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September 4, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. Fly91 Signs \$1 Billion Deal for 40 New Aircraft

- i. India's regional airline Fly91 has entered into an agreement to purchase 40 new ATR 72-600 aircraft worth \$1 billion (approximately ₹9,456 crore). This is the largest single purchase agreement ever placed by a regional airline with ATR globally.
- ii. Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Ram Mohan Naidu, ATR CEO Nathalie Tarnaud-Laud, Fly91 Chairman Harsha Raghavan, and CEO Manoj Chacko, among others, attended the signing ceremony held in Delhi.
- iii. Headquartered in Goa and operating for more than two years, Fly91 currently operates six ATR 72-600 aircraft and provides more than 280 flights per week.
- iv. It was recently reported that former Indian Air Force Group Captain Abhinandan Varthaman, who was awarded the Vir Chakra after shooting down a Pakistani fighter aircraft, joined Fly91 as a pilot following his retirement.

2. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh released a comprehensive strategic roadmap for India's defence diplomacy for the next 10 years.

- i. The strategic roadmap, titled "Raksha," contains plans for various strategic initiatives, including India's defence cooperation objectives with countries around the world over the next decade. According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Defence:
 - The Defence Minister released the strategic roadmap at an event held in New Delhi.
 - Defence diplomacy is an important pillar of India's foreign policy. Against the backdrop of a changing global environment, the roadmap provides a long-term vision to ensure that India continues to play a central role in promoting peace,

stability and a rules-based international order.

- The roadmap seeks to bring about a significant transformation in India's diplomatic engagement, align national security objectives with global cooperation, and promote long-term stability and mutual growth.
- It includes plans relating to defence cooperation objectives with countries around the world, strategic partnerships, capacity building, domestic production and exports, maritime security, and other strategic initiatives.
- Under strategic partnerships, the roadmap sets objectives for strengthening bilateral and multilateral defence cooperation with countries across the world.
- Under capacity building, the objectives include expanding joint military exercises, defence training programmes, and sharing best defence practices with friendly countries.
- The domestic production and exports initiative aims to establish India as a reliable global defence manufacturing hub and promote the export of defence equipment manufactured entirely within the country.
- In the area of maritime security, the objective is to strengthen India's position as a leading country in providing maritime security and emergency assistance in the Indian Ocean Region.

3. Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever, who arrived in India on a three-day official visit, held extensive bilateral discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi. The two countries agreed to expand cooperation in areas including trade, defence, critical minerals, clean energy and technology.

- i. The recently concluded India-European Union Free Trade Agreement is an important milestone. Prime Minister De Wever said that India and Belgium are building a broader and stronger strategic relationship than ever before.
- India and Belgium have historical ties spanning more than three centuries.

- Belgium was among the first European countries to establish diplomatic relations with independent India in 1947.
- ii. Decision to double bilateral trade:
- Bilateral trade reached \$13 billion (₹1.22 lakh crore) in 2025–26. The two countries decided during the talks to double this figure over the next five years.
 - Between 2000 and 2025, foreign direct investment received by India from Belgium amounted to approximately \$4.2 billion.
4. World Bank Managing Director Neelakant Mishra said that the criticism regarding India's economic growth is incorrect.
- i. Earlier, data released by the Union Government stated that India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 7.8% in the April–June quarter of the 2026–27 financial year. Real GDP at constant prices was estimated at ₹81.36 lakh crore, compared with ₹75.46 lakh crore during the corresponding period of the previous financial year, registering a growth of 7.8%.
- ii. The economy has grown faster than expected as fiscal constraints imposed by the Central Government and monetary constraints imposed by the Reserve Bank have eased. With neutral fiscal and monetary policies, the economy is expected to register 7.5% growth.
- iii. The Central Government changed the base year for GDP calculation from 2011–12 to 2022–23 in February. This has streamlined the calculation methodology and increased its reliability.
5. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister S. Joseph Vijay announced in the Legislative Assembly that a world-class Motor Sports City would be established in Tamil Nadu.
- i. He also announced that Formula 1 to Formula 4 races would be conducted there. The announcement, made under Rule 110 of the Assembly, included the following:

- Tamil Nadu is a leading state in the manufacturing of two-wheelers and four-wheelers. Several automobile manufacturers consider Tamil Nadu their preferred destination for establishing new vehicle manufacturing plants.
- Tamil Nadu is also a leading state in India in the manufacturing of motor-sports vehicles. Motor-sports manufacturing units operate in Coimbatore. The Madras International Circuit at Irungattukottai near Chennai and the Kari Motor Speedway in Coimbatore are important infrastructure facilities for motor racing.
- National-level F3 and F4 car racing competitions are conducted at these racing venues. Tamil Nadu has now emerged as a leading state in motor racing and possesses a strong automobile manufacturing ecosystem.
- Tamil Nadu has the necessary ecosystem to establish car manufacturing plants and ancillary industries required for world-class international motor-racing competitions. Establishing world-class motor-racing circuits could promote tourism, specialised vehicle manufacturing, employment and economic development.
- A new Motor Sports City will be established in Tamil Nadu to promote sports tourism, encourage the growing interest in motor sports among Tamil Nadu's youth, provide them with necessary training, and develop Tamil Nadu into a major international hub for motor sports.
- The city will have an international-standard motor-racing track, modern infrastructure and training facilities, enabling it to host international-standard competitions such as Formula 1, Formula 2, Formula 3 and Formula 4.
- The Motor Sports City will identify motor-sports talent among young people, provide training and competitive opportunities, develop national and international-level athletes, and promote sports tourism.

