

Business and Politics in Muslim World

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National Summary:

Rahul Gandhi's visit to Mumbai and his statement Mumbai for all Indians provokes Shiv Sena as Bal Thackeray has asked Sena workers to show black flags to Rahul during his visit to the city. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) criticised Congress leader Digvijay Singh's visit to the family of an alleged Indian Mujahideen (IM) operative, and accused it for "vote bank politics".

The Hindutva activists damaged minority worship places and institutions in Kumpala. They threw stones on Mosques, Church and an orphanage. The Congress leader Digvijay Singh's planned visit to Azamgarh a UP town caused tensions as the Ulema Council opposing the Congress leader visit to Sanjarpur to meet the families of those accused in terror attacks. The pro-Hindu outfits also slammed Singh's trip as an attempt to secure Muslim votes.

"The Sangh Parivar has asked its volunteers in Maharashtra to try to prevent the spread of anti-north Indian and anti-Hindi feelings. RSS leader Ram Madhav said RSS was opposed to discrimination on the basis of language and demanded steps to check disturbances on the sensitive issue. Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan is under severe criticism of Shiv Sena for his sympathetic support to Pakistani cricketers against the IPL decision of their exclusion from the league.

Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram said the paramilitary forces are not engaged in any "battle" in the naxal-affected States, and "The Centre sends paramilitary forces at the request of the State governments, which remain under the control of the State governments" he further stated that thirty-three districts remained seriously affected by naxal violence and Maoists were present in 50 others. In these areas the writ of civil administration does not run.

India Inc's hiring activity has increased considerably since September last year and the current recruitment level is one of the highest globally, says a survey by international recruitment firm Antal. The survey stated that Indian firms plan on increasing their hiring activity even more, with 78 per cent expecting to hire managerial staff over the next three months. Rising food inflation is still a concern for India as it is a hurdle in a smooth progress of the economy.

India proposed Pakistan to resume talks while Pakistan seeks clarity of the content of the talks. Pakistan foreign office clarifies that it seeks a result oriented talks over all disputes including water issue and Kashmir dispute.

Chief Justice of India (CJI) K G Balakrishnan said there is an urgent need to ban websites that circulate pornography and hate speeches and emphasized the need for cyber law enforcement in India. The terrorists who attacked Mumbai on November 26, 2008 could have been guided by an Indian handler whose true identity was yet to be ascertained, home minister P Chidambaram has said. Mumbai police investigators also came to conclusion that Indian national played a key role in 26/11 incident.

India and Germany wants to enhance bilateral relations further and in this regard they are working to finalize accord for the cooperation in different fields.

Regional Summary:

The BJP in Madhya Pradesh has elected 100 Muslim representatives in urban local bodies, 82 Muslims, including 36 burqa-clad women, were elected on the BJP symbol in the recent elections to 268 urban bodies. Samajwadi Party expelled Amar Singh and Jayaprada from the party on the charges of indulging in anti party activities and damaging its political interests and image.

The Trinamool Congress opposed increase in the prices of LPG and other petroleum products recommended by an expert panel headed by former Planning Commission member Kirti Parikh, saying a new burden of raised prices would hit the common people hard. Dispute over formation of the new state of Gorkhaland disrupted the law and order situation in Darjeeling, West Bengal. Protests and demonstrations hurt the peace and security of the region.

A Report on Nutritional Crisis in Maharashtra', prepared by Pune-based NGO Support for Advocacy and Training to Health Initiatives (SATHI) found that 45,000 children dying each year due to malnutrition in Maharashtra. The state government spends just 0.08% of its gross domestic product on the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)

Detailed National Report

Politics:

