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Modi government's only agenda is to defame one family, says Sharad Yadav

(Gns. News), New Delhi
 Opposition leader Sharad Yadav on Sunday said the Narendra Modi government's only agenda was to defame one family and portray that the country made no progress after independence. Mr. Yadav's remark comes after the ED told a Delhi court hearing the Agusta Westland VVIP chopper case that middleman Christian Michel was misusing legal access by passing chits to his advocates asking them how to tackle questions on Congress leader Sonia Gandhi. In a statement, Mr. Yadav, now a Congress ally, said the BJP government at the Centre was indulging in "cheap politics" and had extradited Michel to divert the people's attention from the Rafale deal and other issues. Opposition parties have alleged corruption in the purchase of Rafale aircrafts from France, a charge rejected by the government. "I have no hesita-



Opposition parties have alleged corruption in the purchase of Rafale aircrafts from France, a charge rejected by the government.

tion in saying that the ruling party is playing cheap politics by pressuring investigation agencies to name Congress leaders in the alleged misdeed in the Agusta Westland case," Mr.

Yadav said. People are not so foolish. They can see through the government's hidden agenda, he added. Mr. Yadav said the Modi government should tell the people what

has it done for them since 2014. Michel, who was extradited from Dubai recently, was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate on December 22 and produced before a special

court on Saturday which extended his custody by seven days. He was earlier lodged in Tihar Jail in the related Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) case.

Congress says govt using its agencies to pressure Christian Michel to name a particular family

(Gns. News), New Delhi
 Congress leader and spokesperson R.P.N. Singh, File ED tells court he was misusing legal access by passing chits to lawyers, asking them how to tackle questions on "Mrs Gandhi". The Congress has accused the BJP-led Union government of using its agencies to put pressure on alleged middleman Christian Michel, arrested in the Agusta Westland VVIP chopper case, to name a particular family as elections were nearing and it had no real issues. The Congress's reaction came after a Delhi court which is hearing the case, on Saturday, imposed restrictions on Michel meeting his lawyers in Enforcement Directorate (ED) custody after the agency said he was misusing legal access by passing chits to lawyers, asking them how to tackle questions on "Mrs Gandhi". Christian Michel mentioned Sonia Gandhi to lawyers, says ED; gets his custody for 7 more days. Congress spokesperson R.P.N. Singh said: "We have seen what the BJP has been do-



ing in this matter. In fact, one of the television channels showed how there is pressure on Christian to name a particular family."

On the ED's claim that Michel had spoken about the "son of an Italian lady" and how he was go-

ing to become the next prime minister of the country, Mr. Singh said, "The BJP scriptwriters are working overtime." Attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the Rafale fighter jets deal, he said action should be taken against

him as there was "complete proof". The Modi dispensation was "trying to pressure government agencies to name a person," he alleged. "But the person who has done the biggest 'chori' [theft] cannot be spared," he added.

Easy to spread negativity; let's make positivity viral: PM

(Gns. News), New Delhi
 The highest United Nations Environment award, 'Champions of the Earth' was also conferred upon India, Modi said in his address. "If your resolve is strong, if your fervour, your enthusiasm is without bounds, all your hurdles halt in their tracks" Spreading negativity is fairly easy, but people must come together to make positivity viral. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on December 30, adding that collective efforts of the people have ensured that India achieved a lot in 2018. Addressing the last episode of the year of his monthly 'Mann ki Baat' radio address, he also said if the resolve is strong, hardships fail to turn into obstacles. "I sincerely hope that India's journey on the path of advancement & progress continues through 2019 too. Taking her to newer heights with her inner strengths...let's come together to make positivity viral. I do believe that by doing so, more and more people will get to know about our heroes who brought a change in society. Spreading negativity is fairly easy. But some really good work is being done around us..." Modi said. He said several websites are spreading positive news and people should share their links so that positivity can be made viral. He noted that the year 2018 saw the launching of the world's biggest health insurance scheme 'Ayushman Bharat' "Electricity reached each and every village of the country



this year. Noted world institutions have accepted that the country has taken strides in the area of poverty alleviation at a record pace. On account of the unwavering resolve of our countrymen, swachhata, the sanitation coverage, is rapidly advancing towards crossing the 95 per cent mark," the PM said. For the first time ever after Independence, the Tricolor was hoisted at Red Fort besides the independence day celebrations. This was done to mark the 75th anniversary of the formation of the

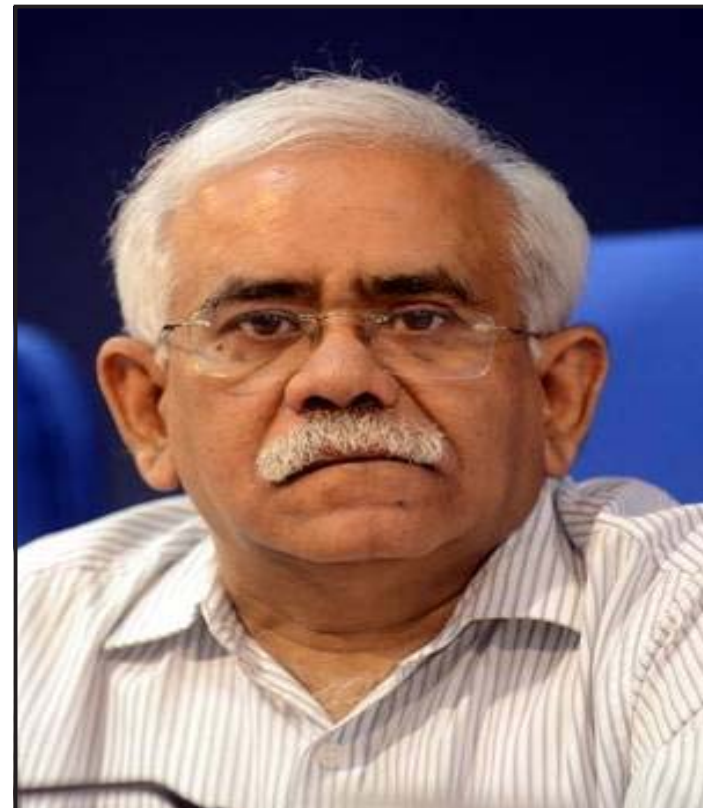
Azad Hind Government, he recalled. To honour Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, world's tallest statue, the Statue of Liberty, was unveiled, he said, adding that recently he had also announced 'Sardar Patel Award' for National Integration to be given to those who have contributed for national unity in any form. The highest United Nations Environment award, 'Champions of the Earth' was also conferred upon India, Modi said in his address. "The world duly took notice of India's efforts in the areas of solar energy and climate change ... It is due to our collective efforts that our country has seen unprecedented improvement in the 'ease of doing business' rankings. "The country's self defence mechanism got further reinforced. It was during this

very year that our country has successfully accomplished the Nuclear Triad, which means we are now armed with nuclear capabilities in water, on land and in the sky," the PM said. He was referring to the first combat patrol carried out by nuclear submarine INS Arihant recently. He also referred to achievements made by sportsmen at various international events, including para Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and Youth Olympics. The PM also paid obituaries to people with modest backgrounds who made their mark in social service and had passed away in 2018. "If your resolve is strong, if your fervour, your enthusiasm is without bounds, all your hurdles halt in their tracks. Hardships can never turn into obstacles," he said.

Sudhir Bhargava named new Chief Information Commissioner, govt. appoints four information commissioners

(Gns. News), The government has appointed Sudhir Bhargava as Chief Information Commissioner (CIC), along with four information commissioners, all of whom were bureaucrats, in the Central Information Commission. Mr. Bhargava was Information Commissioner in the CIC. The panel was functioning with three members against the sanctioned strength of 11, including the Chief Information Commissioner. President Ram Nath Kovind has approved the appointment of former IFS officer Yashvardhan Kumar Sinha, ex-IRS officer Vanaja N. Sarna, former IAS Neeraj Kumar Gupta and former law secretary Suresh Chandra as information commissioners in the panel, a government order, accessed by PTI, said. Mr. Sinha is a 1981-batch Indian Foreign Service officer who was the High Commissioner of India in the United Kingdom. An alumnus of St Michael's High School in Patna and St Stephen's College in Delhi, Mr. Sinha had served a number of important postings in the Ministry of External Affairs including the crucial Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran Division, which he headed for four years as additional secretary. The only woman in the CIC will be Ms. Sarna, a 1980-batch Indian Revenue Service (Customs and Excise) officer, who was the chief of Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC). Neeraj Kumar Gupta, a 1982-batch IAS officer, was secretary in the Department of In-

