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Trump writes to Imran, seeks help in Afghan talks

(Gns. News), Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said on Monday that U.S. President Donald Trump has written a letter to Prime Minister Imran Khan, seeking Islamabad's support in securing a "negotiated settlement" to the war in Afghanistan. The development comes as Washington steps up efforts to hold peace talks with the resurgent Taliban. In the letter, Mr. Trump said a settlement is "his most important regional priority", the Pakistani Foreign Ministry stated. "In this regard, he has sought Pakistan's support and facilitation", it continued. U.S. officials accuse Islamabad of ignoring or even collaborating with groups such as the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network, which attack Afghanistan from safe havens along the border between the two countries. The White House believes that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency and other military bodies have long helped fund and arm the Taliban both for ideological reasons and to counter the rising Indian influence in Afghanistan. It believes that a Pakistani crackdown on the militants could be pivotal in deciding the outcome of the war. Pakistan has long denied the claims and says it has paid the price for its alliance with the U.S. in the "war on terror", with thousands of its citizens killed in its long struggle with militancy. "Trump acknowledged that the war had cost both USA and Pakistan," the Foreign Ministry statement continued. Islamabad would help facilitate any talks "in good faith", the Ministry added. The troubled relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan hit yet another bump last month after Mr. Trump declared he had cancelled assistance worth hundreds of millions of dollars because Islamabad does not do "a damn thing" for the U.S. Mr. Khan hit back at the criticism on Twitter, calling on the U.S. President to name an ally that has sacrificed more against militancy. Mr.

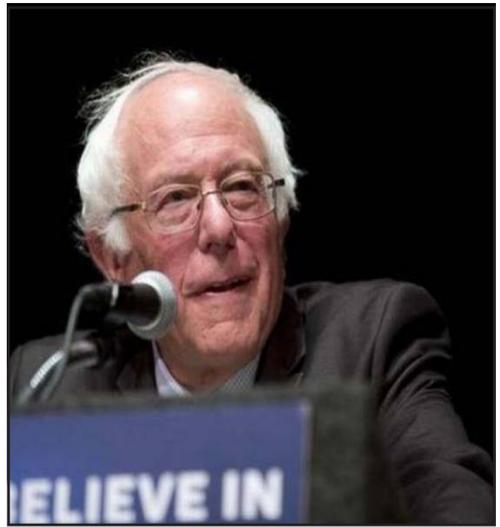


Trump's letter came as the U.S. announced that Zalmay Khalilzad will make another visit starting this week as special envoy to the region. Mr. Khalilzad will meet officials in Pakistan and Afghanistan, as well as Russia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Belgium and the

United Arab Emirates, as part of the push for talks. He recently expressed hopes that a peace deal to end the war could be struck before the Afghan presidential election, scheduled for April. At an international conference on Afghanistan in Geneva last Monday, Afghan President

Ashraf Ghani said a 12-person Afghan negotiating team has been prepared for peace talks. But the Taliban, who have previously insisted they will only speak with U.S. officials, rejected Mr. Ghani's overtures, calling the government in Kabul "impotent" and a "waste of time".

Bernie Sanders could be eyeing a strong 2020 bid



A final decision has not been made, but those closest to Mr. Sanders, 77, suggest that neither age nor interest from a glut of progressive presidential prospects would dissuade him from undertaking a second shot at the presidency. And as Mr. Sanders' brain trust gathered for a retreat in Vermont over the weekend, some spoke openly about a 2020 White House bid. "This time, he starts off as a frontrunner, or one of the frontrunners," said Mr. Sanders' 2016 campaign manager Jeff Weaver. Mr. Weaver added, "It'll be a much bigger campaign if he runs again, in terms of the size of the operation." Amid the enthusiasm — and there was plenty in Burlington as the Sanders Institute convened his celebrity supporters, former campaign staff and progressive policy leaders — there were also signs of cracks in Mr. Sanders' political base. His loyalists are sizing up a prospective 2020 Democratic field likely to feature a collection of ambitious liberal leaders and not the establishment-minded Hillary Clinton. Instead, a new generation of outspoken Democrats such as Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, New Jersey Senator Cory Booker and California Senator Kamala Harris are expected to seek the Democratic nomination. All three have embraced Sanders' call for "Medicare for All" and a \$15 minimum wage, among other policy priorities he helped bring into the Democratic mainstream in the Trump era. Acknowledging the stark differences between the 2016 and 2020 fields, Hollywood star Danny Glover, who campaigned alongside Mr. Sanders in 2016, would not commit to a second Sanders' candidacy when asked this weekend. "I don't know what 2020 looks like right now," Mr. Glover said before taking a front-row seat for Mr. Sanders' opening remarks. "I'm going to support who I feel to be the most progressive choice." One of Mr. Sanders' chief supporters from neighboring New Hampshire, former state senate majority leader Burt Cohen, acknowledged that some people worry Mr. Sanders is too old for a second run, although that's not a major concern of his. Like Mr. Glover, he's not sure if he'll join Mr. Sanders a second time. "There are other people picking up the flag and holding it high, and you know, it could be Bernie, but I think there are other people as well," said Mr. Cohen, who did not attend the Vermont summit. "It's not 'Bernie or bust.' That's certainly not the case." Another high-profile Sanders supporter who was in attendance, Cornel West, described the Vermont senator as "the most consistently progressive one out there," suggesting that some would-be 2020 candidates have adopted Mr. Sanders' words, but maintained ties to Wall Street and "militarism". Still, Mr. West conceded that none of likely 2020 candidates "have as much baggage" as Ms. Clinton did. Perhaps the most important member of Mr. Sanders' network, wife Jane O'Meara Sanders, said Democrats may be embracing his "old progressive ideas" on health care and the economy in some cases, but there's need to go further on issues like climate change, affordable housing and student debt. Whether her husband will lead the debate as a presidential candidate in 2020, she said, remains unclear. Ms. Sanders noted that one question above all others would guide their decision: "Who can beat Donald Trump?" When asked if Mr. Sanders could win in 2020, she said "every single poll" showed that he would have beaten Republican nominee Donald Trump two years ago.

Paris riots: Macron seeks way out of crisis

(Gns. News), Reuters French govt. to hold talks with main parties, protest leaders French leader Emmanuel Macron faced growing pressure on Monday to find a way out of the worst crisis of his presidency after shocking scenes of rioting in Paris at the weekend. As more than 100 people prepared to appear in court over the worst clashes in central Paris in decades on Saturday, Mr. Macron's government was preparing its response. Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, who cancelled a scheduled trip to Poland, was set to meet the heads of the main political parties. But Mr. Macron appeared determined not to roll back the unpopular hikes in fuel tax which sparked the protests, or announce state handouts for poor families. "Thinking that, as we have always done for 30 years, that you make a little symbolic gesture and then we sweep the dust under the carpet, that doesn't resolve the fundamental, structural problem," spokesman Benjamin Griveaux said on France Inter radio. The protests erupted over fuel taxes but have since morphed into a wider wave of resistance to Mr. Macron's economic reforms, with a third round of demonstrations called for Saturday in Paris. Immediately after coming to power, Mr. Macron pushed through tax cuts for entrepreneurs and high-earners — policies that have become a lightning rod for anger among the so-called "gilets jaunes" or "yellow vests". Jacline Mouraud, one of the protest movement's prime instigators, said that scrapping the fuel tax was a "prerequisite for any discussion" with the government.