I never compared Modi to Gandhi: Gadkari

BJP President Nitin Gadkari on Sunday denied making a direct comparison between Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi and Mahatma Gandhi. "I never compared Modi to Mahatma Gandhi," Gadkari told reporters, asserting that there were video clippings of his speech to prove it. "I said that Modi inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Deedayal Upadhyaya, was carrying out all programmes to help the poor and was following in their footsteps," he said, a day after his controversial remark. On his first visit to Gujarat as BJP chief, Gadkari had drew parallels between Mahatma Gandhi and Modi, saying both believed that politics was an instrument to alleviate poverty. Gadkari had made the remarks, which was criticised by the Congress, during the visit that coincided with the 62nd death anniversary of the Mahatma. He asked the media to present "news as news and not to mix views" and to be fair and to report "only what is said." (The Times of India)

Sena vs Rahul: War of words over migrants continues

Shiv Sena on Wednesday stepped up its attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on the "Mumbai for all Indians" remark, raking up Sonia Gandhi's foreign origin. "Mumbai may belong to all Indians but how can it belong to an Italian mummy," Thackeray said in an editorial in Sena mouthpiece 'Saamna'. "The 'Prince of Congress' is totally frustrated and it is in this frustration he has insulted Marathi people and Maharashtra," he said. The Sena leader said Mumbai was not a "dharamshala" (guesthouse) of the country that "anyone comes to Mumbai, spits here and leaves." Referring to the 105 people killed during the Sanyukta Maharashtra Movement dating back to the 1920s, he said, "Have 105 martyrs sacrificed their lives so that Mumbai becomes a dharamshala (guest house)". "Saying that Bihari commandos protected Mumbai during the 26/11 attacks is like insulting the sacrifice of policemen like Hemant Karkare, Vijay Salaskar, Ashok Kamte and Tukaram Omble," he said, referring to the Congress leader's remark that NSG men from North India were involved in vanquishing terrorists during the terror attack. Mumbai belongs to Maharashtra and Marathi people, Thackeray maintained and added that "If anyone is going to murder this truth, he will have to face weapons of Maharashtra". The Congress leader on Tuesday asserted that India is for all Indians and people have a right to go anywhere. "I am really not interested in what Bal Thackeray or Raj Thackeray have to say. Frankly, I am interested in one concept that India belongs to Indians and every part of India belongs to every Indian", he had said at a press conference in Patna. "In Mumbai (during the 26/11 attacks), men in the NSG were from Bihar, UP, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra. At that time they (Sena) did not say that those from Bihar and UP should be taken out. India has to move forward and all have to be taken forward," he had said. (The Indian Express)

Show black flags to Rahul: Bal Thackeray

Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray on Thursday asked party men to show black flags to Rahul Gandhi during his visit to Mumbai tomorrow in protest the Congress leader's

'Mumbai for all' comment. Thackeray has asked Sena workers to show black flags to Rahul during his visit to the city, senior party leader Sanjay Raut told PTI. The directive from Thackeray has come at a time when there has been a war of words between Sena and Congress over the migrant issue. Rahul has ticked off Sena by asserting that Mumbai is for all Indians and people have a right to go anywhere. Thackeray said the Sena will not tolerate anything spoken against "Marathi pride." Shiv Sena executive president Uddhav Thackeray has questioned the timing of the visit. "What was the need for this visit now? There may be elections in Bihar, but we will not tolerate anything spoken against Mumbai and Marathi pride," he had said. During his short visit, Rahul will interact with college students at the Bhaidas Hall in suburban Vile Parle and then proceed to Ramabai Nagar slum colony in Ghatkopar to meet slum youth. The visit is a part of the ongoing Mumbai Youth Congress membership drive for organisational elections. (The Times of India)

