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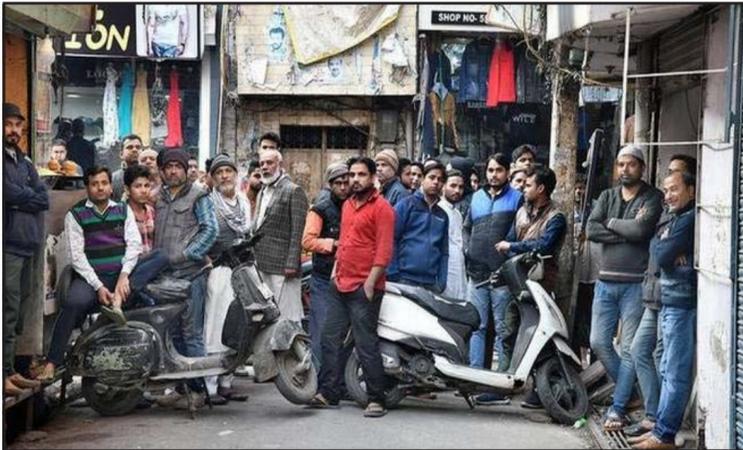
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# NIA busts IS-style module, foils terror strikes in Delhi

(Gns. News), The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday arrested 10 alleged members of an Islamic State (IS)-inspired module and detained six suspects in a joint operation with the Delhi police's Special Cell and the Anti-Terrorist Squad of Uttar Pradesh. The accused persons, from whom a huge stash of bomb-making material, weapons and a country-made rocket launcher have been seized, were planning to target political leaders and security and government installations. NIA Inspector-General Alok Mittal said given the preparation of the module named 'Harkat-ul-Harb-e-Islam', which was active for the past four months and received instructions from an overseas handler via WhatsApp and Telegram mobile chat platforms, terror



## 10 arrested, 6 detained; arms, ammunition seized during raids

strikes in the National Capital Region were imminent. The accused had conducted surveillance of some potential targets. They also intended to carry out "fidayeen" attacks, besides triggering blasts at crowded places, for which they attempted to make bullet-proof vests and remote-controlled bombs, Mr. Mittal said. Five members of the module were arrested in Delhi, and the rest were rounded up in Uttar

Pradesh. While six more suspects are being interrogated, investigations are on to find out if more were involved. The accused are between 20 and 35 years of age. Among those arrested was alleged team head Mufti Mohammed Suhail, a teacher at a madrasa in Amroha and a resident of northeast Delhi's Jaffrabad. He had roped in the others and motivated them to raise funds and procure bomb-

making items and weapons. It was a self-funded module, with the members raising money by selling the gold they had stolen from their houses, the agency said. Mr. Mittal said simultaneous searches at 17 locations in Delhi's Jaffrabad and Seelampur, besides Amroha, Hapur, Meerut and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh had led to seizure of about 25 kg of bomb-making materials like potassium nitrate,

ammonium nitrate, sulphur and sugar material paste; 12 pistols, 150 rounds of ammunition, a country-made rocket launcher, 112 alarm clocks, mobile phone circuits, batteries, 51 pipes and a remote-controlled car's triggering switch. Steel containers, wires, 91 mobile phones, 134 SIM cards, three laptops, a knife and sword, IS-related literature and about Rs. 7.5 lakh in cash were also found.

# Golfer Jyoti Randhawa held on poaching charge

(Gns. News), Golfer Jyoti Randhawa was arrested on Wednesday for allegedly poaching in a forest range in Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh, known for its variety of endangered species, officials said. The international golfer and national shooter and Mahesh Virajdar, who accompanied him, were arrested in Motipur range of Katarniaghat, said Ramesh Pandey, Field Director of the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve. A dead fowl and hides of Sambhar deer and boar were seized from Mr. Randhawa. A .22 rifle, binoculars and range finders were also recovered from his vehicle, which had a Haryana number plate. An officer said Mr. Randhawa appeared to be inebriated. Police slapped serious charges under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and the Indian Forest Act, 1927, against the two. They were produced before magistrate Shikha Yadav, who denied them bail and remanded them in judicial custody for 14 days. The Divisional Forest Officer of Katarniaghat is leading the investigation. He could not be contacted as his phone is switched off. The Katarniaghat



Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in the Upper Gangetic plain falling in the terai of Bahraich district on the Indo-Nepal border. In 1987, it was brought under the purview of the 'Project Tiger.' Spread over more than 400 sq km, it is part of the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve and

provides connectivity between the tiger habitats of Dudhwa and Kishanpur in India and Nepal. An official said forest staff, who were on alert mode owing to their year-end protocol, found the 46-year-old Mr. Randhawa roaming in a "suspicious manner." Mr.

Randhawa was ranked among the world's top 100 golfers between 2004 and 2009. He was married to actress Chitrangada Singh for 13 years before they divorced in 2014. He reportedly owns a farmhouse in Lakhimpur Kheri. Virajdar had served in the Navy as a Captain, a post equivalent to Colonel in the Army and Group Captain in the IAF. He was court-martialled four years ago on charges of financial irregularities. Katarniaghat is home to a wide range of endangered species, including the rhino, Gangetic dolphin, gharial, swamp deer, tiger, white-backed and long-billed vultures and Hispid hare.

# Andhra Pradesh, Telangana to have separate High Courts

(Gns. News), Following a Supreme Court order to the Centre to notify the bifurcation of the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana High Courts by January 1, President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday ordered the separation of the "common" Hyderabad High Court into the two separate High Courts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Both will function separately from January 1, 2019. The principal seat of the Andhra Pradesh High Court is Amaravati, the capital of the State. The High Court in Hyderabad will function separately as the High Court of the State of Telangana. Sixteen HC judges, including Justice Ramesh Ranganathan, who is now the Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court, shall become judges of the Andhra Pradesh High Court from January 1. The new Telangana High Court will have a sanctioned strength of 10 judges. The Presidential notification quoted Article 214 of the Constitution which provides that there shall be a High Court for each State. The other judges of the Andhra Pradesh High Court are Justices Chagari Praveen Kumar, Sarasa Venkatanarayana Bhatti, Akula Venkata Sesha Sai, Dama Seshadri Naidu (now working on transfer as a Kerala High Court judge), Mandhata Seetharama Murthi, Upmaka Durga Prasad Rao, Talluri Sunil Chowdary, Mallavolu Satyanarayana Murthy, Gudiseva Shyam Prasad, Kumari Javalakar Uma Devi, Nakka Balayogi, Telaprolu Rajani, Durvasula Venkata Subramanya Suryanarayana Somayajulu, Kongara Vijaya Lakshmi and Manthoj Ganga



Rao. The Telangana High Court judges are Justices Puligoru Venkata Sanjay Kumar, Mamidanna Satya Ratna Sri Ramachandra Rao, Adavalli Rajashekar Reddy, Ponugoti Naveen Rao, Challa Kodandaram Chowdary, Bulusu Siva Sankara Rao, Dr. Shameem Akther, Potlapalli Keshava Rao, Abhinand Kumar Shavili and Todupunuri Amarnath Goud. The Presidential notification pointed out that under the

Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, both States were to have a common high court, till separate ones were formed. It mentioned the Supreme Court order that there was "no embargo for the Competent Authority to issue a notification bifurcating the High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad into the High Court of Telangana and the High Court of Andhra Pradesh, respectively, and such a notification to be issued by the 1st

day of January, 2019 so that the two High Courts start functioning separately and the High Court of Andhra Pradesh also starts functioning in the new building at the earliest." It mentioned that Justice R. Subhash Reddy, now a Supreme Court judge and formerly a judge of the common High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad, "had exercised the option for allocation to High Court for the State of Telangana."

