four sanctioned positions for full-Time Members on the



SEBI Board have now been filled. Amarjeet Singh, Kamlesh Chandra Varshney, and Sandeep Pradhan are already serving as full-time members.

4. A 12-member Indian squad is set to compete in the ISSF Shotgun World Cup, which begins on Thursday (March 26) in Morocco.

(i) In this competition, which runs until April 6, 270 athletes from 43 nations are participating. Gold medals are at stake across five Olympic Shotgun disciplines.

(ii) Representing India, senior shooter Zoravar Singh Sandhu—who made history by winning a bronze medal at last year's World Cup in Athens—is not participating this time due to workload.

5. A legislative amendment bill, which seeks to remove the provision allowing transgender individuals to self-identify their gender, was passed in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

(i) As this bill had already been passed in the Lok Sabha, it has now received the approval of the Parliament.

(ii) The Central Government introduced the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, with the aim of providing a precise definition for the term "transgender persons" (including transwomen and transmen), and of enhancing the penalties for crimes committed against individuals of this gender to reflect the severity of such offenses.

(iii) This bill—which mandates the submission of appropriate medical evidence while simultaneously removing the provision that allows transgender individuals to self-identify their gender—was passed in the Lok Sabha.

(iv) Subsequently, the bill was tabled in the Rajya Sabha, where a debate ensued. During the proceedings, opposition parties expressed their objection to certain provisions of the bill and insisted that it be referred to a Parliamentary Committee for scrutiny.

(v) The amendments proposed by the opposition parties were rejected, and the bill was subsequently passed by a voice vote.

6. The Central Government has issued a new order stating that consumers residing in areas equipped with facilities for Piped Natural Gas (PNG) connections will have their LPG cylinder supply discontinued if they refuse to switch to using PNG.

(i) This order has been issued against the backdrop of LPG shortages caused by the conflict in West Asia, with the dual objectives of expanding the PNG infrastructure and reducing dependence on a single type of fuel.

(ii) As a ripple effect of the West Asian conflict, gas exports from that region to various nations—including India—have been disrupted. India, which relies heavily on imports to meet its fuel requirements, is consequently facing severe difficulties.

(iii) In light of this situation, the Central Government is urging both domestic and commercial consumers to switch to PNG—a highly convenient alternative fuel that can be procured from a diverse range of countries—while simultaneously intensifying domestic production efforts.



(iv) Since this gas is supplied continuously via pipelines, there is no need to place a booking for refills, unlike with LPG cylinders.

(v) Important Order of the Central Government:

- In this context, the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has issued the 'Natural Gas and Petroleum Products Distribution (Construction, Operation, and Expansion of Gas Pipelines and Other Facilities) Order, 2026' under the Essential Commodities Act.
- This order is aimed at achieving key objectives, including the rapid expansion of PNG infrastructure, the streamlining of necessary regulatory approvals, and the promotion of a transition from LPG to PNG in order to bolster energy security.

7. The Union Cabinet approved the revamped 'UDAN' scheme, aimed at further enhancing regional air connectivity.

(i) To be implemented over the next 10 years (from 2026-27 to 2035-36) with an allocation of ₹28,840 crore, this scheme encompasses airport development, support for operations and maintenance, the construction of modern helipads, and support for the procurement of domestic aircraft.

(ii) A meeting of the Union Cabinet was held in Delhi under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Ashwini Vaishnaw, briefed the press regarding the decisions taken during this meeting.

(iii) Speaking on the matter, he stated, "Under the revamped UDAN scheme, 100 airports—specifically those featuring runways that have hitherto remained unutilized—will be developed in collaboration with the respective State Governments. The Cabinet has approved an allocation of ₹12,159 crore over the next 8 years to undertake these development works."

(iv) He further added, "Similarly, a subsidy fund amounting to ₹10,043 crore will be allocated over the next 10 years to compensate airlines for the operational losses incurred while operating flights on designated routes."

(v) In a press release issued by the Government regarding the financial allocations for other activities under the revamped UDAN scheme, it was stated: "Over the next 8 years, 200 modern helipads will be constructed at a cost of ₹15 crore each. The total financial allocation earmarked for this purpose is approximately ₹3,661 crore."

(vi) "These modern helipads are intended to be constructed in priority and 'Aspirational Districts' with the objective of enhancing last-mile connectivity and facilitating emergency operations. Furthermore, a sum of ₹2,577 crore will be allocated over the next 3 years to provide support for the operations and maintenance of 441 smaller airports," the release noted.

(vii) The UDAN scheme, launched in 2016 with the objective of enhancing regional air connectivity, is set to conclude at the end of this year. In this context, the Union Cabinet has approved a revamped version of the UDAN scheme.

(viii) Under the current scheme, 663 routes have been operationalized across the country, connecting 95 airports, dedicated heliports, and water aerodromes.

(ix) It is noteworthy that a total of 3.41 lakh flight services have been operated on these routes, serving a



cumulative total of 16 crore passengers.

(x) Extension of the IVFRT Scheme:

- With the aim of modernizing and enhancing the security of the country's immigration system, the Union Cabinet has approved the extension of the Immigration, Visa, and Foreigners Registration and Tracking (IVFRT) scheme for a further period of five years, allocating a financial outlay of ₹1,800 crore for this purpose.

8. The Cauvery Water Management Authority has directed the Karnataka Government to release 2.5 TMC of water from the Cauvery River to Tamil Nadu during the month of April.

(i) The 49th meeting of the Cauvery Water Management Authority was convened in New Delhi to deliberate on the issue of releasing water to Tamil Nadu.

(ii) Officials from the Water Resources Departments of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, and Puducherry participated in this meeting.

(iii) Taking into account the water levels in Karnataka's reservoirs, the Tamil Nadu Government urged the Cauvery Authority during the meeting to ensure that Karnataka releases the 2.5 TMC of water due to Tamil Nadu for the month of April at Biligundlu, in accordance with the Supreme Court's directive.

(iv) Consequently, the Cauvery Water Management Authority issued a directive to Karnataka to release 2.5 TMC of water from the Cauvery River to Tamil Nadu during the month of April.

(v) One TMC (Thousand Million Cubic Feet) represents the volume of water obtained by maintaining a continuous discharge rate of 11,574 cubic feet per second for a duration of 24 hours.

(vi) While the dispute regarding the sharing of Cauvery river water between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka had persisted for many years, the Supreme Court delivered its verdict on the related case in 2018. Through that verdict, the Supreme Court stipulated the specific months in which Karnataka must release water to Tamil Nadu, as well as the exact quantity to be released during each of those months. To ensure the implementation of this verdict and to monitor the allocation of Cauvery water, the Supreme Court subsequently constituted two bodies: the Cauvery Water Management Authority and the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee. Accordingly, these two bodies convene periodically to issue directives regarding the sharing of Cauvery river water, based on the Supreme Court's verdict.

(vii) The 48th meeting of the Authority was held in New Delhi on February 13. In accordance with the Supreme Court's order, the Cauvery Water Management Authority, during the meeting, requested Karnataka to release 2.5 TMC of water to Tamil Nadu every month from February to May.