vestment and Public Asset Management, while Mr. Chandra was an Indian Legal Service officer, who retired as Union law secretary this year. Between 2002 and 2004, Chandra was the private secretary to then law minister Arun Jaitley. All the bureaucrats appointed by the government have retired this year. After recent retirements of Chief Information Commissioner R.K Mathur and Information Commissioners Yashovardhan Azad, Sridhar Acharyulu and Amitava Bhattacharyya, the panel, the highest adjudicating authority in RTI matters, was left with three Information Commissioners, prompting activists to approach the Supreme Court on the issue of vacancies. The Supreme Court had asked the Centre and States to maintain transparency in appointments of Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners and upload the details of search committees and applicants on their website. Commenting on the appointment process, Commodore Lokesh Batra, one of the petitioners in the case, said the government has failed to comply with the Supreme Court directions of posting the details on the website. "As my gut feeling said, the government did not comply with the Supreme Court directions viz transparency as it did not post details on its website," Batra told PTI. During the hearing, the Centre had told the top court that the search committee has shortlisted names for the post of CIC and a final



decision will be taken soon. A bench of Justices A.K Sikri, S Abdul Nazeer and R Subhash Reddy asked the Centre to put on the website details of search committee for CIC and information commissioners. Additional Solicitor General Pinky Anand, appearing for the Centre, had informed the court that a total of 65 applications were received for the CIC post and 280 applications for the post of four ICs in the Central Information Commission. She had said after these

posts are filled up, notification will be issued for inviting applications for remaining posts of ICs. The Centre seems to have ignored the plea of former Information Commissioner Sridhar Acharyulu who had called for adequate representation of non-bureaucrats in the commission in accordance with the Right to Information (RTI) Act. Citing Section 12(5) of the RTI Act, he had written to the President that the Act provides for selecting people of eminence.

Driver of Opposition alliance wagon doesn't even have learner's licence, says Naqvi

Taking a swipe at Congress president Rahul Gandhi for his efforts to form a front to take on the BJP in 2019 polls, Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said on Sunday the driver of the opposition alliance wagon doesn't even have a learner's licence and could drive it into a ditch. Mr. Naqvi also said it was out of compulsion that some opposition leaders, even the experienced ones, are backing Mr. Gandhi. "On one hand there is Narendra Modi and on the other is Rahul Gandhi, who works for four days and then he is on a picnic for four months, while Prime Minister Modi, in the last four years, has not taken leave even for four-and-a-half hours. This is the difference," he told PTI in an interview. Talking about the opposition alliance, the Minority Affairs Minister said a big coalition was being formed against the BJP and he has been told that National Conference (NC) chief Farooq Abdullah is coordinating it. Mr. Naqvi said the NC chief is an experienced politician and senior people should understand that the "person sitting on the driver's seat of the alliance's wagon does not even have a learner's licence and (therefore) whether this wagon will be driven into a ditch or dumped elsewhere, the experienced people should know." "Itne khiladi ek anari ke peeche chal rahe hain toh hum kya kar sakte hain (so many experienced people are walking behind a novice, so what can we do)," the 61-year-old leader said. Exuding confidence Mr. Naqvi also exuded confidence that the performance of the BJP and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls will match the 2014 showing. "Last time we fought the election on Narendra Modi's 'naam' (name), this time we are fighting the polls on his 'kaam' (work)," the Rajya Sabha MP said. Asked if there was any merit in the opposition argument that the BJP lost the polls in the Hindi heartland states of Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh due to agrarian distress, Mr. Naqvi said the BJP did not lose any vote percentage and its seats have also not reduced drastically. "However, in the states we have lost, we will take a feedback and act," he said. As far as agrarian issues are concerned, the first budget of this government had the theme of 'mera gaon, mera desh' whose focus was on farmers, Mr. Naqvi pointed out. "From insurance scheme, soil health cards and neem-coated urea to MSP increase, several steps have been taken in the interest of the farmers. In the coming days we will do more," he said. Asked about incidents of lynchings creating insecurity among minorities, the Minority Affairs Minister said that they should be seen as criminal incidents and not as communal incidents. "This is not only a crime but a heinous crime. State governments also deal with them as criminal incidents and take action against the culprits," he said. "Another important thing is that in any part of the country, no terrorist attack, blast or such activities, have been successful. I am saying this because when a terrorist activity takes place, people get killed, which is very sad, but innocent minorities and people from the Muslim community also suffer."

India-Bhutan ties have stood test of time: Rahul



Bhutanese PM Lotay Tshering meets Congress president Rahul Gandhi in Delhi on Saturday. Congress president meets Bhutanese PM Lotay Tshering on Saturday met Bhutan Prime Minister Lotay Tshering here and discussed the political situation in the region. The meeting took place in a hotel. "I had an excellent meeting today with the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Dr. Lotay Tshering. We discussed the political situation in the region and other matters of common interest. I look forward to continuing our dialogue in the future," Mr. Gandhi said on Twitter. Later, in a Facebook post, he said the India-Bhutan relations had endured the test of time. "It's a relationship that has endured the test of time. We are joined not only by a pleasant past but also by our hopes to create a better future for the region," Mr. Gandhi said. The Bhutanese Prime Minister, on a state visit to India, had met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday. The meeting took place in a hotel. "I had an excellent meeting today with the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Dr. Lotay Tshering. We discussed the political situation in the region and other matters of common interest. I look forward to continuing our dialogue in the future," Mr. Tshering arrived here on Thursday on his first foreign visit after taking charge as PM of the Himalayan nation last month following his party's electoral victory.

Editorial

The travails of the modern icon



Icons have always been a part of memory and heritage, carrying the seal of the sacred. Classical iconography was, in fact, the study of religious icons, an exploration of symbols and their meaning. While iconography has a sense of tradition, modern society looks at its icons differently. The perspective did not always carry the mark of the sacred, but combined folklore and propaganda in interesting ways. Folklore captures a sense of orality and storytelling in plural ways. Each locality has its own version of the hero and his exploits, providing a sense of a modern epic. Yet, the stories can be deeply plural, reflecting different histories and memories. Shivaji is seen in Maharashtra as the great liberator, but grandmothers in south India used to hushing children to sleep, warning them that Shivaji would come. This sense of plurality was critical and gave to each locality a sense of creating its own icons. Mass culture and state propaganda operate differently. If folklore has a sense of joy, mass culture brings to its icons a sense of frenzy, hysteria, what one can call a modern sense of idolatry. The narrative possesses an official character which creates a grid of uniformity. The stories are hyperbolic, following a grid. Often there is an attempt to rewrite history or give it a caricatured quality. The figure of Rana Pratap is a good example, where attempts have been made to rewrite his fate in the Battle of Haldighati. Modern memory does not take kindly to defeat and populist memory often takes historical memory and alters it. There is a hyperbolic quality to this rewriting but this act differs from a Stalinist rewriting of histories. Stalin took old Russian heroes, stalwarts of the Bolshevik Revolution, especially those who challenged his dominance, and converted them to non-persons, literally erasing their role in history. The fate of the Indian icon has been constructed differently. The poignancy comes from a benign neglect, reducing memory and commemoration to a ritualistic event, an empty marker. In fact, it is interesting to consider the fate of four great modern Indian icons — Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Subhas Chandra Bose. Each followed a different narrative and each suffered what we can call the travails of the modern icon. The Gandhi of the independence movement was every child's icon, hero and idol. But Indian officialdom and the historian created a one-sided Gandhi, a saint rather than an experimental politician. By museum-ising Gandhi, we put his memory into mothballs. He was reduced to a few select anecdotes, a watered-down version who populated textbooks. The uncomfortable questions he raised, the controversies around him were forgotten. From one of the great monuments of the era, he became a memorial and was soon reduced to mnemonic commemorations on birthdays through official clichés. In 2019, it'll be 150 years since his birth, and one realises he is being stripped for official slogans and programmes, where his great quotations become clerical clichés. A Gandhian programme combined the political and the ethical, which Swachh Bharat Abhiyan does not — it is a mere act of governance, a spectacle which has still to encounter untouchability and the septic tank. The career of Bose followed a different trajectory, of erasure and temporary revival. Bose's mystique derived from two sources: from the Azad Hind Fauj which was a counter to Gandhi's satyagrah imagination, and from the mystery of his disappearance. The fact that there is a mystery around his death created a literal industry of inquiries by every opportunistic politician. The sense of possibility, the repeated excitement of the ever revived question, "what if Bose had lived", always gave a sense of alternative possibilities and histories to India. Many people felt that the Indian narrative would have been different. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's attempt to honour the Azad Hind Fauj tried to cater to this obsession. It was an attempt to play down the Nehruvian imagination. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has attempted to capture history by appropriating Congress icons. It is an act of political envy which reveals that the BJP senses its own national heroes as pygmies before this Congress quartet. The fate of Nehru has been the most controversial. The memory of Nehru has been battered by opponents ever since the war with China. Nehru has been unfairly constructed as a Pandora's box of errors since then. People even attributed the roots of the Emergency to his sense of administration. Yet, Nehru pops up like a spring flower after every one of these attacks. The Nehruvian imagination stands like a huge aesthetic canvas despite the BJP's attempt to belittle him. One has to acknowledge that his leadership evoked a different style, a different set of memories from Indira Gandhi's. Nehru's ideas of modernisation still have a political appeal. It was his era that saw the building of the great institutions that Indian modernity talks about. One can criticise their decline, but no one can deny that Nehru brought a magic to modernity and institution-building. A.B. Vajpayee's attempt to give a Nehruvian touch to his politics testified to the validity of the Nehruvian imagination and style. Nehru is a perennial icon, whose ability to survive has made a mockery of his critics. Instead of hyperbolic attacks and hysterical critiques, one senses that a quieter nuanced assessment would have been more devastating and effective. Sadly, balance and fairness elude the fate of the Indian icon who sways between hagiography and hysterical downsizing, both of which reduce Indian history to a comic strip of exaggerations. The recent events around Sardar Patel capture the travails of a modern icon poignantly. Patel, like Bose, was labelled one of the ignored men of modern history, even when both were larger-than-life creatures in folklore. In fact, they did not need the manicuring of history to make them relevant. The BJP's attempt to appropriate Patel is in that sense pathetic, more interesting as a caricature, a case-study in propaganda than a historical ritual of redemption. The BJP tried to appropriate Patel by turning from text to spectacle. They did not rewrite history but claimed that Patel was the real exemplar and paradigm of India's future. It became an example of gigantism, of the regime's attempts to create spectacular monuments which seek to enter popular memory for their statistical prowess, their ability to make the Guinness World Records than to alter historical perception. Patel, for a few months, will be the tallest statue in the world, till the monument to Shivaji upstages him. In fact, monumentality and gigantism compete with neglect and erasure for the fate of an icon. If one creates artificial erasure, the other emphasises exaggerated attention, and in doing so pretends it is rectifying historical injustice. Exaggerated spectacles rarely rectify history, which has a nuance and logic of its own. What the Modi regime does to its favourite icons, Stalin did to production statistics. It creates an ideological frenzy which commemorates and celebrates not the icon, but the regime, serving as a diversion, a disguise for its own narcissistic preoccupations. The humanity, the vulnerability, the ethical genius of each of these exemplars disappears in these acts of exaggeration or downsizing. In fact, it shows that the BJP is afflicted by its own sense of history rather than possessing a sense of poetry, accuracy or authenticity. The sadness is that all four icons understood the limits of power and history. One misses professionalism, the craft of academic scholarship in these moments where contemporary power destroys history for opportunistic reasons.

