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June 13, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. Special Kuruva Paddy Cultivation Package Announced in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Joseph Vijay has announced that a Special Kuruva Paddy Cultivation Package Scheme worth ₹134.83 crore will be implemented to encourage paddy cultivation.

(i) Key Highlights

- Due to insufficient rainfall and inadequate water storage in reservoirs, the Government has decided to increase rice production through alternative methods.
- Farmers will be provided with uninterrupted three-phase electricity for 18 hours a day.

(ii) Background

- Paddy is cultivated on an average of 52.72 lakh acre in Tamil Nadu.
- Of this, 20.65 lakh acre are in the Cauvery Delta districts of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam, Mayiladuthurai and parts of Cuddalore, Tiruchirappalli, and Ariyalur.
- During the Kuruva season alone, cultivation covers 5.14 lakh acre.
- In non-delta districts, paddy is cultivated on 32.07 lakh acre annually.

(iii) Water Shortage Concerns

- Normally, the Mettur Dam is opened on June 12 every year for Kuruva cultivation.
- The India Meteorological Department has forecast that rainfall during the southwest monsoon may be below 90% of normal due to the El Niño phenomenon.
- Water inflow into the Mettur Dam remains low.
- The dam's current water level is 79.56 feet, with storage of 41.52 TMC, making its scheduled opening difficult.

(iv) Special Package Details

- Using filter-point tube wells, cultivation can still be undertaken on 3.55 lakh acres in the delta region.
- To support farmers:
 - ₹77.50 crore will be allocated for Kuruva cultivation in delta districts using filter-point systems.
 - ₹57.33 crore will be allocated to promote Kar, Kuruva, and Sornavari paddy cultivation in non-delta districts.
- Total package value: ₹134.83 crore.

(v) Infrastructure and Inputs

- 2,325 km of C and D canals have been desilted at a cost of ₹10 crore.
- Desilting of 4,971 km of A and B canals at a cost of ₹100 crore is 97% complete.
- Stocks available for cultivation:
 - 10,714 metric tonnes of paddy seeds.
 - 4.02 lakh metric tonnes of fertilizers.
- Farmers are urged to make full use of the benefits available under the scheme.

2. Centre Restricts Bulk Sale of Petrol and Diesel for 90 Days

The Central Government has imposed a 90-day restriction on bulk sales of petrol and diesel from retail fuel stations to factories and institutions.

(i) Main Restrictions

- Petrol pumps cannot sell diesel or petrol in bulk to factories and industrial establishments.
- Such entities must procure fuel through their own authorized fuel storage and dispensing facilities.
- A maximum of 200 litres of diesel per vehicle per day can be supplied at fuel stations.
- Diesel may only be filled into vehicle tanks or containers approved by the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO).
- Resale of purchased fuel is prohibited.

(ii) Reason for the Decision

- To prevent shortages in retail fuel supplies for the general public.
- Ongoing conflict involving Iran, the United States, and Israel has disrupted crude oil exports from West Asia, causing fuel shortages in several countries.

(iii) Monitoring

- Central and State Governments have been directed to ensure compliance.
- Authorities must prevent hoarding and black-market sales.
- The restrictions may be extended beyond 90 days if necessary.

3. Lydian Nadhaswaram Returns After Creating Symphony with London Symphony Orchestra

Young musical prodigy Lydian Nadhaswaram returned to Chennai after creating his own symphony with 92 musicians of the world-famous London Symphony Orchestra.

(i) He received a warm welcome at Chennai International Airport on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Government.

(ii) Last year, he successfully presented all 1,330 couplets of the Tirukkural in musical form. His effort to bring Tamil musical heritage to the global stage through symphonic music has been widely appreciated.

(iii) According to Minister Rajmohan, Lydian's symphony will be released on June 21, marking World Music Day. The Tamil Nadu Government has assured him of all necessary support.

4. Ebola Outbreak in Eastern Congo Refugee Camp

The United Nations Refugee Agency reported that 22 people have died due to an Ebola outbreak in an internally displaced persons camp in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

(i) Overcrowded living conditions make isolation of infected individuals extremely difficult.

(ii) Authorities fear that panic-driven migration could worsen the outbreak.

Statistics

- Congo has recorded:
 - 676 confirmed cases
 - 136 deaths
- Neighboring Uganda has reported 19 cases.

