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Modi hits back at Rahul Gandhi over 'Hindu' remark

(Gns. News). Floral welcome: Prime Minister Narendra Modi being garlanded by party leaders during a rally at the L.B. Stadium in Hyderabad on Monday. |Photo Credit: G. Ramakrishna

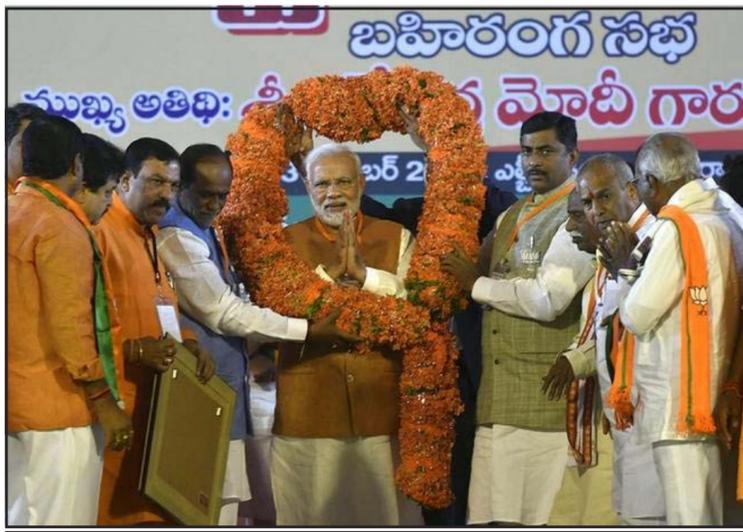
Congress's dream of winning the elections in Rajasthan would be crushed: PM. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday took a swipe at Congress president Rahul Gandhi for questioning his Hindu credentials and asked the Opposition party if it wanted to win the Rajasthan Assembly elections by raising the issue of one's knowledge of religion.

"Even the saints and sages never claimed that they had full knowledge of Hinduism," Mr. Modi said. "It is so vast." Congress president Rahul Gandhi interacts with members of the business community and professionals in Udaipur on December 1, 2018. What kind of Hindu is our Prime Minister, asks Rahul Gandhi. Addressing a rally on the last leg of his Rajasthan campaign, Mr. Modi said it seemed the 'Naamdar' (dynast) had the right to speak with authority on the religion, while he, as a "small

kaamdar" could not claim it. Mr. Modi's retort came two days after Mr. Gandhi asserted that the BJP leader did not understand the foundations of Hinduism.

The Congress's leaders appeared to believe that talking about development was "futile during [the] polls," Mr. Modi said. "The Congress today has become a university for spreading lies... the student who scores the highest in speaking falsehood is awarded with a new position and title," he asserted.

Mr. Modi contended that the Congress's dream of winning the elections in Rajasthan would be crushed, as had happened in other States. The Congress's assumption that it would come to power in the State because of the trend of alternate governments being formed by different parties would be proved wrong this time. Mr. Modi also brought up the issue of former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's alleged opposition to the reconstruction of the Somnath temple in Gujarat, while reiterating his charge that Mr. Nehru had objected to the then President Rajendra Prasad's



visit for the temple's consecration. "This historic temple was destroyed by foreign invaders and renovated by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel," he told the audience. In a veiled reference to Mr. Nehru, Mr. Modi said the leader who wore a rose "knew

about gardens but did not know about farmers or farming". "Because of this, the farmers' community faced hardships," the Prime Minister added. Mr. Modi also lavished praise on Jodhpur's Bishnoi community for its dedication to the cause of

environment protection and recalled the historical incident of 1730 when 363 Bishnoi villagers are said to have laid down their lives in Khejarli for protecting trees. "It is because of them that India has won the 'Champion of Earth' award."

SC refuses to hear fresh plea seeking life ban on lawmakers after conviction in criminal cases

(Gns. News). The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a fresh plea seeking imposition of lifetime ban on lawmakers following their conviction in criminal cases.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi dismissed the petition filed by NGO 'Lok Prahari' through its General Secretary S.N. Shukla, saying that it was already seized of a similar petition on the same issue. "We are already examining the same thing in a petition filed by Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay," said the Bench, also comprising Justices S.K. Kaul and K.M. Joseph.

The apex court dismissed the petition as it was already seized by lawyer and BJP leader Upadhyay on December 4, who in his plea has sought barring of convicted politicians for life. "Why have you filed a separate petition when the court is seized of the same issue in another pending petition. We don't think we need to hear it. Dismissed," the Bench said. The Bench while listing Mr. Upadhyay's plea for hearing on December 4 had said that it could not lose sight of the fact that the PIL was seeking a lifetime ban on politicians convicted in criminal case, besides setting up of special courts to expeditiously try criminal cases involving elected representatives. "We should not lose sight of the fact that the main prayer in the PIL is to im-

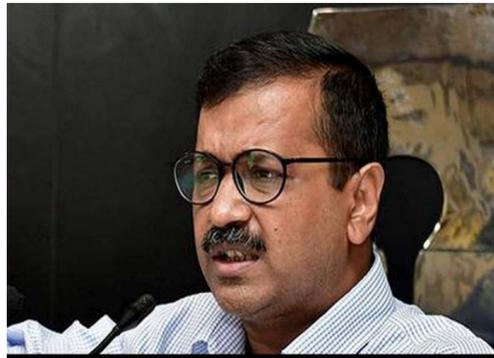


pose the lifetime ban on convicted elected representative," the Bench said, adding that the government servants and judicial officers cannot come back after their convictions. At present, a legislator, when convicted is debarred for six years from contesting elections. The apex court has been approached with several pleas seeking lifetime ban on lawmakers as the provision stood for the judiciary and the executive, where one could not hold office post conviction. The Centre during the last hearing in the matter had submitted that it had no objection in setting up of special courts for exclusively trying the criminal cases involving elected representatives. However, it has not

been in favour of banning the convicted lawmakers for life.

The apex court was earlier informed that 12 special courts set up to try lawmakers exclusively have not been constituted on a uniform pattern, and their number needs to be raised to 19 for trying cases at the sessions level. It was also suggested to the top court that another 51 such courts are required for magisterial trial cases. The amicus had further said that special courts were constituted to exclusively deal with all cases including complaint cases against MPs, MLAs including the former ones, irrespective of the fact as to whether the same was committed when the concerned lawmaker was holding the said office.

BJP slams AAP govt. for data collection



Delhi BJP chief says collection of students' data an exercise for political gains. The Opposition BJP on Saturday alleged that the Aam Aadmi Party-led Delhi government was collecting data of students studying in schools under its jurisdiction for "political purposes".

Expressing doubts about the "intention" behind the exercise and alleging that it exposed the AAP Delhi government's attempt at "taking the help of innocent students for its political gains", the Delhi BJP "strongly condemned" it. "We have been opposing this process since September 2018. When the Directorate of Education (DoE) issued the notification, the Delhi BJP was the first one to lodge its objection and demand an inquiry," Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari said. The north-east Delhi MP said that the Delhi government, in a circular issued in September, had asked all the schools including public and private ones, to collect data of all students, their family members and relatives. Mr. Tiwari said the details sought included mobile numbers, voter ID and data related to educational qualification which, he argued, was, prima facie, a violation of the right to privacy. "The Delhi High Court had also raised an objection to it. Now, the Election Commission has said that collecting data related to the voters is only the right of the Election Commission and no other party can do so. But the statement of Deputy Chief Minister and Education Minister Manish Sisodia on the objections of Election Commission is an attack on the federal system under the Constitution," Mr. Tiwari alleged. Reacting to the Election Commission asking the government to stop the exercise, Mr. Sisodia, on Saturday, said that the poll panel did not have the right to do so. "The education mafia is causing this controversy. There is admission fraud in Delhi that we are trying to catch... The EC's mandate is not to support the BJP's education mafia, but to conduct elections... As long as the voter card is a valid address proof, the EC cannot ask us to stop the exercise," he said at a press conference. Mr. Sisodia added that the exercise had been started after reports of residents of neighbouring States being enrolled in Delhi government schools using false address proofs. He said the students from other States would not be removed, but the government would use the data for formulating future policies. On its part, Mr. Tiwari said Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal must explain "how the children and their family members will benefit" by the process. "In spite of sufficient information collected at the time of admission, what is the purpose behind collecting private information and the intention of getting it done through a private agency?" he demanded.