BJP accuses Congress of 'vote bank' politics

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday criticised Congress leader Digvijay Singh, who reportedly questioned the Batla House shoot-out in Delhi after meeting the family of an alleged Indian Mujahideen (IM) operative, for resorting to "vote bank politics". "This was the worst manifestation of vote bank politics. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) conducted an inquiry into it and found that all allegations are wrong. Even the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court dismissed a PIL demanding a judicial inquiry into the matter," BJP spokesman Ravi Shankar Prasad told reporters here. He said that if Congress leaders think that they will get votes of all Muslims by visiting house of families of terrorists, they were "utterly irresponsible". Prasad noted that the government had given Ashok Chakra gallantry medal to Delhi Police Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma, who was killed in Batla House gun battle, and now Digvijay Singh was questioning the incident. "We want to ask the prime minister, the home minister and Congress president Sonia Gandhi to explain this position," he said. Singh visited Sanjarpur town of Uttar Pradesh's Azamgarh district on Wednesday to meet the family members of the two alleged IM operatives Atif and Chhota Sajid, killed during the September 2008 Batla House shoot-out. While Singh met Sajid's family, members of Atif's family refused to meet him, saying they would meet Singh or Congress leaders only after their demand to carry out a judicial enquiry into the shoot-out was met. Though Singh did not assure them of a judicial inquiry into the incident, he said he would try his best to get an inquiry by the National Investigating Agency (NIA). Prasad said innocent people were killed in terrorist attacks in Uttar Pradesh and Mumbai, but Congress leaders had not visited their homes. "I want to ask how many families of those innocent people were visited by them. What message are they giving?" he added. (The Times of India)

Minorities' issues:

Stones thrown at minority institutions

The Canara Organisation for Development and Peace (CODP) at Nanthoor, the Noorani and Noor-ul-Islam mosques, an orphanage, a house and a shop adjoining the mosques in Kumpala were damaged in stone-throwing by suspected Hindutva activists early on

Sunday. At the CODP, which is the social service organ of the Mangalore Catholic Diocese, the attackers threw stones and damaged a stained glass with an image of Mary as well as windowpanes of the building. The incident came to light at daybreak. Around 2 a.m., a string of Muslim institutions were targeted at Kumpala. The attackers are suspected to have been travelling on motorcycles. They first threw stones at the Noorani mosque, then moved on to a neighbouring cell phone shop and damaged it. They then damaged a concrete fence of a house next door before throwing stones at the adjoining Noor-Ul-Islam mosque and the orphanage run by it. A window of the orphanage was damaged, and Mohammed Raushan (13) was injured in stone-throwing. One of the residents of Kumpala told *The Hindu* that similar attacks had occurred in the past. Superintendent of Police A.S. Rao said that the police had identified some suspects in the case and would interrogate them. Additional forces had been deployed in Nanthoor and Kumpala. (The Hindu)

Ulema, VHP raise the heat, Diggi's man unfazed

A day ahead of Congress leader Digvijay Singh's planned visit to this terror-tainted eastern UP town, tension mounted in Azamgarh, with the Ulema Council vowing not to allow the Congress leader to enter Sanjarpur to meet the families of those accused in terror attacks. The pro-Hindu outfits also slammed Singh's trip as a gimmick to corner Muslim votes. Calling the visit an eyewash, the Ulema Council alleged it was only after constant visits by Congressmen in the area for the past few days that a boy from Azamgarh was recently arrested. The Ulema Council is a body of clerics formed in the backdrop of the Batla House encounter just before the Lok Sabha elections. The outfit failed to win a single seat although it had fielded six candidates. Council chief Maulana Amir Rashadi, who runs a madrasa, Jamiatur Rashad, in Azamgarh, had led two massive rallies in New Delhi and Lucknow to demand justice for the families of the alleged Indian Mujahideen activists living in Azamgarh. "The entire Azamgarh is with us in opposing Digvijay Singh. They can shoot us if they want, but we will not allow him to enter Sanjarpur," said Rashadi. "What kind of information he wants from us when everything is an open chapter. We had asked for a judicial inquiry into the encounter but they could not hold it. I have nothing personal against Singh but we will not allow him or his party to cheat us." Rashadi accused Amaresh Misra, who was Ulema Council's candidate from Lucknow in the Lok Sabha polls but later joined the Congress to become the chief of the party's Anti-Communal Front, of behaving like a government agent. Pro-Hindu outfits like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Hindu Yuva Vahini too opposed the visit, alleging it would encourage terrorism. Vahini even asked for the arrest of Singh for meeting the families of the terror accused just as people were arrested for meeting Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, a key accused in Malegaon blasts. K D Rai, a VHP leader in Azamgarh, said, "This is yet another trick of the Congress. They are just bothered about Muslim votes. What kind of a message will Digvijay Singh's action send to the police and other people? We strongly oppose it." Amaresh Misra, who is making arrangements for Singh's visit, is unfazed. "Digvijay Singh's visit has troubled both Hindu and Muslim fundamentalist organisations because communal harmony hits their interests. The kind of statements they are making and also the administration, which is suggesting that Singh should not visit the area, indicates that the BSP, BJP and the Ulema Council are all working to divide the people," Misra added. (The Indian Express)