6. Chief Minister S. Joseph Vijay announced in the Legislative Assembly that a world-class Tamil Nadu Olympic City would be established in Chennai.

The announcement was made under Rule 110 of the Assembly.

- i. To enable athletes from Tamil Nadu to win a larger number of medals at the Olympic Games and other international sporting events, a world-class Tamil Nadu Olympic City will be established in Chennai under the Tamil Nadu Sports Development Authority.
- ii. The Olympic City will be developed as an integrated Olympic-standard sports complex. It will include:
 - World-class sporting arenas
 - State-of-the-art sporting equipment
 - A high-performance training centre
 - Sports science and sports medicine centres
 - Accommodation facilities for athletes and coaches
 - Other modern infrastructure facilities
- iii. The complex will function as an integrated sports centre capable of hosting national and international sporting competitions and developing talented athletes capable of winning Olympic medals.

7. Historical and Cultural Significance of the Tamil Coastline

- Sangam literature holds a profound connection to the sea, classifying Tamil land into five distinct landscapes (Ainthinai) and identifying the sea and its surrounding coastal life as "Neithal".
- Throughout Tamil history, the sea has served not merely as a body of water, but as a gateway for life, a robust trade route, and a cradle for the expansion of civilization.
- Due to climate change, this vital geographic asset is transforming into a severe security concern, slowly altering the landscape through millimeter-scale erosion, intense storm surges, and saltwater intrusion over years.

(i) Drivers and Scale of Global Sea Level Rise

- the rapid melting of massive glaciers and ice sheets in regions like Greenland and Antarctica, and the physical thermal expansion of warming seawater.
- According to assessments by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the global average sea level has risen by approximately 20 cm between 1901 and the present day.
- Under scenarios of continued high greenhouse gas emissions, the global scientific community warns that sea levels will rise significantly higher by the end of this century.
- While a few centimeters of sea-level rise may seem minor, its danger multiplies exponentially when combined with storms, high waves, and shoreline erosion, dramatically magnifying the destructive impact on coastal zones.

(ii) Severe Local Impact on Tamil Nadu's Coastline

- Tamil Nadu features a vast coastline of about 1,000 km extending from Chennai to Kanyakumari, closely intertwining the lives of lakhs of residents through fishing, ports, salt production, tourism, and coastal farming.
- A study by the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) spanning from 1990 to 2018 revealed that 42.7% of Tamil Nadu's 991 km analyzed coastline has suffered from sea erosion to varying degrees.
- Districts such as Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam, Pudukkottai, Cuddalore, and Thanjavur have witnessed significant and concerning coastal retreats.
- The receding shoreline does not merely wash away sand, but actively consumes houses, infrastructure, coastal roads, agricultural fields, and the vital livelihood foundations of local fishing communities.

(iii) The Threat of Saltwater Intrusion and Ecological Vulnerabilities

- The over-extraction of groundwater in coastal regions disrupts the natural equilibrium between freshwater aquifers and the ocean.
- Rising sea levels intensify this hydrological pressure, driving seawater deep inland into drinking wells and agricultural irrigation systems.

- When once-productive freshwater wells turn saline, it ceases to be an isolated household issue and escalates into a catastrophic livelihood crisis for entire rural communities.
- In metropolitan centers like Chennai, sea-level rise compounds urban flooding. When heavy monsoon rains, high sea waves, and blocked drainages occur simultaneously, storm runoff cannot escape, flooding the inner parts of the city.
- The shrinkage of coastal wetlands and natural channels blocks rainwater from draining into the sea, underscoring that preserving wetlands is not just an environmental action but a vital security investment for cities.

(iv) Nature-Based Mitigation Strategies

- Constructing long concrete seawalls along every stretch of the coast is not a viable solution; instead, the state must develop science-backed strategies to live in harmony with the sea's dynamics.
- A generic, uniform coastal protection plan is highly ineffective; danger and hazard maps must be meticulously updated and drafted at localized village and coastal segment levels, rather than just broad district-wide plans.
- The state must actively revive and protect natural ecological shields, including the mangrove forests of Pichavaram and Muthupet, coastal wetlands, coral reefs in the Gulf of Mannar, sand dunes, and specialized coastal grasses.

(v) Scientific Tools and Policy Interventions

- Shoreline changes must be continuously monitored using space satellites, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and remote sensing technologies to create highly updated Coastal Zone Hazard Maps.
- Permits for construction, development of natural barriers, and high-risk zone classifications must be strictly regulated using scientific data.
- Fishermen's generations of traditional sea experience and observation must be systematically incorporated into modern coastal protection frameworks.
- Financial expenditure on coastal protection should not be treated as a mere

administrative expense, but recognized as a vital protective investment to prevent catastrophic losses from future natural disasters.

- As humans cannot conquer the sea, they must utilize science to understand its patterns, preserve its natural buffer systems, and adapt human habitats to its shifting parameters.

8. Chief Minister S. Joseph Vijay announced that a new Secretariat would be constructed in Chennai at a cost of ₹1,200 crore.

- i. He also stated that the heritage buildings of Fort St. George, where the Secretariat currently functions, would be preserved as historical heritage monuments.
- ii. His announcement made under Rule 110 in the Legislative Assembly that Fort St. George was built on land purchased by the East India Company in Chennai in 1640 for establishing a centre for its commercial activities, and its construction was completed in 1644. After being elevated to the status of a Presidency in 1652, it served as the official headquarters of the British administration.