A tragedy that deserves an intense investigation

A few days ago, when I was preparing to write a light-hearted year-end column, I read a list of some significant media corrections this year, compiled by Alexios Mantzarlis, Director of the International Fact-Checking Network at the Poynter Institute. The list made for an interesting read because no one likes admitting to mistakes but everyone likes reading about them, as Mr. Mantzarlis points out. Two corrections especially stood out for me. The first was by a Brazilian news magazine, *Veja*, which read: "The candidate likes to spend his free time reading Tolstoy, and not watching *Toy Story*, as originally reported." The second was by *The Wall Street Journal*: "Vladimir Putin is president of Russia. An editing mistake erroneously identified him as Vladimir Trump in an earlier version of this article." However, a tragedy stuck on Sunday morning that forced me to change the subject and mood of this column from amusing corrections to the ethics of reporting on health issues, stigma, and public health governance. In Tamil Nadu, a 19-year-old blood donor, whose HIV-infected blood was transfused to a pregnant woman, died after consuming poison. This was undoubtedly an avoidable tragedy. There were multiple failures in this case. The medical professionals in the State did not follow any of the protocols for blood transfusion. The donor was not aware of his HIV-positive status when he donated blood. It was reported



that he was found to be HIV positive when he donated blood in 2016 at the government hospital in his home town, Sivakasi. However, he was not informed of this, nor was there any follow-up. Tamil Nadu was one of the earliest States to come up with effective methods to deal with HIV/AIDS. Suniti Solomon and her team were at the forefront of this fight for decades. In 2015, when Solomon passed away, *The New Yorker* wrote: "As H.I.V. swept across the world, in the mid-nineteen-eighties, no country possessed a more menacing

mix of conditions, predilections, and the kind of poverty likely to hasten an AIDS epidemic than India... Many researchers predicted a crisis unlike those in any other nation. But it never happened — in part because India had Suniti Solomon, the AIDS-treatment pioneer who died on Tuesday, at the age of seventy-six. In 1986, Solomon, a microbiologist then teaching at Madras Medical College, diagnosed the country's first cases." The National Aids Control Organisation, a division of the Health and Family Welfare Ministry,

used to often cite examples from Tamil Nadu as the best practices in blood bank management and retroviral treatments. The Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society is one of the State bodies that controls and operates blood transfusion services, according to the 'Tamil Nadu State Blood Policy and Implementation Framework 2017'. Every unit of blood donated is supposed to be tested for HIV, Hepatitis-B, Hepatitis-C, syphilis, and malaria. In terms of testing quality, the State is ranked among the best in the country. Early this

year, former Health Secretary Keshav Desiraju, along with Samiran Nundy and Sanjay Nagral, published an important book, *Healers or Predators? Healthcare Corruption in India*, a caustic study that showed the mirror to our society and, more specifically, to those associated with the health sector. It elaborated on how healers in many cases are becoming predators. Apart from the terrible personal cost paid by the donor and the recipient due to complete contempt for due process by those who are supposed to protect public health, there are some disturbing questions about how information travelled during this troubled time. Who informed the

19-year-old donor about his HIV status? Were sufficient precautions taken before informing him about the infection? What are the levels of preparedness in dealing with the stigma of HIV-infection in these hospitals? When was the last sensitisation programme held? These are all journalistic questions which need to be asked and probed thoroughly. For nearly a decade, HIV/AIDS was covered extensively in the media and given due importance. Right from the methods of retroviral treatments to relapse, journalists followed the spread and control of the virus. The time has come to examine the status of HIV/AIDS in the country.

Plan before making a bid

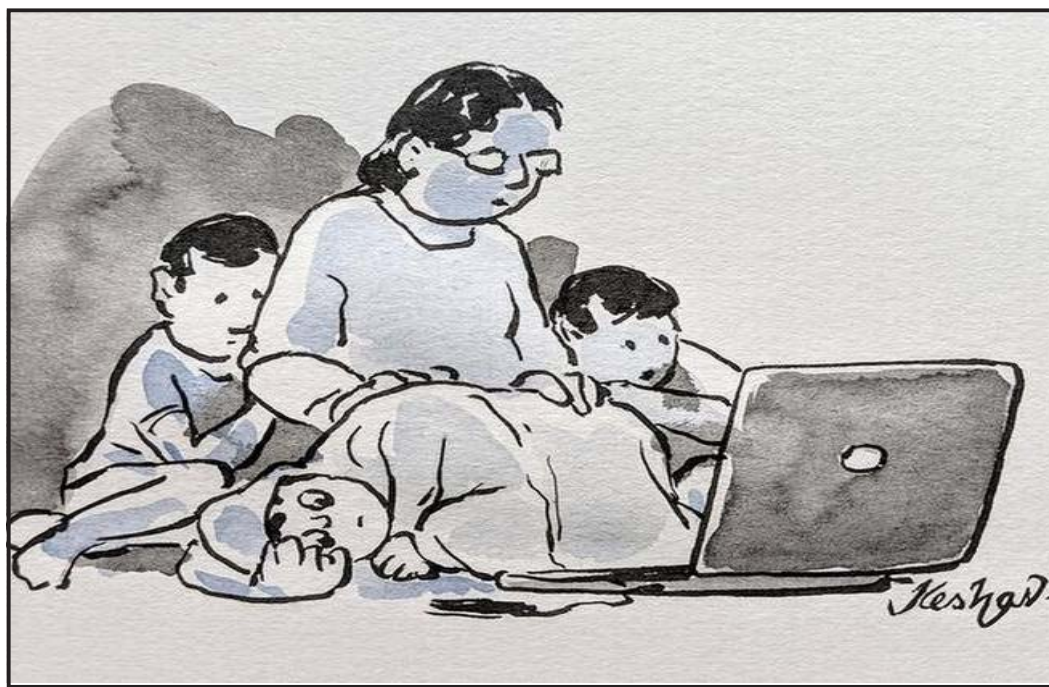


(Gns. News), India has expressed interest to host the 2032 Summer Olympic Games, apart from the 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games and the 2030 Asian Games. The Olympic Games have been designed to leave an indelible mark on host cities, with long-term benefits. However, the Games have proven to be more of a liability than an asset. They have daunted countries even from submitting complete bids. Understanding that bidding itself can be tedious and expensive, the International Olympic Committee introduced a more streamlined mechanism through the Olympic Agenda 2020 and the New Norm. Till now, Olympic bids were made keeping in mind a single city as the venue for the Games. Today, it is almost impossible to find a metropolitan city which can sustain the enormous influx of people and build the infrastructure required to host the Games. In view of this concern, multi-city bids are now welcomed. The Indian Olympic Association must consider several issues if it wishes to host the Games. First, to be considered a sporting powerhouse, India must leave a mark at the 2020 Olympic Games to convince the world that it takes sports seriously. Second, India has hosted only a handful of multisport events, with none really matching up to the grandeur and scale of the Olympic Games. Hosting multisport events in the coming years may prove to be key in cementing its prowess to pull off the mighty event. Third, typically, the Olympic Games are funded through public and private money. Designing a long-term investment plan will ensure high participation from the private sector, reducing the burden on government funds. Fourth, the government should make the most of this opportunity to tackle issues of the environment, waste management, public health, and sanitation, to ensure clean and safe facilities for the Olympic athletes. Fifth, any government would like the prestige of having hosted an Olympic Games during its tenure. Working together with a stable democratic polity would prove to be a huge attraction for participating countries. Finally, identifying locations for hosting the games early on will help create facilities that have a longer life span and would also help reduce costs. Considering India's pressing issues, the need to host the Games is an unending debate. However, creating an Olympic bid with an outlook of primarily channelling development efforts for the country will prove to be a win-win situation. It is only when we view the Games as a long-term development enabler that it can be made a sustainable proposition. Hopefully, a 2032 bid for the Olympic Games by India would prove to be a classic scenario of trusting the process.

