

May 23, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1.The Reserve Bank of India announced that it will transfer a record surplus income of ₹2.87 lakh crore to the Central Government.

(i) This is 6.7 percent higher than the ₹2.69 lakh crore transferred by the RBI to the Central Government during the 2024–25 financial year.

(ii) At a time when crude oil supply disruptions caused by the West Asian situation have increased import costs, the RBI's surplus transfer is expected to strengthen the financial position of the Central Government.

(iii) In a press release issued by the RBI, it stated: "Before contingency provisions and statutory allocations, the RBI's net income rose from ₹3.13 lakh crore in FY 2025 to ₹3.96 lakh crore in FY 2026. As a result, the RBI's balance sheet expanded by 20.61 percent and reached ₹91.97 lakh crore as of March 31."

(iv) In this context, based on an assessment of global and domestic economic conditions and future risks at the recent meeting of the RBI's Central Board of Directors, it was decided to transfer ₹1.09 lakh crore to the Contingency Risk Buffer for FY 2025–26. Compared to ₹44,861 crore transferred last year, the current allocation is more than double.

(v) The meeting also decided to transfer ₹2.87 lakh crore to the Central Government as surplus income for FY 2025–26, the statement added.

2.The short-range Agni-I ballistic missile, capable of accurately striking targets, was successfully test-fired.

(i) Developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), the missile has a strike range of 700 km to 1,200 km. It can carry up to 2,500 kg of conventional explosives or nuclear warheads.

(ii) The Agni-I missile, which has been in service since 1979, was tested at the Chandipur test range in Odisha. During the test, the missile's operational and technical parameters were evaluated. Officials said the missile accurately struck and destroyed the designated target.

(iii) It is noteworthy that India possesses Agni-1 to Agni-4 missiles capable of striking targets at ranges between 700 km and 3,500 km.

3.The Union Health Ministry has instructed all states and Union Territories to intensify surveillance and ensure medical preparedness to prevent the spread of the Ebola virus disease in India.

(i) It has also directed authorities to medically screen travelers arriving from affected countries.

(ii) These instructions were issued after the World Health Organization declared the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

(iii) More than 100 people have died and over 600 have been infected due to the rapidly spreading Ebola outbreak in Congo and Uganda.

(iv) In a letter written by Union Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava to all state Chief Secretaries and Union Territory administrators, the following points were stated:

- Ebola may have spread not only in Congo and Uganda, but also in neighboring countries such as South Sudan.
- At present, the likelihood of the disease spreading beyond the affected African region to other regions is considered low.

(v) Central Government advisory:

- Following the WHO's declaration of Ebola as a global public health emergency, it is essential to ensure adequate preparedness and preventive measures at all levels of the healthcare system.
- Fever, fatigue, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and inflammation of the skin and eyes are symptoms of Ebola infection.
- Surveillance under the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme should be intensified to identify Ebola symptoms among people who recently traveled to affected regions.
- Isolation facilities, dedicated ambulances, trained personnel, personal protective equipment, and laboratory infrastructure should be kept ready.
- The Indian Council of Medical Research's National Institute of Virology in Pune, Maharashtra, is fully prepared to test suspicious samples and confirm Ebola infections. Additional laboratories may also be involved depending on the situation.
- It is noteworthy that no Ebola case has been confirmed in India so far.

4. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, angry residents set fire to a treatment center after authorities refused to hand over the body of a person who died from Ebola.

(i) Since Ebola can spread rapidly through the bodies of deceased victims, authorities themselves conduct the funeral rites. However, local people have been protesting, saying this practice goes against their customs and traditions, creating challenges for disease-control efforts.

(ii) Meanwhile, the World Health Organization has raised the Ebola risk assessment for Congo to a "very high" level. The risk for neighboring countries remains "high," while the global risk level continues to be assessed as "low."