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mooted. Deputy Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said that emergency measures were "one option among others," but he said they were "not on the table for now". Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire said that solution for tackling low purchasing power for struggling families lay in reducing the tax burden in France, which is among the highest in Europe. "We must speed up the reduction of taxes," he said. "But for that we must speed up the decrease in public spending." Mr. Macron, a former investment banker, was booed on Sunday by onlookers while surveying the damage caused during the rioting. The president assessed the Arc de Triomphe, the massive monument to France's war dead at the top of the Champs-Élysées avenue, where rioters scrawled graffiti and ransacked the ticketing and reception areas. He also saw the wreckage of burnt-out cars and damaged buildings from rioting at other sites but has not spoken publicly about the destruction since his return from a G20 summit in Argentina. Paris police said 412 people were arrested on Saturday during the worst clashes for years in the capital and 363 remained in custody, according to the latest figures. A total of 263 people were injured nationwide, including 133 in the capital, 23 of them members of the security forces. The violence has caused deep concern in the French business community which claims it has already lost billions of euros, and representatives are set to attend a meeting at the economy ministry on Monday. "Our worst fears have been confirmed: this is the third consecutive weekend of (protest) blockades which amounts to a major loss for the whole business community," Jacques Creyssel, representative of a federation of retail businesses, told AFP. Three people have died in incidents linked to the anti-government protests which began on November 17. On Saturday, the Champs-Élysées, the Louvre museum, the Opera (Gns. News), and Place Vendôme were among the ritzy areas where shop windows were smashed and dozens of cars torched by rioters. One person was in a critical condition after protesters pulled down one of the huge iron gates of the Tuileries garden by the Louvre, crushing several people. Nearly 190 fires were put out and six buildings were set alight, the interior ministry said.

U.S.-China ties make 'big leap forward', says Trump

(Gns. News), Truce for now: President Donald Trump and wife Melania in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, in September this year. Truce for now: President Donald Trump and wife Melania in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, in September this year. [Photo Credit: Evan Vucci] Proposes talks with Xi and Putin to halt the 'uncontrollable' arms race U.S. President Donald Trump boasted on Monday that U.S. relations with China have taken a "BIG leap forward" following his meeting in Argentina with President Xi Jinping.



"Very good things will happen. We are dealing with great strength, but China likewise has much to gain if and when a deal is completed. Level the field!" he said in a series of early morning tweets. Mr. Trump alluded — possibly inadvertently — to the "Great Leap Forward", Mao Zedong's campaign to rapidly industrialise China's agrarian economy, which historians believe led to the deaths of millions of people in the Great Chinese Famine. Mr. Trump, who joined Mr. Xi in calling a truce on an intensifying trade war between their two powerhouse countries, earlier touted a rollback in Chinese tariffs on U.S.-made cars. At their dinner meeting in Buenos Aires on Saturday, the two leaders agreed to suspend any new tariffs and give negotiators 90 days to strike a deal, sending stock markets soaring. "My meeting in Argentina with President Xi of China was an extraordinary one. Relations with China have taken a BIG leap forward!" Mr. Trump said. "Farmers will be a very BIG and FAST beneficiary

of our deal with China. They intend to start purchasing agricultural product immediately. We make the finest and cleanest product in the World, and that is what China wants. Farmers, I LOVE YOU!" he said. "He [Xi] and I are the only two people that can bring about massive and very positive change, on trade and far beyond, between our two great Nations. A solution for North Korea is a great thing for China and ALL!" Mr. Trump also proposed future talks with the leaders of China and Russia, aimed at halting what he described as an "uncontrollable" arms race. His comment follows an October announcement in which he said he would withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), a Cold War deal with Russia to cut missile numbers. Critics say the move, which has not been finalised, would spark a new arms race with Russia. In an early morning tweet, the President said: "I am certain that, at some time in the future, President Xi and I, together with President Putin of Russia, will start talking about a meaningful halt to what has become a major and uncontrollable Arms Race. The U.S. spent 716 Billion Dollars this year. Crazy!"

UN plane evacuates wounded Houthis

(Gns. News), Fifty wounded rebels will be evacuated from the Yemeni capital for medical treatment on Monday, a Saudi-led military coalition said, as the UN envoy landed in Sana'a ahead of planned peace talks in Sweden.



The evacuation on a UN chartered plane marks a key step in kick-starting stalled negotiations as world powers press for an end to the brutal four-year conflict that has pushed Yemen to the brink of famine. The fate of wounded rebels had been a stumbling block to the start of a previous round of aborted peace talks in September. The UN is trying to persuade the Houthi insurgents and the Saudi-backed government to sit down at the negotiating table this month. Coalition spokesman Turki al-Maliki said a UN chartered flight would evacuate 50 wounded combatants, accompanied by three Yemeni doctors and a UN doctor, from Sana'a to the Omani capital of Muscat, in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency. Wounded militants were transported across the capital, controlled by the Iran-backed Houthis since 2014, in ambulances as they made their way to the long-defunct Sana'a International Airport on Monday. Inside the airport departure hall, other wounded rebels — some in suits and wheelchairs — lined up awaiting their evacuation to Muscat. UN envoy Martin Griffiths landed in Sana'a on Monday for talks with rebels. His visit comes as pressure mounts to reopen the rebel-held airport, which has been shut for more than three years following

air raids by the coalition. The UN source said the reopening of Sana'a International Airport was a priority at the planned peace talks. A UN panel of experts this year said the "effective closure" of Sana'a airport since 2015, when the Saudi-led alliance intervened in the Yemen war, constituted a violation of international humanitarian law. The Houthis had announced at the weekend that the airport could now meet the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to "receive civilian flights". The ICAO has not released a statement on Sana'a airport. Yemen's Information Minister, Moammer al-Eryani, said the government had agreed to the Sweden talks as a first step towards "facilitating negotiations" and to end "all excuses invoked by the coupists (rebels) to evade finding peace". The proposed UN-brokered peace talks have been backed by both the rebels and the Saudi-led government and were expected to take place in Sweden this week. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, however, has played down the early December schedule and said he hoped talks would start "this year". Iran also offered support on Monday for the planned negotiations, calling for an end to "the brutal aggression" on Yemen. Tehran also said it was ready to cooperate with the international community to resolve the crisis. World powers should put "pressure on the exporters of arms to the aggressors to facilitate the peace process in Yemen and let the Yemeni people decide their country's fate free from the outsiders' interference," said the Iranian Foreign Ministry. The rebels have said they will attend the talks in Sweden if they are guaranteed safe passage. A Houthi spokesman also said the rebels were ready to hold talks "starting with a ceasefire" by the rival coalition,

Editorial

Stunted, wasted: on Global Nutrition Report 2018



(Gns. News).

The health, longevity and well-being of Indians has improved since Independence, and the high levels of economic growth over the past two-and-a-half-decades have made more funds available to spend on the social sector. Yet, the reality is that a third of the world's stunted children under five — an estimated 46.6 million who have low height for age — live in India. A quarter of the children display wasting (that is, low weight for height) as well. As the Global Nutrition Report 2018 points out, this finding masks the wide variation in stunting levels in different parts of the country. District-level data show high and very high levels of stunting mainly in central and northern India (more than 30% and 40%, respectively), but less than 20% in almost the entire south. This shows the important role played by political commitment, administrative efficiency, literacy and women's empowerment in ensuring children's health. Food and freedom go together, and the availability of one strongly influences access to the other; social institutions can work to improve nutrition and children's welfare in free societies, and the absence of hunger enables people to develop their capabilities. Governments should acknowledge the linkages and commit themselves to improved nutritional policies. The national framework to improve nutrition already exists. The Anganwadi Services scheme, which incorporates the Integrated Child Development Services, caters to children up to age six, and to pregnant and lactating women. If it has not worked well in several States, it must be subjected to a rigorous review and targeted interventions for supplementary nutrition made. Among the factors affecting the quantity and quality of nutrition are maternal education, age at marriage, antenatal care, children's diet and household size. Now that mapping of malnutrition at the district level is available, as in the Global Nutrition Report, it is incumbent on State governments to address these determining factors. A second issue is that of the quality of nutrition in packaged foods available to children. Going by the report, only 21% of these foods in India were rated as being healthy, based on overall energy, salt, sugar and saturated fat on the negative side, and vegetable, fruit, protein, fibre and calcium as positive factors. The fact that the global average of processed foods scored only 31% and a peak of 37% in New Zealand indicates that whole foods and cooked meals emerge superior. India should invest more of its economic prosperity in its welfare system, without binding itself in restrictive budgetary formulations. The Economic Survey 2017-18 put social services spending at 6.6% of GDP, an insignificant rise after a marginal decline from the 6% band during the previous year to 5.8%. The latest report on stunting and wasting should convince the Centre that it needs to understand the problem better and work with the States to give India's children a healthy future.