# Paper cups may be exempted

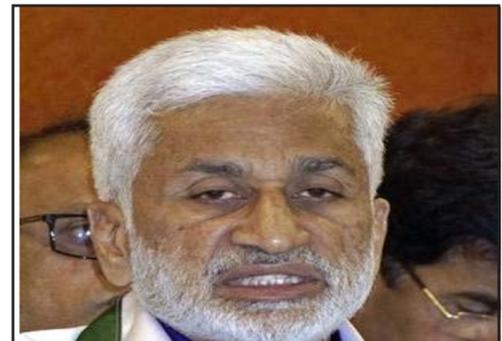
Minister for Environment K. C. Karuppannan on Wednesday said that the government was considering the possibility of exempting paper cups from the plastic ban to be effected from January 1. Addressing a regional-level coordinators meeting at the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board head office here, he said that since the cups had just 6% plastic content by way of a coating, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami was considering the representations made by various associations to exempt them. The Minister said that a request to exempt non-woven bags with bamboo handles, used by textile shops (called kattapai in popular parlance), was also under consideration since these bags could be reused. He also added that the State government was encouraging companies to set up units to generate power from garbage. Minister for Fisheries D. Jayakumar, who spoke about the dangers of plastic pollution in the oceans, said that in many cases of whale and shark deaths, plastics had been found inside the carcasses. "Microplastics have been found inside fish and even humans. We need to take drastic steps to reduce pollution," he added. Representatives of plastic manufacturers associations including G. Sankaran and B. Swaminathan have questioned the rationale behind the proposed exemption. "The same logic would



apply to several other banned items. In the same breath, the government can order an increase in the thickness of shopping bags so that they can be reused," Mr. Sankaran said. Addressing a regional-level coordinators meeting at the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board head office here, he said that since the cups had just 6% plastic content by way of a coating, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami was

considering the representations made by various associations to exempt them. The Minister said that a request to exempt non-woven bags with bamboo handles, used by textile shops (called kattapai in popular parlance), was also under consideration since these bags could be reused. "What is applicable to paper cups can be applied for all banned items from the perspective of hygiene," Mr. Swaminathan added.

# YSRCP to stage dharna in New Delhi today



(Gns. News), The YSR Congress Party will stage a dharna in protest against the failure of the Central and State governments on Special Category Status (SCS) to Andhra Pradesh and other benefits promised in the Re-organisation Act, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Thursday. YSRCP Rajya Sabha member V. Vijaya Sai Reddy, former MP's Mekapati Rajamohan Reddy and Y. V. Subba Reddy, and senior leader Botcha Satyanarayana, addressing the media in New Delhi on Wednesday, said party leaders would participate in the dharna. They also released a poster on the programme. Vijayawada Central coordinator and former MLA Malladi Vishnu, addressing the media here, said the party was seeking only what was required to the State. The TDP and the BJP were allies for four years, he said, and added that the parties were now playing the blame game.

# Making all-out efforts to oust Modi: Naidu



(Gns. News), Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday gave a call to people to oust Narendra Modi to ensure development in Andhra Pradesh, and said he had been making efforts to form a new strong front against the BJP. Addressing a large gathering at the 11th Dharna Porata Deeksha here, Mr. Naidu asked people to uncover the face of Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, who was surreptitiously supporting the BJP compromising the interests of the State, particularly the SCS. In the same breath, the Chief Minister asked Jana Sena Party founder Pawan Kalyan to come clean on whom he would

support in the coming general elections. Blaming political parties for serving only a particular community, the Chief Minister said the TDP backed the 'have-nots' and the poorer sections. Mr. Naidu advised the workers and leaders to eschew their ego and work together for the victory of the party, as according to him it was a historical necessity. Indicating that there could be changes in the candidates for the Assembly and the parliamentary constituencies, Mr. Naidu promised to take into consideration the feelings of the local people before finalising a name. Asking party workers not to sleep or take

things for granted in the next four months, he sought their cooperation in selecting the right candidates and ensuring their victory so that all the 14 Assembly and the two Lok Sabha seats from the district could be won. Promising to release water to Madakasira and Hindupur areas very soon, he said once storage started at Polavaram from May 2019, the region would start getting abundant water from the Krishna. "Inter-linking of rivers is the priority of the government and very soon 1 crore acres would be irrigated." J.C. Diwakar Reddy and Nimmala Kishappa, MPs, also spoke.

## Editorial

## No lessons learnt: on Meghalaya mining disaster

The disaster that struck a coal mine at Ksan in Meghalaya's Jaintia Hills district on December 13, trapping at least 13 workers, is a shocking reminder that a fast-growing economy such as India continues to allow Dickensian mining practices. India being home to some of the worst mine disasters, such as Chasnala near Dhanbad in 1975 in which more than 370 people were killed, the full spectrum of mining activity should be tightly regulated. Yet, the Ksan mine, referred to as a rat hole, was allowed to function in violation of not just safety norms but a complete prohibition issued by the National Green Tribunal. Clearly, the administration did not act to stop unscrupulous operators of the illegal mine from exploiting desperate workers, some of them from Assam, who were willing to work the rat hole tunnels because that is the most remunerative employment available to them. Unscientific mining led to a collapse of the chamber and deadly flooding followed. After disaster struck, it was incumbent on the Meghalaya government to launch an immediate rescue effort. But it did not possess the equipment to dewater the stricken mine quickly, and did not show any urgency in requisitioning it from elsewhere, in spite of the involvement of the National Disaster Response Force. The families of the workers are now left hoping for a miracle. Meghalaya has no excuse for not closing down such dangerous mines. What it can and should do now, jointly with the Assam government where needed, is to offer adequate compensation and jobs for the next of kin of the workers without delay. NDRF personnel engaged in rescue operation at the coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district. File photo in Meghalaya, where it took 15 deaths for the reality of illegal mining to hit hard. Official inquiries into flooding disasters at approved mines, including Chasnala, have shown serious shortcomings in safety management. Two years ago, a landslide at an open cast mine in Goda, Jharkhand, killed 23 people, raising questions about the rigour of the technical assessment done prior to expansion of extraction activity. A study on three big flooding accidents published in 2016 by the IIT-Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad, concluded that the official approach of fixing responsibility on human error was flawed, since it did not try to identify the root cause. There is little evidence to show that pre-mining surveys and safety protocols are incorporating such advice. The case of illegal mines falls in a different category. Unapproved work, which appears to have led to the Meghalaya accident, cannot continue, and employment should be provided to those who are displaced. Illegal mining has been highlighted by activists, but they have become targets of violence by those operating the mines. In the glare of national attention, Chief Minister Conrad Sangma has acknowledged that illegal mining does take place. His government has been remiss as it failed to act on the NGT's directions. It must bear responsibility for what has happened at Ksan, and work to prevent such tragedies.

## Abandoned on the battlefield



(Gns. News), U.S. President Donald Trump's recent decision to pull American troops out of Syria is a body blow to the Syrian Kurds, the unsung heroes of the war against the Islamic State (IS). The U.S. began bombing the IS in September 2014 after the jihadist group announced a new Caliphate with territories spread across the Iraqi-Syrian border. But the bombing campaign remained largely ineffective until the U.S. found a partner on the ground to take on IS positions.