Those cosy movie nights

(Gns. News), I was just about to chew my blanket out of anxiety, not wanting to see it but still wanting to see it! That is what happens when someone forces a horror movie on me! My cousins were all having fun watching me perspire, and some were even rubbing salt into the wound by mentioning the ghouls were 'funny' and saying there was no reason to be scared! Another spasm of the ghouls' body and I jumped up, screaming and running out of the room and waking up everybody at home. This is just one of the times we cousins had met over a 'movie night'! When we get together for one such night, it's usually a bragging session, where each one is trying to convince the group to watch a movie they like. And no matter whose suggestion we agree to finally, the end result is always the same: the person whose choice it was ends up getting drowned in the cacophony of the rest of us screaming and shouting about having put us through such a torturous three hours! This reminds me of that one time when my cousin proudly strutted in with his laptop saying he had 'just for us' downloaded his favourite movie and we would be watching that one that night. It was the 'best comedy movie' he had ever seen and we were told we would die laughing! Well, we sure did die, but not of laughing, but by sheer exasperation on what was unfolding on the screen! Leave alone laugh, it failed to elicit even a hint of a smile on any of our faces. And no matter how much that cousin tried to convince us that the next scene will be funny, we finally managed to make him shut up. He remained the butt of jokes through the entire night. And though his movie didn't make us laugh, we still died laughing pulling his leg at the choice of his movie. Meanwhile, he continued whining about how we don't have any 'class' when it comes to movies! I must at this point confess I too have been at the receiving end so many times!

When I'm out of my hometown, movie-watching becomes a very personal experience, in my room, on my laptop! Even in my room, with my roommate, either her or my watching a movie sometimes resulted in very awkward experiences. We never watched a movie together, so it always happened that whenever she was watching one and I was suddenly subjected to an asura-type laughter, I would turn my face up from my book and look at her with a 'what-the-hell-happened' countenance. And the same response I would get when I unleashed my demonic laughter on her! I don't think either of us liked the idea of watching a sob story when the other was in the room... who wants to let everyone know they cry while watching movies? Now here on this campus, movie-watching has taken a different turn altogether, with the 'Movie Club' showing



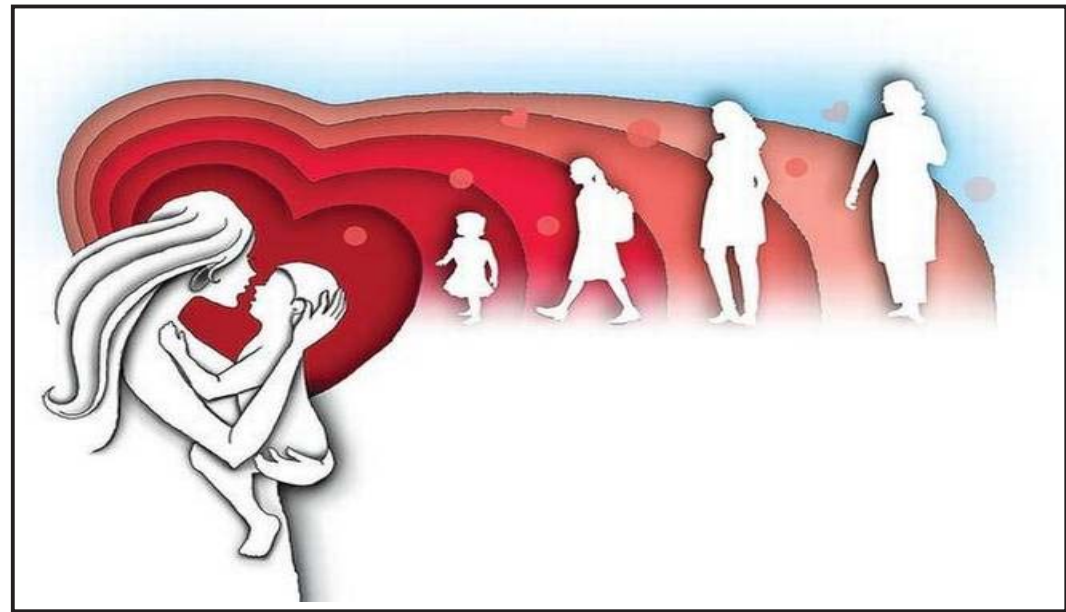
a movie every Friday at 9 in the auditorium. I love watching movies at the campus auditorium because I enjoy the environment the campus brings... those hoots, cat-calls... the whistles when the hero or heroine finally achieves what he/she set out for, or the solemn claps at the end as a mark of respect to the maker if it's a serious movie! The experience of watching movie in an auditorium full of youthful millennial

campus students is a different experience altogether. Not that I'm very old myself! There's definitely some charm that these cosy, cuddly warmth, what with the Christmassy glitter and all! They make you want to catch up with your cousins or friends, or just yourself, and curl up inside a warm blanket and watch a movie you always wanted to! And bless Netflix, Hotstar and Amazon Prime, now it has become easier than ever! And it's

always so after the sun is down, and night has spread its beautiful star-studded blanket, that the urge is felt, to spend the night watching a movie, together, with our loved ones! For, the charm of being cuddled up inside a blanket on a winter's night with shapes shifting on the screen in front of you, providing you warmth, bringing a smile on your face, and a glitter in your eyes, is priceless indeed!

Growing up with you the child

(Gns. News), Sometimes we don't realise what we would have missed all along until we actually get it. I had never considered what it really means to be a mother until I held you, the baby you, outside our home that fine evening, and you put your tiny arms around my shoulders and buried your face deep in the crook of my neck. In a rush of epiphany, I lifted you in front of my face, peered into your face in the twilight and think — oh so this is how a baby of mine looks like, why I never wondered about that before! You have been started on semi-solid food. You are a very fuzzy eater. I put you down on a mat in the hall with all the paraphernalia — nappies, water, spoons, food and toys. I am talking and singing non-stop trying to coax you to eat. I dash into the kitchen to boil some milk, hoping you wouldn't notice my absence. But something moves near my feet. It is you — who have crawled after me double-quick. I concede defeat and set you up, mat and all, on the kitchen floor itself. It is getting dark and suddenly the lights go out. The doorbell rings. Cradling you in one hand, I pick up a candle and open the door. Suddenly you start screaming and I see that you have touched the flame. As I rush about to apply some cold water and try to soothe you, my remorse at not foreseeing your innocent fascination for the flame streams down my eyes. We are out visiting but I sense bad vibes with the people



around. You start crying non-stop, quite out of character. I have to take you out of the house and am able to escape the conversation almost completely. I am far from you, pursuing higher studies, and rush home every weekend braving sleepless nights in buses. Each time it's early morning when I reach. You are in bed, pretending to be still asleep. Climbing beside you, I softly kiss your cheeks and you put your arms around me without opening your eyes. Later, squeezed tight into my lap, you start telling me all your news of the week. The list gets exhausted and we sit in silence. I see that your mind is busy searching and wait patiently. Suddenly you scramble

away to get something. Someone reminds you that you had already told me about it last week. Your face falls. An attack of amnesia comes over me and we both settle down for a repeat of the long story. I am trying to train you for a few hours of nursery school, and am asked to come back in half an hour. I walk around the school, all the while hearing your screams, which stop the moment you see me come back in. We both dry our tears and head out, hand in hand, truly relieved that the day's ordeal is over. I am watching you in the playground. You are a very fuzzy eater. I put you down on a mat in the hall with all the paraphernalia — nappies, water, spoons, food and toys. I

reflection cutting across years. You have seated me along with your dolls and teddies, each with an open book in front. I have to respond on behalf all the students, in different voices, of course. I watch your serious face, gesticulating as you take the class, and am transported to another world where the lines dividing animals and humans blur, where animals talk about feelings and even talk back rude. You are on the stage, part of a children's drama. I watch from the sidelines, tired after many days of shuttling you to rehearsals, juggling our schedules and getting hold of costumes and accessories. As I see you infusing magic into the role and hear the deafening applause, I understand that no personal achievement of my own can match the surge of happiness in my heart, which feels as if it would burst. You have grown so tall that I need to raise my hands to touch your face. The doorbell rings. Cradling you in one hand, I pick up a candle and open the door. There are guests at home. Someone says something that hurts me. As I sit silently, flush from the hot words which I am swallowing, I feel your glance on me from across the room. Later, you come near, playfully box my ears while whispering 'hey, why angry?' and give me a squeeze and I know for sure, my darling, that the umbilical cord that once connected you to me has never really been severed.