The inevitable tryst with dust

(Gns. News). There are a number idiosyncrasies associated with the average Indian street.

But probably no other trait tends to define the Indian philosophy and way of life as does the ever-present dust that adorns it. Perhaps the concept of immortality of the human soul came about as a result of observing the eternal dust that manifests itself in many forms. Normally hidden in plain sight, it has become an indispensable part of our street life. Rising to the fore and gently irritating the nostrils of passers-by whenever an over-ambitious vehicle tries to test the limits of its internal combustion engine. Unlike in other countries that have decided to ban dust from their streets altogether, in the grand Indian tradition of secularism we cherish this diversity of particulate, and both PM2.5 and PM10 are accorded equal opportunity to inhabit our lungs. No wonder, dust is so close to our hearts! Mind you, it

hasn't been an easy journey for dust. Despite our tradition of tolerance that prompted successive Indian rulers over the centuries to look at clean paved roads with disdain, there never was any active encouragement toward true empowerment of dust for it to break the shackles and prosper.

All that changed with the onset of the industrial age when large coal-based power plants, fleets of diesel-burning trucks and a construction boom intertwined the empowerment of dust with India's growth story. Successive governments and statutory bodies have shown exemplary intent and bipartisan unity by being mindful of the Indian sensibilities toward dust. It is for this reason that there is active encouragement for incomplete combustion across the board; be it by the ordinary farmer burning stubble or large power plants spewing ash. From the watchman who burns litter in cold nights to the



everyday protestor who torches everything from buses to effigies, all come together in support of this mass movement. In 21st century India, dust has become an integral part of our socio-economic ecosystem. For example, the presence of dust has created thousands of jobs for sweepers throughout our country. Anyone who has ever walked on an Indian street could not have missed a sweeper going about the futile job of cleaning the road and sweeping the dust to its margins.

This dust will of course be back on the road come noon, but that's the circle of life — what goes around, comes around. You see, unlike Arjuna in the Mahabharata, the average Indian sweeper does not need Lord Krishna to inspire him or his ilk to perform his or her karma and not think of the outcomes. And in order to empower this enlightened force of sweepers, the civic bodies ensure that the roads are not made too high and that their

sides are kept unpaved.

Our contractors selflessly give up on the intellectual property rights for the advanced construction practices utilised by them by performing all operations from excavation to erection out in the open for all to see, in order to contribute to the grand tradition of re-distributing dust out in the open. Unlike in other countries that have decided to ban dust from their streets altogether, in the grand Indian tradition of secularism we cherish this diversity of particulate, and both PM2.5 and PM10 are accorded equal opportunity to inhabit our lungs. No wonder, dust is so close to our hearts!

Mind you, it hasn't been an easy journey for dust. Despite our tradition of tolerance that prompted successive Indian rulers over the centuries to look at clean paved roads with disdain, there never was any active encouragement toward true empowerment of dust for it to break the shackles and prosper.

Defence Acquisition Council approval: New frigates to get BrahMos

(Gns. News).

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), which met on Saturday, approved procurements worth ₹3000 crore which include BrahMos cruise missiles for the two stealth frigates to be procured directly from Russia and armored recovery vehicles for the Army's Arjun tanks. "As a follow up of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) decision in October 2018 for procurement of four P1135.6 follow-on ships, the DAC granted approval for procurement of indigenous BrahMos missiles for two Indian Navy ships to be built in Russia," the Defence Ministry said in a statement. The indigenously designed BrahMos missile is a tested and proven supersonic



cruise missile and will form the primary weapon on-board these ships, the statement added.

In October 2016, India and Russia signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) for four Krivak or Talwar stealth frigates - two to be procured directly from Russia and two to be built by Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) and the commercial deals were signed recently. Defence Acquisition Council approval: New frigates to get BrahMos. The basic structures of two frigates are already ready at Yantar shipyard in Russia and will be finished now following the \$1 bn deal. Last week, Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) signed a \$500 mn deal

with Rosobronexport of Russia for material, design and specialists assistance to build two frigates in India. BrahMos, which is a joint venture between India and Russia, has already been inducted on all frontline warships of the Indian Navy. The DAC also approved the procurement of Armoured Recovery Vehicles (ARVs) for the Army's Arjun main battle tanks. These are designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and would be manufactured by Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML). The ARVs ensure efficient and speedy repair and recovery of tanks during combat.

M Secular democracy in peril



India is literally at the crossroads with the very future of its secular democracy at stake. With five important State Assembly elections in various stages of completion and the general election around the corner, the political temperature is at boiling point. Competitive Hindutva has become the name of the game, with the ostensibly secular Congress party trying desperately to demonstrate its Hindu credentials to cut into the base of the Hindu-nationalist BJP. Congress president Rahul Gandhi is busy visiting Hindu temples and publicising his caste genealogy for electoral gains. This is the first time since Independence that the religion and caste of a candidate for the job of Prime Minister is overtly portrayed as the defining basis for his/her claim to lead the country.

The Congress party's passive Hindutva will in all probability lead to its crushing defeat in the forthcoming general elections because, as a pale imitation of the BJP's aggressive Hindutva, it cannot compete with the genuine article. Mr. Gandhi and his advisers are confusing contrived demonstrations of personal religiosity with Hindu nationalism. The last is a clearly defined political ideology that, in direct contravention of the letter and spirit of the Constitution, is based on the notion that Hindus have exclusive claim to the country and Muslims and Christians are interlopers who can be treated as second-class citizens at best. It has nothing to do with personal piety and the religious tenets of Hinduism. The Congress's passive Hindutva is ceding the ideological ground to the BJP by heavily diluting the tenets of secularism enshrined in the Constitution. The well-established secular norm of not overtly using religion for electoral gains is now a thing of the past. A very dangerous aspect of this unfolding drama is the escalation in the politics of intimidation, which is undermining the rule of law and threatening the democratic fabric of India. The recent mobilisation of thousands of devotees in Ayodhya by the Vishva Hindu Parishad, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the Shiv Sena and related Hindu nationalist organisations is a prime example of this. This mobilisation was a part of the strategy to put pressure on a government seen as friendly to the cause to build the Ram temple immediately on the site of the Babri mosque demolished in 1992. However, even more important, it was a direct challenge to the power of the Supreme Court where the matter is under adjudication, thus drastically undermining the judicial system itself. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat made it clear in a speech during the rally in Ayodhya that "society does not move only by the words of law, but also by its own wishes". Other speakers indulged in even more intemperate language. What started as a property dispute has thus been turned into a matter of faith beyond the purview of the courts. Simultaneously, there is an anti-democratic wave sweeping through the country. Populism rather than liberal democracy is increasingly coming to define the nature of the Indian polity. A jingoistic form of ultra-nationalism has become very popular. Politicians regularly engage in such rhetoric with discussants on TV channels, some of them retired military officers, also contributing in great measure to its legitimisation.