The decline of the IS actually began in Kobane, a largely Kurdish-populated Syrian town on the Turkish border, in January 2015. At that time, the group was fast-expanding from eastern Syria, where it established its de facto capital in Raqqa, to the border towns in the northeast. The Turkish-Syrian border remained porous, allowing the IS to transport militants in and out of Syria freely. It was the height of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-declared Caliph's bloodbath campaign. It laid siege to the city of Kobane. After a six-month-long battle, the People's Protection Units (YPG), the militia of the Syrian Kurdistan, recaptured the battered city and ousted the IS. The U.S. provided air cover. It was after the battle for Kobane that then U.S. President Barack Obama realised the real strategic potential of the Kurdish rebels. The Kobane experience was repeated in nearby towns. The YPG freed Tal Abyad in July and moved to oust the IS from the Syria-Turkish border region. After these initial victories, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a coalition of Kurdish, Arab and Assyrian militias and led by the YPG, was formed in 2015 with the blessings of the U.S. It has since become the official defence force of the Syrian Kurdistan (commonly known as Rojava). The U.S. doesn't have a major troops presence in the region. Since Mr. Obama sent some 50 commandos to advise the Kurds in 2015, the number of American troops has grown to at least 2,000. But in the territories east of the Euphrates that are part of the Rojava, the U.S. has built massive military infrastructure — it has at least a dozen military bases, including four air-

fields. This American-Kurdish partnership has been a success story. Within three years of its formation, the SDF has defeated the IS in most of the territories the group held. After capturing the (Kurdish) border areas, the SDF moved to Arab-populated towns in the east such as Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor and freed them one after the other. The IS, which once claimed territories as big as the United Kingdom, has now been confined to some narrow pockets on the Iraqi-Syrian border. But the U.S.'s support for the Kurds and their military victories has irked another country in the region — Turkey. A NATO member and an American ally, the YPG (the main component of the SDF) has close ties with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), the Kurdish militant group on the Turkish side which is seen as a terrorist organisation by both Ankara and Washington. Abdullah Ocalan, one of the founding leaders of the PKK who has been imprisoned in Turkey since 1999, is revered in Rojava as well. So Turkey fears the military mobilisation of the Rojava would embolden the PKK. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has also been upset that the U.S. has been backing the Kurdish rebels, who he often refers to as terrorists. Turkey's attack on Afrin, a predominantly Kurdish town on the Syrian side, in January this year was born out of this security concern. Mr. Erdogan wants to create a buffer between the Turkish border and the Rojava. The plan is to capture the border region from Kurdish militants and hand it over to pro-Turkey rebel groups — there are Turkmen and Arab rebels in Syria who get aid from Turkey. And if Turkey occupies parts of Syria on the border — Turkish-backed militants operate in Idlib, a rebel-held territory — it will also give Turkey a seat on the high table to find a solution to the Syria crisis. But a major impediment to execute this plan has been the continuing U.S. presence in Rojava. The Afrin attack was limited in scale. Since then, Mr. Erdogan has on several occasions made empty threats to send troops to other areas, including Manbij, where U.S. troops are present.

## Winter bear hug: on weakening stocks

(Gns. News), U.S. President Donald Trump probably did not have his best Christmas this year. American stocks suffered their worst Christmas-eve loss in market history with the Dow Jones Industrial Average losing a massive 650 points on Monday, a drop of almost 3% within a single trading session. Mr. Trump has been keen on projecting the stock market's performance as a gauge of how well the U.S. economy is doing under his presidency. While U.S. and global stocks performed extremely well in the first year of Mr. Trump's presidency, they haven't lived up to his expectations this year. The Dow Jones, now down almost 19% from its peak in early October, is clearly teetering near bear market territory. The index is down about 12% since the beginning of the year. The S&P 500 is already more than 20% down from its intra-day peak during the year, thus meeting the common definition of a bear market. And the Japanese Nikkei index dropped 5% on Christmas day. The Christ-



mas-eve slump in the U.S. came after Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin's statement on Sunday announcing the convening of the President's Working Group on Financial Markets,

colloquially known as the Plunge Protection Team, that last met in 2008 in the midst of the global financial crisis. Investors interpreted the statement as a sign of possible trouble brewing within

the financial system, thus contributing to at least some of the panic in the markets on Monday.

It is no surprise that stocks in the U.S. and around the world have shown signs of weakness

just around the time the Federal Reserve and other major Western central banks have been keen on ending the era of easy money by tightening monetary policy. Many major indices have either broken their short-term uptrend or struggled to go past their most recent highs. Mr. Trump has expectedly been public about his criticism of Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, who has surprised many by sticking to his plan of gradual rate hikes despite U.S. inflation being comfortably below the Fed's target rate of 2%. He fears that rising interest rates could derail economic growth that has been quite ro-

bust in recent times and affect his popularity. Historically, politicians have generally favoured easy money policies represented by low interest rates while central bankers have insisted on sticking to their primary mandate of controlling price inflation. So the battle between the President and the Federal Reserve Chairman is not completely surprising, except for Mr. Trump's criticism of the Fed. What is important to observe is how markets, which have now clearly begun to price in the effects of tighter monetary policy around the world, will fare in the era of more normalised interest rates.

## Imran's distorted logic



(Gns. News), On Christmas, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan tweeted: "His [Muhammad Ali Jinnah's] struggle for a separate nation for Muslims only started when he realised that Muslims would not be treated as equal citizens by the Hindu majority. Naya Pak is Qaid's Pak & we will ensure that our minorities are treated as equal citizens, unlike what is happening in India." Mr. Khan has no reason to boast about Pakistan's treatment of its minorities and advise India to take a lesson from it. Pakistan is denuded of most of its Hindu population. It threatens the life and livelihood of its small Christian minority through instruments such as the blasphemy law. India's treatment of its minorities may be less than perfect, but for Mr. Khan to suggest that his country's record in this arena is superior is an exercise in vulgarity. Mr. Khan's attempt to justify Jinnah's "wisdom" in demanding Partition demonstrates his ignorance of the disastrous consequences of this act for Indian Muslims. Partition, by giving off the Muslim majority areas, reduced the Muslim population of India from more than a quarter to 10%, thus enormously weakening their political clout in the country. The position of Indian Muslims today would have been infinitely better had India not been divided. Hindu nationalists would have remained marginal in the politics of the country, as they had been before Partition. No one would have said "Go to Pakistan!" if someone expressed genuine concern about discrimination against Indian Muslims, as actor Naseeruddin Shah did. The Muslim League was established in 1906 to protect the interests of Indian Muslims where they were most vulnerable, namely, the Muslim minority provinces. By demanding Partition, Jinnah distorted the very raison d'être of the Muslim League by leaving Muslims in the minority provinces far more vulnerable, with their loyalty suspect, than they would have been in undivided India. Jinnah's two-nation theory should have been declared dead following the separation of Bangladesh, which was home to most of Pakistan's population, from West Pakistan. The massacre of approximately 300,000 Bengalis, 90% of them Muslim, by the Muslim Pakistan army and its local Muslim allies in 1971 should have been enough to thoroughly discredit the theory that Muslims of the Indian subcontinent formed one nation distinct from the Hindus. For Mr. Khan to justify the creation of Pakistan and the validity of Jinnah's ill-conceived and self-serving theory with reference to the plight of India's Muslims adds insult to the injury that Indian Muslims suffered owing to Partition. In fact, he owes Indian Muslims an apology on his behalf and on behalf of his Qaid-e-Azam for the division of India that rent asunder the Indian Muslim community.

## Being a good neighbour

(Gns. News), If South Asia is one of the world's least integrated regions, India is one of the world's least regionally-integrated major powers. While there indeed are structural impediments (posed by both India and its neighbours) in fostering regional integration, the most significant handicap is New Delhi's ideational disinclination towards its neighbourhood. Successive regimes have considered the neighbourhood as an irritant and challenge, not an opportunity. Seldom have India's policies displayed a sense of belonging to the region or a desire to work with the neighbourhood for greater integration and cooperation. Today, we have become even more transactional, impatient and small-minded towards our neighbourhood which has, as a result, restricted our space for manoeuvre in the regional geopolitical scheme of things.

