

May 9, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. In the conflict-ridden Mogoke region of Myanmar, a ruby gemstone weighing around 11,000 carats (2.2 kilograms) has been discovered.

(i) Considered the second-largest ruby ever found in Myanmar in terms of weight, the gemstone was unearthed during excavation work carried out after last month's traditional New Year celebrations.

(ii) Earlier, in 1996, a 21,450-carat ruby had been discovered. However, the newly found ruby is regarded as far more valuable because of its color and quality.

(iii) Myanmar leader Min Aung Hlaing and his cabinet personally inspected the gemstone. Around 90 percent of the world's rubies are sourced from Myanmar. The country's gemstone industry serves as a major source of revenue for both the military regime and armed groups. Because of this, human rights organizations have raised international objections against the trade.

2. Leaders at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit held in the Philippines held intensive discussions on confronting the Middle East war and its economic consequences.

(i) The summit, attended by leaders of 11 countries — Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and East Timor — was conducted in a simple manner in Cebu province of the Philippines.

(ii) As Southeast Asia heavily depends on Middle Eastern countries for fuel requirements, the ongoing war has emerged as a major threat to the region. In this context, priority was given at the summit to constructive discussions on addressing current challenges.

(iii) Detailed discussions were held regarding emergency plans to ensure fuel and food security. Proposals included sharing fuel among ASEAN nations, creating a regional electricity distribution network, and identifying new countries for crude oil imports.

(iv) Leaders also examined measures to encourage the use of electric vehicles and explored new technologies, including nuclear energy.

(v) Apart from the Middle East conflict, discussions were also held on major Southeast Asian issues such as the South China Sea dispute and the Myanmar civil war.

3. Reports have emerged that two Indian sailors aboard the Dutch luxury cruise ship MV Hondius have tested positive for the Hanta virus.

(i) The ship began its voyage from Argentina on April 1 with 150 tourists and sailors from 28 countries on board. Most of them disembarked at Saint Helena Island on April 24.

(ii) It has now been confirmed that five people on the ship were infected with the Hanta virus. Additionally, three individuals — two Dutch nationals and one German woman — have died due to the infection. Among the five infected persons are the two Indian sailors.

(iii) The Hanta virus is transmitted through rodents, particularly rats.

(iv) Before the outbreak was identified, 29 tourists from 12 countries had already disembarked at Saint



Helena Island. There are concerns that the virus could spread to other places through them. Therefore, efforts to trace these individuals have been intensified.

(v) Six years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the world, infecting millions and causing hundreds of thousands of deaths. In this context, the World Health Organization has clarified whether the Hanta virus could spread rapidly between humans in a similar way.

(vi) According to senior WHO official Maria Van Kerkhove, "This will not spread like COVID-19. It is not a highly contagious disease. Its mode of transmission is completely different. Generally, it spreads through rodents. However, this is the first time it has been identified as spreading from one infected human to another. Even then, it is likely to spread only among those who have been in close contact with infected individuals."

4. An advanced missile system equipped with an indigenously developed modern device was successfully tested in the sea region off the coast of Odisha.

(i) The device, named "Thara," has the capability to alter its trajectory and accurately strike and destroy distant targets.

(ii) In a statement issued by the Defence Ministry, it was said that the advanced weapon system "Thara" was jointly developed by the Research Centre Imarat in Hyderabad and laboratories of the Defence Research and Development Organisation. The system has been designed to strike and destroy land-based targets.

(iii) This is the first indigenously developed missile system in India capable of redirecting conventional missiles – which normally cannot change course after launch – toward targets using advanced guidance systems.

5. Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh stated that India follows a comprehensive approach to migration governance centered on the welfare, safety, and empowerment of migrants.

(i) He expressed these views while speaking at a session of the Second International Migration Review Forum held at the United Nations headquarters in New York City.

(ii) The session was also attended by Amy Pope, Director General of the International Organization for Migration.

6. A U.S. federal court ordered the cancellation of the uniform 10 percent tariff imposed by the United States on countries around the world, including India, stating that the levy was invalid. This is being viewed as a major setback for the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump.

(i) Earlier, the Supreme Court of the United States had ruled that the reciprocal tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on countries worldwide were invalid and struck them down. Following that judgment, the newly imposed uniform 10 percent tariff has also now been declared invalid.