This is the polar opposite of patriotism combined with liberal values that was enshrined in the Constitution and was held dear by the first generation of independent India's leadership. A further indication of the erosion of democratic values is the tendency of highly placed serving military officers to comment publicly on sensitive issues of domestic and foreign policy. They intervene in debates such as those regarding illegal immigration and India-Pakistan relations, which should be the exclusive preserve of civilian leaders in government and in the opposition. This would not have been tolerated in an earlier era because the founding fathers of the republic were emphatic that civilian supremacy over the military brass must be safeguarded at all costs and the military isolated from the political arena. The current trajectory of Indian politics reminds one eerily of the first decade of the existence of neighbouring Pakistan. Mounting majoritarianism fuelled by religious intolerance, hyper-nationalism born out of insecurity, deliberate erosion of political and judicial institutions, and creeping military intervention in the political arena finally led to the first military coup in Pakistan in 1958. This paved the way for a succession of military takeovers. One of these resulted in the division of Pakistan in 1971 and another in the creation of terrorist outfits in the 1980s that continue not only to threaten India and Afghanistan but also to tear apart Pakistan's social fabric. Pakistan has never recovered from the tragic errors committed in its early years and is paying a very high price for it today. One hopes that India will not go down the same path because otherwise, the largest democracy in the world could face an equally bleak future.

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Make planning fashionable again



chine-making industry, scientific research institutes, and electric power."

The programmes launched in India from the 1950s onwards to build indigenous capabilities in capital- and technology-intensive sectors, despite the general poverty of the country, became a model for other developing and Third World nations. The debates around Indian planning provided a fertile launching pad for the evolution of development economics as an important sub-discipline. It will only be reasonable to argue that the foundations for India's diversified economic base had been laid during the planning years. The successes that India enjoys today in the information technology and knowledge-intensive sectors owe much to the research and educational institutions that were built during the early decades. At the same time, however, planning did very little to remove the hurdles to the growth of agriculture and small-scale industries. India's record during the post-Independence period in implementing land reforms and ensuring primary education for all has been rather unimpressive. As a result, the benefits from state-led development have so far reached only a minority of Indians. India's commitment towards development through planning had begun to diminish from the early 1990s itself — much before the Planning Commission was formally dismantled in 2014. After the introduction of economic reforms in 1991, public investment, especially on agriculture and industry, has been on a decline in the country. PSUs have begun to be valued only for the returns they bring as commercial entities. There has been little recognition of the important role that PSUs can play as creators of new technologies and knowledge, particularly in fields in

which the private sector may have little interest or capabilities. The disregard for planning and the general withdrawal of the state from economic decision-making have had important consequences on Indian industry. India is today one of the largest markets in the world for a wide range of goods, whether passenger cars, mobile phones or food products. Despite the emergence of such a large domestic market, the record of Indian manufacturing in absorbing the large labour reserves in the country remains abysmal. The imports of machinery, transport equipment, electronic goods and all their components have been rising continuously in India from the 2000s onwards. This trend has not been reversed after the introduction of the 'Make in India' initiative. Planning is not incompatible with markets and globalisation. On the contrary, a developing country trying hard to stay afloat amidst the turbulence of a global economy requires more, and not less, guidance thorough industrial policies. The successes achieved by East Asian countries such as South Korea in manufacturing are, to a great extent, the result of strategic planning over several decades by their governments. China is gradually shifting its economic base from low-wage industries, and is now emerging as a global leader, even ahead of the U.S., in several new technologies, including artificial intelligence and renewable energy. These Chinese achievements owe much to the careful planning and investments made by its government, particularly in the area of science and technology. The employment challenge that India faces — close to 15 million waiting to be absorbed in the industrial and services sectors every year — is possibly bigger than that faced by any other

country (except China) in the world. It cannot be resolved with the technologies that foreign companies bring into India, which tend to be labour saving. What India requires, on the other hand, are technological advances that create new economic opportunities and absorb — not displace — labour. Consider, for instance, breakthroughs in biotechnology that may find new commercial applications for our agricultural products, or electric ve-

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

Uneasy fields: on Kisan Mukti Morcha

Last week, tens of thousands of farmers reached Delhi for a two-day Kisan Mukti Morcha and held the country's attention. They sought a special 21-day Parliament session to discuss the crisis in India's agrarian economy. Their key demands included an unqualified loan waiver to mitigate indebtedness levels in farm households and better remuneration for their produce instead of promises on paper of high minimum support prices. These broad demands sum up the precarious livelihood of a majority of farmers who work on small, fragmented land holdings. This is certainly not the first distress call from the farm sector to Parliament and policymakers; several such stirrings have taken place across States over the past year alone. In March, when around 30,000 farmers and tribals from Maharashtra walked for days to Mumbai, they drew appreciation for their restrained conduct compared to the usually unruly protesters. And, they secured assurances from Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis of tangible action on their demands over the next six months. Finding little movement on those promises, many of those who had marched to Mumbai joined the rally in Delhi, which was by far the biggest such gathering. Galvanised by the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, it reportedly had participation from 200-plus organisations, with farmers from 24 States. With rural distress palpable, elections for five State Assemblies under way, and the Lok Sabha election just about six months later, farmers' issues are bound to further dominate politics. Official data released last Friday show that the agriculture sector clocked a growth of just 3.8% (on a gross value added basis) in the second quarter of this fiscal, compared to the 5.3% recorded in the preceding quarter. To put that in perspective, farm sector output was growing strongly in the first three quarters of 2016-17, before imploding in the aftermath of the demonetisation exercise. The latest number suggests that the semblance of recovery seen in the previous two quarters has dimmed too. The government has done an about-turn on its responses to a parliamentary panel that farmers were hit hard by the note ban, and sought to reassure farmers by reiterating its own initiatives for the sector. The Opposition, in turn, is using the farmers' platform to take jibes at the BJP-led government at the Centre and in many States. Unfortunately,

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

As is well known, India under Nehru's leadership inaugurated a strategy for industrialisation of the country in the early 1950s. This involved the setting up of public sector units (PSUs) in diverse areas of manufacturing; research institutions in cutting-edge technologies of the time such as space and atomic energy; and centres of higher learning, including the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs). All of these by a poor country, which was still struggling to find its feet amidst the multiple blows it had to endure during the early years after Independence. But that was not all. By consciously entering into sectors such as machine building and nuclear research, which needed capital and technology more critically

than labour, India was also challenging a deeply held orthodoxy in economic theory. From the time of David Ricardo, a galaxy of economists had argued (and many still argue) that countries should develop industries based on their comparative advantage. According to this theory, a labour-surplus country like India should be limiting its industrial development ambitions to labour-intensive sectors, such as garments or leather. After all, the theory would ask, why should a country like India produce machines or pharmaceuticals domestically, when such products can easily be imported from advanced countries? During the colonial period, the British government in India had indeed been putting the theory of comparative advantage into practice — to the disadvantage of most Indians. In his book The Discovery of India, Nehru described how the colonial government systematically strangled Indian entrepreneurship. Writing from his prison cell in Ahmednagar Fort in the early 1940s, Nehru argued that the fundamental requirements for a modern India included "a heavy engineering and ma-

Pak vs NZ third Test: Williamson, Watling rally New Zealand despite Yasir Shah's triple strike