Court restrains Mahinda Rajapaksa from acting as PM

Court asks the former President and his Ministers to explain on December 12 on whose authority they continued acting in office despite the legislature voting them out twice. Sri Lanka's Court of Appeal on Monday, December 3, 2018, restrained controversially installed Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and his purported Cabinet of Ministers from functioning in their respective offices. The interim order follows a quo warranto petition filed by 122 MPs on November 23, challenging Mr. Rajapaksa's continuance in the office of the Prime Minister, after losing two trust votes in Parliament on November 14 and 16.



criticised snap move — are yet to recognise the outcome of the votes in Parliament, citing "breach of procedure." While manoeuvres in the legislature have so far proved inadequate to get Mr. Rajapaksa's contested government to step down, Monday's appeal court order delivered a legal blow to the legitimacy they claimed so far.

All eyes are now on Mr. Sirisena, who is scheduled to chair two crucial meetings on Monday evening — with the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and relevant officials on the possible release of political prisoners, and with the United National Frontled by Mr. Wickremesinghe's UNP — who showed a strength of 117 members in the House last week, with the critical support of 14 TNA lawmakers.

Vote BJP to see Hyderabad transform into 'Bhagyanagar': Yogi Adityanath

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has urged voters in Telangana to elect the BJP to power in the coming assembly elections in state if they want to see Hyderabad transform into 'Bhagyanagar'. Addressing an election rally in Goshmahal constituency here in support of BJP candidate T Raja Singh Lodh, Adityanath said he has specially come to campaign for him as he (Singh) was working towards renaming Hyderabad to Bhagyanagar. BJP through the foundation of good governance and development has taken the responsibility of building India on the 'Ram Rajya' model and in that mission Telangana should also play a role, he said. "If Hyderabad has to be transformed into 'Bhagyanagar' then I call upon you to support BJP to form government (in Telangana)", Adityanath, whose government last month approved the renaming of Faizabad as Ayodhya and Allahabad as Prayagraj, told the public meeting late Sunday evening.



at the protest march in Delhi are demanding from the Narendra Modi government. He alleged that during Congress rule Pakistan-sponsored terrorists were fed biryani and now under BJP government each terrorist is dealt with firmly. He charged both Congress and TRS with indulging in Muslim appeasement by drafting schemes for the community and claimed their election manifestos reflect such programmes. Amitabh Bachchan shares photos from Deepika Ranveer's reception. Guests leave Jodhpur after Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas' wedding. Simmba trailer launch: Ranveer Singh, Sara Ali Khan, Rohit Shetty and Karan Johar mark their presence. He further said: "former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, had also said that first right on nations rest sources is of minorities. The chief

minister said BJP was taking up developmental works and bringing out welfare schemes without discriminating any caste, creed and religion and sought to know why Congress, TRS and TDP did not implement such schemes.

Telangana Assembly elections 2018: I am neither BJP's 'B team' nor Congress's 'agent', says K. Chandrasekhar Rao

(Gns. News). TRS president and caretaker Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao at an election rally at Madhira of Khammam district on December 3, 2018. |Photo Credit: G.N. Rao

He also criticises Modi's alleged comments that there is a power shortage in Telangana. Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) president K Chandrasekhar Rao on Monday said he was only an "agent" of the people of Telangana and not anyone else's, amid accusations that he is the BJP's "B team" and the Congress's "agent".



"He [Prime Minister Narendra Modi] says KCR is Sonia Gandhi's agent. Rahul Gandhi [Congress president] comes and says KCR is [the] 'B' team of Modi. Then, whose agent am I? What is this story of agents?" he said. "I submit only one thing... KCR is Telangana people's agent and not [an] agent of anybody..." the caretaker Chief Minister said at a rally at Kodad town in

Suryapet district. Mr. Gandhi on Monday alleged that Mr. Modi, Mr. Rao and AIMIM (All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul Muslimeen) leader Asaduddin Owaisi were "one" and urged the State people to not be "fooled by them". He also claimed that the

HC upholds CRPF DIG's sacking over obscene texts

The Delhi High Court has dismissed the plea of a decorated Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) who was dismissed from service for sending sexually explicit messages and his nude pictures to a woman on her mobile phone.

Former CRPF DIG Sandeep Yadav is a recipient of the President's Police medal for meritorious service in 2010, and was posted in New Delhi when an inquiry was initiated on the complaint by the husband of the woman. A Bench of Justice S. Muralidhar and Justice Sanjeev Narula refused to interfere with the punishment given to Mr. Yadav noting that the procedure adopted by the Inquiry Officer was "just and fair and fully consistent with the requirements of natural justice". The charge against Mr. Yadav was that while he was functioning as DIG of the CRPF in 2014, he committed a serious misconduct in sending nude pictures of himself and sexually explicit material from his mobile phone to a woman on her mobile.

AAP volunteer, others beat up 'molester'

Incident happened on Nov 14; accused has 5 criminal cases lodged against him. A youth was thrashed by several people, including an Aam Aadmi Party's volunteer, working closely with AAP MLA Rituraj Jha on November 14, the police said on Sunday.

The man has been accused of molesting the AAP volunteer's sister during Chhat Puja celebrations. The entire incident was captured on camera and had gone viral on social media, they said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) Seju P. Kuruvilla said the police received a call on November 14 regarding a ruckus. "The information stated that Vikas and Monu were creating a ruckus during Chhat Puja celebrations in Hind Vihar Colony. On reaching the spot, the police was told that the duo and their friends — Sonu, Sandeep and a juvenile — had molested a woman. They were nabbed and beaten up by a mob," the officer said. In the video, the volunteer can be seen thrashing Vikas as the police officers stood there watching.

with the Congress and claimed they were playing a "friendly match" in the Assembly polls. At the Kodad rally, Mr. Rao criticised Mr. Modi's alleged comments that there is a power shortage in Telangana. He said the country was able to use only 30,000 thousand million cubic feet (tmc) of water though 70,000 tmc of water is available. "40,000 TMC water is merging with the sea."

"He claimed that Telangana was the only State in the country which gave 24-hour free power to farmers. "Narendra Modiji, your government is there in 19 States. Are you giving 24 hours free power to farmers in any of the States?" Mr. Rao asked.

Editorial

Uneasy fields: on Kisan Mukti Morcha

(Gns. News) Last week, tens of thousands of farmers reached Delhi for a two-day Kisan Mukti Morcha and held the country's attention. They sought a special 21-day Parliament session to discuss the crisis in India's agrarian economy. Their key demands included an unqualified loan waiver to mitigate indebtedness levels in farm households and better remuneration for their produce instead of promises on paper of high minimum support prices. These broad demands sum up the precarious livelihood of a majority of farmers who work on small, fragmented land holdings. This is certainly not the first distress call from the farm sector to Parliament and policymakers; several such stirrings have taken place across States over the past year alone. In March, when around 30,000 farmers and tribals from Maharashtra walked for days to Mumbai, they drew appreciation for their restrained conduct compared to the usually unruly protesters. And, they secured assurances from Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis of tangible action on their demands over the next six months. Finding little movement on those promises, many of those who had marched to Mumbai joined the rally in Delhi, which was by far the biggest such gathering. Galvanised by the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, it reportedly had participation from 200-plus organisations, with farmers from 24 States. With rural distress palpable, elections for five State Assemblies under way, and the Lok Sabha election just about six months later, farmers' issues are bound to further dominate politics. Official data released last Friday show that the agriculture sector clocked a growth of just 3.8% (on a gross value added basis) in the second quarter of this fiscal, compared to the 5.3% recorded in the preceding quarter. To put that in perspective, farm sector output was growing strongly in the first three quarters of 2016-17, before imploding in the aftermath of the demonetisation exercise. The latest number suggests that the semblance of recovery seen in the previous two quarters has dimmed too. The government has done an about-turn on its responses to a parliamentary panel that farmers were hit hard by the note ban, and sought to reassure farmers by reiterating its own initiatives for the sector. The Opposition, in turn, is using the farmers' platform to take jibes at the BJP-led government at the Centre and in many States. Unfortunately, neither has focussed on the big picture strategy needed to reboot India's hugely state-controlled farm sector. The Centre exhibits an aversion to inconvenient facts. And the Opposition's attempts to tap into their angst with breezy promises of loan waivers (with both the Congress and the Telangana Rashtra Samithi promising them in State election pitches) that over-simplify the crisis. Farmers are not just vote banks, but also critical economic actors who aspire to live without handouts. Till that is clearly recognised, paying lip service to the humble farmer will continue to distort the discourse.