(ii) After assuming office for a second term as U.S. President, Trump accused 60 countries, including India, of following unfair trade practices with the United States and introduced reciprocal tariff measures. Accordingly, he initially imposed a 25 percent tariff on goods imported from India. Later, accusing India of indirectly supporting Russia's war in Ukraine by purchasing crude oil from Russia, he imposed an additional 25 percent tariff on Indian goods.



(iii) This strained relations between the two countries. Meanwhile, negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement between India and the United States continued. As a result, a framework for an interim bilateral trade agreement was recently finalized. Announcing this, Trump ordered the withdrawal of the additional 25 percent tariff on Indian goods. He also announced that the remaining 25 percent tariff on Indian goods would be reduced to 18 percent.

(iv) At the same time, numerous petitions had been filed before the U.S. Supreme Court challenging the reciprocal tariffs imposed on 60 countries, including India. Hearing these petitions on February 20, the court ruled that the tariffs imposed by President Trump under emergency powers laws – including reciprocal import duties on goods from other countries – were invalid.

(v) Following the ruling, Trump announced that the United States would pursue alternative ways to impose reciprocal tariffs on foreign countries. Accordingly, beginning February 24, he imposed a new uniform reciprocal tariff of 10 percent on goods from countries worldwide, including India, for a period of 150 days. He further stated that due to the continuing economic decline caused by the Supreme Court ruling, the 10 percent reciprocal tariff could be increased to 15 percent. Details regarding these revised tariffs would be announced by the U.S. administration in the coming months.

(vi) Additionally, the United States initiated a fresh investigation under Section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act of 1974 to determine the extent to which the allegedly unfair trade practices of partner nations such as India, China, and Japan have affected American manufacturing.

(vii) In this context, spice company Burlap & Barrel and toy company Basic Fun filed a case before the Court of International Trade challenging the 10 percent uniform reciprocal tariff imposed on countries worldwide.

(viii) The case was heard by a bench comprising Judges Mark A. Barnett, Claire R. Kelly, and Timothy C. Stanceu. The judges delivered a split verdict.

(ix) In the majority opinion delivered by Judges Mark Barnett and Claire Kelly, it was stated that the provisions of the 1974 Trade Act used by President Trump to impose the 10 percent tariff on foreign countries could be invoked only in situations involving a crisis in balance-of-payments obligations. In other words, such action could be taken only when there is a deficit arising from imbalances in trade-related accounts. In such circumstances, Congress may delegate broad tariff powers to the President.

(x) However, President Trump's proclamation failed to establish that the conditions required under the law had been fulfilled in order to legally impose an additional 10 percent tariff on imports from countries around the world. Therefore, the newly imposed uniform reciprocal tariff of 10 percent on imports from all countries is invalid," the judges ruled.

7. Indian crude oil companies have incurred losses amounting to ₹30,000 crore since last March.

(i) Due to the conflict involving Iran, the United States, and Israel, Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz. As a result, commercial ships carrying crude oil and other fuels through that route were barred from passage. Consequently, crude oil prices surged manifold in the international market.

(ii) However, petrol and diesel prices have not been increased in India over the past few years. Instead, to prevent losses to Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, the Union Government reduced the central excise duty on petrol and diesel. Even so,

the government did not raise the retail prices of petrol and diesel. As a result, Indian oil companies have suffered losses of ₹30,000 crore from last March until now. If the Union Government had not reduced the excise duty on petrol and diesel, the losses of oil companies could have risen to ₹62,500 crore.

(iii) When the conflict involving Iran, the United States, and Israel began on February 28, the price of crude oil was 72 US dollars per barrel. It has now increased to 144 US dollars per barrel.

8. Analysis of autism, highlighting the potential of these children and the systemic changes needed to support them.

(i) World-record achievement has been made by four children under 10 with autism who swam approximately 107 kilometers (58 nautical miles) from Dhanushkodi to Talaimannar and back in 18 hours and 12 minutes. This proves that with proper training, these children can achieve global excellence.

(ii) Autism is defined not as a mental illness, but as a neurological disorder caused by differences in brain development.

