

September 22, 2025 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. The Tamil Nadu Science Forum (TNSF) has requested the Tamil Nadu Government to intervene and prevent the illegal drilling of methane gas (shale gas) exploratory wells in the Protected Agricultural Zone of the Delta.
 - i. V. Sethu Raman, Convenor of the forum's Environment sub-committee, in Thanjavur, told reporters: It has been 5 years since the Cauvery Delta region, the rice-growing region of Tamil Nadu, was declared a Protected Agricultural Zone in 2020. In this regard, the recently released annual report for 2024-2025 of the Central Energy Directorate confirms that the Central Government is taking steps to continue implementing Hydrocarbon projects.
 - ii. While the report of the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons has mentioned that methane gas exploration wells have been installed at 3 locations in the Cauvery Delta for the past 3 years without naming them, the report released this year confirmed that ONGC has installed methane gas exploration wells in Periyakudi, Thiruvarur, and Annavaasanallur.
 - iii. This has exposed ONGC's alleged covert drilling of methane gas exploration wells that could only be accomplished through hydraulic fracturing, contrary to its previous announcement. This is completely against the Protected Agricultural Zone Act brought by the Tamil Nadu Government.
 - iv. Chief Minister M.K. Stalin should immediately constitute a high-level expert committee to investigate ONGC's current activities and the digging of three methane gas exploration wells in violation of regulations, and take appropriate action based on its findings.
 - v. He demanded that action be taken to completely cancel the Central Government's Mannarkudi methane project – which is trying to operate in the Agriculture Protected Zone – and the three oil and gas projects brought to areas including Neduvasal in Pudukkottai district.
2. Britain, Canada, and Australia have formally recognized Palestine as a separate state. At the same time, these countries have also made it clear that that Hamas should have no role in Palestine.
 - i. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu criticized Britain, Canada, and Australia's recognition of Palestine as a separate state as a gift to Hamas.
3. The President Trump has raised H-1B visa fees to encourage companies operating in the United States to give preference to local workers in employment and discourage them from hiring foreigners.
 - i. Those who already hold or renew an H-1B visa do not need to pay this new fee. He said that new H-1B visa applicants will have to pay Rs. 88 lakh only once. They will not have to pay it every year.
 - ii. Trump signed an order to raise the H-1B visa fee from Rs. 149,000 to Rs.8.8 million, aiming to ensure jobs in the U.S. go only to qualified workers and that American companies hire Americans. This new fee came into effect on Sunday

(Sept. 21).

4. The Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has said that the Shipyards to be set up in Thoothukudi will serve as the foundation for the development of South Tamil Nadu.
 - i. The Industries Minister T.R.P. Raja said that two world-class shipyards will be built in Thoothukudi with an investment of Rs. 30 thousand crores.
 - ii. He also said that the SIPCOT administration and the V.O. Chidambaranar Port Trust signed a Memorandum of Understanding for this a few weeks ago.
 - iii. The Minister T.R.P. Raja said that this MoU will pave the way for Tamil Nadu to emerge as a global hub for shipbuilding and maritime innovation.
5. The GST was introduced from July 1, 2017, by integrating 17 taxes and 13 sub-taxes in the country, apart from a few state taxes. Under it, tax was levied at four rates: 5%, 12%, 18%, and 28%.
 - i. Marking eight years since GST was introduced, the Prime Minister Modi said in his recent Independence Day speech that a next-generation reform (GST 2.0) – aimed at simplifying the system further and reducing GST on everyday items – will be carried out before the Diwali festival.
 - ii. The GST Council had on September 3 approved a two-tier tax structure of 5% and 18%, removing 12% and 28% from the four-tier GST regime, and levying 40% tax only on tobacco, gutkha, pan masala and other harmful and luxury items.
 - iii. It was decided to implement the two-rate GST system from September 22, coinciding with the start of Navratri.
 - iv. According to this important reform, 99 percent of goods taxed at 12% were brought under the 5% tax rate; 90 percent of goods taxed at 28% came under the 18% rate.
 - v. Most daily necessities were either exempted from duty or brought under a 5% duty. Taxes on most medicines, raw materials, and testing equipment were reduced to 5%, and taxes on cars were reduced from 28% to 18%.
6. The Taliban Government has once again rejected Afghan President Donald Trump's request to return Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan's largest air base, to US control.
 - i. The airbase fell to the Taliban when US forces completely withdrew from Afghanistan about 4 years ago. Now, President Trump has insisted that it be handed over to them.
7. Saudi Arabia tops the list of countries providing low-interest loans to Pakistan. The country is providing loans to Pakistan at a very low interest rate of 4 percent per annum.
 - i. Pakistan, which is in a severe economic crisis, continues to receive loans in various installments from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, China, and Arab countries.
 - ii. Pakistan's economy has been hit hard by a lack of progress in agricultural production, poor industrial growth, continued corruption in Government administration, terrorist attacks, and the struggle of homegrown insurgents. Foreign investment in Pakistan has also declined. Political instability and economic downturn are another major reason.

- iii. According to the Economic Survey conducted in the country in 2024-25, Pakistan's debt is 76,000 billion in local rupees (about Rs. 23 lakh crore in Indian currency), of which one-third is foreign debt.
 - iv. Saudi Arabia, China, and the United Arab Emirates are the three largest lenders to Pakistan. These three countries have collectively provided loans of \$12 billion (over Rs. 1 lakh crore) in about 3 years. This is slightly less than Pakistan's total foreign exchange reserves (\$14.3 billion). While Pakistan pays over 6 percent interest on loans received from other countries, Saudi Arabia charges only 4 percent interest.
8. The Drone warfare exercises have been made mandatory in the Border Security Force (BSF) training program. This effort follows Operation Sindoor, which was carried out in May after the Pahalgam terror attack in Pakistan.
- i. A drone technology lab for students has been launched at Rustomji College of Technology (RJIT), a BSF training centre in Dekhanpur, Gwalior district, Madhya Pradesh. RJIT is the only college run by a paramilitary force under the Union Home Ministry. The BSF has also set up a Police Technology Innovation Centre with the help of officers and experts.
 - ii. In this regard, Shamsher Singh, Director of the Training Center, said: The BSF has now included drone technology as a mandatory subject in its training. A drone school has also been recently opened to help the BSF become self-reliant using technology made in India. New rules and procedures are being developed to improve this.
 - iii. The BSF guards India's 6,000 km border with Pakistan and Bangladesh.
9. Personalities in news :-
- i. Mark Carney- Prime Minister of Canada
 - ii. Keir Starmer - Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
 - iii. Anthony Albanese- Prime Minister of Australia
 - iv. Pramod Bhagat - Indian badminton player