Which ever way one looks at it, India's neighbourhood policy is at a critical juncture: while its past policies have ensured a steady decline in its influence and goodwill in the region, the persistent absence of a coherent and well-planned regional policy will most definitely ensure that it eventually slips out of India's sphere of influence. India's foreign policy planners therefore need to reimagine the country's neighbourhood policy before it is too late. The Narendra Modi government's neighbourhood policy began exceptionally well with Mr. Modi reaching out to the regional capitals and making grand foreign policy commitments. But almost immediately, it seemed to lose a sense of diplomatic balance, for instance, when it tried to interfere with the Constitution-making process in Nepal and was accused of trying to influence electoral outcomes in Sri Lanka. While India's refugee policy went against its own traditional practices, it was found severely wanting on the Rohingya question, and seemed clueless on how to deal with the political crisis in the Maldives. Despite their characteristic bravado and grandstanding, the BJP government's foreign policy mandarins looked out of their depth. While it is true that 2018 seems to have brought some good news from the regional capitals, it has less to do with our diplomatic finesse than the natural course of events there. The arrival of an India-friendly Ibrahim Mohamed Solih regime in Male has brought much cheer, and the return of Ranil Wickremesinghe as Sri Lanka's Prime Minister is to India's advantage too. Nepal has reached out to India to put an end to the acrimony that persisted through 2015 to 2017. Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh are also positively disposed towards India, though the relationship with Pakistan continues to be testy and directionless. What this then means is that New Delhi has a real opportunity today to recalibrate its neighbourhood relations. First, let's briefly examine what should not be done in dealing with a sensitive neighbourhood. For one, India must shed its aggression and deal with tricky situations with far more diplomatic subtlety and finesse. The manner in which it weighed down on Nepal in 2015 during the Constitution-making process is an example of how not to influence outcomes. The ability of diplomacy lies in subtly persuading the smaller neighbour to accept an argument rather than forcing it to, which is bound to backfire.



Second, it must be kept in mind that meddling in the domestic politics of neighbour countries is a recipe for disaster, even when invited to do so by one political faction or another. Preferring one faction or regime over another is unwise in the longer term. Take the example of incumbent Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena. There was a great deal of cheer in New Delhi when he took office in January 2015 (with some saying India helped him cobble together a winnable coalition) after defeating Mahinda Rajapaksa, considered less well disposed toward India. However, Mr. Sirisena's political transformation was quick, as were India's fortunes in Colombo, at least temporarily. Third, New Delhi must not fail to follow up on its promises to its neighbours. It has a terrible track record in this regard. Fourth, there is no point in competing with China where China is at an advantage vis-à-vis India. This is especially true of regional infrastructure projects. India simply does not have the political, material or financial wherewithal to outdo China in building infrastructure. Hence India must in-

vest where China falls short, especially at the level of institutional-building and the use of soft power. However, even in those areas China seems to be forging ahead. India must therefore invest a great deal more in soft power promotion (and not the Hindutva kind of outreach). To begin with, India could expand the scope and work of the South Asian University (SAU), including by providing a proper campus (instead of allowing it to function out of a hotel building) and ensuring that its students get research visas to India without much hassle. If properly utilised, the SAU can become a point for regional integration. Finally, while reimagining its neighbourhood policy, New Delhi must also look for convergence of interests with China in the Southern Asian region spanning from Afghanistan to Nepal to Sri Lanka. There are several possible areas of convergence, including counter terrorism, regional trade and infrastructure development. China and India's engagement of the South Asian region needn't be based on zero-sum calculations. For ex-

ample, any non-military infrastructure constructed by China in the region can also be beneficial to India while it trades with those countries. A road or a rail line built by China in Bangladesh or Nepal can be used by India in trading with those countries.

Going forward, New Delhi must invest in three major policy areas. There needs to be better regional trading arrangements. The reason why South Asia is the least integrated region in the world is because the economic linkages are shockingly weak among the countries of the region. The lead to correct this must be taken by India even if this means offering better terms of trade for the smaller neighbours. While it is true that long "sensitive lists" maintained by South Asian countries are a major impediment in the implementation of SAFTA, or the South Asian Free Trade Area, India could do a lot more to persuade them to reduce the items on such lists. Second, several of India's border States have the capacity to engage in trading arrangements with neighbouring countries. This should be made easier by the government by way of constructing border infrastructure and easing restrictions on such border trade. Second, India prefers bilateral engagements in the region rather than deal with neighbours on multilateral forums. However, there is only so much that can be gained from bilateral arrangements, and there should be more attempts at forging multilateral arrangements, including by resurrecting the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Third, India must have a coherent and long-term vision for the neighbourhood devoid of empty rhetoric and spectacular visits without follow up. We must ask ourselves, as the biggest country in the South Asian neighbourhood, what kind of a region do we want to be situated in, and work towards enabling that.

## The shape of growth matters

(Gns. News), The intent to change the approach to planning from preparations of plans and budgets to the creation of a mass movement for development in which "every Indian recognises her role and experiences the tangible benefits" is laudable. The strategy affirms that "policy-making will have to be rooted in ground realities" rather than economic abstractions. It says that stakeholders have been consulted widely in preparing the strategy, which is also something that the erstwhile Planning Commission said. However, what matters is the quality of consultations. It will be worthwhile for NITI Aayog to get feedback from stakeholders on whether it has improved the process of consultation substantially or not. The strategy emphasises the need to improve implementation of policies and service delivery on the ground, which is what matters to citizens. Its resurrection of the 15 reports of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission and recommendation that they must be implemented vigorously are welcome. The previous government had taken its eye off the ball. It did not put its weight behind the implementation of these well-thought-out recommendations, which had the endorsement of all political parties, by a Commis-



sion it had supported. Employment and labour reforms, the second chapter in the strategy, have rightly been given the highest priority, which was not the case in the previous plans. Overall growth is also emphasised by NITI Aayog: "Besides having rapid growth, which reaches 9-10 per cent by 2022-23, it is also necessary to ensure that growth is inclusive, sustained, clean and formalised." However, it is the shape of growth that matters more than size. The employment-generating capacity of the economy is what matters more to citizens than the overall GDP growth rate. There is no joy for citizens if India is the fastest-growing economy and yet does not provide jobs and incomes.

The growth of industry and manufacturing is essential to create more employment, and to provide bigger opportunities to Indians who have been too dependent on agriculture so far. Here, too, it is not the size of the manufacturing sector that matters but its shape. Labour-intensive industries are required for job creation. If the manufacturing sector is to grow from 16% to 25% of the GDP, which the strategy states as the goal, with more capital-intensive industries, it will not solve the employment problem. The strategy does say that labour-intensive industries must be promoted, but the overall goal remains the size of the sector. What one measures, one manages. Therefore, the goal must be clearly

set in terms of employment, and policies and measurements of progress set accordingly. Indian statistical systems must be improved quickly to measure employment in various forms, formal as well as informal. The strategy highlights the urgency of increasing the tax base to provide more resources for human development. It also says financial investments must be increased to strengthen India's production base. Managing this trade-off will not be easy. If tax incentives must be given, they should favour employment creation, not more capital investment. A big weakness in the Indian economy's industrial infrastructure is that middle-level institutions are missing. Rather than formalising small enterprises excessively, clusters and associations of small enterprises should be formalised. Small enterprises cannot bear the burden of excessive formalisation — which the state and the banking system need to make the informal sector 'legible' to them. Professionally managed formal clusters will connect the informal side of the economy with its formal side, i.e. government and large enterprises' supply chains. NITI Aayog's plan for industrial growth has very rightly highlighted the need for strong clus-

ters of small enterprises as a principal strategy for the growth of a more competitive industrial sector. The strategy on labour laws appears pedestrian compared with the ambitious strategy of uplifting the lives of millions of Indians so that they share the fruits of economic growth. It recommends complete codification of central labour laws into four codes by 2019. While this will enable easier navigation for investors and employers through the Indian regulatory maze, what is required is a fundamental reorientation of the laws and regulations — they must fit emerging social and economic realities. First, the nature of work and employment is changing, even in more developed economies. It is moving towards more informal employment, through contract work and self-employment, even in formal enterprises. In such a scenario, social security systems must provide for all citizens, not only those in formal employment. Indeed, if employers want more flexibility to improve competitiveness of their enterprises, the state will have to provide citizens the fairness they expect from the economy. The NITI Aayog strategy suggests some contours of a universal social security system. These must be sharp-