- Challenges and Realities:
 - 40% of individuals with autism lack speech skills.
 - 75% of autistic adults remain unemployed due to a lack of proper vocational training.
 - While it cannot be "cured" entirely, proper medical treatment, speech therapy, and vocational training can help them live normal lives.
- Some children exhibit "Savant Syndrome," where they possess exceptional memory, focus, and talents in music or painting that far exceed those of average children.
- Donald Triplett, the first person officially diagnosed with autism, who worked in a bank, was a musician, and lived a full, normal life until the age of 89.

(iii) Prevalence in India and Worldwide

- Approximately 1% of the world's population (about 7.5 crore people) are affected by autism.
- In India, one in every 68 children is diagnosed with autism.
- Data indicates that since 2020, the number of reported autism cases has increased by 128%.

(iv) Steps Taken and Suggestions for the Government

- The State Elementary Education Department has ordered all Government primary and middle schools to display notices stating that "children with intellectual disabilities and autism will be admitted". This information must also be included in student application forms.
- The Government is encouraged to provide specialized training to teachers who care for autistic children in schools.
- The Tamil Nadu Health Department recently issued a circular requiring both Government and private hospitals to give priority in treatment queues to individuals with autism and intellectual disabilities.
- Legal provisions should be made for special leave and concessions for parents (especially single parents) working in Government or private sectors to help them care for their children.
- While many NGOs run care homes, there is a call for the Government to increase the number of Government-run homes to provide long-term care for autistic children who do not have parents.

Effective implementation of welfare schemes and a supportive social attitude are essential to managing

the challenges of autism.

9. Analysis of the rising drug and alcohol addiction in Tamil Nadu

(i) Political and Social Context:

The issue of a growing "drug culture" was a major talking point during the recent 17th Tamil Nadu Assembly election campaign. While traditionally limited to toddy and arrack, more potent substances like ganja and opium were introduced later through trade from North India and abroad.

(ii) Evolution of Usage:

Non-medical use of ganja and opium began among workers during the British era and gradually permeated Tamil society.

- Prohibition Timeline in Tamil Nadu:
 - 1937: Prohibition was first introduced on a trial basis in Salem district.
 - World War II: It was relaxed to increase Government revenue.
 - 1948: Total prohibition was implemented across Madras State (now Tamil Nadu).
 - 1971–1974: Prohibition was lifted due to economic crisis, then reimposed and lifted multiple times for political reasons in subsequent years.

(iii) Impact of the Current System:

Unrestricted sale of liquor for the past 25 years has led to significant social decay, including domestic conflicts, debt-driven suicides and increased violence against women.

- Despite 2016 election promises to close TASMACHOP shops gradually, no Government has done so permanently because they generate approximately ₹50,000 crore in annual revenue.
- Drugs are now sold through illegal online platforms like the "Dark Web" and are easily accessible near schools, colleges, and student hostels.
- While millions in the state require addiction recovery services, Tamil Nadu currently only has the capacity to treat a few thousand individuals annually.

(iv) Prevalence of Addiction

In Tamil Nadu

- During "Operation Ganja Hunt" (December 2021–2022), the police seized 75,000 kg of ganja. Seizures of opium, heroin, and synthetic drugs have also risen.
- Youth Statistics (2025 Study):
 - A study in three districts revealed that 9% of school students use ganja and other drugs.
 - In Chennai, a study of youth aged 10–19 found that 30% use alcohol and 34% use at least one form of drug (alcohol, ganja, etc.).
- Adult Alcohol Usage:
 - 70 lakh men drink daily.
 - 22 lakh men drink 3 to 4 times a week.
 - 37 lakh people are identified as addicts requiring medical treatment for alcohol-related issues.
- Other Drugs: Approximately 7.5 lakh people use ganja, opium, or synthetic drugs, with 1.5 lakh

identified as severe addicts.

(v) Worldwide

- Many nations have recognized drug culture as a path to national destruction and have successfully worked to eliminate it. Countries cited as successful examples include Iceland, Portugal, Switzerland, Netherlands, Japan, and Singapore.

(vi) Proposed Steps and Solutions

Multi-pronged approach is necessary to address the crisis:

- Implementing severe legal consequences for the sale of drugs.
- The state must provide rapid and accessible recovery treatment for addicts.
- Introducing drug awareness programs at the school level.
- Encouraging youth to participate in sports and various arts to divert them from addiction.
- Teachers and parents must work together to monitor and guide students who may be drifting toward substance abuse.