5. Shehbaz Sharif will leave for a four-day official visit to China on Saturday (May 23).

(i) Beginning his visit in Hangzhou, China, Shehbaz Sharif will chair the Pakistan-China Trade and Investment Conference.

(ii) During the visit, he is also expected to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang to discuss bilateral political, economic, and strategic relations.

(iii) The visit coincides with the completion of 75 years of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, which were established in 1951.

(iv) Pakistan was the first Muslim-majority country to establish diplomatic relations with China. To mark the occasion, the Pakistani Government will also issue a special commemorative 75-rupee coin.

6. Six agreements, including the establishment of a joint working group for counter-terrorism operations, were signed between India and Cyprus.

(i) The agreements were signed after extensive talks held in Delhi between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides. A five-year defense cooperation action plan was also

introduced.

(ii) Cyprus, an island nation in the eastern Mediterranean, is a member of the European Union. President Nikos Christodoulides arrived in India on a three-day state visit.

(iii) Bilateral discussions:

- During the meeting in Delhi, the two leaders held detailed discussions on strengthening bilateral relations. They also discussed expanding cooperation in trade, investment, defense, education, research, space, infrastructure, and shipping, along with regional and international issues of mutual interest.
- Following the talks, six agreements were signed in areas including education, innovation, technology, culture, and the establishment of a joint working group for counter-terrorism cooperation. A five-year defense action plan was also launched. Both sides also decided to finalize an action plan for mobility and transportation at the earliest.

(iv) Strategic partnership:

Later, speaking to reporters, Prime Minister Modi said:

- Investments from Cyprus into India have doubled over the past 10 years. Cyprus is among India's top 10 investment partners. Mutual trust between the two nations has strengthened. The India-European Union free trade agreement has created numerous new opportunities.
- Taking advantage of these opportunities, both countries have set a target to double investments again over the next five years. To achieve this, bilateral relations have been elevated to the status of a strategic partnership. India-Cyprus friendship is strong and future-oriented. It has also been decided to expand cooperation in maritime security and counter-terrorism efforts, he said.

7. Union Home Minister Amit Shah stated that a "Smart Border" project will be implemented next year along the 6,000-km border with Pakistan and Bangladesh to make infiltration impossible.

(i) Amit Shah made these remarks while addressing the K.F. Rustamji Memorial Lecture organized in Delhi by the Border Security Force (BSF). He further said:

- As the BSF prepares to celebrate its 60th anniversary next year, the "Smart Border" project will be implemented along the 6,000-km border adjoining Pakistan and Bangladesh. Within the next year, these borders will be transformed into virtually impenetrable frontiers.
- The project will make use of modern technology, drones, advanced surveillance radars, and modern cameras.
- BSF personnel must foil attempts to artificially alter India's population through illegal infiltration, he added.

8. Significant milestone in India's nuclear energy sector.

On April 6, 2026, the 500 MW Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) at the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR) in Kalpakkam successfully reached its first stage of criticality.

(i) A Global Scientific Milestone

- World Leader: With this achievement, India has become only the second country in the world, after

Russia, to operate a commercial-scale prototype fast breeder reactor.

- The "Breeder" Advantage: Unlike conventional nuclear reactors, a fast breeder reactor (FBR) produces more fuel than it consumes.
- Three-Stage Program: This success marks India's transition to the second stage of its three-stage nuclear power program, which involves using plutonium. The third stage will involve utilizing thorium and uranium-233.

(ii) Indigenous Achievement

- Self-Reliance: The PFBR was entirely designed, developed, and funded indigenously through the collaborative efforts of IGCAR and BHAVINI (Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Limited).
- Overcoming Global Failures: While major powers like the U.S., France, and Japan failed to master this technology due to technical glitches and sodium leaks, Indian scientists successfully overcame these challenges.
- International Praise: The Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, lauded India's progress as a vital path toward future fuel stability.