The inevitable tryst with dust



(Gns. News) There are a number of idiosyncrasies associated with the average Indian street. But probably no other trait tends to define the Indian philosophy and way of life as does the ever-present dust that adorns it. Perhaps the concept of immortality of the human soul came about as a result of observing the eternal dust that manifests itself in many forms. Normally hidden in plain sight, it has become an indispensable part of our street life. Rising to the fore and gently irritating the nostrils of passers-by whenever an over-ambitious vehicle tries to test the limits of its internal combustion engine. Unlike in other countries that have decided to ban dust from their streets altogether, in the grand Indian tradition of secularism we cherish this diversity of particulate, and both PM2.5 and PM10 are accorded equal opportunity to inhabit our lungs. No wonder, dust is so close to our hearts! Mind you, it hasn't been an easy journey for dust. Despite our tradition of tolerance that prompted successive Indian rulers over the centuries to look at clean paved roads with disdain, there never was any active encouragement toward true empowerment of dust for it to break the shackles and prosper. All that changed with the onset of the industrial age when large coal-based power plants, fleets of diesel-burning trucks and a construction boom intertwined the empowerment of dust with India's growth story. Successive governments and statutory bodies have shown exemplary intent and bipartisan unity by being mindful of the Indian sensibilities toward dust. It is for this reason that there is active encouragement for incomplete combustion across the board; be it by the ordinary farmer burning stubble or large power plants spewing ash. From the watchman who burns litter in cold nights to the everyday protestor who torches everything from buses to effigies, all come together in support of this mass movement. In 21st century India, dust has become an integral part of our socio-economic ecosystem. For example, the presence of dust has created thousands of jobs for sweepers throughout our country. Anyone who has ever walked on an Indian street could not have missed a sweeper going about the futile job of cleaning the road and sweeping the dust to its margins. This dust will of course be back on the road come noon, but that's the circle of life — what goes around, comes around. You see, unlike Arjuna in the Mahabharata, the average Indian sweeper does not need Lord Krishna to inspire him or his ilk to perform his or her karma and not think of the outcomes. And in order to empower this enlightened force of sweepers, the civic bodies ensure that the roads are not made too high and that their sides are kept unpaved. Our contractors selflessly give up on the intellectual property rights for the advanced construction practices utilised by them by performing all operations from excavation to erection out in the open for all to see, in order to contribute to the grand tradition of redistributing dust out in the open. Unlike in other countries that have decided to ban dust from their streets altogether, in the grand Indian tradition of secularism we cherish this diversity of particulate, and both PM2.5 and PM10 are accorded equal opportunity to inhabit our lungs. No wonder, dust is so close to our hearts! Mind you, it hasn't been an easy journey for dust. Despite our tradition of tolerance that prompted successive Indian rulers over the centuries to look at clean paved roads with disdain, there never was any active encouragement toward true empowerment of dust for it to break the shackles and prosper.

Tariff truce: On U.S.-China trade war

(Gns. News) The global trade war has come to a welcome pause. On the sidelines of the G20 meeting in Buenos Aires over the weekend, the U.S. and Chinese Presidents, Donald Trump and Xi Jinping, agreed to a 90-day truce. The two countries will try to find an amicable solution to the various problems plaguing bilateral trade relations, such as disputes over intellectual property rights and Chinese state support for domestic industries, through talks over the next three months. Meanwhile, the U.S. will refrain from raising the tariff on Chinese goods worth \$200 billion from the current rate of 10% to 25% on January 1, 2019, as planned. In return, according to the White House, China will purchase agricultural and other goods from the U.S. in order to reduce the trade imbalance between the two countries. If talks fail, however, increased tariff rates are scheduled to come into force immediately. It is worth noting that Canada and Mexico arrived at a compromise trade agreement with the U.S. in October, replacing the decades-old North-American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). So these are signs that the global trade war that began earlier this year may be cooling down a little as 2018 draws to an end. What prompted the U.S. and China to arrive at an unexpected, albeit temporary, compromise is un-

clear. It will be important to see if any compromise between the two trade giants will include a complete rollback of the tariffs imposed on each other over the year. But the temporary trade truce should still offer some relief, as there have been apprehensions about the U.S.-China trade battle bringing global economic growth to a grinding halt. Signs of a significant slowdown in the Chinese economy and concerns over the negative impact of the trade war on American financial markets may have played a part in Mr. Trump and Mr. Xi agreeing to the truce — probably a sober recognition of the fact that there are no economic winners in any trade war. During the upcoming negotiations, the U.S. is likely to press hard on China's protectionist policies aimed at favouring its domestic industries. But it is unlikely that China will yield to such pressure as that would require a seismic shift in the country's growth policy, which till now has emphasised the state's role in the economy. In fact, the Chinese government's promise to increase imports from the U.S. is a clear giveaway of the fact that it still dominates the economy. Further, China itself is bound to draw attention to the U.S.'s own protectionist policies. A compromise that will allow both sides to claim final victory in the battle would be the best outcome.

Make planning fashionable again

(Gns. News) The withdrawal of the Indian state from economic decision-making has had consequences on industry. Economic planning is not considered fashionable today. Nevertheless, contemporary economic debates will have much to gain by revisiting the ideas on planning, championed in particular by Jawaharlal Nehru.

As is well known, India under Nehru's leadership inaugurated a strategy for industrialisation of the country in the early 1950s. This involved the setting up of public sector units (PSUs) in diverse areas of manufacturing; research institutions in cutting-edge technologies of the time such as space and atomic energy; and centres of higher learning, including the Indian Institutes of Technologies (IITs). All of these by a poor country, which was still struggling to find its feet amidst the multiple blows it had to endure during the early years after Independence. But that was not all. By consciously entering into sectors such as machine building and nuclear research, which needed capital and technology more critically than labour, India was also challenging a deeply held orthodoxy in economic theory. From the time of David Ricardo, a galaxy of economists had argued (and many still argue) that countries should develop industries based on their comparative advantage. According to this theory, a labour-surplus country like India should be limiting its industrial development ambitions to labour-intensive sectors, such as garments or leather. After all, the theory would ask, why should a country like India produce machines or pharmaceuticals domestically, when such products can easily be imported from advanced countries? During the colonial period, the British government in India had indeed been putting the theory of comparative advantage into practice — to the disadvantage of most Indians. In his book *The Discovery of India*, Nehru described how the colonial government systematically strangled Indian entrepreneurship. Writing from his prison cell in Ahmednagar Fort in the early 1940s, Nehru argued that the fundamental requirements for a modern India included "a heavy engineering and machine-making industry, scientific research institutes, and electric power."