## Migrant boy dies in custody



An eight-year-old Guatemalan migrant boy died early on Christmas Day after being detained by border agents, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) said, the second migrant child to die in U.S. detention this month. The boy and his father were in CBP custody on Monday when a Border Patrol agent noticed the child showing signs of illness. CBP said in a statement. The father and son were taken to the Gerald Champion Regional Medical Center in Alamogordo, New Mexico, where the boy was diagnosed with a common cold and fever, and eventually released by hospital staff. But later that evening, the boy began vomiting and was transferred back to the hospital. He died there early on Tuesday, CBP said, adding that the official cause of death was not known. The father and son were not identified, and the agency said it would release more details "as available and appropriate." Guatemalan officials have been notified of the death, CBP said. The boy's death followed the death in early December of seven-year-old Jakelin Caal, also from Guatemala. She died after being detained along with her father by U.S. border agents in a remote part of New Mexico. After the second death, the CBP announced it was developing several policy changes late on Tuesday. It will conduct secondary medical checks on all children in its custody, with a focus on those under 10, the agency said in a release. The agency will also work with Immigration and Customs Enforcement to improve custody options, such as better transportation to Family Residential Centers and supervised release, and working with non-governmental agencies for housing. Guatemala's Foreign Ministry said its consul in Phoenix was seeking to interview the boy's father, to whom it pledged to give all necessary consular assistance and protection. In a statement, the Ministry said it also requested medical reports to clarify the cause of death. According to the Ministry, the boy and his father entered the United States via El Paso, Texas, on December 18.

## Trump signals no end to shutdown

(Gns. News), President Donald Trump said he would do "whatever it takes" to get money for border security. A shutdown affecting parts of the federal government appeared no closer to resolution on Wednesday, with President Donald Trump and congressional Democrats locked in a hardening standoff over border wall money that threatens to carry over into January. Mr. Trump vowed to hold the line, telling reporters as he flew to Iraq that he'll do "whatever it takes" to get money for border security. He declined to say how much he would accept in a deal to end the shutdown, stressing the need for border security. "You have to have a wall, you have to have protection," he said. The shutdown lasted Saturday when funding lapsed for nine Cabinet-level departments and dozens of agencies. Roughly 4,20,000 workers were deemed essential and are working unpaid, while an additional 3,80,000 have been furloughed. While the White House was talking to congressional Democrats and staff, talks on Capitol Hill negotiations dragged Wednesday, dimming hopes for a swift breakthrough.

With no deal at hand, members of the House were told there would be no votes on Thursday, assuring the shutdown would last yet another day. Lawmakers are away from Washington for the holidays and have been told they will have 24 hours' notice before having to return for a vote. The Senate is slated to come into session on Thursday



afternoon. Rep. Mark Meadows of North Carolina, a Trump ally who has been involved in the talks, said the president "is very firm in his resolve that we need to secure our border." He told CNN, "I don't know that there's a lot of progress that has been made today." But he added of Democrats, "If they believe that this President is going to yield on this particular issue, they're misreading him." The impasse over government funding began last week, when the Senate approved a bipartisan deal keeping government open into February. That bill provided \$1.3 billion for border security projects but not money for the wall. At Mr. Trump's urging, the House ap-

proved that package and inserted the \$5.7 billion he had requested. Congress MLC moves court on merger 'Vihari has a sound technique' 'Mitchell will reduce pacers' workload' Not the right time to appeal Sterlite verdict: Vaiko Israel to hold early election in April: Netanyahu spokesman Mattis leaving Pentagon sooner than planned, Patrick Shanahan to take over as acting Secretary Mayank and Vihari to don openers' role Top news of the day: PM inaugurates Bogibeel bridge; Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh CMs expand Cabinets What do they know of women's cricket who only women's cricket know? Congress MLC moves court

on merger 'Vihari has a sound technique' 'Mitchell will reduce pacers' workload' Not the right time to appeal Sterlite verdict: Vaiko Israel to hold early election in April: Netanyahu spokesman Mattis leaving Pentagon sooner than planned, Patrick Shanahan to take over as acting Secretary Mayank and Vihari to don openers' role Top news of the day: PM inaugurates Bogibeel bridge; Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh CMs expand Cabinets What do they know of women's cricket who only women's cricket know? Congress MLC moves court on merger 'Vihari has a sound technique' 'Mitchell will reduce pacers' workload' Not the right time to appeal Sterlite verdict: Vaiko

## 14-hr raid on Jaffrabad houses after arrest of terror suspects



(Gns. News), Anas and Mufti Mohammad Suhail were among the arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), in a joint operation with the Delhi police's Special Cell and the Anti-Terrorist Squad of Uttar Pradesh, for their alleged link with an ISIS-inspired terror group. The group was allegedly planning suicide attacks and serial blasts targeting politicians and government installations in Delhi and other parts of north India. Mohammad Younus, who has a plaster of Paris business, stays with his family — wife, daughter and son. At 4.30 a.m., at least 25 police personnel, including women SWAT commandos, NIA officers and Delhi policemen, entered the narrow lanes in Jaffrabad and knocked on his house. "I heard a commotion outside Younus's house, located opposite to my house. When I peeped from my window, I saw about 25 armed policemen wearing bulletproof jackets in the lane. A man wearing a black mask [Anas] was in police custody. A little later, all of them went inside Younus's house," said a neighbour, Faheem. Faheem added that they were in shock after they got to know about Anas's involvement in terror-related activities. Recalling his last interaction with Anas at a nearby masjid, he said, "Anas was an introvert. He was pursuing engineering from a college in Noida. Younus's family has a good reputation in the locality. Younus was always concerned about his children's future. His daughter has also applied for higher studies," said Faheem. The team left the house with Anas and four cartons of 'documents' recovered from his room. Family members of another terror suspect, Mufti Mohammad Suhail, arrested from Amroha in Uttar Pradesh where he was preaching Quran at a madrasa, lives a few metres away from Anas's house said that they cannot believe whatever has been told to them regarding their son. "At 4.30 a.m., a group of policemen knocked on my gate. They searched the entire house and left after confiscating mobile phones of all family members," said Mohammad Zubair, Suhail's elder brother.

## U.S. offers safety, job security to Taliban: report

(Gns. News), The U.S. is eager to persuade the Taliban to join the peace process in Afghanistan and is offering a safety network that includes job opportunities for the insurgents, a media report said Thursday. As the U.S., Pakistan, China, Russia and other world powers expedite efforts to encourage the Taliban to join the Afghan peace process, the U.S. Defence Department has also outlined a plan for rehabilitating the rebels in a new Afghanistan, the Dawn reported. "Although some members of the Taliban may be weary of fighting and ready to lay down their weapons, they will only rejoin society if they believe their safety and the safety of their families are guaranteed, and if they have an opportunity to earn enough money to provide for their families," the report said, quoting a Pentagon plan sent to Congress this week, along with the proposals for addressing U.S. security concerns and the interests of Afghanistan's neighbours. The Pentagon, however, notes that while local leaders are developing programmes that may offer a path to peace on a small scale, "the Afghan government has not developed a national reintegration programme," it said. Eager to persuade Taliban to join the Afghan peace process, the U.S. is offering them a safety network that includes creating job opportunities for the insurgents, the report said. While the Trump administration appears keen to start withdrawing U.S. troops from Afghanistan, the Pentagon advocates maintaining enough troops in Afghanistan to force the Taliban to join peace talks. Over the past 16 months, the U.S. and its partners have used military force to drive the Taliban towards "a durable and inclusive political settlement", the report said. "Although some members of the Taliban may be weary of fighting and ready to lay down their weapons, they will only rejoin society if they believe their safety and the safety of their families are guaranteed, and if they have an opportunity to earn enough money to provide for their families," the report said, quoting a Pentagon plan sent to Congress this week, along with the proposals for addressing U.S. security concerns and the interests of Afghanistan's neighbours.

