

September 22, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. With the spread of dengue fever increasing in Tamil Nadu, Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay directed officials to take comprehensive measures to prevent its spread.

(i) So far, 17,277 people in Tamil Nadu have been affected by dengue fever. Dengue prevalence is reportedly high in districts including Chennai, Chengalpattu, Coimbatore, Tiruvannamalai, Krishnagiri, Salem, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Thanjavur and Villupuram.

(ii) The Department of Health and Family Welfare stated that 4,648 people have so far been affected by scrub typhus, a disease transmitted by mites.

(iii) The ELISA IgM test is used to diagnose dengue fever.

2. The India–New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) will come into effect on October 20, Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said.

(i) Signed on April 27, the agreement provides tariff concessions for Indian goods exported to New Zealand. Speaking to reporters on Monday, Piyush Goyal said:

- Under the India–New Zealand FTA, New Zealand is expected to make investments of up to ₹1.91 lakh crore (\$20 billion) in India over the next 15 years.
- This historic agreement will come into effect on October 20. Through the agreement, New Zealand will provide technological assistance aimed at improving India's agricultural productivity.
- The present objective is to implement the agreement in a manner that provides greater benefits to the people and businesses of both countries.
- Dairy products, onions, chickpeas, peas, almonds, artificial honey and sugar have been excluded from the scope of the agreement. Amid instability in the international geopolitical environment, the India–New Zealand agreement will enhance the confidence of businesses in both countries.

(ii) Talks with Canada on October 5:

- The fifth round of negotiations on the India–Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) will be held on October 5. The next 90 days will be highly significant for bilateral relations between the two countries.

(iii) The trade agreement between India and the European Union is expected to come into effect in the next few months.

(iv) Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal recently held talks during his visit to Chile regarding the India–Chile trade agreement. He said he hoped that there would be good news soon.

(v) On September 18, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an order imposing a 100 per cent tariff on countries, including India and China, that purchase oil and gas from Russia.

3. Scientists have identified a new species of one of the smallest wild cats in the forests of Bolivia.

(i) Affectionately known as the tigrino, the cat belongs to a new species called *Leopardus tilcayo*. It is reportedly the first new living wild-cat species to be described by scientists in more than a century.

(ii) Measuring just 46 cm in length and weighing 1.4 kg, it is smaller than an average domestic cat. This rare cat has been cared for at a wildlife sanctuary since 2017, and visitors are now gathering in large numbers to see it.

4. The high-level general debate of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly begins on Tuesday (September 22) in New York, with more than 100 world leaders expected to participate amid wars and concerns over the threats posed by artificial intelligence (AI).

The 81st session of the UN General Assembly officially began on September 8. Its key event, the high-level general debate, begins on Tuesday, September 22.

(i) The conference is being held amid concerns over intensifying conflicts across the world, uncontrolled AI technology emerging as a threat to humanity, global warming and the impacts of climate change.

(ii) The conference is also taking place against the backdrop of a slowdown in the global economy caused by disruptions to shipping and supply chains, affecting the livelihoods of millions of people.

(iii) The UN has faced criticism that its efforts to maintain international peace and end wars have fallen short, while financial arrears from the United States have contributed to the organisation's financial difficulties. Despite these challenges, the UN continues to serve as a central forum bringing countries around the world together. In this context, around 130 heads of state and ministers are expected to address the general debate beginning on Tuesday.

(iv) Issues to be discussed:

- Alongside geopolitical concerns, AI technology that could potentially go beyond human control has emerged as a major topic of discussion at this year's conference. Although leading AI companies have called for measures to regulate the pace of development of the technology, Trump has rejected such calls.
- At a time when there are no globally accepted rules to regulate this technology, the UN Security Council will hold a consultative meeting on the issue on Wednesday afternoon.
- The conference will also discuss the structure and reform of the UN, which has completed 81 years. Although the 193 member states have agreed on the need to reform the organisation and change the existing situation in which the five countries that emerged victorious in World War II—the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom and France—exercise dominant influence through their veto power in the Security Council, several difficulties remain in implementing these reforms.
- This will be the final conference at which UN Secretary-General António Guterres will meet world leaders in his current term. His term is scheduled to end on December 31, increasing expectations over who will become the next Secretary-General.