The programmes launched in India from the 1950s onwards to build indigenous capabilities in capital- and technology-intensive sectors, despite the general poverty of the country, became a model for other developing and Third World nations. The debates around Indian planning provided a fertile launching pad for the evolution of development economics as an important sub-discipline. It will only be reasonable to argue that the foundations for India's diversified economic base had been laid during the planning years. The successes that India enjoys today in the information technology and knowledge-intensive sectors owe much to the research and educational institutions that were built during the early decades. At the same time, however, planning did very little to remove the hurdles to the growth of agriculture and small-scale industries. India's record during the post-Independence period in implementing land reforms and ensuring primary education for all has been rather unimpressive. As a result, the benefits from state-led development have so far reached only a minority of Indians. India's commitment towards development through planning had begun to diminish from the early 1990s itself — much before the Planning Commission was formally dismantled in 2014. After the



introduction of economic reforms in 1991, public investment, especially on agriculture and industry, has been on a decline in the country. PSUs have begun to be valued only for the returns they bring as commercial entities. There has been little recognition of the important role that PSUs can play as creators of new technologies and knowledge, particularly in fields in which the private sector may have little interest or capabilities. The disregard for planning and the general withdrawal of the state from economic decision-making have had important consequences on Indian industry. India is today one of the largest markets in the world for a wide range of goods, whether passenger cars, mobile phones or food products. Despite the emergence of such a large domestic market, the record of Indian manufacturing in absorbing the large labour reserves in the country remains abysmal. The imports of machinery, transport equipment, electronic goods and all their components have been rising continuously in India from the 2000s onwards. This trend has not been reversed after the introduction of the 'Make in India' initiative. Planning is not incompatible with markets and globalisation. On the contrary, a developing country trying hard to stay afloat amidst the turbulence of a global economy requires more, and not less, guidance through industrial policies. The successes achieved by East Asian countries such as South Korea in manufacturing are, to a great extent, the result of strategic planning over several decades by their governments. China is gradually shifting its economic base from low-wage industries, and is now emerging as a global leader, even ahead of the U.S., in several new technologies, including artificial intelligence and renewable energy. These Chinese achievements owe much to the careful planning and investments made by its government, particularly in the area of science and technology. The employment challenge that India faces — close to 15 million waiting to be absorbed in the industrial and services sectors every year — is possibly bigger than that faced by any other country (except China) in the world. It cannot be resolved with the technologies that foreign companies bring into India, which tend to be labour saving. What India requires, on the other hand, are technological advances that create new economic opportunities and absorb — not displace — labour. Consider, for instance, breakthroughs in biotechnology that may find new commercial applications for our agricul-

tural products, or electric vehicles and renewable energy solutions that depend less on imported material. India's research institutions and our PSUs should engage in the creation and dissemination of such technologies. The country's industrial policies should be able to enthuse young and educated entrepreneurs from rural areas to make use of these technologies to create new jobs. And, for all these, planning should be brought back to the centre of our economic discussions.

India is literally at the crossroads with the very future of its secular democracy at stake. With five important State Assembly elections in various stages of completion and the general election around the corner, the political temperature is at boiling point. Competitive Hindutva has become the name of the game, with the ostensibly secular Congress party trying desperately to demonstrate its Hindu credentials to cut into the base of the Hindu-nationalist BJP. Congress president Rahul Gandhi is busy visiting Hindu temples and publicising his caste genealogy for electoral gains. This is the first time since Independence that the religion and caste of a candidate for the job of Prime Minister is overtly portrayed as the defining basis for his/her claim to lead the country. The Congress party's passive Hindutva will in all probability lead to its crushing defeat in the forthcoming general elections because, as a pale imitation of the BJP's aggressive Hindutva, it cannot compete with the genuine article. Mr. Gandhi and his advisers are confusing contrived demonstrations of personal religiosity with Hindu nationalism. The last is a clearly defined political ideology that, in direct contravention of the letter and spirit of the Constitution, is based on the notion that Hindus have exclusive claim to the country and Muslims and Christians are interlopers who can be treated as second-class citizens at best. It has nothing to do with personal piety and the religious tenets of Hinduism. The Congress's passive Hindutva is ceding the ideological ground to the BJP by heavily diluting the tenets of secularism enshrined in the Constitution. The well-established secular norm of not overtly using religion for electoral gains is now a thing of the past. A very dangerous aspect of this unfolding drama is the escalation in the politics of intimidation, which is undermining the rule of law and threatening the democratic fabric of India. The recent mobilisation of thousands of devotees in Ayodhya by the Vishva Hindu Parishad, the Rashtriya

Defence Acquisition Council approval: New frigates to get BrahMos



rahMos, which is a joint venture between India and Russia, has already been inducted on all frontline warships of the Indian Navy.

(Gns. News) The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), which met on Saturday, approved procurements worth ₹ 3000 crore which include BrahMos cruise missiles for the two stealth frigates to be procured directly from Russia and armored recovery vehicles for the Army's Arjun tanks. "As a follow up of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) decision in October 2018 for procurement of four P1135.6 follow-on ships, the DAC granted approval for procurement of indigenous BrahMos missiles for two Indian Navy ships to be built in Russia," the Defence Ministry said in a statement. The indigenously designed BrahMos Missile is a tested and proven supersonic cruise missile and will form the primary weapon on-board these ships, the statement added. In October 2016, India and Russia signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) for four Krivak or Talwar stealth frigates - two to be procured directly from Russia and two to be built by Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) and the commercial deals were signed recently. Defence Acquisition Council approval: New frigates to get BrahMos. The basic structures of two frigates are already ready at Yantar shipyard in Russia and will be finished now following the \$1 bn deal. Last week, Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) signed a \$500 mn deal with Rosoborone xport of Russia for material, design and specialists assistance to build two frigates in India. BrahMos, which is a joint venture between India and Russia, has already been inducted on all frontline warships of the Indian Navy. The DAC also approved the procurement of Armoured Recovery Vehicles (ARVs) for the Army's Arjun main battle tanks. These are designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and would be manufactured by Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML). The ARVs ensure efficient and speedy repair and recovery of tanks during combat.

MSecular democracy in peril



nationalism has become very popular. Politicians regularly engage in such rhetoric with discussants on TV channels, some of them retired military officers, also contributing in great measure to its legitimisation. This is the polar opposite of patriotism combined with liberal values that was enshrined in the Constitution and was held dear by the first generation of independent India's leadership. A further indication of the erosion of democratic values is the tendency of highly placed serving military officers to comment publicly on sensitive issues of domestic and foreign policy. They intervene in debates such as those regarding illegal immigration and India-Pakistan relations, which should be the exclusive preserve of civilian leaders in government and in the opposition. This would not have been tolerated in an earlier era because the founding fathers of the republic were emphatic that civilian supremacy over the military brass must be safeguarded at all costs and the military isolated from the political arena. The current trajectory of Indian politics reminds one eerily of

Swayamsevak Sangh, the Shiv Sena and related Hindu nationalist organisations is a prime example of this. This mobilisation was a part of the strategy to put pressure on a government seen as friendly to the cause to build the Ram temple immediately on the site of the Babri mosque demolished in 1992. However, even more important, it was a direct challenge to the power of the Supreme Court where the matter is under adjudication, thus drastically undermining the judicial system itself. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat made it clear in a speech during the rally in Ayodhya that "Society does not move only by the words of law, but also by its own wishes". Other speakers indulged in even more intemperate language. What started as a property dispute has thus been turned into a matter of faith beyond the purview of the courts. (Simultaneously, there is an anti-democratic wave sweeping through the country. Populism rather than liberal democracy is increasingly coming to define the nature of the Indian polity. A jingoistic form of ultra-

nationalism has become very popular. Politicians regularly engage in such rhetoric with discussants on TV channels, some of them retired military officers, also contributing in great measure to its legitimisation. This is the polar opposite of patriotism combined with liberal values that was enshrined in the Constitution and was held dear by the first generation of independent India's leadership. A further indication of the erosion of democratic values is the tendency of highly placed serving military officers to comment publicly on sensitive issues of domestic and foreign policy. They intervene in debates such as those regarding illegal immigration and India-Pakistan relations, which should be the exclusive preserve of civilian leaders in government and in the opposition. This would not have been tolerated in an earlier era because the founding fathers of the republic were emphatic that civilian supremacy over the military brass must be safeguarded at all costs and the military isolated from the political arena. The current trajectory of Indian politics reminds one eerily of

the first decade of the existence of neighbouring Pakistan. Mounting majoritarianism fuelled by religious intolerance, hyper-nationalism born out of insecurity, deliberate erosion of political and judicial institutions, and creeping military intervention in the political arena finally led to the first military coup in Pakistan in 1958. This paved the way for a succession of military takeovers. One of these resulted in the division of Pakistan in 1971 and another in the creation of terrorist outfits in the 1980s that continue not only to threaten India and Afghanistan but also to tear apart Pakistan's social fabric. Pakistan has never recovered from the tragic errors committed in its early years and is paying a very high price for it today. One hopes that India will not go down the same path because otherwise, the largest democracy in the world could face an equally bleak future. Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University and Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Center for Global Policy, Washington DC