The Pentagon, however, notes that while local leaders are developing programmes that may offer a path to peace on a small scale, the Pentagon plan claims that this selective use of force persuaded the Taliban to accept the Eid ul Fitr ceasefire in June. Even though the Taliban did not publicly accept the second ceasefire offer, "there're indicators of support within the Taliban senior leadership and a desire to pursue negotiations," it adds. The Taliban have held talks with U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in Qatar, where the Afghan insurgent group has a political office.



The talks were aimed at renewing the Afghan peace process and eventually winding down America's longest war. The Pentagon also supports the peace process initiated by U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation (SRAR) Khalilzad, who has already held meetings with the Taliban in Qatar and the UAE and regularly visits Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries, like Pakistan and India, the report said. "Increased military pressure on the Taliban, international calls for peace, and the new SRAR's engagements appear to be driving the Taliban to

negotiations," says the Pentagon plan. It, however, acknowledges that the Taliban control large portions of Afghanistan's rural areas, and continue to attack poorly defended government checkpoints and rural districts. A key element in the Pentagon's proposal for persuading the Taliban to stay engaged in the peace process is to "ensure the long-term sustainability of the Access Network Discovery and Selection Function (ANDSF)", which would "demonstrate to the Taliban the international communities' firm resolve in Afghanistan", the report said.

## No partying beyond 1 a.m. in Chennai this New Year



"Organisers of festivities should obtain proper permission, follow all safety requirements and install CCTV units to cover all areas. We re-emphasised the need to install CCTV units at all entry and exit points, even on roads leading from the premises and specifically in the bar area," he said. "We have told them to not turn a blind eye to illegal activities, including consumption of drugs, and to inform the police," Mr. Agarwal said. "In case they don't inform us and if it comes to our notice, we will definitely proceed against them," he added. Those with a 12-hour licences should stop liquor service by midnight, while those with a 24-hour licence can continue to serve beyond midnight. But, the celebrations would have to end by 1 a.m. Representatives of hotels were also told to deploy a sufficient number of drivers so their guests could avoid drunk driving and accidents. "We are going to deploy a sufficient number of bouncers, security guards and drivers to avoid untoward incidents. We are going to frisk the guests properly when they enter the hotels," said V. Suresh, manager of a hotel. Those with a 12-hour licences should stop liquor service by midnight, while those with a 24-hour licence can continue to serve beyond midnight. But, the celebrations would have to end by 1 a.m. Representatives of hotels were also told to deploy a sufficient number of drivers so their guests could avoid drunk driving and accidents. "We are going to deploy a sufficient number of bouncers, security guards and drivers to avoid untoward incidents. Hotel staff were also told not to erect any stage or pandal near swimming pools. Pandal or stages could be erected only after obtaining permission from authorities.

## Indonesia reroutes all flights around erupting Anak Krakatau volcano



(Gns. News), Indonesia on Thursday raised the alert level for the erupting Anak Krakatau volcano to the second-highest, and ordered all flights to steer clear, days after it triggered a tsunami that killed at least 430 people. A crater collapse on the volcanic island at high tide on Saturday sent waves up to 5 metres (16 feet) high smashing into the coast on the Sunda Strait, between the islands of Java and Bali. Authorities have warned that the crater of Anak Krakatau, or child of Krakatau, remains fragile, raising fears of another collapse and tsunami, and have urged residents to stay away from the coast.

The volcano has been rumbling on and off since July but has been particularly active since Sunday, spewing lava and rocks, and sending huge clouds of ash up to 3,000 metres into heavily overcast skies. The national geological agency, in raising the alert level to the second-highest, set a 5-km exclusion zone around the island. "Since December 23, activity has not stopped... We anticipate a further escalation," said Antonius Ratdomopurbo, secretary of the geological agency. A thin layer of volcanic ash has been settling on buildings, vehicles and vegetation along the west coast of Java since late on Wednesday, according to images shared by the national disaster mitigation agency. Authorities said the ash was not dangerous, but advised residents to wear masks and goggles when outside, while aircraft were ordered away. "All flights are rerouted due to Krakatau volcano ash on red alert," the government air-traffic control agency AirNav said in a release. Authorities have warned that the crater of Anak Krakatau, or child of Krakatau, remains fragile, raising fears of another collapse and tsunami, and have urged residents to stay away from the coast. The volcano has been rumbling on and off since July but has been particularly active since Sunday, spewing lava and rocks, and sending huge

clouds of ash up to 3,000 metres into heavily overcast skies. The civil aviation authority said no airports would be affected. The capital, Jakarta, is about 155 km east of the volcano. In 1883, the volcano then known as Krakatoa erupted in one of the biggest blasts in recorded history, killing more than 36,000 people in a series of tsunamis and lowering the global surface temperature by one degree Celsius with its ash. Anak Krakatau is the island that emerged from the area in

1927 and has been growing ever since. Indonesia is a vast archipelago that sits on the Pacific 'Ring of Fire'. This year, the country has suffered its worst annual death toll from disasters in more than a decade. The latest tsunami disaster, coming during the Christmas season, evoked memories of the Indian Ocean tsunami triggered by an earthquake on Dec. 26, 2004, which killed 226,000 people in 14 countries, including more than 120,000 in Indonesia.

## A Valley of pain and sorrow



(Gns. News), In what's termed Srinagar Biennale, 14 artists belonging to Kashmiri Pandit community that was forced to flee the State and the Muslim community have come together to give expression to the region's pain and sorrow. Artist Veer Munshi has curated the segment, part of the infra-projects conceived by the biennale curator Anita Dube. Showcased at TKM Warehouse in Mattancherry, the central work of the project features a structure shaped like a Sufi dargah. Mr. Munshi said that the nurturing structure borrowed elements from Kashmiri architecture, reinforced by secular values. "Sufi shrines are considered a common place where all could go and pray," he said. "The idea is to showcase how spaces like these have got marginalised," said the artist, from Srinagar, but based in Delhi now. Inside the shrine are baby coffins with papier-mâché bones and skulls. The installation is surrounded by works of other artists. The art comes in the form of performances, paintings, photographs, papier-mâché works and new media mix. Srinagar Biennale documents the migration and alienation faced by the Kashmiris. "Most Kashmiri artists have been in and out of the Valley since the 1990s," said Mr. Munshi, alumnus of the MS University of Baroda. "While some belonging to the minority Hindu community fled as part of mass exodus, the others, mostly Muslims, stayed back. Both have suffered in these shrinking cultural spaces." Artist Gargi Raina's work has crows as messengers, while Saeed Bhatt's work talks how violence and conflict become memory and, inversely, memory becomes trauma. Mujtaba Rizvi juxtaposes his own images with those who have disappeared in Kashmir. His series, titled 'If there's a son that she could kiss', started as a performance wherein the artist sought to present an image to Praveena Ahangar. That's the name of the man whose son, Javaid Ahangar, was picked by the security forces two decades ago.