(Gns. News), Pakistan players celebrate the dismissal of New Zealand's Kane Williamson on day 1 of the third Test in Abu Dhabi on December 3, 2018. Pakistan players celebrate the dismissal of New Zealand's Kane Williamson on day 1 of the third Test in Abu Dhabi on December 3, 2018. Photo Credit: AP Shah playing in his 33rd test match needs two more wickets to become the quickest bowler in test history to reach 200 wickets. New Zealand captain Kane Williamson scored a fighting half century on a turning wicket Monday and rallied his team to 229-7 on the first day of the third and final test against Pakistan. Williamson's 89 off 176 balls was the cornerstone of New Zealand's revival after leg-spinner Yasir Shah's (3-62) triple strike had left the visitors reeling at 72-4 before lunch. B.J. Watling, who added 104 runs with Williamson for the fifth-wicket stand, defied Pakistan for more than four hours to remain unbeaten on 42 off 180 deliveries, hitting a solitary boundary in his

patient knock. Williamson and Watling dug in well and denied Pakistan success in the middle session before the home team got three wickets after tea to check New Zealand's progress. Fast bowler Hasan Ali finally broke the (1-46) century partnership when Williamson was caught at short mid-wicket. The New Zealand captain used his feet well against the spinners and hit seven fours before falling to Hasan's reverse swing. Colin de Grandhomme (20) was smartly held by Asad Shafiq in the leg slip only a ball after surviving a stumping attempt by Pakistan skipper Sarfraz Ahmed off Bilal Asif's (2-57) offspin. Tim Southee, playing his first test match of the series, then top-edged Asif before debutant Will Somerville (12 not out) successfully overturned an lbw decision against the off-spinner and saw off the day with Watling. Asif could have dented New Zealand after lunch but Watling was dropped by Imam-ul-Haq at forward short leg as Pakistan couldn't make further inroads

after Shah's demolition in the first session. Williamson completed his half century off 109 balls with three fours when he drove Asif to the covers for three runs and looked comfortable against seamers and spinners before he was undone by Hasan. Earlier, Shah had the wickets of Jeet Raval (45) and Ross Taylor (0) off successive deliveries before Henry Nicholls (1) played on to the leg-spinner after Williamson won the toss and elected to bat. Shah playing in his 33rd test match needs two more wickets to become the quickest bowler in test history to reach 200 wickets. Australia leg-spinner Clarrie Grimmett holds the record after taking his 200th wicket in his 36th test in 1925. Pakistan struck early through debutant Shaheen Afridi (1-43) when the left-arm fast bowler had Tom Latham (4) leg before wicket in his third over. Onfield umpire Paul Reiffel adjudged Latham not out but Pakistan had the decision overturned through television referral as the replays showed the ball would have crashed into the middle and leg stump. Shah's 14-wicket haul had earned Pakistan a resounding innings and 16-run victory in the second test, which leveled the series at 1-1. And New Zealand's batsmen continued to struggle against Shah's nine overs in the first session at the same venue, where Williamson's team won the first test narrowly by four runs last month. The leg-spinner had Raval leg before wicket off a delivery which came back in to the left hander, ending a 46-run second-wicket stand. Taylor was clean bowled off the next delivery, which didn't rise above shin height. Nicholls denied Shah a hat trick but in the next over was clean bowled as he dragged the ball back onto the stumps while attempting a sweep shot as New Zealand lost three wickets for two runs.

Chris Gayle wins \$300,000 in defamation settlement



(Gns. News), Chris Gayle reacts as he leaves the New South Wales Supreme Court in Sydney, Australia, October 30, 2017. Photo Credit: Reuters jury found he was defamed in Australian newspaper articles which claimed he had exposed himself indecently to a female masseur in 2015 West Indies cricket star Chris Gayle has been awarded \$300,000 in damages, three months after a jury found he was defamed in Australian newspaper articles which claimed he had exposed himself indecently to a female masseur. Justice Lucy McCallum levied the damages on Monday in a long-awaited ruling after a four-person jury in the New South Wales state High Court found in October, 2017 that Fairfax had not established Gayle had exposed himself in a team dressing room during a Sydney training session at the 2015 World Cup. The jury also found Fairfax was motivated by malice, rejecting the media group's defense of qualified privilege, which argues the organization acted reasonably by publishing information which is in the public interest. Fairfax Media said on Monday it will "immediately" appeal the decision. Justice McCallum awarded Gayle a single sum for a series of articles published in January, 2016 in the Sydney Morning Herald, Canberra Times and Melbourne Age. Aggravated damages were not awarded and the figure was at the lower end of recent defamation payouts. The judge found imputations in the articles published by Fairfax "went to the

heart of Mr. Gayle's professional life as a batsman". But she agreed with Fairfax, the allegations were "not at the most serious end of the spectrum." "In light of the jury's verdict I am required to assess damages on the basis that the allegation of indecent exposure was not true and that the attribution of such conduct was very damaging to Mr. Gayle's reputation." Justice

McCallum said Gayle's evidence that the articles had hurt his feelings was "surprisingly compelling." A particular source of hurt were calls for Gayle to be banned from international cricket. Fairfax said it would appeal because it is "concerned with the conduct of the trial." "The jury was misled in a way that prejudiced Fairfax and Fairfax did not get a fair trial," a spokesman said.

Students exhibit culinary skills



(Gns. News), Around 500 students from 13 schools from Udhagamandalam and Coonoor took part in the Food Fest organised by the Monarch International College of Hotel Management recently. Around 500 students from 13 schools from Udhagamandalam and Coonoor took part in the Food Fest organised by the Monarch International College of Hotel Management recently. Photo Credit: HANDOUT_E_MAIL A food festival was organised at the Monarch International College of Hotel Management here recently. Nalini Thimraj, President of the college, said that the festival was organised by the final year BSc Hotel Management students as part of their course curriculum, with 13 schools from Udhagamandalam and Coonoor being invited. Ms. Thimraj said that the theme of the festival was "Tasting The Tales of Monarch!" "The Monarch students displayed their talents (sic) in hospitality by creating a variety of food and beverages. While the production took care of the delicious food,

Aus vs Ind first Test: Marcus Harris to debut, India announces 12-man team

(Gns. News), Indian captain Virat Kohli with his Australian counterpart Tim Paine pose with the Border Gavaskar trophy ahead of the first Test in Adelaide on December 5, 2018. Indian captain Virat Kohli with his Australian counterpart Tim Paine pose with the Border Gavaskar trophy ahead of the first Test in Adelaide on December 5, 2018. Photo Credit: Ryan Piers Australia drops vice-captain and all-rounder Mitchell Marsh brings in Peter Handscomb in his place. Australia vice-captain and all-rounder Mitchell Marsh has been dropped for the first test against India as selectors backed the team's three specialist seamers to bowl a full workload at Adelaide Oval. India will pick their playing XI for the first Test against Australia from the 12 players which was announced on Wednesday. Marsh's place in the side for the series-opener, which starts on Thursday, has been taken by middle order batsman Peter Handscomb, recalled for the first time since the tour of South Africa in March and April. Despite scoring a century for Sheffield Shield side Western Australia in the lead-up, Marsh pays the price for a poor tour of the United Arab Emirates where he managed 30 runs from four innings with the bat against Pakistan and two wickets at the cost of almost 100 runs with the ball. "Mitch Marsh probably hasn't



been as consistent as he would like and we would like," captain Tim Paine told reporters at Adelaide Oval on Wednesday, confirming that Handscomb would bat fifth in the order with local favourite Travis Head at six. "We know he's good enough to be a genuine all-rounder at test level. The quicks are going to have a bowl a bit more and we have full faith that Nathan Lyon can do the

job." Paine confirmed Marcus Harris would make his test debut and open the batting with Aaron Finch in the opener of the four-match series, Australia's first home test since Steve Smith and David Warner were banned over the Newlands ball-tampering scandal. "He's been a really consistent player for the last three years and thoroughly deserves the opportunity," Paine said of

Harris. "He's an aggressive little player, hell play his shots but he's also improved his defence." Australia coach Justin Langer earlier confirmed that batsman Usman Khawaja

would take his place in the side despite the arrest of his brother on charges of attempting to pervert the course of justice and forgery on Tuesday.