'Russian offered Trump team cooperation'

(Gns. News), President's former lawyer Michael Cohen has provided substantial help to the Russia investigation, say prosecutors. U.S. prosecutors have revealed that a Russian offered cooperation to Donald Trump's campaign as early as 2015, declaring that the President's lawyer Michael Cohen had provided "relevant" and "substantial" help to the Russia investigation. In a separate case, federal prosecutors on Friday demanded "substantial" jail time of between 51 and 63 months — four to five years — for Mr. Cohen for bank fraud and campaign finance violations to which he pleaded guilty in August. U.S. Attorney Robert Khuzami accused the 52-year-old, who once vowed to take a bullet for the President, of being motivated by "personal greed" and of "repeatedly" using his power and influence for "deceptive ends". "Totally clears the President. Thank you!" Mr. Trump tweeted cryptically as television networks were consumed by the Cohen documents — which the White House dismissed as revealing "nothing of value". The campaign finance violations to which Mr. Cohen pleaded guilty — unrelated to the Russia investigation — concerned hush payments he made on Mr. Trump's behalf to alleged former lovers of the President, including porn star Stormy Daniels. In the 40-page document, Mr. Khuzami drew a direct link between Mr. Cohen's illegal behaviour and Mr. Trump. "In particular, and as Cohen himself has now admitted, with respect to both payments, he acted in coordination with and at the



direction of Individual-1," the document reads, referring to Mr. Trump. Robert Mueller, the Special Counsel heading the probe into alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 vote, followed up with a separate filing, saying that Mr. Cohen had made "substantial and significant efforts to remediate his misconduct, accept responsibility for his actions, and assist" the special investigation. He had provided information about contacts with Russian interests during the campaign, attempts by Russians to reach the campaign and about contacts with "persons connected to the White House" in 2017-18, the filing added. Mr. Cohen said the unidentified person "repeatedly proposed" a meeting between Mr. Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, claiming it could have a "phenomenal" impact "not only in political but in a business dimension as well." Mr. Cohen, however, did not follow up on this invitation," the filing added.

reported contacts, Mr. Cohen spoke to a purported "trusted person" in the Russian Federation, who offered the campaign "political synergy" and "synergy on a government level". He had provided information about contacts with Russian interests during the campaign, attempts by Russians to reach the campaign and about contacts with "persons connected to the White House" in 2017-18, the filing added. Mr. Cohen said the unidentified person "repeatedly proposed" a meeting between Mr. Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, claiming it could have a "phenomenal" impact "not only in political but in a business dimension as well." Mr. Cohen, however, did not follow up on this invitation," the filing added.

Mr. Cohen last week pleaded guilty to lying to Congress in connection with a Moscow real estate deal, which was being pursued as late as one month before Mr. Trump officially became the Republican nominee for president. Due to his help, Mr. Mueller declined to recommend additional jail time for Mr. Cohen for lying to Congress.

(Gns. News), The authorities' plan to turn Tübingen, a small city in southern Germany best known for its eponymous university, into an investment hub for artificial intelligence (AI) met with a hurdle last week when students and activists organised a demonstration. Some of the companies that are making investments in this initiative, known as Cyber Valley, have close ties with the defence sector. The protesting students said that they opposed both the "commercialisation" and "militarisation" of research. "We decided to protest against these plans. We don't want to have any kind of militarisation, neither of our university nor of our city," said Maximilian Jan, 23, a student of political science and part of a far-left group. Together with other students, he occupied one of the university buildings. Tübingen has already become an investment destination for AI projects under Cyber Valley. Researchers from around the world visit the Valley regularly to explore projects. Political elites like the city's Mayor continue to praise these developments. They deny any kind of militarisation of the city and argue that commercialisation of research has become inevitable. "I am worried that there is some fundamentalist resistance [against the Cyber Valley]. But it has absolutely nothing to do with militarisation and industrialisation. The idea



that research never has to have commercial benefits is absurd. In such a case, you have to shut down major parts of the university," said Tübingen Mayor Boris Palmer. Technology giants like Google and Amazon are also involved in projects in the city. "We know that Google continues to research AI to help the U.S. military's robot drones. Amazon also mishandles the data of millions of people," said Mr. Jan. Last March, Google's involvement with Project Maven, a Pentagon programme, was revealed: the company is helping the U.S. government analyse drone footage by using AI. After a fierce backlash from both Google employees and technology critics, who see automated warfare as a dangerous slippery slope with ethical implications,

programme after 2019. Reportedly, the U.S. military is now developing armed drones with AI. In fact, such weapons have already been tested in U.S. bases. Together with other students, he occupied one of the university buildings. Tübingen has already become an investment destination for AI projects under Cyber Valley. Researchers from around the world visit the Valley regularly to explore projects. Political elites like the city's Mayor continue to praise these developments. "I think it is really important to call attention to such issues. But in today's

world, it has become more and more difficult to really prevent such developments. Digitisation is everywhere and often it's not easy to see to what it is linked to," said Radwan Ali, 27, a student of media science at the university. Students also pointed out the presence of a number of smaller companies in the Cyber Valley that have close military ties. Syss is known for its work with the German military. According to anti-militarisation observers, it is preventing hacker attacks. Atos, another new firm in Tübingen, is mainly responsible for border surveillance and digital detection. Several AI companies that have made investments in the Valley are involved with Airbus Defence & Space, which is running the German military's surveillance satellites. The company is also known for running the military's surveillance drones in war-hit countries like Mali and Afghanistan. Germany's very first armed drones are going to be run by it. "They [the government and the university leadership] turn their back to these facts. We will not accept that. But we also have to create more awareness in general for these issues," said another student protester, who did not want to be named.

CIC slams Home Ministry for denying information on communal riots



(Gns. News), The Central Information Commission has slammed the Home Ministry for denying information on 13 inquiry commission reports on communal riots in the country. In response to an RTI request, the Ministry said it was not the custodian of the records sought. Charging the Ministry's Public Information Officer (PIO) with "causing deliberate obstruction to the flow and dissemination of information... and not furnishing any reasonable justification for such complete inaction," Central Information Commissioner Bimal Julka asked why punitive action should not be initiated. In his strongly worded December 27 order, Mr. Julka noted that the issue involved the larger public interest and directed the Home Secretary to depute a senior official to find out the status and location of the 13 reports and the reason for the denial of information within 15 days. In 2006, the Home Ministry had constituted

a working group of the National Integration Council "to study the reports of the Judicial Commissions and Inquiry Commissions about the anatomy of Communal Riots." The working group examined 29 such reports, investigating the causes and course of communal violence across the country, from riots in several Madhya Pradesh towns in February 1961 to deadly attacks on a Kerala beach in May 2003. While the working group's own report is on the Home Ministry's website, only 16 of the inquiry reports it studied are available. Anjali Bhardwaj, co-convenor of the National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI), had filed an RTI request in July 2017 asking for the other 13 reports to be also made available, with all their volumes and annexures. Not receiving any response within the stipulated 30-day time frame, Ms. Bhardwaj filed a first appeal. A day later, in a late response, the Ministry's PIO simply dismissed the request saying that she was not the custodian of the records sought. "This information is available in the MHA as the reports sought by me were examined by a working group set up by the MHA," pointed out Ms. Bhardwaj, contradicting the Ministry's claim. She added that the PIO should have transferred the application if the information was held by a different public authority.