(iii) Strategic Use of Thorium

- Vast Reserves: India possesses limited uranium but has vast thorium deposits along its coastlines (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Odisha, etc.) and riverbeds.
- Long-term Energy Security: The PFBR is essential for converting thorium into Uranium-233. India's thorium reserves are capable of producing 500 GW of electricity annually for the next 400 years, which is double the current peak demand.

(iv) National Impact and Future Goals

- Powering Millions: This single reactor at Kalpakkam has the capacity to provide electricity to approximately 30 lakh (3 million) homes.
- Clean Energy Targets: The project is crucial for India's goal to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2070 and to scale nuclear production to 100 GW by 2047.
- Economic Independence: By utilizing domestic thorium, India can significantly reduce its reliance on expensive uranium imports and protect itself from global fuel price fluctuations caused by international conflicts.

(v) Safety and Geopolitical Concerns

- Vulnerability to Attacks: While reactors have built-in safety features, they are not designed to withstand deliberate missile strikes, citing recent attacks on nuclear plants in Ukraine and Iran as major concerns.
- Policy and Regulation: India urges the IAEA to strictly enforce non-proliferation treaties to ensure that nations do not cross the line into developing military nuclear technology.
- Private Participation: The SHANTI Act of 2025 prioritizes involving private and foreign entities in establishing and operating nuclear sectors, though its long-term impact remains to be seen.

9. Legal journey and current status of passive euthanasia in India.

(i) The Landmark Verdict and First Implementation

- **Historic Ruling:** On March 11, the Supreme Court of India delivered a historic judgment allowing passive euthanasia, which has drawn significant national attention.
- **First Case:** Following this verdict, Harish Rana, a 31-year-old former engineering student, became the first person in India to undergo a legal "passive mercy death." He had been in a vegetative state for 13 years after falling from a hostel roof.
- **Judicial Intervention:** His parents initially approached the Delhi High Court due to mounting medical costs, but their petition was dismissed. The Supreme Court eventually granted the order upon appeal.

(ii) Constitutional Basis and Definitions

- **Right to Dignity:** The court ruled that Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees the right to live with dignity, also encompasses the right to die with dignity.
- **Passive Euthanasia Defined:** India specifically allows "passive" euthanasia (செயலற்ற வதையில்லா மரணம்). This involves the withdrawal of life-sustaining measures—such as food, medicine, or artificial support—to allow a natural death for patients who have no hope of recovery.

(iii) Global Legal Context

- **Pioneering Nations:** The Netherlands and Belgium were the first to legalize mercy killing. They were followed by Luxembourg, Spain, and Portugal.
- **Diverse Approaches:** Switzerland allows assisted suicide for the terminally ill, while Canada and several U.S. states (including Washington, Oregon, and Montana) allow physician-assisted mercy deaths.

(iv) Evolution of Mercy Killing Laws in India

- **Initial Legal Shifts (1994–1996):** In 1994, the Supreme Court initially suggested that Article 21 included the right not to live, effectively challenging the law against suicide. However, in 1996, it reversed this stance, ruling that inducing death remains a criminal offense.
- **Law Commission Recommendations:** In 2006, the Law Commission's 196th report recommended legal changes to Section 309 of the IPC to accommodate those suffering from long-term, incurable illnesses.
- **The Aruna Shanbaug Case (2011):** This landmark case involving a nurse in a coma for 42 years led the Supreme Court to establish strict guidelines for passive euthanasia, even though the specific petition for her death was dismissed.

(v) Procedural Guidelines and Shift in Perspective

- **High Court Oversight:** Under current guidelines, petitions for passive euthanasia must be filed in the High Court and heard by a bench led by the Chief Justice and another judge.
- **Medical Evaluation:** A team of three expert doctors must be appointed to evaluate the patient and provide recommendations before the court issues an order.
- **From "Mercy Killing" to "Mercy Death":** A 2018 PIL by the NGO Common Cause shifted the legal and social perspective. Instead of being viewed as a "killing," it is now seen as a "mercy death" for individuals whose bodies and minds are 100% inactive with no prospect of life.