



P.L.RAJ IAS & IPS ACADEMY

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

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1. The Government of India has extended the tenure of senior IAS officer T.V. Somanathan, the current Cabinet Secretary, by one more year.

- i. According to an order issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved a one-year extension in the service of T.V. Somanathan, a 1987-batch IAS officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre, beyond August 30, 2026.
- ii. The normal retirement age for IAS officers is 60 years. However, under the All India Services (Death-cum-Retirement Benefits) Rules, 1958, the Central Government has the authority to grant service extensions to officers holding the country's highest administrative posts, such as the Cabinet Secretary, Home Secretary, and Defence Secretary, even after retirement.
- iii. T.V. Somanathan assumed office as India's 33rd Cabinet Secretary after Rajiv Gauba, who had served in the post for five years, retired on August 30, 2024.
- iv. With this extension, Somanathan will continue as India's senior-most IAS officer until August 30, 2027.

2. Taiwan Begins Annual 'Han Kuang' Military Exercise

Taiwan has launched its annual Han Kuang military exercise to strengthen its preparedness against potential threats from China.

- i. The 10-day exercise is being conducted across Taiwan to counter China's possible grey-zone tactics (activities short of open warfare) and to ensure uninterrupted 24-hour defence readiness.
- ii. In major cities, including the capital Taipei, internet speeds were intentionally reduced for about 30 minutes to test the resilience of wartime communication systems. The exercise also evaluates the urban civil defence capabilities of the public.
- iii. Compared to last year, over 5,000 reserve soldiers from two military brigades are participating. The exercise also marks the first deployment of the newly acquired M1A2T

Abrams main battle tanks purchased from the United States.

- iv. China considers the self-governed island of Taiwan as part of its own territory and frequently sends military aircraft and naval vessels near the island to increase pressure.

3. A total of 839 people involved in illegal environmental crimes in the Amazon rainforest, the world's largest tropical rainforest, have been arrested.

- i. Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru jointly carried out "Operation Green Shield 2026" from July 15 to July 31.
- ii. More than 3,600 police personnel participated in the operation, targeting illegal mining, illegal logging, wildlife trafficking, and land encroachment.
- iii. Raids were conducted at 1,045 locations, leading to the seizure of approximately 280,000 cubic metres of illegally harvested timber and 195 tonnes of minerals and equipment.
- iv. Authorities also rescued more than 3,000 live wild animals, including snakes and birds, that had been captured for trafficking. Additionally, the carcasses of 430 dead animals were recovered. The total international value of the seized materials is estimated at US\$280 million.

4. Air India Appoints New CEO

Tewolde Gebremariam has been appointed as the new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Air India, which operates under the Tata Group.

- i. He will succeed Campbell Wilson, who announced his resignation in April.

5. Indian Grandmaster R. Praggnanandhaa finished in first place in the Rapid section of the St. Louis Rapid and Blitz Chess Tournament being held in the United States.

6. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to keep the repo rate unchanged at 5.25%, maintaining the interest rate at which it lends short-term funds to commercial banks.

- i. The decision was taken unanimously by the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) chaired by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra during its meeting in Mumbai.

7. Massachusetts Declares August 15 as 'India Day'

The U.S. state of Massachusetts has announced that August 15, India's Independence Day, will be officially observed as "India Day."

- i. Governor Maura Healey stated that the recognition honours the significant contributions made by the Indian-American community to the development of the United States.
- ii. According to the official state proclamation, Indian-Americans are among the most well-integrated communities in the country and have made valuable contributions over many years. In recognition of these achievements, August 15 has been declared India Day. Similarly, the Mayor of Boston has also proclaimed August 15 as India Day.

8. Reports indicate that Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju met Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi to discuss reintroducing the 131st Constitutional Amendment Bill, which seeks to increase the number of Lok Sabha constituencies and implement 33% reservation for women.

- i. The Bill, first introduced in Parliament in April, proposes increasing the total number of Lok Sabha constituencies to as many as 850 in order to provide 33% reservation for women. It also proposes increasing the number of seats in State Legislative Assemblies and Union Territory legislatures to implement similar reservation.
- ii. However, the Bill could not secure the required two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha for passage. The Central Government is now attempting to reintroduce it with certain amendments. One proposed addition is a provision to increase the number of Lok Sabha constituencies in all states by up to 50%.

9. Resurgence of HIV/AIDS concerns in India, particularly among the youth.

- i. Recent news from Karnataka, where 7,000 college students and youth (aged 18–25) were confirmed to be infected with HIV.
- ii. Historical Timeline in India:
 - The first HIV case in India was detected in 1982.
 - In 1986, Dr. Suniti Solomon identified the infection among sex workers in Chennai.
 - By 1987, the number of infected individuals grew to 135, with 14 having progressed to

AIDS.

iii. Institutional Milestones:

- The National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) was established in 1993 to spearhead prevention efforts.
- In the same year (1993), India's first voluntary counseling center was started by Dr. Suniti Solomon at Chennai Medical College.

iv. Global and National Rankings:

- Globally, more than 3 crore people are living with HIV.
- India ranks 3rd in the world for the total number of HIV-infected individuals, following South Africa and Nigeria.
- However, in terms of prevalence rate, India is ranked 89th globally.

v. Statistical Trends in India:

- In 2005, there were 55 lakh infected individuals in India. This number dropped to 25 lakh by 2007.
- As of 2015, approximately 21.17 lakh Indians were living with HIV.
- The infection rate decreased from 0.41% in 2005 to 0.26% in 2015.

vi. Tamil Nadu Statistics:

In 2018, there were 12,778 identified AIDS cases in Tamil Nadu, with the highest concentration recorded in Chennai.