Trade, tariffs and opioid addiction

(Gns. News), About a week ago at the G20 meetings in Buenos Aires, over a dinner that featured sirloin steak, caramelised pancakes and glasses of Malbec, U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping reportedly talked trade, tariffs and fentanyl. The first two have grabbed headlines internationally, but the third has been a silent but far deadlier issue. The synthetic opioid, a component of many painkillers, has been central to America's opioid epidemic that was responsible for 49,000 of the 72,000 deaths caused by drug overdoses, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These drugs bind to pain receptors in the brain and spinal cord, blocking pain, and also stimulate areas of the brain to release dopamine, causing a "high" and making users want to take the drug again. Some opioids like codeine and morphine are made from opium poppy plants, while some like hydrocodone and oxycodone are a combination of natural and synthesised compounds. Fentanyl is a synthesised opioid and can be up to 50 times more powerful than heroin. In the U.S., opioids became increasingly popular in the 1990s as doctors started prescribing them for treatment of non-cancer severe pain based on reassurances from pharmaceutical companies and poorly conducted studies that they were not addictive. The medical community was also reacting to a global environment of undertreatment of cancer and post-operative pain. "Not prescribing opioids for a patient with pain risked being labelled as inhumane, often even to the extent of litigation for the under-treatment of pain," an article by Mark R. Jones et al in the journal Pain and Therapy says. Mandatory pain management standards for practitioners contributed to the doling out of opioids. The CDC says that between 1999 and 2016, 3,50,000 U.S. residents died from an overdose of prescription and illicit opioid use. There were three waves of deaths — the first in the 1990s caused by prescription opioid misuse; the second, starting in 2010, with an increase in heroin deaths; and the third wave starting in 2013, this time with a significant rise in the use of synthetic opioids, especially based on illicitly manufactured fentanyl. Today, unlike other drug problems, the crisis is manifest across the U.S., though its shape varies slightly across regions and populations. While



fentanyl is the basis of the most powerful prescription opioids, the fentanyl on the streets — according to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) — comes from diverted supplies not from hospitals, but from China and Mexico. Yet, it remains unclear if Mr. Trump's talks with Mr. Xi will have a dramatic impact. First, under the Barack Obama administration, a similar control of Chinese exports to the U.S. of chemicals illegal in the U.S. but legal in China was agreed to but not implemented. Second, fentanyl was, at the time of the G20 talks, already a controlled substance according to Chinese

regulators. There are numerous factories legally producing fentanyl and diversion of their production process to make illicit fentanyl is far harder to detect than to clamp down on an altogether illegal plant. However, on the positive side, China has added two fentanyl precursors and 25 other fentanyl-like substances to its controlled list, The New York Times reported. While time will tell how this impacts America's drug problem, any long-term solution is likely to be found closer to home, by focusing on the demand side — better treatment, care and prevention of drug addiction.

Tillerson was Dumb as a Rock, Lazy as hell: Trump

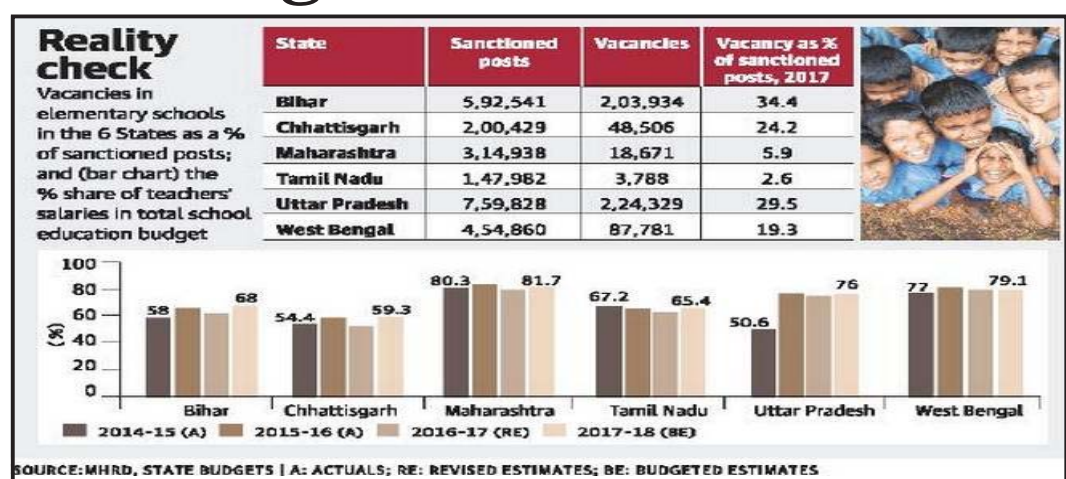


(Gns. News), President Donald Trump denounced his first Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, as "dumb as a rock" and "lazy as hell" on Friday after Mr. Tillerson said the President had regularly pushed him to take actions that were illegal. Mr. Trump, who fired Mr. Tillerson with a Twitter post in March, lashed back at him the same way after the former Secretary gave a talk in Houston and said Mr. Trump was undisciplined, did not like to read and did not respect the limits of his office. "Mike Pompeo is doing a great job, I am very proud of him," Mr. Trump wrote on Friday afternoon. "His predecessor, Rex Tillerson, didn't have the mental capacity needed. He was dumb as a rock and I couldn't get rid of him fast enough. He was lazy as hell. Now it is a whole new ballgame, great spirit at State!" Mr. Tillerson took the stage for a benefit for the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, at which he presented a blistering account of the President he served. "It was challenging for

me coming from the disciplined, highly processor-oriented Exxon Mobil Corporation to go to work for a man who is pretty undisciplined, doesn't like to read, doesn't read briefing reports, doesn't like to get into the details of a lot of things, but rather just kind of says, 'Look, this is what I believe'," said Mr. Tillerson. Mr. Trump, he added, kept pressing for actions beyond his authority. "So often, the President would say here's what I want to do and here's how I want to do it and I would have to say to him, 'Mr. President, I understand what you want to do, but you can't do it that way'," Mr. Tillerson said. "It violates the law." Often, he said, Mr. Trump would get frustrated. "I'd say, 'Here's what we can do. We can go back to Congress and get this law changed. And if that's what you want to do, there's nothing wrong with that,'" he said. "I told him, 'I'm ready to go up there and fight the fight, if that's what you want to do'." NY Times

Hard lesson: funds not enough to attract teachers to government schools

(Gns. News), This despite States increasing their budgets for school education in the past three years, says a study conducted across six States by two NGOs State governments have increased their budgets for school education in the past three years, but the allotment of funds has not been enough to attract permanent qualified teaching staff to government schools, finds a recent study conducted across six States. The report, prepared jointly by Child Rights and You (CRY) and the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA), examines budgeting for school education in six States — West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra — during the 14th Finance Commission recommendation period, which started in April 2015. The study finds that there has been an overall increase in revenue with the States following the 14th Finance Commission recommendations. This was a result of an increase in the share of the States in the divisible pool of Central taxes from 32% to 42%. At the same time, a reduction in the Union government's contribution to the States for Central schemes in social sectors forced the States to improve their tax revenue collection. The study analyses whether the availability of additional funds translated into prioritising of school education in these six States. Between 2015-



16 and 2017-18, there was a net decline in the share of school education budget in the total State Budget for three of the six States, according to the detailed demand for Grants and State Budget documents. Bihar saw a dip of 3.1%, Maharashtra a drop of 1% and West Bengal 0.9%. On the other hand, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh saw an increase in the size of school education budget by 0.4%, 2.6% and 3.2%, respectively. The report examines whether the increase in the size of school education budget was more than the rise in size of the total budget, indicating a higher priority for the sector. It concluded that between 2014-15 and 2017-18, Uttar Pradesh saw a 98.8% increase in budget for schools, whereas its total budget increased by 63.3%. West

Bengal's budget for school education increased by 49.4% while its total budget increased by 48.2% and in Tamil Nadu, the former increased by 38.7% but the total budget increased by 38.5%, indicating that school education was a priority for these three States. At the same time, all the six States showed an increase in the magnitude of per-child and per-student spending for education between 2014-15 and 2016-17. Despite a varying level of commitment towards school education across the six States, all of them struggle with a shortage of teachers. The report cites data from the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development to show that as on March 2017, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have from 19% to 34% of total teacher positions

at the elementary level vacant. Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu were relatively better with 5.9% and 2.6% posts unfilled. Data from the District Information System for Education show that at the upper primary level, there is a severe paucity of subject-specific teachers required under the Right to Education Act — 77% upper primary schools in Maharashtra, 46% in Uttar Pradesh, 40% in West Bengal and 37% in Bihar do not have subject teachers. More than one lakh schools in India are run with only one teacher and all the six States surveyed have shown the number of such schools on the rise. The shortage of teachers is more acute at the secondary level — Bihar has 20,494 teaching posts vacant, Chhattisgarh 8,278 and Uttar Pradesh 12,008.