Competitive Hindutva has become the name of the game

AAP volunteer, others beat up 'molester'

The man has been accused of molesting the AAP volunteer's sister during Chhat Puja celebrations. The entire incident was captured on camera and had gone viral on social media, they said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) Seju P. Kuruvilla said the police received a call on November 14 regarding a ruckus. "The information stated that Vikas and Monu were creating a ruckus during Chhat Puja celebrations in Hind Vihar Colony. On reaching the spot, the police was told that the duo and their friends — Sonu, Sandeep and a juvenile — had molested a woman. They were nabbed and beaten up by a mob," the officer said. In the video, the volunteer can be seen thrashing Vikas as the police officers stood there watching. The officers later intervened and rescued Vikas, they added. Vikas on sensing his arrest started to run away from the celebration venue with Sandeep, Mr. Kuruvilla said. "The police chased him to the railway tracks where he jumped into the water to save himself. The team then rescued him. Meanwhile, 40 to 50 persons started beating Vikas and Sandeep. The police officers saved them and took Vikas to the police station," the officer said. "The man in the video had molested the volunteer's sister. All the ac-

cused are serial offenders and the people are troubled because of them. But I think that the volunteer should not have taken the law into his hands," he said. The woman lodged her complaint on November 14 evening stating that Vikas and his friends molested her following which a case under relevant sections was registered and all accused including minor was held, the police said. They added that another 17-year-old girl, a resident of Prem Nagar, alleged molestation by the accused while she was on her way to the puja celebrations. She alleged that the accused had tried to kidnap her, the police said. A separate case was registered in connection with the complaint, the officer said, adding that Vikas has five criminal cases registered against him. Vikas' father Panna Lal alleged that a few men had come looking for his son around 7 a.m. on November 14 and then they thrashed him. "I went to the police but they did not take my complaint. I received this video on November 29 after which I sent it to a few people. The police then contacted me on Sunday and took my complaint," he alleged. When questioned if a case has been registered in connection with the thrashing of Vikas, Mr. Kuruvilla said, "We will see the complaint and then take a legal action."

Worker falls to death; no safety gear was provided, say police

(Gns. News) A 35-year-old daily wage worker was killed and another 38-year-old worker sustained grievous injuries after they fell off the third floor of an under-construction building in west Delhi's Janakpuri on November 30, the police said on Sunday. The victims were not given any safety gear, the police found in the preliminary investigation. Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Monika Bhardwaj confirmed the incident and said the deceased was identified as Than Singh from Agra, and the injured was identified as Hari Ram of Rajasthan. Ram is undergoing treatment and is out of

danger, the officer said. The police said they received a call around 7.30 p.m. on November 30 from Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital regarding admission of two persons. "When the police reached the hospital, they were informed that Than was declared dead and Ram was being treated. Local enquiry revealed that the two had fallen from a height while working in Janakpuri's Chander Nagar," the officer said. Further enquiry revealed that the workers were called by the contractor to repair the shaft of the under-construction building. "They were working on the third floor and because they were not pro-

vided with any safety gear like makeshift swing or helmets, the two fell," said a police officer privy to the case. The police said, landlord of the building called the ambulance and rushed the injured to the hospital. The police said that a case under Sections 288 (negligent conduct with respect to pulling down or repairing buildings), 337 (causing hurt by act endangering life or personal safety) and 304A (causing death by negligence) has been registered at Janakpuri police station. "The contractor has been identified but he is absconding. Teams are looking for him," the officer said.

Horn not okay please

Traffic cops have been cracking down on sound of loud music

(Gns. News) To keep a lid on noise pollution, the Delhi Traffic Police is prosecuting vehicles for playing loud music, using pressure horns and for honking at restricted places. As of November 15, the traffic police issued 1,459 challans to vehicles for playing loud music; 7,209 for using a pressure horn and 21,996 for honking at restricted places.

Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Alok Kumar said a major crackdown on air and noise pollution caused by vehicles is on the cards. "We keep sensitising drivers against unnecessary honking. We have identified and issued a public notice regarding places designated as no-honking zones. Drivers playing loud music will also be fined



since they cause nuisance to others," he said. To keep a check on unnecessary honking, the traffic police has already listed 60 stretches — including some spots on the busy Ring Road — that have been designated as no-honking zones. Some of the noisiest intersections in the city include ITO crossing, Karol Bagh and Ashram Chowk. However, lack of devices to measure noise pollution and priority to other

traffic violations have put a spanner in the works as far as enforcement of rules to curb noise pollution is concerned. A traffic policeman on duty at ITO crossing said prosecutions for noise pollution can increase if the force is equipped with sound-measuring devices. In the meantime, he said, the force nabs vehicles for more serious traffic offences like driving on the wrong side, jumping the red light and speeding.

Temporary change in first, last train time on Pink Line

The DMRC has urged commuters who use the Metro on these sections to check its website or call its helpline.

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Delhi Metro to undertake upgrade work from late night till early morning between December 3 and 8. The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation on Sunday said that it will undertake upgrade work from late night to early morning between December 3 and December 8 to facilitate technical integration of various systems for extension of Pink Line from Lajpat Nagar to Mayapuri Vihar Pocket-1.

This, the DMRC said, will lead to temporary changes in the timings of the first and last trains from terminal stations, interchange stations and other stations on the operational two sections of this line — Majlis Park to Lajpat Nagar and Trilokpur-Sanjay Lake to Shiv Vihar. "During this period, there will be minor variations [from 0 to 75 minutes] in the first and



last train timings for trains originating from either end of these two operational sections of the Pink Line. For rest of the day during this integration period, train services on these two sections will run as per normal schedule," said a DMRC spokesperson. The Delhi Metro has urged all commuters who use the Metro

early in the morning or late at night on these sections to check the temporary revised timings on the DMRC website or call the helpline number 155370, and plan their travel accordingly. Normal train timings will be restored on these two sections from December 9 onwards, once the integration work is successfully carried out, the DMRC said.

Shedding its image of a passing fad, tattoo art emerges as symbol of syncretism

(Gns. News)

The Heartwork Tattoo Festival was organised at DLF Place, Saket, in the Capital. Artists from across the country and beyond the borders come together to celebrate their art at Heartwork Tattoo Festival in the city. With tattoo art shedding the image of a passing fad and acquiring the status of a regular art form, tattoo artists had come together in the city to celebrate their art at the Heartwork Tattoo Festival being organised at DLF Place, Saket. Artists, from across the country and beyond the borders, turned the festival into a melting pot of different cultures and traditions, with each artist showcasing an attempt to fuse different elements from different themes.

Glancing through myriad designs, those depicting deities in different avatars, transcending the limits of religion, faith and culture made the festival stand out, as clients displaying a "gothic" Shiva or Lord Shiva merging into Lord Buddha or Lord Buddha surrounded by tribal motifs made for a visual extravaganza. An interesting aspect that surfaced in the festival was attempts by the artists to merge elements from different religions and come up with refreshing designs. Anil Tamrakar, a tattoo artist from Nepal, spoke about his studio's focus on "Traditional Nepal" and how he at-

tempts to blend traces of Buddhism and Hinduism, laced with oriental designs. While the focus remains on temples, deities and traditional motifs, the element of religious amalgamation is apparent. "For me, the fusion is a sign of modernity, where different faiths and traditions coexist in harmony," he said.

Ajit Patiker, another artist from Nagaland, displayed a similar enthusiasm in blending different cultures and coming up with hybrid designs. For him, the thrill of mixing gothic art with Japanese orientalism and traditional faiths in his home town was what kept his creative juices flowing. His fascination for gothic art forms induced him to create designs that seamlessly merged motifs and figures from different religions, yet retain their indigenous charm. Pointing at a design which was a gothic variation of Lord Shiva, he added that minor modifications like tweaking anatomical features, like replacing Shiva's serene eyes with dark and intense gothic ones, adds a completely different charm and meaning to the design.