5. In the three-day election to the lower house of the Russian Parliament, the ruling United Russia Party, backed by President Vladimir Putin, has retained its single-party majority.

(i) The voting took place amid intense attacks by Ukraine, which launched more than 1,110 drones in a single night, targeting Moscow, the capital, and other areas. According to the initial results released by the

country's Election Commission, United Russia is expected to make a new record by winning 355 of the total 450 seats.

(ii) The election, held to demonstrate public support in the post-war situation, recorded a 59 per cent voter turnout. This was the first parliamentary election held since the full-scale war against Ukraine began. The election has sparked controversy after the Supreme Court barred Yabloko, the only moderate party opposed to the war, from contesting, while many anti-war activists have been imprisoned.

(iii) Voting was also held in the four regions declared by Russia to have been annexed from Ukraine, as well as in Crimea, under the protection of Russian military personnel. Ukraine condemned the voting as illegal. With international election observers denied access, international political analysts have pointed out that the administration of President Putin conducted the election according to its own preferences and ensured that the results were favourable to it.

6. India's current Chief Economic Adviser is Dr. V. Anantha Nageswaran.

7. The Ministry of Defence has signed a ₹586-crore contract to procure Auxiliary Power Units (APUs) for T-72 and T-90 tanks.

(i) The contract was signed with Accurate Industrial Controls in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in New Delhi.

(ii) According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Defence, the Auxiliary Power Units (APUs) generate the electricity required for the fire-control system, gun stabilisation system and other auxiliary systems of the tanks.

(iii) The integration of indigenously manufactured APUs will further strengthen the operational readiness, reliability and sustainability of the Indian Army's mechanised formations.

(iv) Accordingly, a contract worth ₹586 crore was signed with Accurate Industrial Controls. The Ministry stated that this was another milestone towards achieving the ambitious goal of 'Viksit Bharat @2047'.

8. International Cotton Day - October 7

9. Diplomatic Challenge

(i) US Sanctions Legislation on Russian Oil Importers

- The US Congress has passed a sanctions law empowering President Donald Trump to impose an import tariff of up to 100% on goods from countries importing high volumes of crude oil and gas from Russia, explicitly targeting nations like India and China.
- The bill was introduced by South Carolina MP Lindsey Graham (who passed away in July) and previously passed by the Senate. It was subsequently approved by the US House of Representatives and signed into law by President Trump.
- Unlike last year's 50% tariff order, which was an easily revocable executive decision, this Congressional statute legally obligates the President to submit a written justification to Congress before increasing or decreasing tariff rates.
- The law seeks to weaken Russia's economy, which relies heavily on crude oil export revenues to

sustain itself four years into the Russia-Ukraine war.

(ii) Potential Economic Impact on India

- Approximately 20% of India's total exports depend directly on the US market.
- Under the previous 50% tariff, Indian exporters incurred heavy losses by sacrificing profit margins to keep American clients. An enforcement of up to 100% tariffs would devastate India's micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) exporters.
- Combined with existing 50% tariffs and a 10% forced-labor compliance tariff, key Indian exports including iron, steel, and aluminum risk becoming uncompetitive in the US market.

(iii) Global Energy Dependencies and Import Statistics

- Since the Russia-Ukraine war began in 2022, the primary importers of Russian crude oil have been China (50%), India (37%), Turkey (5%), and the European Union (5%).
- The legislation also applies to nations that imported more than 15% of their natural gas from Russia in the preceding year.
- As of July 2026, 51% of India's total crude oil imports are sourced from Russia.
- With crude oil prices already exceeding \$100 per barrel, securing cheaper alternative oil sources outside Russia is currently unfeasible given West Asian conflict conditions.