MG varsity continues its foray into reel world

(Gns. News), Far from the arc lights, dazzle and scandals of the Malayalam film industry, a few film enthusiasts under the banner of a university are labouring to establish a movie culture of their own. Close on the heels of rolling out the first-ever full-length feature film by any university in the country, the Mahatma Gandhi University here is slated to release its second production in March next year. The two-hour movie, Trip, will be a fast paced, travel-investigation thriller, the makers claim, and will be released in three languages, including English. It is scripted and directed by M.R. Unni, registrar of the university, and Anwar Abdullah, academic and former student. Trip revolves around the internal conflicts of Unni, a youth who was forced to live in seclusion at the whims of his father. The plot develops through the intriguing journeys taken up by Fida, the female lead character, to unravel the mystery behind Unni's missing. It features a host of new faces, including Arya Ramesh and Rejin Raj, who play the lead characters. Veteran actor K.T.C. Abdulla, who passed away recently, makes his final film appearance in the movie. According to G. Sreekumar, publicity-in-charge and programme coordinator of the Jaivam project which funds the film, most of the movie's cast and crew are linked to the university. "The project is part of the university's extension activity, which also provides the students with the opportunity to be involved in the production process alongside industry professionals," he said. Written by K. Jayakumar, O.V. Usha and others and composed by Jazzi Gift, the film has four songs. Muhammad A. is the cinematographer and Rinju R.V. the editor. The university had released its first feature film Samaksham at cinemas across Kerala in November.

NDA allies boycott PM's events

(Gns. News), In an embarrassment for the BJP, both its OBC-based allies in Uttar Pradesh who have expressed displeasure with the party, boycotted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's functions in Ghazipur and Varanasi on Saturday. The Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) accused the BJP of trying to appropriate the legacy of its icon Raja Suheldev by downplaying his caste identity in a postal stamp released by Mr. Modi in Ghazipur. The Apna Dal said it boycotted the events to draw attention to the disrespect and "insulting attitude" towards it by the State unit of the BJP. The BJP has a "use-and-throw" policy toward its allies, said Om Prakash Rajbhar, SBSP chief and U.P. Cabinet Minister. The SBSP boycotted the Ghazipur event after it learnt that the postal stamp on Raja Suheldev did not include his caste, Rajbhar. The party was also pleased that despite its base in Ghazipur, its leader was not formally invited.

Travel agency told to pay Rs. 60,000 solatium



(Gns. News), Holding Cox and Kings deficient in services, a district consumer disputes redressal forum here has directed the travel agency to compensate a group of complainants by paying over Rs. 60,000 following allegations that the agency had failed to deliver services on the tour promised. Directing the travel agency to compensate the complainant, the consumer panel said, "...reserving rights in the terms and conditions for tour [travel agency] cannot skip its liability to provide proper meals at proper places on the tour to the participants..." Complainant Sushil Jain alleged that despite paying the requisite booking charges, the agency had failed to provide the services promised on the Europe trip. "Rooms in a 4-star hotel were assured but instead, very small rooms accommodating only two persons were made available. Problems regarding Jain food and meal was also experienced. The [agency] also did not provide Euro Star train journey as assured and the complainants were made to travel by cruise." The complaint read in the order. Further, it was alleged that the family was booked on different flights. "It is also surprising to note that the couple was travelling on a flight scheduled for 10.15 a.m. and the children of the same couple below 12 years had to travel alone by the next flight, which was entirely unprofessional and irresponsible on the part of the [agency]," the forum observed. An additional sum of Rs. 5,000 has been awarded by the consumer forum for litigation charges.

CM: BJP has deleted names of voters from Bania community

(Gns. News), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal alleged on Saturday that the BJP had deleted half of the voters from the Bania community in Delhi as a part of the ongoing revision of electoral rolls. In a Twitter exchange with BJP MP and Union Minister Vijay Goel, who like Mr. Kejriwal is from the Bania community, the AAP chief said that 4 lakh out of 8 lakh Bania voters had been struck off the rolls. With the AAP accusing the BJP of having voters from the Bania, Poorvanchali and Muslim communities deleted from the rolls ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, Mr. Goel took to Twitter on Saturday to say that the Delhi's Banias were upset because the AAP thought they were "fools". Would the community believe that the BJP would target it, he asked. Mr. Kejriwal responded by saying that the community, which has traditionally been engaged in trade, would not vote for the BJP in the 2019 elections due to the Centre's policies, like the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax regime. In response, Mr. Goel accused Mr. Kejriwal of using caste for politics.

"Kejriwal's tweet proves that there is an attempt being made to practice politics in the name of the Bania community which hates lies. It seems I have touched @arvindkejriwal's raw nerve. This politicking in the name of caste and community is not good [sic]." Mr. Goel said in response to one of Mr. Kejriwal's tweets. Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Legislative Assembly Vijender Gupta, who was part of an all party meeting at the Delhi Election Commission in August and recently accused the AAP's representatives at that meeting of keeping silent on the issue then, also jumped into the fray. "The AAP, in panic, is spreading lies in line with its politics of religion, caste and community by including 2.5 lakh voters, who got their names removed from electoral rolls of their own volition by filling Form 7. This reminds of a Nusrat Ali song. I think about how innocent they were. What have they now become before our very eyes [sic]." Mr. Gupta tweeted in response to Mr. Kejriwal. The Rohini legislator also released snapshots of lists of voters attacking Mr. Kejriwal by stating that his "information was incor-



rect" in addition to arguing that as per data accessed from the commission, while 8,38,049 names had been deleted by suo motu as many as 13,73,300 new names had been added. On its part, the AAP, in a statement, alleged that the BJP "only used the Bania community for funds" during elections.

Three members of Kapil Sangwan gang arrested



(Gns. News), Three members of Kapil Sangwan alias Nandu gang were arrested on Friday after a brief exchange of fire, the police said on Saturday. They said that the accused were planning to kill members of their rival gang Manjit Mahal. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Anto Alphonse said that the accused have been identified as Nakul Sangwan, Tarun and Rohit Gahlawat. The police said that on November 20, Manjit Mahal's accomplice, identified as Roshan alias Chhota, was murdered allegedly by members of the Nandu gang. The team, which was investigating the case found out that a wanted criminal, Vikas alias P.K., is involved in the murder and is hiding in Nandu's house in Najafgarh. "Acting on the tip-off, a trap was laid outside his house. The members inside sensed police presence, but were unaware that they had been completely surrounded. Three of them came out and tried to flee," Mr. Alphonse said, adding that when they saw the officers, they even fired three rounds. The police also fired two rounds, the officer said, but no person sustained injuries. The three gang members then surrendered to the police, Mr. Alphonse said. The police said that Vikas was, however, not found. During interrogation, Nakul told the police that he is associated with the Nandu gang for the last three years and looks after their court matters. "On Friday, they had gathered at the house to plan the murder of close accomplices of Manjit Mahal. They were waiting for their accomplice Monu Chandwala, who along with Amit Gulia had arranged weapon for them, to come. Monu was supposed to provide them details about the person who they were planning to eliminate," Mr. Alphonse said. Nakul also told the investigators that the three of them wanted to provide security to his cousin Kapil Sangwan by escorting him to and from jail for his court proceedings. He said they were apprehensive about his murder by members of their rival gang. The police have seized a pistol made in Turkey, along with 10 live cartridges and two country-made pistols with seven live cartridges from the possession of the accused.

Assembly panel to probe school fee hike



The Delhi Assembly's Petitions Committee will probe the alleged illegal fee hike by a south Delhi school by visiting the premises on Monday. According to the notice for the inspection, the committee had taken up the petition alleging illegal fee hike by Indian School in Sadiq Nagar for deliberation on December 4 and decided to visit the school on Monday. The panel's members and chairperson, AAP MLA Saurabh Bharadwaj, would be accompanied by the petitioners — Suman Satish and Tanu Nair, and officials of the Directorate of Education and the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights, stated the December 6 notice.

Parking contractor told to pay Rs. 6 lakh for missing car

(Gns. News), New Delhi. A district consumer disputes redressal forum here has directed a parking contractor engaged by the New Delhi Municipal Council [NDMC] to compensate the complainant by paying over Rs. 6 lakh after it was alleged that his car had gone missing from a parking lot in 2010. Holding the contractor guilty of deficiency in services, the consumer panel said, "After going through the evidence of the parties it is clear that complainant parked his vehicle with the [contractor] and at that particular time when the [parking attendant] was manning the parking lot. Accordingly, the [contractor] is responsible for the omissions perpetrated at the behest of the [attendant] who was manning the parking lot when the vehicle was stolen." It was alleged by complainant Sandeep Boreja that despite parking his car in a NDMC authorised parking lot, his car had gone missing. Claiming a compensation of over Rs. 5.83 lakh, the complaint said, "The vehicle was

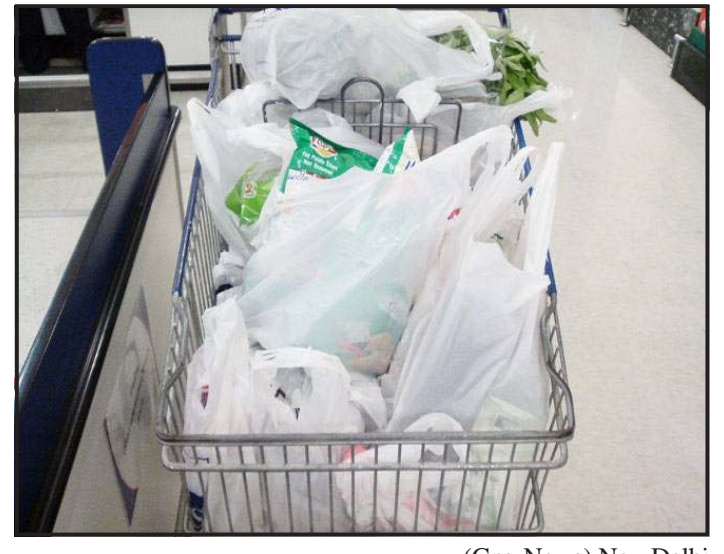


in collective custody [of the NDMC, contractor and attendant]. Therefore they are under legal obligation for the loss caused to the complainant." However, the NDMC contended that it was not responsible as the licence of the parking lot was given to the contractor. The civic body contended that according to relevant clauses, "the licence

contract was accountable and responsible for any or all the damages or losses caused to the vehicle parked at the parking lot". While the consumer panel accepted the NDMC's stand, it rejected the contractor's contention that the complainant had not handed over the keys to the attendant. "The handing over of key by the complainant [to the

attendant] serves no purpose as the vehicle was duly parked in an authorised parking lot," the forum also said. The consumer panel has directed the contractor to refund a sum of Rs. 5,60,000, which was the price for sale consideration in July 2010. Further, the district forum directed a compensation of Rs. 30,000 and Rs. 15,000 as litigation charges.