5. Elon Musk Becomes World's First Trillionaire Following SpaceX IPO

Following the Initial Public Offering (IPO) of 'SpaceX', its CEO Elon Musk has reportedly become the world's first trillionaire.

What is a Trillionaire?

- A trillionaire possesses wealth exceeding \$1 trillion (approximately ₹95 lakh crore).

Musk's Rise

- Born in South Africa, Musk gained global recognition through:
 - Tesla
 - SpaceX
- In 2022, he acquired:
 - X (formerly Twitter)

Impact

- Tesla revolutionized the electric vehicle industry and encouraged traditional automakers to embrace EVs.
- SpaceX operates in space exploration, satellite internet, and AI-related technologies.

IPO Milestone

- SpaceX announced an IPO worth \$75 billion.
- This surpassed the previous IPO record set by Saudi Aramco in 2019.

Wealth Increase

- Before the IPO, Musk's net worth was estimated at \$780 billion.
- The rise in SpaceX share value significantly increased the value of his holdings, pushing his total wealth above the trillion-dollar mark

6. Former Indian Shooting Star Jaspal Rana Passes Away

Former Indian shooter and coach Jaspal Rana passed away at the age of 49.

Contributions

- He served as a coach for the Indian shooting team.
- He guided Manu Bhaker, who won two bronze medals at the Paris Olympics.

Honors

He received:

- Arjuna Award (1994)
- Padma Shri (1997)
- Dronacharya Award (2020)

7. ICC Women's T20 World Cup Begins

The 10th ICC Women's T20 World Cup has commenced in Birmingham, England.

8. Shigella Infection Claims Life in Kerala

A woman has died in Malappuram, Kerala, after being infected with the Shigella bacterium.

- The deceased, Sarojini (59), is the second death linked to the infection this month.
- An additional 18 people across Kerala have been infected.

About Shigella

Shigella infection spreads through:

- Contaminated food.
- Contaminated water.
- Contact with infected persons.

Common symptoms include:

- Vomiting.
- Diarrhea.
- Fever.
- Abdominal pain.

9. India Sends Measles Vaccines and Medical Supplies to Maldives

India has sent:

- 20,000 doses of measles vaccine.
- Three tonnes of medical equipment and supplies.

to assist Maldives, where measles cases are rising rapidly.

The assistance aims to support healthcare authorities managing the outbreak.

10. Sudarsan Pattnaik Wins Russian Grand Sand Master Trophy

Renowned sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik from Odisha won the Russian Grand Sand Master Trophy for his creation at an international sand sculpture competition held in Kaliningrad.

11. Madras High Court Questions Tamil Nadu Government on Removal of Prosopis Juliflora

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court asked the Tamil Nadu Government what steps it has taken to implement earlier orders regarding the removal of Prosopis Juliflora (Seemai Karuvelam) trees.

Background

- Public interest petitions seeking removal of the invasive trees were filed by Vaiko and others.
- The court had earlier ordered:
 - Removal of the trees across Tamil Nadu within six months.
 - Implementation of the project under the name "Sezhumai Karuvoolam."

Government's Submission

Before a bench comprising Justices N. Sathish Kumar and Bharatha Chakravarthy:

- Officials have been appointed in most districts.

- Appointments remain pending in a few districts.
- Retired Judge A. Selvam conducted the first phase of inspections in Pudukkottai district.
- Removal work is continuing.
- The Government requested additional time to complete implementation.

12. NITI Aayog report regarding the progress and persistent deficiencies in the Indian school system over the last decade.

(i) Access and Dropout Challenges

- **School Availability:** There is a significant gap between primary and secondary education facilities. While India has 7.3 lakh primary schools, there are only 1.64 lakh high schools.
- **High Dropout Rates:** Approximately 4 out of every 10 students drop out of school before completing the 12th grade.
- **Economic Barriers:** Factors contributing to dropouts include the end of free education under the RTE Act after age 14, family poverty, high fees, and the rising costs of transportation, textbooks, and private tuition.

(ii) Teacher Shortages and Infrastructure Gaps

- **Single-Teacher Schools:** Nationwide, 1,04,125 schools operate with only one teacher. This includes 3,671 schools in Tamil Nadu, where over 95,000 students are taught by a single staff member.
- **Basic Amenities:** Infrastructure remains a hurdle; 14,505 schools across India lack drinking water, and 59,829 schools do not have hand-washing facilities.
- **Vacancies:** The report notes that there are over 5,000 teacher vacancies in Tamil Nadu that require urgent filling.

