

# NEWSIN brief

## India's caste riots death toll hits 28

AFP, New Delhi  
The death toll from caste unrest in northern India has risen to 28 but violence has subsided, officials said Thursday, as a court asked authorities to investigate reports of rape during the riots. Large-scale violence gripped northern Haryana state at the weekend after the Jat caste led protests to demand preferential treatment in government jobs.

## Lahore-Delhi 'Dosti' bus service resumes

PTI, Lahore  
Pakistan on Wednesday resumed Lahore-Delhi 'Dosti' bus service, days after it was suspended indefinitely at India's request following violence and arson in Jat quota stir in Haryana. The bus service, which was suspended on February 21, was resumed after clearance from India and about 21 passengers.

## 'Sahayaks' not 'coolies'

AFP, New Delhi  
India said it will roll out wife to hundreds of stations, install 17,000 hi-tech toilets on trains and professionalise its unskilled porters, or "coolies" under a drive to modernise its creaking railways. Station baggage carriers, known by the derogatory name "coolies", would be called as "sahayaks", which translates as "helpers" in Hindi "in line with the evolving image of Indian Railways", Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu said as he presented the 2016-17 rail budget in parliament.

## Australia warns of Indonesia terror threat

AFP, Sydney  
Australia yesterday warned that terrorists might be in the "advanced stages of preparing attacks" in Indonesia and advised travellers to take precautions, just days after a similar warning about neighbouring Malaysia. However, a spokesman for Indonesia's national police said authorities had not seen any indications of an imminent attack.

## Shabab killed '180 Kenyan troops'

BBC ONLINE  
At least 180 Kenyan troops were killed when al-Shabab attacked their base last month, Somalia's president has said. Kenya's army said the number was untrue, but again refused to give its own casualty figures for the assault in the southern Somali base of el-Ade. The Islamist militant group said it had killed about 100 Kenyan troops. If it is confirmed that 180 troops were killed, it would be al-Shabab's deadliest assault since it was formed nearly a decade ago.



Nepalese police yesterday inspect a burned body near the wreckage of a Twin Otter plane operated by private Tara Air, after it crashed on Wednesday due to bad weather in Myagdi, Nepal. Inset, Grieving relatives gather as the bodies of airplane crash victims are brought to a hospital in Kathmandu yesterday. Emergency workers have recovered bodies of all 23 on board the Tara Air aeroplane when a flight from Pokhara to Jomsom crashed in Myagdi, some 220 kilometres west of Kathmandu.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

# IS bomb supply chain includes 7 India firms

REUTERS, Ankara  
Companies from 20 countries are involved in the supply chain of components that end up in Islamic State explosives, a study found yesterday, suggesting governments and firms need to do more to track the flow of cables, chemicals and other equipment. The European Union-mandated study showed that 51 companies from countries including Turkey, Brazil, and the United States produced, sold or received the more than 700 components used by Islamic State to build improvised explosive devices (IEDs). IEDs are now being produced on a "quasi-industrial scale" by the militant group, which uses both industrial components that are regulated and widely available equipment such as fertiliser chemicals and mobile phones, according to Conflict Armament Research (CAR), which undertook the 20-month study. Islamic State controls large swathes of Iraq and Syria. Nato member Turkey shares borders with both countries and has stepped up security to prevent the flow of weapons and insurgents to the hardline Sunni group.

A total of 13 Turkish firms were found to be involved in the supply chain, the most in any one country. That was followed by India with seven. "These findings support growing international awareness that IS forces in Iraq and Syria are very much self-sustaining — acquiring weapons and strategic goods, such as IED components, locally and with ease," said James Bevan, CAR's executive director. The sale of these cheap and readily available parts, some of which are not subject to government export licences, is far less scrutinised and regulated than the transfer of weapons. The study found that Islamic State is able to acquire some components in as little as a month after their lawful supply to firms in the region, suggesting a lack of oversight in the supply chain. Seven Indian companies manufactured most of the detonators, detonating cord, and safety fuses documented by CAR. Those were all legally exported under government-issued licences from India to entities in Lebanon and Turkey, CAR found.