"We're keeping an eye on 'Uzzie', obviously it was a little bit of a shock for him yesterday," Langer said on SEN radio. "A lot of cricketers say this, but the actual sanctuary is out in the middle so while there's a lot going on in his personal life, we're all around him to support him. With a scorching 39 degrees Celsius forecast for Adelaide on Thursday, Paine said Australia would be inclined to bat first if he won the toss against counterpart Virat Kohli. "You want to bat on days when it's 40 degrees," said the wicketkeeper.

Australian XI: Aaron Finch, Marcus Harris, Usman Khawaja, Shaun Marsh, Peter Handscomb, Travis Head, Tim Paine (captain), Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Nathan Lyon.

India (12 players): Virat Kohli (captain), Murali Vijay, Lokesh Rahul, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Hanuma Vihari, Rohit Sharma, Rishabh Pant, Ravichandran Ashwin, Mohammed Shami, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah

Be patient with football in India: Matthauss



His first taste of India was through hockey when Munich hosted the Olympic Games in 1972. That was the first time German football legend Lothar Matthauss found India's name frequently popping up and incidentally West Germany won the Olympic hockey title then, beating Pakistan by a lone goal in the final. That hockey tournament, where India won the bronze, perhaps stays fresh in Matthauss' mind for it ended in controversy with the Pakistan fans and officials invading the pitch and assaulting tournament officials and stadium security personnel after the final. "India is a young football country. You have a different national sport here, you play hockey. Thirty to 40 years ago, my first contact with India was because of hockey. I think it was the 1972 Olympics," said Matthauss as he watched a bit of the Reliance Foundation Youth Series football tournament's Kochi final at the Panampilly Nagar Sports Academy ground here on Tuesday evening. He said that football was gaining in popularity in India but one should be patient with the sport and give it time to develop. Matthauss, the captain of the German team which won the 1990 World Cup, felt that Croatian Luka Modric winning the Ballon d'Or award in Paris on Monday, breaking the 10-year monopoly of Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, was a good choice. "I think it was a good decision from the people who decide on it. Luka had a great season with Real Madrid, he played a great World Cup," said Matthauss, a former FIFA 'Player-of-the-Year'. "We have a lot of good players and it is nice that after 10 years, there is no Messi or Ronaldo. They are still the best in the world but Modric had great results with Real Madrid and Croatia. I had the honour to win this title 27 years ago, but I think without good teammates, without good results with the team you cannot win a title like Modric has won. I think he played in good teams like Croatia and Real Madrid and the teams have had good results too. Congratulations from my side, he is not only a good player, he is a nice guy, I know him personally and am happy for him." He felt that an over-dependence on old stars turned out to be a problem for the 2014 champion Germany in the FIFA World Cup earlier this year in Russia. "I think Bayern Munich and Germany are missing something in the last six

We'll need a few options to take down Kohli: Hazlewood



(Gns. News), The Indian batting line-up is the best in the world but not untameable if talismanic skipper Virat Kohli is kept in check, feels Australia vice-captain and pacer Josh Hazlewood. Kohli had scored 692 runs, including four hundreds, during India's previous Test tour of Australia and Hazlewood said the run-machine will once again take centre stage when the rivalry renews from December 6 here. "I see the Indian line up as the best in the world, if not right up there, led by Virat and I think they feed a lot off him and how he goes about things," Hazlewood said. "They've played a lot at home since we played them last in Australia. They toured England and South Africa, and it was only Virat who stood out. A lot of the others haven't scored too many of the runs," he added.

The bowler said his team has been making plans for Kohli and a few "options" will be in place.

"I think we'll obviously have a chat about him before the game starts. We'll come up with a couple of options. It's about what conditions suit, with a player of that caliber you need a few options," Hazlewood told reporters. But sledging the marauding batsman does not figure in those options. "Virat obviously thrives on that sort of stuff. It gets him going and he probably plays his best cricket when he's doing that. It's up to the individual - if it's a bowler or a fielder. I am usually pretty quiet when I am bowling." Speaking specifically about the first Test, Hazlewood said early breakthroughs will hold the key. "If we can make some early inroads in this first Test, it's always crucial and the first innings. We can get on top of them early, hopefully that will filter through the rest of the Test."

India have been touted as favourites against Australia in the absence of the banned bat-

ting duo of Steve Smith and David Warner but Hazlewood said it would be an even contest. "I think it's pretty even. They're obviously number one Test team in the world but we play some good cricket at home. So I think it's very even heading this," he said. "With our bowling attack we're very confident and based on last year, we had quite a good template there and it worked pretty well (in the Ashes). So we'll be looking to replicate that and test it against one of the best batting orders in the world." Australia's quest for reverse swing led to a ball-tampering scandal against South Africa in March this year and this will be the first Test at home for the hosts since that infamous Cape Town Test. Talking about working the ball for reverse swing during the series, Hazlewood said, "It's pretty common sense. The rules are pretty clear now —

it's good to have it in black and white. This ground (Adelaide Oval) and Perth are not ideal for reverse swing so it's more normal seam and swing. I don't think it's going to play a massive part in this game." Hazlewood also stressed on the importance of off-spinner Nathan Lyon, especially the fact that he can bowl long spells to allow the three pacers enough time to recuperate. "He's the key for me. With the four of us, you have Pat who bowls shorter spells and sometimes Starc too. So to have Lyon, it even worked well two weeks ago when we played the Shield game. He pretty much bowled from one end after the new ball and we filtered through from the other end." He added that the fitness of their three-pronged pace attack, also consisting of Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins, will probably determine the course of this series.

Indian Super League: Many chances, no goals

Not his day: Thoi Singh, second from left, missed couple of good chances to put Chennaiyin FC ahead. Not his day: Thoi Singh, second from left, missed couple of good chances to put Chennaiyin FC ahead. Photo Credit: R. Ragu Chennaiyin FC and Kerala Blasters' miserable run continues Chennaiyin FC and Kerala Blasters played out a goalless draw in their Indian Super League match at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here on Thursday. Seimenlen Doungel hit the post for Kerala as its winless run continued and Thoi Singh missed a sitter as defending champion Chennaiyin failed to make the

best use of its chances to revive a disastrous season. The game threw up surprises even before the kick-off. Blasters captain Sandesh Jhingjan and Seimenlen Doungel — one of Kerala's best performers this season — started from the bench. John Gregory made five changes, leaving out the likes of goalkeeper Karanjit Singh. Carlos Salom and Anirudh Thapa from Chennaiyin's starting line-up. Neither team looked comfortable in the first few minutes. The first real chance of the match came in the 30th minute from a set piece. Mailson Alves headed an Orlando free-kick onto the path of Thoi Singh whose

powerful volley went straight at Blasters' goalkeeper Dheeraj Singh, who was later adjudged the man of the match. Just three minutes later, in a quick counter-attack, Jeje, who's been going through a dry spell in front of goal, squared the ball to Thoi. The latter scuffed the shot to miss the easiest chance of the game. Raphael Augusto, pulling the strings in midfield and entertaining fans with his intricate skills, was the only bright spark of the game. He created more than one good chance early in the second half, but it just didn't look like Chennaiyin's day. Goalkeeper Sanjibhan Ghosh kept Chennaiyin in the

game when he got down well to save a shot from Sahal Abdul Samad in the 51st minute after a brilliant run from Kizito. Samad made an important contribution at the other end a few moments later when he dived to block a shot from Orlandi that was on its way in. In the 71st minute, Orlandi missed an easy chance to put the home side in front when he skied a shot it was another frustrating night for Blasters. Its best chance of the match came in the 80th minute when Doungel's shot came off the upright. The visitors created a few more chances in the final ten minutes and David James even brought Jhingjan on, but to no avail.