## American adventurer completes solo trek across Antarctica

(Gns. News), An American adventurer has become the first person to complete a solo trek across Antarctica without assistance of any kind. Colin O'Brady (33), took 54 days to complete the nearly 1,000-mile (1,600-km) crossing of the frozen continent from north to south. "I accomplished my goal: to become the first person in history to traverse the continent of Antarctica coast to coast solo, unsupported and unaided," Mr. O'Brady wrote in an Instagram post after covering the final 77.5 miles in 32 hours. "While the last 32 hours were some of the most challenging hours of my life, they have quite honestly been some of the best moments I have ever experienced," he wrote. "I was locked in a deep flow state the entire time, equally focused on the end goal, while allowing my mind to recount the profound lessons of this journey. I'm delirious writing this as I haven't slept yet." His voyage was tracked by GPS, and live updates of the trip were provided daily on his website colinobradyc.com. Mr. O'Brady and an English-



man, Army Captain Louis Rudd (49), set off individually on November 3 from Union Glacier in a bid to be the first to complete a solo, unassisted crossing of Antarctica. In 1996-97, a Norwegian polar explorer, Borge Ousland, made the first solo crossing of Antarctica but he was wind-aided by kites on his

voyage. Mr. O'Brady and Mr. Rudd set off on cross-country skis dragging sleds called pulks which weighed nearly 400 pounds (180 kilograms). Mr. O'Brady reached the South Pole on December 12, the 40th day of his journey. He arrived at the finish point on the Ross Ice Shelf on the Pacific Ocean on Wednes-

day after covering a total of 921 miles. Mr. Rudd is about a day or two behind. Mr. O'Brady said he made the decision over breakfast to finish his journey in one continuous push. "As I was boiling water for my morning oatmeal, a seemingly impossible question popped into my head," Mr. O'Brady wrote on Instagram.

**A.P. and Telangana to have separate HCs**



Following a Supreme Court order to the Centre to notify the bifurcation of the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana High Courts by January 1, President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday ordered the separation of the "common" Hyderabad High Court into the two separate High Courts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Both will function separately from January 1, 2019. The principal seat of the Andhra Pradesh High Court is Amaravati, the capital of the State. The High Court in Hyderabad will function separately as the High Court of the State of Telangana. Sixteen HC judges, including Justice Ramesh Ranganathan, who is now the Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court, shall become judges of the Andhra Pradesh High Court from January 1. The other judges of the Andhra Pradesh High Court are Justices Chagari Praveen Kumar, Sarasa Venkatanarayana Bhatti, Akula Venkata Sesha Sai, Dama Seshadri Naidu (now working on transfer as a Kerala High Court judge), Mandhata Seetharama Murti, Upmaka Durga Prasad Rao. Sixteen HC judges, including Justice Ramesh Ranganathan, who is now the Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court, shall become judges of the Andhra Pradesh High Court from January 1. T Talluri Sunil Chowdary, Mallavolu Satyanarayana Murthy, Gudiseva Shyam Prasad, Kumari Javalakar Uma Devi, Nakka Balayogi, Telaprolu Rajani, Durvasula Venkata Subramanyo Suryanarayana Somayajulu, Kongara Vijaya Lakshmi and Mantho Ganga Rao.

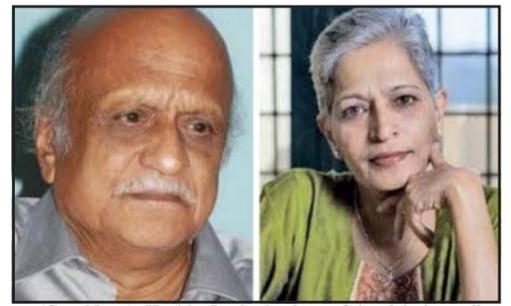
**Convicts threatening us, claim Latehar lynching victims' families**

Relatives of two cattle traders who were killed in Jharkhand's Latehar district by suspected cow protection vigilantes in March 2016 have claimed threat to their lives and urged the State High Court not to grant bail to the killers who were convicted by the trial court last week. Eight persons were sentenced to life imprisonment on December 21 for beating to death Majlum Ansari (32) and Imtiaz Khan (12), who were reportedly taking their cattle to a village fair for sale, and hanging their bodies from a tree on March 17, 2016. Those convicted in the case are Manoj Sahu, Pramod Sao, Awadhesh Sao, Mithilesh Sao, Manoj Kumar Sao, Arun Sao, Sahadev Soni and Bishal Tiwari. At a press conference on Wednesday, Majlum's wife Saira Bibi and elder brother Afzal said the killers had threatened the relatives of the victims with dire consequences. Afzal said the family had been going through tough times after the murder of Majlum, a father of five children. Imtiaz's parents Azad Khan and Nazma Bibi said their lives were shattered after the death of their 12-year-old son. Imtiaz, a Class VI student, used to assist his father in his business. Afzal



of further attacks, Azad Khan shut his shop and his younger son dropped out of school. Nazma Bibi said the family did not even have enough money to get their two daughters married. "I request the government to provide proper security to my family. Also, the State government should provide financial assistance and a job to us," Nazma Bibi added. The relatives said they had not got enough compensation from the government. The two families

**Kavitha Lankesh to implead in SC case**



(Gns. News), Kavitha Lankesh, sister of the slain journalist-activist Gauri Lankesh, is all set to implead herself before the Supreme Court opposing any move to transfer the murder probe to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). This follows the observation of the Supreme Court, hearing a petition filed by the family of another slain scholar M.M. Kalburgi seeking a speedy probe, that a single agency, the CBI, should probe into all the four murders — of Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare, M.M. Kalburgi, and Gauri Lankesh — as there was a common thread among them. It is alleged that they were targeted by a single unnamed right wing group. Meanwhile, Megha Pansare, daughter-in-law of Govind Pansare, said that the family was also opposed to the probe into the murder of Pansare being handed over to the CBI. sfer the murder probe to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). This follows the observation of the Supreme Court, hearing a petition filed by the family of another slain scholar M.M. Kalburgi seeking a speedy probe, that a single agency, the CBI, should probe into all the four murders — of Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare, M.M. Kalburgi, and Gauri Lankesh — as there was a common thread among them. The case in the Supreme Court has been posted for hearing in the first week of January 2019. Meanwhile, Kalburgi's son Sreevijaya said that they had not specifically sought a CBI probe, but would abide by the decision of the Supreme Court.

**'BNP leader will be brought to justice'**

(Gns. News), If the Awami League returns to power in the December 30 election, the Sheikh Hasina government will push for the extradition of Tarique Rahman, the acting chairperson of the main Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, to be punished for his crimes. Ms. Hasina said this in an interaction with Indian journalists on Wednesday. Mr. Rahman is the son of late President Ziaur Rahman and former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. He has been living in London after his party lost the election a decade ago. "Of course, I will try [to bring back Mr. Rahman]. He is our citizen and committed many crimes in this country... He is convicted in cases related to money laundering and the grenade attack of August 21 [2004], where many of our workers, including our leader Ivy Rahman was killed, [though] I was the target... He should be brought back to this country." Bangladesh and Britain do not have an extradition treaty but Dhaka pushed for the pact last April during Foreign Secretary-level talks



in London, mainly to bring Mr. Rahman back. Indian foreign intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing, has repeatedly claimed that Mr. Rahman has strong connection with Pakistan's intelligence agency, Inter-Services Intelligence. "We are negotiating with the British government to bring him back," Ms. Hasina said to a separate question. She did not deny limited ISI activity in Bangladesh and accused the BNP of "taking money from Pakistan".

**Resolution row: AAP, Congress in war of words**



(Gns. News), Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh on Wednesday hit out at Delhi Congress president Ajay Maken on Twitter saying that the deposits of his party candidates would be forfeited in the Lok Sabha elections again. Mr. Singh was replying to a tweet by Mr. Maken who shared a news story on how AAP may have jeopardised a possible alliance in the 2019 general election over the demand to withdraw the Bharat Ratna awarded to former PM Rajiv Gandhi. Reacting to Mr. Singh's statement, Delhi Congress chief spokesperson Sharmistha Mukherjee said that AAP leaders were living in an illusory world.