# Pak military helping ISIS in Afghanistan

Says ex-ISIS fighters  
PTI, Kabul  
Pakistan's military provides weapons and training to Islamic State militants in Afghanistan and instructs them to kill the "infidel" Afghan forces, according to the terror group's fighters who laid down their arms. They also said that Pakistani military provides light and heavy weapons to IS fighters in Afghanistan. "Pakistani military gave us weapons and used to tell us that Afghan forces are infidels and you must kill them," Zaitoon, a former IS fighter who laid down his arms and joined the peace talks, was quoted as saying. The 10-member group has joined the peace process due to efforts by the High Peace Council office.

# Hate speech can never be free speech

Says Indian FM on JNU row in Rajya Sabha  
AGENCIES  
Indian Finance minister Arun Jaitley yesterday said "hate speech can never be free speech", rejecting allegations that the government was cracking down on students because it didn't agree with their views. "Vandalism is condemnable but sedition is free speech? Vandalism is terrible but in the name of academic freedom how can hate speech become freedom of expression. How can hate speech become freedom of expression?" he said in Rajya Sabha while speaking in Parliament's debate over unrest in Hyderabad University, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and other institutions. Jaitley was commenting on sedition cases being filed against JNU students for alleged

anti-national slogans and lawyers attacking them in Delhi court, reports Hindustan Times. Initiating the debate yesterday, Left leader Sitaram Yechury accused the government of charging students with sedition because it couldn't tolerate dissent and wanted to enforce its ideology on everybody. Meanwhile, detectives questioning Umar Khalid and Anirban Bhattacharya, the JNU students held in a sedition case, are having a tough time cracking the duo with the former denying his involvement in any sloganeering and the latter challenging claims that the slogans were "anti-national". Delhi Police yesterday continued their interrogation of Khalid and Anirban but remained tight-lipped about developments in the case citing High Court's order to



# PAKISTAN'S FIGHT AGAINST TERROR 'Last phase' of offensive begins

254 madrasas shut down  
AFP, Islamabad  
Pakistan has begun the "last phase" of a bloody operation targeting militants in the restive northwest region along the Afghan border, a senior security official said yesterday. The military released a statement Wednesday saying that powerful army chief General Raheel Sharif had given the order to launch the final phase of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan, one of the tribal areas on the border with Afghanistan in which militants had previously operated with impunity. Both ground and air assets are being used to take on the terrorists hiding in the areas, a source told AFP on condition of anonymity. The army launched the operation under US pressure in mid-2014, in a bid to wipe out militant bases in the North Waziristan tribal area and bring an end to the near decade-long Islamist insurgency that has cost Pakistan thousands of lives. Meanwhile, Pakistani authorities have shut 254 suspected and unregistered religious madrasas across the country as part of a crackdown on religious seminaries involved in extremism. 167 suspected seminaries in Sindh, 13 in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, two in Punjab, and 72 seminaries in Sindh have been closed, said Balighur Rehman, minister of state for interior & narcotics control with the National Assembly. The government is countering hate speech and banning dissemination of extremist material and so far 2,471 cases have been registered, 2,345 people arrested and 73 shops involved in the business sealed, Rehman told the house. On misuse of loudspeakers, he said 9,945 cases had been registered, 10,177 people arrested and 2,664 devices confiscated.

# MALDIVES CRISIS Opposition to boycott talks with govt

THE HINDU ONLINE  
The opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and the Adhaalath Party (AP) on Wednesday said they would not take part in the talks with the government [likely to take place on March 2] until their leaders were released. A statement issued by international spokesperson of the MDP, Hamid Abdul Ghafoor, stated that the recent invitation for an all-party talks with the government would be under the "same conditions as the talks that failed [previously] as a result of the Government's impositions". He urged for "more conducive environment" ahead of the talks.



Indian passengers squeeze into the packed general wagon of The Simanchal Express at Anand Vihar Railway Station in New Delhi yesterday. Indian Railways Minister Suresh Prabhu yesterday announced the Indian Railways Budget in the country's parliament.