(iv) Enforcement Hurdles and Strategic Factors

- Restricting Russian crude oil from global supply chains could trigger shortages and drive prices higher, inflicting inflation on US consumers.
- With US mid-term elections approaching in November, President Trump may hesitate to enforce the maximum tariff penalties.
- The US previously warned Ukraine against attacking Russian oil refineries, indicating a reluctance to completely halt Russian oil supplies.
- India faces a delicate diplomatic test, as it cannot afford to lose access to the US market nor subordinate its strategic autonomy.

10. Education and Employment is important

(i) The Education-Employment Gap and Job Market Reality

- For generations, a university degree in Arts, Science, or Commerce was viewed as a gateway to social mobility, higher education, and stable employment; however, rapid economic shifts have raised questions about whether a degree alone guarantees job readiness.
- A report titled 'Rethinking Skill Development for Developed India 2047' published by NITI Aayog highlights a major mismatch between higher education curricula and market requirements.
- Citing data from Economic Survey 2024-25, the report reveals that only 8.25% of graduates are employed in jobs that match their educational qualifications.
- Unemployment among graduates stands at 13 per cent, while it is 20.4 per cent among female graduates. This disparity is a matter of concern, considering that the overall unemployment rate in the country is 3.2 per cent.

(ii) Student Enrollment Statistics in Undergraduate Studies

- The main challenge is not the large population of educated youth, but that many students graduate without a clear roadmap for employment, further studies, or career growth.
- NITI Aayog stated that out of the 3.4 crore students enrolled in undergraduate programmes across the country, 1.13 crore are pursuing arts degree programmes. When the three streams—arts, science, and commerce—are combined, the number of students exceeds 2 crore, according to NITI Aayog.

(iii) Financial Impact of Skill Training on Starting Salaries

- An UG graduate without additional skill training earns an average starting salary of ₹22,000 per month, whereas a skill-trained graduate earns approximately ₹29,000 per month.
- Citing Boston Consulting Group (BCG) data, NITI Aayog projects that with an average annual salary increment of 3.2%, the initial ₹7,000 monthly gap accumulates to a total difference of ~₹9.7 lakh over 10 years.
- This income gap at the start of a career directly impacts a young professional's financial independence, ability to support family responsibilities, personal savings, and capacity to fund higher education.

(iv) Integrating Industry-Oriented Specializations into Degrees

- Rather than maintaining general degree courses purely as broad academic education disconnected from work, degrees should be tailored to match regional economic opportunities and industry demands.
- Stream-Specific Modifications:
 - Arts: Incorporating training for sectors like hospitality and tourism.
 - Science: Integrating courses in applied technology.
 - Commerce: Combining subjects like data analytics and digital business.
- Universities do not need to convert into vocational training centers, but rather strengthen the bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical execution.

(v) Purpose of Higher Education and International Models

- Higher education must balance job readiness with developing critical thinking, creativity, intellectual curiosity, and social awareness.
- NITI Aayog emphasizes expanding apprenticeship-linked degrees and work-integrated degree programs.
- Models from Germany and Switzerland demonstrate how structured collaboration between educational institutions, industries, and Governments makes workplace training an integral component of higher education.

(vi) Key Recommendations by NITI Aayog

- Because many students lack clear information regarding job availability, required skills, salary expectations, and skill upgrades, institutional career counseling must be prioritized.
- Implementing a centralized digital skill registry can help record skill verification, certifications, internships, and workplace experience in one place.
- Foundational career and entrepreneurial skills should be introduced starting from Class 6 to



familiarize students with the working world and help them identify personal interests.

- Early learning modules should cover digital literacy, financial literacy, communication skills, teamwork, and entrepreneurship.
- Practical support systems must be established to ensure women have equitable access to skill training and job opportunities.
- Closing the education-employment disconnect is a vital long-term investment in India's future human resources.