- Youth and college students are increasingly at risk due to factors like casual relationships with strangers, unprotected behavior, late-night entertainment clubs, alcohol, drug use (via needles), and peer pressure.
- Widespread awareness campaigns through media (newspapers, radio, TV), schools, and NGOs have historically helped the public understand how the virus spreads and how to prevent it, leading to a decline in cases.
- Integration of science-based sexual health education, mental health counseling, and life values into the educational curriculum to empower students to make responsible decisions.
- India has received significant financial and technical aid for HIV eradication from global organizations, including the World Bank, the Gates Foundation, the UN, and

USAID.

- While laws cannot mandate peace or health, awareness must bloom from within. Ultimately, the total eradication of the disease depends on the vigilance and behavior of the people.

10. Potential for energy self-reliance in Tamil Nadu through biogas.

- i. International political conflicts frequently disrupt crude oil and gas production, causing price hikes that destabilize the economies of many nations.
- ii. Rural and suburban Tamil Nadu, rich in agriculture and livestock, can achieve self-sufficiency by producing "cow dung gas" (biogas) instead of relying solely on imported LPG.
- iii. A small space behind a house is sufficient to install a biogas plant. Once installed, it can provide gas for 15 to 20 years, significantly saving on LPG cylinder costs.
- iv. The waste remaining after gas extraction is a nitrogen-rich, high-quality organic fertilizer beneficial for crops.
- v. LPG has a higher calorific value (10,000–11,000 kcal/m³) compared to biogas (4,500–5,500 kcal/m³). To replace one monthly LPG cylinder, a household typically needs the daily dung of 3 to 4 cows.
- vi. To overcome maintenance challenges for individual households, a cooperative model can be proposed. Cow dung would be collected centrally in a village, processed at a main plant, and the gas distributed to homes via pipes.
- vii. Waste-to-Energy Potential:
 - Different wastes have varying gas production capacities: 1 cow's dung is equivalent to waste from 20 goats or 100 chickens.
 - Based on 2019 data, Tamil Nadu has 1 crore cows, 1.5 crore goats, and 12 crore poultry.
 - If all this livestock waste were utilized, it could provide cooking gas for approximately 35 lakh homes year-round.
- viii. The Chief Minister Joseph Vijay recently visited a biomethane plant in Chennai that uses vegetable waste. It suggests integrating livestock dung with kitchen and market waste for a comprehensive state-wide energy plan.
 - If the Government intends to provide 6 free LPG cylinders annually, replacing a portion

of that with locally produced biogas could save the state significant money while boosting livestock farming and organic fertilizer production.

- The Chola-era "Savva Moovva Peradu" scheme. Under King Raja Raja Chola, livestock were donated to the poor on the condition that they provide a specific amount of ghee for temple lamps. This maintained a permanent livestock population and provided continuous income and resources to the underprivileged.
- Managing these biogas plants should be entrusted to the 4.8 lakh Women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Tamil Nadu, which involve over 50 lakh women.
- By integrating these resources and involving the public, the state can reduce its debt burden and ensure sustainable growth.

11. Tamil Nadu Government's long-term economic vision and the specific allocations made in the revised 2026–2027 budget.

- The primary objective is to elevate Tamil Nadu's economy to \$1.5 trillion by the year 2036.
- The state aims to become poverty-free and highly prosperous through the implementation of "Vetri Tamil Nadu" long-term programs.
- The state currently carries a debt of ₹10,98,768 crore. It is estimated that it will take two years to bring the state back onto a path of financial integration.
- Revenue Generation Plans:
 - i. Rules have been relaxed to allow youth and small business owners to participate in Government tenders for the first time.
 - ii. A special fee on liquor manufacturers and increased honesty in project approvals are expected to generate ₹1,000 crore annually.
 - iii. Computerizing GST monitoring, stamp duty registration, and mining oversight is projected to bring in ₹15,000 crore.
 - iv. A committee led by former Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia has been formed to increase non-tax revenue.
- Key Social Welfare Schemes:
 - i. Annan Seer: A marriage assistance scheme providing an 8-gram gold coin and a silk saree to women, with an allocation of ₹812 crore.
 - ii. Thai Mama Gold Ring: Infants born in Government hospitals will receive a 1-gram

gold ring, supported by a ₹560 crore fund.

- iii. Singapennugal: A scheme to transform Women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs) into micro-enterprises, providing a ₹5 lakh startup subsidy.
- iv. Thai Care: Provides free food and medical help centers for pregnant women (₹23 crore).

- Education and Youth Empowerment:

- i. Vetri Madi Kannini: An allocation of ₹2,000 crore to provide laptops to college students.
- ii. Skill Training: ₹150 crore is set aside to provide job-oriented skill training to 12 lakh college students and 1 lakh unemployed youth.
- iii. Student Housing: ₹3,200 crore will be used to build 200 integrated hostels for college students under the "Tamil Nadu Sudar" scheme.
- iv. Kamarajar Special Schools: Residential schools will be established for socio-economically backward students, with an initial allocation of ₹125 crore.

- Infrastructure and Industry:

- i. Green Energy: ₹300 crore is allocated for a project to produce green hydrogen over the next five years.
- ii. Transportation: Chennai will receive 1,000 new electric AC buses, with ₹500 crore allocated for charging and mechanical facilities.
- iii. Urban Development: ₹2,117 crore is earmarked for the Chief Minister's Integrated Urban Development Scheme to create world-class cities by 2031.

- Budgetary Statistics:

- i. The total state revenue is projected at ₹3.50 lakh crore, with 72.73% coming from the state's own tax revenue.
- ii. Total expenditure is estimated at ₹4,72,585 crore, resulting in a fiscal deficit of ₹1,21,819 crore.
- iii. The state expects ₹32,922 crore in pending grant arrears from the Union Government.