PHOTO: AFP



# India opens all combat roles for women

REUTERS, New Delhi  
India will allow women to take up combat roles in all sections of its army, navy and air force, President Pranab Mukherjee said, signalling a radical move towards gender parity in one of the world's most male-dominated professions. Most countries employ women in various roles in their armed forces but only a handful, including Australia, Germany, Israel and the United States, have allowed them to take on fighting, or combat, roles. India, which has one of the largest armies in the world, has resisted such a move, citing concern over women's vulnerability if captured and over their physical and mental ability to cope with the stress of frontline deployments. Addressing both houses on the eve of parliament's budget session, the president - who is also supreme commander of the armed forces - said the government would in future recruit women for fighting roles in the armed forces. India began recruiting women to non-medical positions in the armed forces in 1992.

# 'Transnational crime booming in SE Asia'

AFP, Bangkok  
Transnational crime is booming in Southeast Asia, the UN warned yesterday, aided by rapid regional economic integration and patchy cross-border police work. The problem is so acute that the UN estimates illegal trade across East Asia and the Pacific is now worth more than \$100 billion -- more than the combined GDP's of Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. The stark assessment comes after the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) launched its EU-inspired regional economic bloc in December aimed at boosting trade and attracting more investment. But in a report released yesterday, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime warned moves to pull down barriers are likely to be a major boon to the region's sophisticated criminal networks. Those organisations already flourish amid widespread corruption and weak governance in Southeast Asia to trade drugs, wildlife, natural resources, people and other counterfeit goods. "Transnational crime flows have been growing rapidly in the region," the report's

authors write. "The threat is clear and rising." Timber is one area where crime groups can make huge gains with little risk. The report estimates that between 30-40 percent of all wood-based products exported from Southeast Asia are illegal "due to poor regulation and monitoring of the legitimate wood trade". Drug production and smuggling continues to boom, especially in Myanmar which remains the world's second largest heroin producer after Afghanistan. And shipping is another major weak spot seized upon by crime groups with \$5.3 trillion of global trade transiting through Southeast Asian waters each year. "Of the 500 million containers that are shipped annually, less than two percent are inspected," the report states. Jeremy Douglas, regional representative of the UNODC, said Southeast Asian nations must do more to combine their pursuit of increased trade with better policing and controls. "This region is highly, highly unique," he told AFP, with countries ranging from some of the richest, such as Singapore, to some of the poorest like Laos and Myanmar.

# CLASHES OVER OPIUM 20 anti-drug vigilantes hurt in Myanmar

AFP, Yangon  
An anti-drug vigilante group in northern Myanmar said at least 20 of its members were wounded in gunfire and explosions yesterday as they pressed ahead with a controversial mission to destroy opium poppy crops. The violence comes a day after police allowed hundreds of members of Pat Jasan, a group known for flogging drug users, to advance towards poppy fields against the wishes of local opium farmers. Tan Goon, head of Pat Jasan from the Kachin capital Myitkyina, said its members who had set off towards fields in the Waingmaw area yesterday were ambushed by unknown attackers. "Some were shot, some were wounded in mine and bomb blasts, some were beaten and hit with stones," he told AFP.

# The power of Indian classical dance

Study says the art helps to heal trafficking, sexual violence victims  
REUTERS, Mumbai  
Classical Indian dance could be an effective form of therapy for victims of human trafficking and sexual violence, helping them to overcome their traumatic experiences and gain confidence, a pilot study has shown. The six-month study of 50 female survivors in Kolkata and Mumbai found that dance movement therapy helped ease anxiety, depression, anger and post-traumatic stress when used alongside traditional counselling and other rehabilitation efforts. "Often, in the rehabilitation of victims of trafficking and sexual violence, the impact on the body can be overlooked," said Sohini Chakraborty, the founder and director of Kolkata Sanved, a charity which carried out the research. "Dance is about the body, and the women are somewhat familiar with these dance forms, so we can help them heal and create a more positive body image," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Kathak can help release anger, while the elaborate hand and eye movements in bharatnatyam from southern Tamil Nadu state can help express a range of emotions, Chakraborty said.