"For me, blending different cultures and traditions is reflective of my personality. It is like adapting to the ways of the world and understanding that even gods like Lord Shiva can have different sides to his personality," Mr. Patiker said. Taking tattoo art as an expression of the



self, many tattoo artists spoke about how they customised each design according to the personal aspects of their clients. With people finding tattoo art as a gateway to their inner selves and giving their innermost emotions a physical manifestation, artists displayed a sense of pride in being able to contribute to the personal journeys of millions of strangers. "People find a certain solace in inscribing designs that

reflect some aspect of their life. It could be a personal loss or a certain victory or a motivational reminder to keep going in tough times. For instance, if someone's beloved pet dies, the person could inscribe a flower and not necessarily the image of the pet as a loving memory. Similarly, the semicolon tattoo is a rage among clients who want a gentle reminder to be strong, a physical mark that serves as that re-

minder," says Ina, a tattoo artist from Spain, who now has her studio in Germany. The famed artists who have participated at the festival are Paul Booth, Triplesix Studios and Vlado from the UK, Aloka tattoos from Sri Lanka, Kesho the Second from Japan, and Jamie Mahood. The famous Indian artists who shared the dais were Lokesh Verma, Vikas and Micky Malani and Alex Shimray.

46-year-old found dead at residence

(Gns. News) Deceased left behind one-page note for sister, say police. A 46-year-old man was found dead inside his residence in north Delhi's Sarai Rohilla on Sunday morning. The police said the deceased has left behind a note. Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) Harendra Singh said Navveen Kumar Gupta alias Bunty was living in a rented accommodation in Shastri Nagar since 2015. "A police control room call was received regarding a fire at a house in Shastri Nagar. When the police reached the spot, they found smoke coming out from the room on the second floor. The room was found locked from inside," Mr. Singh said. "The victim was rushed to Bara Hindu Rao Hospital where he was declared dead. The crime scene has been inspected and photographs were taken," the officer said. Gupta had addressed the note to his sister where he spoke of being under financial debt. An officer privy to the case said Gupta was divorced and his parents and elder brother had passed away. The victim used to work at a private company at a salary of ₹12,000-₹14,000 per month, the police said. Gupta's sister has been informed, Mr. Singh said, adding that the woman said she will come for the post-mortem and procedural formalities on Monday. "The matter will become clear after speaking to Gupta's sister," the officer said.

Special awards for a special cause

"This is one of the top priorities for the Prime Minister and the present government"

Twelve people under three different categories who have helped further employment opportunities for the differently abled were celebrated at the NCPEDP-Mindtree Helen Keller Awards on Sunday. Speaking at the event, held at the India International Centre, Minister of State for Human Resource Development Satya Pal Singh said, "There are 12 million differently abled children in this country but only 1% go to schools." Mr. Singh said the Ministry recently announced 5% reservation for the differently abled in all kinds of educational institutions to address this.

The Minister said a directive has been sent to all State governments that expenditure on books, uniforms and transport will be reimbursed by the government and girls will receive ₹200 per month. "This is one of the top priorities for the Prime Minister and the present government" he said. NCPEDP executive director Arman Ali said, "It is heartening to see the kind of applications we received this year. Typically, most applications received are from the IT industry. This year, it was refreshing to see that most applications were from organisations and people working in the retail sector."

HC stays 25% deduction from prisoners' wages

Rates of wages payable to the inmates are already on the low side, observed the High Court. Rates of wages payable to the inmates are already on the low side, observed the High Court. Photo Credit: Sushil Kumar Verma. Provision in Delhi Prison Rules mandates deduction for victim compensation fund. The Delhi High Court on Monday put on hold a practice in the Tihar jail under which 25% of the wages of prisoners is deducted for a victim compensation fund. A Bench of Chief Justice Rajendra Menon and Justice V. K. Rao stayed the deductions till February 8, 2019, the next date of hearing on a petition filed in public interest which has

opposed the practice. The High Court decision came on a plea by one Katyayini, filed through advocate Ajay Verma, seeking to quash an August 2006 notification and the Delhi Prison Rules of 1988, which mandate the deduction. The Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DSLISA) has also opposed the deduction for creating a victim compensation fund, saying it was "not reasonable or justified" as the city government has now created a scheme for victims. The DSLISA said the rule for deducting 25% of wages of prisoners was inserted in the Delhi Prison Rules when there was no provision for compensating victims under the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

However, in 2009, a provision was inserted in CrPC for putting in place a scheme for compensating victims or their dependants, the DSLISA has said in an affidavit and added that subsequently the Delhi Victims Compensation Scheme came into force. "Moreover, the rates of wages which are payable to the prisoners show that they are already on a very low side compared to the minimum wages that are payable in Delhi, and further deduction from the same may not be justified or proper. The deduction from the wages of the prisoners for contribution to the victim welfare fund does not appear reasonable and justified," the DSLISA has said.

Cable operator found dead inside office

A 36-year-old man was found dead inside his office in south Delhi's Sangam Vihar on Sunday morning. Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Vijay Kumar said Laxmi Narayan, a resident of Tigri, who worked as a cable operator. "A police control room call was received at 9 a.m. regarding the incident. His body has been sent for post-mortem," Mr. Kumar said, adding that no note was

found. During preliminary investigation, the police said Narayan, who was married, was also in a relationship with another woman with whom he was conversing over WhatsApp on the night of December 1.

"He had sent her pictures of him consuming liquor inside the office," said a senior officer. The officer said the woman is a house help, whom he had met six months ago, when he had gone to fix

cable at a house where she was working. Narayan's family said he had come home on December 1 afternoon for lunch and did not return after that.

"We kept trying his phone till early morning but he did not receive any calls. My elder son then went to his office and found him dead," said victim's mother, Somvati.

Inquest proceedings have been initiated, the police said.

IIT-Delhi incubated start-up aims to keep bad air out of homes

Nasofilter co-founders Prateek Sharma and Tushar Vyas showcase Pollution Net at IIT-Delhi on Sunday. Photo Credit: Special Arrangement. Pollution Net aims to replace the traditional mosquito net. On the occasion of World Pollution Prevention Day, which is observed on December 2, a start-up incubated by Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi — Nasofilter — launched a product that promises to protect homes and offices from particulate matter (PM). Called Pollution Net, the product aims to replace the traditional mosquito net that people install on windows. Pollution Net promises protection not just against mosquitoes but also outdoor pollution. The same nanotechnology that the former students and professors of IIT-Delhi used to come up with the Nasofilter, which is worn on the nostrils, has been used in this product, which promises to keep PM 2.5 and PM 10 out of building. Prateek Sharma, the co-founder of the start-up, said, "With the help of Pollution Net, people will be able to live in a well-ventilated house as they will be able to keep windows and doors open while keeping outside air out." He said Pollution Net can be fitted to door and windows with the help of Velcro and can be cleaned easily. The material used is water-resistant as well. Speaking about the need for more innovative barriers to



protect people from Delhi's disastrous air quality, pulmonologist Shivanshu Goyal said there is an increase in cases of cancers among people in their 20s and 30s due to increased exposure to bad air. Such cases, he said, were earlier seen in much older people with prolonged exposure to pollution. "In Delhi today, everybody who breathes

this air is a smoker and at risk. In fact, we have started using the term infant smoker as they are immediately exposed to bad air," he said. Calling it a national emergency, Dr. Goyal said everybody needs to start protecting themselves from the pollution by using barrier devices as it is impractical for everybody to relocate to a place with cleaner air.

Guards to keep stray dogs off deer park

Garbage is being removed regularly from the south Delhi park, DDA tells HC

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has told the High Court that guards have been deployed at the deer park in south Delhi and garbage is removed regularly to ensure stray dogs do not enter the premises and residents are able to walk without fear. A Bench of Chief Justice Rajendra Menon and Justice V. K. Rao was hearing a petition filed in public interest by a lawyer seeking removal of stray dogs from the park. Advocate Sunita Kapil had in her plea claimed that canines not only attack the locals but are also a threat to peacocks in the park. The DDA said it has floated a tender for building a wall around the park to restrict access of stray canines. Following this, the Bench directed the DDA to file an updated status report and listed the matter for further hearing on February 19. Ms. Kapil claimed that many peacocks come out on the road due to the presence of stray dogs. The plea also said the canines harmed the environment as their excreta made it difficult for people to breathe or walk in the park.