Police Inspector, youth killed as mob attacks U.P. outpost

(Gns. News), Vehicles that were set on fire by a mob in Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh, on December 3, 2018. | Photo Credit: PTI Rumours of cow slaughter spark violence; police fired upon; Inspector Subodh Kumar Singh was investigating officer of the Dadri lynching case between September 28, 2015 and November 9, 2015. A police Inspector and a youth were killed when a mob of around 400 persons clashed with the police following the alleged discovery of cow carcasses in a village in Bulandshahr district of western Uttar Pradesh on Monday. Around half-a-dozen policemen, including a DSP, and several civilians were injured in the clashes, which saw firing from both sides and stones being pelted on the local police outpost at Chingravati in Syana.

Inspector Subodh Kumar Singh, who was killed in the attack, was in-charge of the outpost. A Special Investigation Team under the IG, Meerut, has been constituted to probe the incident, while the ADG-Investigation has been asked by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to submit a report within 48 hours. While the police had initially

maintained that the officer died due to profuse bleeding following a head injury suffered in stone-pelting, ADG (Law and Order) Anand Kumar confirmed later that Mr. Singh had died of a gunshot injury, as shown by the autopsy report. This was in addition to the injuries he sustained from hard and blunt objects.

"The entry of the bullet is near the left eyebrow. As per the post-mortem report it appears to be a .32 bore bullet," said Mr. Kumar. Video footage showing the officer lying dead in his jeep in a field with youth seen around filming the scene on their mobile phones amid sounds of bullets being fired had put pressure on the police to clarify the cause of death. While the body was hanging by the door of the vehicle, the window panes were shattered and all doors were open. It is not known how the officer was caught alone in the vehicle.



Subodh Kumar Singh, who passed away in the Bulandshahr violence. Subodh Kumar Singh, who passed away in the Bulandshahr violence. Trouble started after the former pradhan of Mahav village Raj Kumar approached the police to complain-

ing that bodyparts of five to six cows had been found in a field. Along with his team, Mr. Singh rushed to the spot to investigate and tried to calm the agitated locals, said police. While the police assured the villagers of action and an FIR was also under

process, some miscreants carried carcasses, "possibly of cow progeny," on a tractor trolley, parked it outside the police outpost and blocked the road, said Mr. Kumar. District Magistrate Anuj Jha said the locals did not allow the police to seize the carcasses. Around 400 persons had assembled near the police outpost from three villages — Mahav, Chingravati and Mahavas — said Mr. Kumar.

While the villagers first seemed to agree with the police assurances, some began "heavy stone-pelting" on the outpost, following which police had to resort to a lathi-charge and firing in the air to disperse the crowd, said Mr. Kumar. The village mob retaliated with firing from country-made pistols, the officer said. The mob also damaged at least 15 vehicles outside the police outpost, officials said.

In the clashes, a local youth, Sumit Singh, suffered gunshot wounds and died later at a hos-

pital in Meerut. Police are investigating whether he was killed in police firing or in firing from the villagers. BJP district president Himanshu Mittal said he had heard that two activists of the party had been shot in the incident. However, he could not confirm the names. It is alleged that local right-wing groups and BJP members instigated the locals to gather at the police outpost. Inspector Singh was the

investigating officer (IO) of the Dadri lynching case resulting in the death of Mohammad Akhlaq from September 28, 2015 to November 9, 2015. The chargesheet, however, had been filed by a different IO in March, 2016, said a senior police officer. Security has been beefed up in the district and five companies of the Rapid Action Force and six additional companies of the PAC have been deployed to maintain order.

Bihar BJP targets JD(U) leader Prashant Kishor for 'influencing' Patna University poll



Bihar Chief Minister Nitin Kumar with Prashant Kishor in a file picture. | Photo Credit: PTI JD(U) leaders said the BJP leaders have "unnecessarily" reacted to a small clash between students of two different organisations. The ruling alliance partners JD(U) and BJP in Bihar have come face to face over Patna University Students Union (PUSU) election with state BJP leaders obliquely targeting poll strategist and JD(U) national vice-President Prashant Kishor for "influencing the election."

Ever since Mr. Kishor joined the JD(U) he has been meeting with youths and students for several consecutive days to rope them in to the party. He, of late, had also met with party's student wing leaders of Patna University in view of the upcoming

election, scheduled to be held on December 5, and chalked out strategy to win the poll. Recently, while campaigning for the poll, students belonging to Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) which is affiliated to the RSS had a clash with JD(U)'s student wing leaders. Later, the JD(U) student wing leaders lodged a complaint with the local police station against ABVP students. The police swung into action immediately and raided the local ABVP office to arrest those named in the case. The police raid at the ABVP office irked the State BJP leadership and they pressed four local party legislators to come out in support of the ABVP on the incident. The State BJP leaders, three of them local party MLAs and one MLC — Arun Sinha, Sanjiv

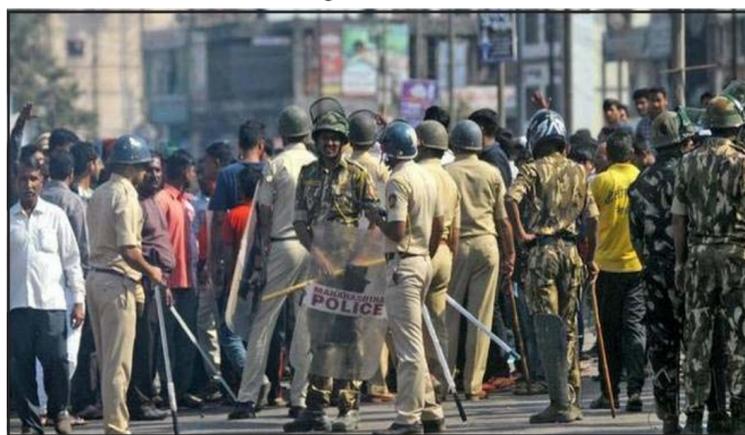
Chaurasia, Nitin Navin and Sanjay Paswan — later condemned the police raid on ABVP office and issued a press release targeting Mr. Kishor, though obliquely. "Certain event management professionals are being used to influence the outcome of the student union elections of Patna University... the ABVP candidates and their supporters are being terrorised by the police and the administration," said the press release issued by them. The BJP Youth Morcha too came out in support of the ABVP and protested against government at Income-Tax intersection on Sunday in Patna. Meanwhile, JD(U) leaders said the BJP leaders have "unnecessarily" reacted to a small clash between students of two different organisations.

SC directs Maharashtra to submit charge sheet in Bhima-Koregaon case by December 8

(Gns. News), Policemen trying to control a mob at Koregaon-Bhima village in Maharashtra after the clashes early this month. AFP The bench has now posted the appeal for further hearing on December 11. The Supreme Court on Monday said it wants to see the chargesheet filed by the Maharashtra government against lawyer Surendra Gadling and others accused of Maoist links in the aftermath of the Bhima-Koregaon violence to see "how serious" the charges against them are. The decision by a Bench of Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, Justices S.K. Kaul and K.M. Joseph to call for the chargesheet came after the State objected to grant of bail to the accused, claiming the charges were too serious for such a relief. The court asked the State to file the chargesheet and the gist of the case before December 11, the next date of hearing. The State had approached the Supreme Court against a Bombay

High Court order rejecting the Maharashtra police plea for a 90-day extension to complete its investigation and file a chargesheet against Mr. Gadling and others. The court had recently stayed the October 24 High Court, which had opened the window for Mr. Gadling, Nagpur University professor Shoma Sen, activists Sudhir Dhawale and Mahesh Raut and Rona Wilson to seek default bail.

They were arrested on June 6 by the Pune police and a case was registered against them under various provisions of The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 and the Indian Penal Code. The State's petition has argued that under Section 43-D (2) of the UAPA Act, the trial court may, on the report of the public prosecutor, extend the detention of the accused for another 90 days. On September 2, the trial court had allowed an extension of 90 days, following which Mr. Gadling and the others moved the High Court, which set



aside the trial court order. The High Court, however, stayed its order till November 1 to give the State time to appeal to the Supreme Court. The State govern-

ment argued that the High Court resorted to a "pedantic view rather than resorting to a pragmatic view." The High Court concluded that the report backing the plea

for a 90-day extension of detention was filed before the Sessions Judge by the case investigating officer instead of the public prosecutor as required by law.