**Ahead of CM's tour, farmer's kin detained**

(Gns. News), The day-long visit of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis to Dhule and Nandurbar districts on Wednesday was marred by controversy after security personnel took into preventive custody the son and wife of late farmer Dharma Patil to ensure that they did not create any "commotion". Dharma Patil, 84, died in January this year after consuming poison at the Mantralaya in Mumbai. He was demanding higher compensation for his five-acre mango farm in Dhule, which had been acquired by the Maharashtra State Power Generation Company Limited (Mahagenco) in 2012 for a solar power project. The detention of Patil's son, Narendra and his wife, Sakhubai, led to protests from the opposition including the Congress in Dhule and the Sambhaji Brigade in Pune. "At a time when farmers are committing suicides, the least the Chief Minister could have done was to have met with the kin of Dharma Patil, who lost his life because of bureaucratic apathy. Instead they have been thrown into a police cell," said Jayantkumar Sonawane of the Dhule Youth Congress. Santosh Shinde of Sambhaji Brigade



called the police's action as "outrageous". "Dharma Patil gave up his life fighting for justice... if this is how the present BJP government honours his memory by placing his son and wife into preventive custody, then all farmers and their sons will bring down this government in 2019," said Mr. Shinde. Patil, along with his son, had come to the Mantralaya in Mumbai on January 22 to seek an audience with the concerned ministers over the inadequate compensation offered to them for their land which was acquired for the Methi-Vikhran solar power plant. When he could not meet any minister or official, he consumed pesticide in despair and died at Mumbai's JJ Hospital a week later.

**Television services will not be affected, says TRAI**

**Pay and watch**  
MRP of some popular standard definition (SD) pay channels

Star Plus	₹19 for SD
Star Sports 1	₹19 for SD
CNN News 18	₹2 for SD
Colours	₹19 for SD
Asianet	₹19 for SD
Animal Planet	₹2 for SD
Discovery Channel	₹4 for SD
ETV	₹17
NDTV 24x7	3 for SD

(SOURCE TRAI)

(Gns. News), The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Wednesday clarified that customers will not face any disruption of their TV services due to implementation of its new regulatory framework for broadcasting and cable services. The new framework, which comes into force from December 29, allows consumers to select and pay only for the channels they wish to view, and requires the TV broadcasters to disclose maximum retail price of channels individually as well as of bouquets. "The Authority has noticed that there are messages circulating in the media that there may be a black-out of existing subscribed channels on TV screens after December 29. The Authority is seized of the matter and hereby advises that all Broadcasters/DPOs/LCOs will ensure that any channel that a consumer is watching today is not discontinued on 29.12.2018,"

a TRAI statement said. Keeping in view the interest of the subscribers and to enable a smooth transition, the Authority is preparing a detailed Migration Plan for all the existing subscribers. "The migration plan will provide ample opportunity to each and every subscriber for making an informed choice. "The Authority has noticed that there are messages circulating in the media that there may be a black-out of existing subscribed channels on TV screens after December 29. The Authority is seized of the matter and hereby advises that all Broadcasters/DPOs/LCOs will ensure that any channel that a consumer is watching today is not discontinued on 29.12.2018,"

"Further, if a consumer carefully chooses channels of his choice for complete requirement of a family, the amount payable by him may be even less than the present payments being made per month. Some of the probable packs in different markets have been compiled by TRAI." "Further some broadcasters with wider presence have reduced the price of their channels recently. The published prices as declared by broadcasters are offered prices and not the final market determined prices. The Authority expects the market forces to stabilise the prices soon based on economic principles," it said. The TRAI, in its FAQs on the new norms, has reasoned that after digitization of cable TV networks in March 2017, there was an urgent need to improve transparency as many stakeholders were not providing choice to consumers. It said the consumer becomes the real decision-maker now.

**Captured elephant moved to camp**



(Gns. News), The wild elephant that was captured in Kukkuwadeshwari of Channagiri Range Forest, on Tuesday, was shifted to the Sakrebaitu elephant camp near here on Wednesday. Chandra-shekhar, Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife division) told The Hindu that the 35-year-old male elephant, has been kept in a kraal and will be trained by mahouts and kavadis. The farmers of Ubrani hobli had urged the Forest Department to capture the elephant and translocate it as they suspected it of damaging their fields. The operation to capture it was launched on December 21.

**Taiwanese launch yellow vest movement to protest taxes**



Thousands of demonstrators turned out Thursday for the third time in a week to demand lower taxes and the fair handling of tax disputes. Wearing yellow vests, they shouted slogans outside the Ministry of Finance in Taipei and waved banners calling Taiwan's tax collection policies illegal. A ministry official said earlier this week that it had addressed some of the complaints of anti-tax activists on its website. Protest organizers say they're inspired by the success of the recent French protests, which were sparked by a tax hike for gasoline and diesel. French President Emmanuel Macron eventually agreed to a number of steps including an increase in the minimum salary for full-time workers.

**Shah picks poll managers**

(Gns. News), BJP president Amit Shah on Wednesday made large-scale appointments of poll managers for various States in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha election. The most significant was the appointment of former Gujarat Minister and sometime dissident against Prime Minister Modi, Govardhan Zadaphia, as in charge of Uttar Pradesh. Appointments were made for poll in-charges for 17 States, with Mr. Zadaphia sharing the responsibility for Uttar Pradesh with party vice-president Dushyant Gautam and Madhya Pradesh leader Narottam Mishra. Mr. Zadaphia, formerly a member of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and office-bearer of the party's farmers cell, is considered close to the RSS and was Home Minister of Gujarat during the post-Godhra riots of 2002. After having revolted against the leadership in the run-up to the 2007 elections, he rejoined the party after 2012 and worked on the ground for the BJP during the 2017 Assembly elections. The BJP's recovery in Rajasthan to a respectable defeat from what was predicted to be a rout in the current round of Assembly poll has netted then poll in-charges, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar and party spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi the assignment of taking care of the party's prospects for the Lok Sabha poll. For Prime Minister Modi's home State of Gujarat, the party has continued with Om Mathur. Among others appointed to various States are Union Minister Thawarchand Gehlot for Uttarakhand, Mahendra Singh for Assam, and Rajya Sabha MP V. Murale-

State	In Charge
Uttar Pradesh	Govardhan Zadaphia
	Dushyant Gautam
	Narottam Mishra
Andhra Pradesh	V. Muralaiah
	Sunil Deodhar
Assam	Mahendra Singh
Bihar	Bhupendra Yadav
Chhattisgarh	Anil Jain
Gujarat	Om Mathur
Himachal Pradesh	Teerath Singh Rawat
Jharkhand	Mangal Pandey
Madhya Pradesh	Swatantrdev Singh
	Satish Upadhyaya
Manipur and Nagaland	Nalin Kohli
Odisha	Arun Singh
Punjab & Chandigarh	Captain Abhimanyu
Rajasthan	Prakash Javadekar
	Sudhanshu Trivedi
Sikkim	Nitin Naveen
Telangana	Arvind Limbavali
Uttarakhand	Thawarchand Gehlot

edharan and Sunil Deodhar for Andhra Pradesh. BJP general secretaries Bhupendra Yadav and Anil Jain will retain their portfolio of Bihar and Chhattisgarh respectively. Party vice-president Arun Singh retains charge of Odisha, where the BJP hopes to net some seats. For Madhya Pradesh, where the BJP narrowly lost the Assembly election this month, Swatantrdev Singh and former Delhi BJP president leader Satish Upadhyaya have been appointed. The most significant was the appointment of former Gujarat Minister and sometime dissident against Prime Minister Modi, Govardhan Zadaphia, as in charge of Uttar Pradesh. Appointments were made for poll in-charges for 17 States, with Mr. Zadaphia sharing the responsibility for Uttar Pradesh with party vice-presi-