AAP says voters opposed to BJP Prosecution for PUC violations being struck off electoral rolls up 334% over last 4 years

(Gns. News) The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday alleged that voters from communities that could oppose the BJP in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections had been struck off the electoral rolls in Delhi. Alleging that 30 lakh voters had been deleted by the Election Commission of India (ECI) at the BJP's behest, AAP leader and East Delhi Lok Sabha in-charge for the party Atishi said most of the deleted voters belonged to communities that were "fed up with the BJP". The AAP has been raising the issue of deletion of voters names from the rolls, which are being revised by the ECI. The party analysed the "incomplete list of deletions" provided by the ECI on its website to find that a large number of voters with Baniya, Poorvanchali and Muslim names

had been struck off the rolls, she said. "In East Delhi constituency alone, three lakh voters have been deleted. Of these, 75,000 are from the Baniya community, 70,000 are Muslims and 1.14 lakh are from Poorvanchali," she said, adding that these communities would not support the BJP.

She added that the ECI website had stopped accepting applications from Delhi voters to get their names back on the rolls for the past few days. The AAP would go door-to-door to Delhiites whose names had been deleted and get them to fill out the Form 6, which is an application for inclusion in the voter's list, she added. The AAP has alleged that many of the voters whose names have been deleted for change of address have continued to reside at the same address.



Trough to bring moderate rainfall till Thursday



(Gns. News) May not be sufficient to overcome city's deficit, say meteorologists. A trough is likely to bring moderate rainfall for three days over coastal Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. While places like Chennai may experience rain, it may not be sufficient to cover the deficit, say meteorologists.

Officials of the Meteorological Department said the trough, which lies over southwest Bay of Bengal, may revive Northeast monsoon activity in Chennai.

Many places across the State are likely to receive light to moderate rainfall till Thursday. N. Puviarasan, Director, Area Cyclone Warning Centre, said the system was moving westwards and rain would start in coastal areas and move to interior parts from Tuesday. One or two places in the Delta districts may record heavy rainfall. Chennai too will have a generally cloudy sky and experience a few spells of light rain till Wednesday. Some localities in the city received light showers on Monday evening too.

"This rain spell may not be

enough to bring down the rain deficit in the city. We will have to wait for some days for a significant weather system to develop and influence more rains over the north coastal region," he said. Chennai continues to remain among the top districts, including Dharmapuri and Karur, that are experiencing severe rainfall deficiency. The city has recorded only 32cm of rainfall so far this season, which is 51% less than the average, since October 1. The city reservoirs, which are the primary drinking water sources, have only 15% of their storage capacity. The previous rain spell brought inflow just enough for four or five days of water supply, said officials of Water Resources Department.

NGT imposes ₹25 crore fine on Delhi govt for failing to curb air pollution



(Gns. News) Waste materials being burnt near Geeta Colony in New Delhi on December 1, 2018. Waste materials being burnt near Geeta Colony in New Delhi on December 1, 2018. | Photo Credit: R. V. Moorthy. A plea filed by city residents, Satish Kumar and Mahavir Singh, alleged pollution is caused due to burning of plastic, leather, rubber and other waste materials on agricultural lands in Mundka and Neelwal villages. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Monday directed the Delhi government to deposit an environmental compensation of ₹25 crore with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) for failing to curb air pollution in the Capital. A Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said in case the State government failed to comply with the orders, a sum of ₹10 crore per month will be levied. "The Delhi government will forthwith deposit a sum of ₹25 crore towards the cost of damage to the environment with the CPCB for restoration of the damage. We further direct that on failure to comply with this order, the Delhi government may be required to deposit at least ₹10 crore per month till the order of this tribunal is fully executed," the Bench said. Rapping the State government for not providing "relevant information", the Bench said, "In the compliance affidavit, beyond making a vague averment that challans have been furnished which appears to be a delicate concealment of relevant fact. Such particulars may now be furnished and action initiated under the law against those responsible including officers of the Delhi government." Further, the Chief Secretary has been directed to prepare an action plan identifying the name of the persons responsible to execute and supervise the plan, and in case of failure, to bear the consequences. "The Delhi government is at liberty to recover the cost of damage to the environment from its officers as well as from the polluters acting in violation of the law," the Bench added. The directions came while the green panel was hearing a plea filed by city residents Satish Kumar and Mahavir Singh alleging pollution caused due to the burning of plastic, leather, rubber and other waste materials on agricultural lands in Mundka and Neelwal villages. The tribunal further, said that a performance guarantee of ₹25 crore has to be provided by the State government and in case of non-compliance of orders, the amount will be forfeited. The Chief Secretary has been directed to file a compliance affidavit by March 31, 2019.

Court orders FIR against builders, officials for stamp duty evasion

(Gns. News) A local court here has ordered registration of an FIR against 28 persons, including 14 builders and six then sub-registrars and joint sub-registrars, for allegedly causing a revenue loss of more than ₹5 crore to Haryana government by way of evasion of stamp duty. The accused officials allegedly colluded with the builders to register 53 agricultural properties falling within the municipal area in Manesar tehsil treating them out of it. It caused a loss of 2% of stamp duty to the government exchequer resulting in a loss of whopping ₹5,09,40,088. The fraud took place from 2009 to 2012. Pronouncing the order in an open court, Judicial Magistrate (First Class) Naveen Kumar, on December 1 directed the registration of the FIR against the 28 named companies/persons under different sections of the IPC, Prevention of Corruption Act and the Information Technology Act. The court has directed the SHO, Manesar to submit the compliance report on its order on the next date of hearing on December 19. The orders came on the complaint of RTI activist Ramesh



Yadav in a plaint filed under Section 156(3) of the Criminal Procedure Code on July 20 last. The accused also include five registry clerks and three computer operators. Mr. Yadav told The Hindu that the stamp duty rate for the properties within the jurisdiction of the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram is 7% but the accused colluded to show these properties in Sihi and Kherki Dhuala as falling out of the municipal limits by tampering with the software and illegally facilitated the registration at 5% rate. "The loss of revenue for each registry of property ranged from ₹10-20 lakh. In some cases, the

residential properties were registered as agricultural land as well," said Mr. Yadav. The RTI activist said he lodged a formal complaint at Manesar police station on April 23, 2016, based on the documents of registry number 310 alleging the fraud, but no action was taken. "On April 28 last, I reported the matter to the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Manesar, and he found during his investigation that the builders and the officials had conspired to commit a fraud in registration of properties. The Gurugram Police Commissioner then wrote to DGP Vigilance who sought permission from the Chief Secretary.

Haryana for investigation into the matter. The Chief Secretary did not grant the permission, but forwarded it to Additional Chief Secretary who in turn sent it to Deputy Commissioner, Gurugram," said Mr. Yadav. He claimed that he also wrote to the Prime Minister's Office in October last. Mr. Yadav said it was just the tip of an iceberg and the total revenue loss could be over ₹100 crore in Gurugram as more such cases of stamp duty evasion are likely.

(Gns. News), Challans will keep increasing as the police have been cracking down on polluting vehicles in the Capital, says a senior traffic police officer. Though pollution in the Capital remains in the 'poor' category, prosecution by the traffic police for plying without a valid Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificate has increased by 334% in the last four years. A traffic policeman said the figure is expected to touch 400% by the end of the year. Between November 1 and 15, the Delhi Traffic Police took action against 4,353 vehicles for plying without valid PUCs in the Capital.

Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Alok Kumar said challans for PUC violations were issued under three categories.

"We fined vehicles for carrying uncovered building material, impounded ones that are 10-year-old [diesel] and 15-year-old [petrol], and penalised others for not having a PUC certificate,"

said Mr. Kumar. He said enough traffic policemen have been deployed across the city, especially along the border areas, to keep check on polluting vehicles entering the Capital.



"Prosecution will keep increasing as the traffic police has been cracking down on polluting vehicles," the officer added. In October, 4,539 vehicles were fined for PUC-related violation. The police said a vehicle plying

without a valid PUC certificate is liable to be prosecuted under the Motor Vehicles Act. There is a penalty of ₹1,000 in case of first offence and ₹2,000 for every subsequent violation. Delhi boasts 388 centres for petrol/

CNG vehicles and 273 centres for diesel vehicles. These centres issue PUC certificates only if a vehicle meets the prescribed emission norms. If it needs necessary repairs or tuning, the PUC certificate is not issued.