Odisha to put reflective tapes on cattle horns

With stray cattle posing threat to vehicular movement on roads, the Odisha government has decided to put reflective stickers on horns of the cattle across the State. In an order issued to the Regional Transport Officers, State Transport Commissioner Sanjeeb Panda said, "for enhancing visibility of the stray cattle sleeping or standing on roads, it has been decided to put reflective stickers on their horns so that the driver can know about them from a longer distance".

Although road accidents have claimed 43,000 human lives and left 57,684 people grievously injured in 1,04,713 accidents in the past one decade, no study has been conducted as to how many accidents were caused by the cattle. "Cattle wandering on roads has become a major headache... Drivers often bump into cattle and meet with accidents while evading them. Quite a high number of accidents can be attributed to cattle straying on road," said Mr. Panda. The recent mishap involving death of 11 persons on the bridge on Mahanadi River near Cuttack has prompted the government for this action. The bus carrying nearly 50 passengers had fallen off the bridge after hitting a buffalo. The RTOs were directed to take immediate steps to put yellow or red tapes on the horns of cattle. Urban local bodies, NGOs or veterinary department could be roped in for the job, he ordered. The RTOs have also been directed to submit action taken reports by December 20. Last month ahead of the Hockey World Cup, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation had started tagging cattle to identify animals which were being frequently set free.

Minister raps students for blocking roads

(Gns. News), Taking strong exception to road blockades staged by college students over attendance mandate, West Bengal Education Minister Partha Chatterjee has asserted the government will be forced to take action if the agitators cause inconvenience to public for "personal benefit".

A large number of students from two institutes — Shibnath Shastri College and Heramba Chandra College — had take to the streets on Thursday and Friday to protest against the Calcutta University mandate of 60% minimum attendance for appearing in the examinations.

The students from Heramba Chandra College blocked thoroughfares in Golpark area for two consecutive days, demanding immediate relaxation of the



norms. The protest was also backed by students of Gurudas College and Jaipuria College, who demonstrated outside their campuses. The Education Minister said the government will not succumb to the pressure tactics of the students. "Many people were inconvenienced as they (students) blocked the roads to get their demands fulfilled. This is unacceptable," Mr. Chatterjee had said. Earlier this year, the CU authorities had

asked all affiliated colleges to ensure strict compliance of the directive. Mr. Chatterjee pointed out that the State Education department has fixed 60% attendance as the criterion, even as the UGC suggested 75% attendance for higher educational institutions. Trinamool Congress Chhatra Parishad, the students' wing of the ruling party, appealed to the Minister to find a "way out of the deadlock" to restore normality in the institutes.

Former Minister criticises Siddaramaiah for silence on JD(S) claims

Former Minister and KPCC vice-president B. Shivaramu has come down heavily on former Chief Minister and coordination committee chairman Siddaramaiah for maintaining silence, even after JD(S) leaders repeatedly claiming credit for development works sanctioned for Hassan. At a press conference here on Monday, Mr. Shivaramu said Chief Minister

H.D. Kumaraswamy and Public Works Minister H.D. Revanna have repeatedly commented that Hassan district "had a curse for 10 years" and that there was no development works under the previous governments. "Even after many major works were sanctioned for the district, JD(S) leaders had been terming the Congress rule as a curse to the district. Why should Mr.

Siddaramaiah keep mum even after providing huge funds for roads and major irrigation works for the district," he questioned. The former Minister said the three highway projects for the Union Minister Nitin Gadkari laid the foundation stone on Saturday were all sanctioned during the Congress rule. "Mr. Revanna has claimed credit for these works.

Migrant workers still out of reach of HIV screening

(Gns. News),

Social activists holding awareness placards and red ribbon as they walk in a carnival on the AIDS Day in Bhubaneswar on Saturday. Social activists holding awareness placards and red ribbon as they walk in a carnival on the AIDS Day in Bhubaneswar on Saturday. Ganjam the eighth most HIV infection-prone district in the country, says District AIDS Cell official A large number of migrant labourers vulnerable to HIV infection in Ganjam, the most AIDS prone district in Odisha, are still out of reach of regular screening and test for possibility of presence of the deadly virus in their body. According to programme manager of the District AIDS Cell, Hemant Kumar Das, Ganjam is the eighth most HIV infection-prone district in the country. Most of the HIV infected persons of the district are migrant labourers, who work outside Odisha, especially in Surat of Gujarat. As per an assessment, there are around five lakh migrant labourers in Ganjam district. At present, around 1,47,000 persons in Ganjam are getting screened for HIV infection in a year. Out of them, around 60,000 are pregnant women, as now thrust is on preventing transfer of HIV from infected mothers to newborns. The other tests are targeted at migrant labourers. Eight months ago, the Odisha AIDS Control Society, with the support of social organisation ARUNA, had started a special project for cent percent screening of migrant labourers for HIV infection at 200 villages in six blocks of the district. At these villages, volunteers counsel and screen through HIV test-



ing kits every migrant labourer returning to his home. Around 36,000 persons are to be tested under this project. Lokanath Mishra of ARUNA, who for more than a decade has been involved in rehabilitation of HIV infected persons as well as migrant labourers, said the project has to be extended to all the villages in the 22 blocks of the district to cover all migrant labourers. Ganjam has 3,250 villages that have migrant labourers. "As per the present facility, around 87,000 migrant labourers are getting screened for HIV infection after their return, which is less than one fifth of the total number of migrant labourers," Mr. Mishra said. Regular screening will also increase awareness about HIV among the migrant labourers, who are generally less educated, he added. UNAIDS has

envisioned to achieve '90-90-90' target by 2020, which will result in controlling HIV infection to sustainable state by 2030. As per the '90-90-90' target, 90% of all HIV infected persons should get diagnosed and know their HIV positive status. Ninety % of these diagnosed HIV positive persons are to be provided regular Antiretroviral Therapy (ART). Ninety % of persons taking ART should show signs of viral suppression which reduces their scope of infection. But in Ganjam district, getting 90% of all the HIV positive persons diagnosed is still a distant target. From May 2000 till October 2018, total number of persons tested to be HIV positive in Ganjam district is 15,373. It is around 33% of total number of 46,128 HIV positive persons in Odisha.

Right to know: Now just drop into a govt. office to access information

(Gns. News), Mumbai: Citizens seeking data from the government under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, can now simply land up at the concerned office on Monday afternoons and study the relevant files, as per a fresh decree from the Devendra Fadnis administration. Apart from smoothening access to information, the move is also expected to help curb the rising number of pending appeals with the Maharashtra State Information Commission from applicants against departments denying or withholding information. By the end of September 2018, 39,709 appeals and complaints were pending since 2014. "To reduce the number of first and second appeals, all government offices ranging from district level to lower

level, and municipal corporations, municipal councils, and zilla parishads will make files available for applicants to inspect between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. every Monday," said a directive issued by the State government.

In case there is a public holiday on Monday, information can be accessed on the next working day. Former Central Information Commission Shailesh Gandhi termed this is a useful order for citizens and suggested that people carry a copy of the official order the first time they visit government offices, because there is going to be denial from officials initially. "Once more people keep insisting, the officers will have to buckle under the pressure," he said, adding that the order should help reduce the number of pending appeals and

complaints. "RTI applications have been on the decline for the last two years. Because, a citizen finds that the system is obscuring and blocking the information. Then they get tired and don't have time and energy to follow up," explained Mr. Gandhi.