(iii) Concerns Over Learning Quality

- **Learning Deficits:** In government schools, only 27.6% of 3rd-grade students can perform basic subtraction, compared to 47.5% in private schools.
- **Comparative Performance:** In an NCERT learning ability survey, Tamil Nadu students scored an average of 55.1 out of 240, which is significantly lower than students in Kerala (140.3) and Punjab (150.4).
- **Lagging Students:** A 2025 study identified 7.47 lakh students in Tamil Nadu (Grades 6–9) who are lagging behind, necessitating special educational interventions.

(iv) Tamil Nadu's Performance and Successes

- **Welfare Leadership:** Tamil Nadu is considered a frontrunner in education due to extensive welfare schemes like breakfast and midday meals, free uniforms, textbooks, bags, cycles, and bus passes.
- **Enrollment Gains:** These initiatives have successfully increased student enrollment and significantly reduced dropout rates.
- **Academic Achievements:** Recent 10th-grade results showed a positive shift, with thousands of students achieving perfect scores in Science and Social Science, moving beyond the traditional focus on only Mathematics.

(v) Administrative and Systemic Issues

- **Non-Teaching Burdens:** Government teachers are overwhelmed with administrative tasks like EMIS data entry, meal monitoring, and welfare distribution. They are calling for separate administrative staff to allow them to focus solely on teaching.
- **Teacher Welfare:** There is an ongoing demand to resolve salary anomalies for secondary teachers

who recently conducted a 37-day protest.

- Sanitation Standards: Although most Tamil Nadu schools have toilets, they are often poorly maintained and require better hygiene management.

13. Strategic evolution, objectives, and internal hurdles of the Quad alliance in the current global landscape.

(i) Origins and Philosophical Foundation

- While the idea of linking the Indian and Pacific Oceans dates back to German geographer Karl Haushofer in the 1920s, the modern strategic framework was established by former Japanese PM Shinzo Abe.
- In 2006, Abe introduced the concept of the "Confluence of the Two Seas" in the Indian Parliament, asserting that the Indian and Pacific Oceans should be viewed as a single strategic space for freedom and prosperity.
- After collapsing in 2008 due to Chinese pressure and Australian withdrawal, the Quad was revitalized in 2020 when Australia rejoined the Malabar naval exercises.

(ii) Strategic Shifts and the China Factor

- The alliance's focus has evolved in response to China's massive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its increasing naval aggression in the South China Sea.
- A significant outcome of the 2026 New Delhi Foreign Ministers' meeting was a commitment to joint maritime monitoring and regional awareness to ensure the security of international sea lanes.

(iii) Institutional Nature: Informal vs. Military Alliance

- Quad is not a military pact like NATO; it is an informal group based on shared values and voluntary cooperation.
- The Quad cannot issue mandates or security guarantees; instead, it acts as a platform for coordinating diplomatic and security policies to maintain a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific".

(iv) Technological and Economic Synergy

The Quad leverages the specific strengths of its four economic powerhouses to build a resilient technological ecosystem:

- United States: Leading the world in Artificial Intelligence (AI) research and patents.
- Japan: A global pioneer in robotics and advanced manufacturing.
- Australia: Emerging as a vital center for Quantum computing research.
- India: Providing a massive digital infrastructure and a highly skilled human resource pool for technological innovation.
- Working Groups: Focused collaboration is ongoing in critical areas such as semiconductors, clean energy, and advanced telecommunications.

(v) Key Challenges and Impediments

- The immediate hurdle is that member nations naturally have differing national priorities and regional perspectives that do not always align.
- Sustaining cooperation requires consistent diplomatic effort and high-level political commitment that must survive changes in Government within the member states.
- Effective management of joint action plans and establishing technical standards across four diverse nations remains a complex task.

(vi) Future Strategic Vision

- As the U.S. seeks to reduce its global burden under a policy of "strategic realism," the Quad must step up to maintain the power balance.
- To ensure long-term stability and peace, the Quad needs to deepen its relationships with other Indo-Pacific nations, creating a broader coalition to manage the rising competition between major powers.