KCR being remote-controlled by Centre, says Congress

(Gns. News) Congress president Rahul Gandhi waving at the crowd during an election rally in support of party candidate D.K. Aruna in Gadwal on Monday.

"The Chief Minister can afford to take rest in his farmhouse, but what about people who were denied double bedroom houses?" The All India Congress Committee (AICC) president Rahul Gandhi continued his attack on caretaker Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Naidu, stating that he was being controlled by a remote at the Central government and mortgaged the interests of Telangana to continue his 'Family rule'. At separate election meetings held at Gadwal in Jogulamba Gadwal district and Tandur of Vikarabad district on Monday, he referred to KCR's comment that he would take rest if TRS party is voted out in next elections and said it would be better for people if he takes rest. Unfortunately, he has built a farm

house for taking rest while forgetting the 22 lakh double bedroom houses he promised to build. Less than 5,000 units have been built in the last four-and-a-half years, he said. Mr. Gandhi said Mr. Rao had insulted people of Telangana, referring to his comments at a meeting in Adilabad wherein he apparently said that people are not mature enough to elect the right candidates.

"KCR doesn't have any respect for anyone and he should apologise for his remarks," he said. Reminding the slogan of Telangana movement — Nello, Nidhulu, Niyamakulu (water, funds and jobs), he said KCR has cheated people by enhancing the project costs for commissions. The Palamuru Ranga Reddy project, approved by the previous Congress regime was of about ₹10,000 crore. But TRS Government re-designed it and escalated the cost to ₹60,000 crore. Contractors got money but

people did not get water, he alleged. Mr. Gandhi said corruption and irregularities in Telangana projects have given KCR a new name — Khao Commission Rao. The surplus State of ₹17,000 crore has been bur-

dened with debt of ₹2.5 lakh crore. The TPCC chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy promised that Vikarabad would be brought back under Charminar Zone and Vikarabad town would be developed as satellite city.

Eight women, one minor, go missing from shelter home

Deputy CM Manish Sisodia orders suspension of two officials

(Gns. News) Nine residents of a Delhi government shelter home for girls and young women went missing on Sunday, leading Deputy Chief Minister and Women and Child Development Minister Manish Sisodia to order the suspension of two officials on Monday. Nine residents — one minor and eight adults — were discovered to be missing from the Sanskar Ashram for Girls in Dilshad Garden on Sunday morning. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara) Meghna Yadav said an FIR for kidnapping of the minor had been lodged, while missing person's reports were filed for the adult inmates. In his note to the Chief Secretary, Mr. Sisodia said the incident was "extremely serious and unfortunate". "The Department of Women and Child Development has failed in its duty to provide a safe and secure environment for minor girls who were placed under protection of the State," Mr. Sisodia wrote, directing the CS to suspend the WCD department's district officer for north-east Delhi and the superintendent of the home.

He added that the Delhi Commission of Women (DCW) chairperson Swati Maliwal had raised concerns about previous lapses by the authorities. Urging Mr. Sisodia to take "strict and exemplary disciplinary action against erring officials", Ms. Maliwal said: "These girls were victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation and the possibility of the traffickers or brothel owners kidnapping these girls in connivance with the home authorities or even the child welfare committee [which ordered the transfer] needs to be investigated in detail." In her letter to the Deputy Chief Minister, Ms. Maliwal, said that despite previous complaints and notices issued, authorities failed to take steps against the officials. "Earlier, the DCW received a detailed complaint regarding irregularities in the functioning of the Sanskar Ashram for Girls Home, Dilshad Garden. A specific incident of the treatment meted out to a girl with special needs by the home authorities had been mentioned... the Commission issued a notice to the Department of Women and Child Development and Delhi Police... However, it is submitted that no action was taken by the WCD or the Delhi Police..." read the letter. Ms. Maliwal also asked Mr. Sisodia to make a recommendation for the transfer of investigation to the Crime Branch.

TenderSURE development for Cottonpet Main Road

The Cottonpet Main Road, one of the arterial roads in the congested Central Business District which witnesses a lot of vehicular movement, is all set for a makeover. It will be developed under Tender SURE (Specifications for Urban Roads Execution). The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) will be developing the road that connects the city centre to Mysuru Road, Chamarajpete and other areas in south Bengaluru. Work on the 1.13 km-long road would be taken up soon, beginning with the shifting of utilities, confirmed sources in the BBMP. Cottonpete Main Road was recently in the news after the road caved in near Super Talkies. The road runs over a secondary stormwater drain. The drain is nearly a century old. One of the slabs covering the drain collapsed. This resulted in the road caving in. BBMP officials stated that the entire underground drainage line ran in the secondary drain, which is nearly 10 feet below the surface. "We have fixed the issue. The drain has been linked with a 900 mm diameter RCC pipe, which was later backfilled with wet mix macadam (WMM) and quarry dust. The road was opened to vehicular movement soon after," sources said. The road is one of the six main roads and nearly dozen cross roads, measuring a total of 9.81 km, in the Majestic and K.R. Market areas that are being developed under TenderSURE. BBMP officials stated that the work order was issued in September 2017.

JNU students oppose hike in rate for duplicate documents

(Gns. News) Opposing Jawaharlal Nehru University administration's move to hike fee for documents, marksheets, migration certificates and more, the JNU Students' Union on Monday alleged that the administration has "wasted" money on other ventures while the students are "suffering to make ends meet".

Termining the move as a "unilateral imposition of its anti-student policies", the JNUSU in a statement said: "This fee hike should immediately be taken back or else the Vice-Chancellor will get a befitting reply from the JNU community. It is unfortunate that from the time M. Jagadeesh Kumar took over as V-C, JNU is seeing privatisation, commercialisation and corporatisation of public spaces." In a October 22 notice, that the JNUSU provided, it has been stated that in the 147th meeting of the JNU Academic Council, it was decided that there will be revised rates for duplicate documents. The fee for provisional certificates has been proposed to be raised to ₹100, as opposed to the earlier charge of ₹50. For revaluation of answer scripts, students have to pay ₹40, which is double the amount charged previously. Stating that the administration was not following a "democratic process", the JNUSU in a statement said: "The agenda for fee hike was placed in Part B of the meeting, which is illegal as all student-related and fee-related issues need to be discussed in Part A, where students are a part. The JNU administration has committed twin illegalities." Despite repeated attempts, the varsity authorities could not be contacted for a comment.



Last of Metro fleet to reach city soon

(Gns. News) Standing by: As of now, the 41 trains have been stationed at the Chennai Metro Rail Limited depot in Koyambedu. Standing by: As of now, the 41 trains have been stationed at the Chennai Metro Rail Limited depot in Koyambedu. Will arrive from Sri City on Thursday, closing the final chapter in Phase I Five years after the first train for Chennai Metro Rail made its entry into the city, the 42nd and last train is all set to arrive from Sri City on Thursday, according to sources, fulfilling the requirement for the project's Phase I. Phase I, built at a cost ₹14,600 crore, will have 42 trains manufactured by Alstom running in the 45-km stretch, criss-crossing the city. Of these, nine were manufactured in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and reached the city a few years ago. The remaining 33 were manufactured in Sri City and in the last five years, they were brought in one after the other, depending on the need. All trains have been stationed at the Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) depot in Koyambedu. At present, the Metro runs 25 trains in the 36 km operational in Phase I; but in January next year when the Phase I project would be completed and an additional 9-km stretch would be usable, 10 more trains will be added. According to CMRL officials, during the peak hours, the frequency of services is likely to come down to five minutes from the current seven, by the end of next month. The Chennai Metro Rail will start testing the trains on two stretches — AG-DMS to Government Estate and Chennai Central to Washermanpet — on Tuesday. "These trials will continue for about three weeks during day and night, and in early January we will get the signalling software," an official said. Subsequently, the Commissioner of Metro Rail Safety would come in for the final mandatory inspection and as soon as the approval comes,