Illegal plastic bags: DPCC asked to probe charge



(Gns. News), New Delhi. Following an allegation pertaining to the illegal manufacturing of plastic bags in Wazirpur, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) to look into the matter. A Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel said, "Allegation is that plastic bag manufacturing activity is illegally being carried out at Wazirpur for the last 40 years creating poisonous pollution in the area. On the top floor, dyeing unit is also being run which further adds to the pollution." "A copy of this letter be sent to DPCC so that the matter can be considered, if not already considered. The DPCC may also involve the local Sub-Divisional Magistrate," the Bench said. The DPCC has been directed to submit a report to the tribunal by February 28. The directions came after the green panel received a complaint from Delhi Vikas Manch secretary Mohd Salim.

Two wanted criminals of Sonu Dariyapur gang arrested



(Gns. News), Two members of Sonu Dariyapur gang, who were carrying a reward of Rs. 2 lakh each on their arrest, were arrested on Friday, the police said on Saturday. The accused were on the run for 12 years, the police said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Pramod Singh Kushwah said that the accused, identified as Sanjay Lakra (47) and Vijay Lamba (38), were arrested from Pochunpur village. The police said that they had received an information that the gang members had been changing their hideouts and planning to eliminate witnesses in the cases registered against Dariyapur and other members of the gang. They had been allegedly extorting money in the name of the gangster who was arrested in

September last year. "Information was received that Sanjay and Vijay would come to Pochunpur village. A trap was laid. Around 10.30 p.m., the two were intercepted in Najafgarh when they were coming in a car, which was later found to be stolen from Badarpur," Mr. Kushwah said, adding that two firearms and 18 live cartridges were seized from their possession. The police said that Lamba has more than six criminal cases under Maharashtra Control of Organized Crime Act and on charges of murder, attempt to murder and assault registered against him. The police said that they had received an information that the gang members had been changing their hideouts and planning to eliminate witnesses in the cases registered

against Dariyapur and other members of the gang. They had been allegedly extorting money in the name of the gangster who was arrested in September last year. "He is the son of a retired police officer. He used to practice wrestling when he was young. He started getting involved in criminal activities after he came in contact with Dariyapur," Mr. Kushwah said. The police also said that Lakra is the son of a retired government officer and has more than 20 cases registered against him under the MCOCA and other charges. Dariyapur was arrested by the Special Cell after being on the run for eight years. The Delhi Police had announced a reward of Rs. 5 lakh on his arrest, while the Haryana Police had announced Rs. 50,000.

Manoj Tiwari announces pan-city campaign in Jan.

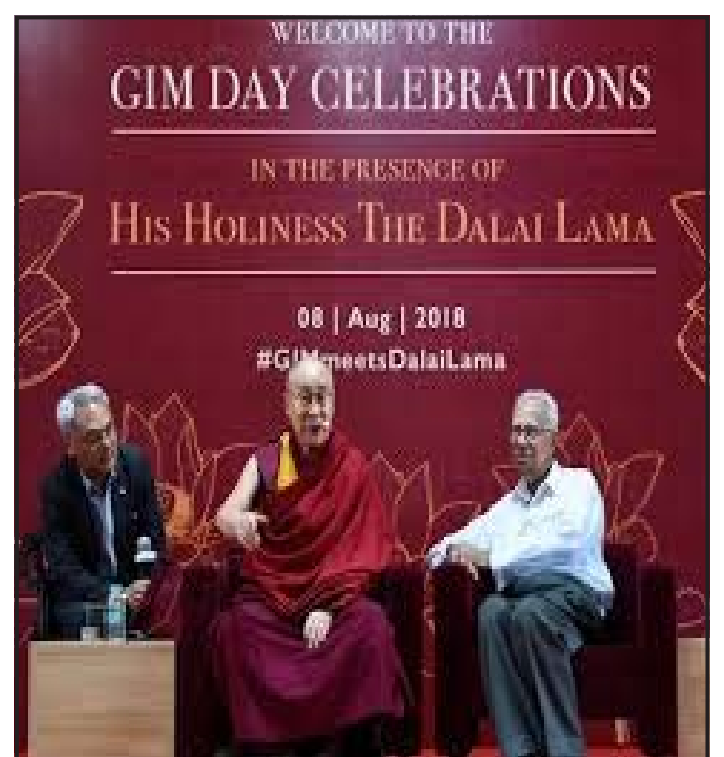
(Gns. News), New Delhi. Delhi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief Manoj Tiwari on Saturday announced a pan-city campaign which will seek contributions of rice and pulses from an estimated 1.4 crore SC/ST households for the preparation of a community khichdi at the Ramlila Maidan here in early January. He equated the event with the construction of Sardar Vallabhai Patel's Statue of Unity for which contributions of iron were collected from across the country. The event, titled the Bhim Mahasangam Vijay Sankalp Rally which intends to "create an atmosphere of harmony in Delhi", is scheduled to be held at the Ramlila Maidan on January 6 and have national BJP president Amit Shah in attendance as chief guest. On December 16, Mr. Tiwari said further, the party had scheduled a 'Mahila Hunkar Rally' followed by a 'Yuva Sankalp Rally' on January 20. "The success of the Poorvanchal Mahakumbh organised earlier this year was encouraging...in the near future, all morchas of the organisation are planning big rallies in the city which will be executed with the support of the people of Delhi in the run-up to the upcoming Lok Sabha polls," Mr. Tiwari said. The way in which people of the entire country contributed iron for the construction of the Statue of Unity in order to express their



respect for Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Mr. Tiwari said, the people of Delhi too would contribute dal and rice for the initiative. Later, Mr. Tiwari flagged off 70 bike riders as the Samarsta Palak for each Assembly constituency who will collect the contributions for the khichdi which will be prepared and served at the rally to attendees. The event, titled the Bhim Mahasangam Vijay Sankalp Rally which intends to "create an atmosphere of harmony in Delhi", is scheduled to be held at the Ramlila Maidan on January 6 and have national BJP president Amit Shah in attendance as chief guest. "Along with the riders, 2.8 lakh

Samarsta Sankalp cards expressing support for this rally have also been sent out. These bike riders will contact every house to collect dal and rice for preparing Samarsta Khichdi for the rally," Mr. Tiwari said. Meanwhile, citing media reports, Mr. Tiwari also condemned Mr. Kejriwal's "petty gimmicks and his politics of gaining sympathy." "It is quite evident...that the 'mirchi' attack was staged and conspired at the behest of the Chief Minister to create an atmosphere of sympathy towards himself in the public...it is shocking to learn that Kejriwal can stoop to any level for his own political gain," Mr. Tiwari alleged.

Body found in bushes, probe on



A man in his late 20s was found murdered with multiple stab injuries in Dwarka's Chhawla on Saturday morning, the police said. They said that the man has not been identified yet and a case has been registered in the matter. DCP (Dwarka) Anto Alphonse said that the PCR received a call regarding a body lying in the bushes. When the police reached the spot they found that the man had been stabbed multiple times. "He was aged around 27-28. He was wearing a black and white striped t-shirt. There was an 'Om' tattoo on his hand," the officer said. The police said that the body has been sent to the mortuary for a post-mortem and a case under Section 302 (punishment for murder) of the Indian Penal Code has been registered. DCP (Dwarka) Anto Alphonse said that the PCR received a call regarding a body lying in the bushes. When the police reached the spot they found that the man had been stabbed multiple times. "He was aged around 27-28. He was wearing a black and white striped t-shirt. There was an 'Om' tattoo on his hand," the officer said. Teams have been formed to identify the person. A local enquiry is also being conducted, the police also said.