Hindu Fundamentalism:

Shah Rukh deserves Nishaan-e-Pakistan: Bal Thackeray

Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray on Saturday said Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan deserves Pakistan's highest civilian award, the Nishaan-E-Pakistan, for supporting the inclusion of Pakistani cricketers in the IPL. In a scathing editorial in Saturday's party mouthpiece Saamna, Thackeray said that the "Khan" inside Shah Rukh Khan must be crushed by the "Har Har Mahadev" war cry of the "Shivaji" inside the Hindus. This was an oblique reference to Chhatrapati Shivaji's killing of Bijapur general Afzal Khan, sent by Sultan Adil Shah II of Bijapur in 1659, at Pratapgad in Satara district of western Maharashtra. The Shiv Sena hit out at Shah Rukh Khan, also the Kolkata Knight Riders co-owner, after he said he would have picked a Pakistani player for the Indian Premier League matches if his team had a slot. IPL franchise owners did not bid for Pakistani players during the auction for the IPL III, which has snowballed into a major spat between the two countries. The editorial said that if "Shah Rukh wants to give a red carpet treatment to Pakistani cricketers on the blood of innocent Indians slain by Pakistani terrorists from Kashmir to Mumbai", then, Thackeray warned, the Shiv Sena will never permit it. It pointed out that by supporting the cause of Pakistani players, Shah Rukh has insulted the memory of the victims of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks - for which Pakistan may confer the Nishaan-E-Pakistan - but Indians will spit on him. The editorial further noted that nobody from the Congress has raised a voice against Shah Rukh since he is considered close to Sonia Gandhi. Thackeray wrote in his article that "since SRK has so much love for the Pakistanis the Bollywood actor could appoint 26/11 terror accused Mohammed Ajmal Amir Kasab as the captain of his Kolkata Knight Riders team and Mohammed Afzal Guru (facing death penalty for the 2001 attack on parliament) as the vice captain in the forthcoming IPL matches". In this context, Thackeray praised Amitabh Bachchan for rejecting a doctorate awarded by Queensland's Brisbane University, to protest the attacks on Indians in Australia. "This is true love for our country," he said. In a related development, Congress state spokesman Hussain Dalwai wrote to state Home Minister R.R. Patil demanding security for Shah Rukh's forthcoming release "My Name Is Khan". Dalwai also urged Patil to ensure that those police officers who cannot prevent violence or disruption of the movie within their respective jurisdiction must be suspended. Former chief minister and union Minister for Heavy Industries Vilasrao Deshmukh Saturday criticized the Sena for its stand on Shah Rukh. Intensifying its protest against Shah Rukh Khan for speaking in favour of Pakistani cricket players, Shiv Sena activists held a demonstration at the actor's residence Mannat in suburban Bandra. "Shah Rukh should go to Pakistan if he wants to speak in favour of Pakistani players," Shiv Sena leader and MLC Anil Parab, who led the protest, said. Sainiks displayed a travel ticket from Mumbai to Pakistan and demanded ban on the actor's upcoming movie 'My Name is Khan'. Supporting the protest of Sena activists, senior party leader Manohar Joshi said, "this is the issue of patriotism and Shah Rukh should not interfere in politics." "Shah Rukh has been staying in Mumbai for years but he never spoken anything for Marathi," Joshi said. "If Shah Rukh wants Pakistani players to play here, he should go to Karachi and Islamabad to play with them," Sena spokesperson Sanjay Raut had told reporters. (The Times of India)

RSS to protect north Indians in Maharashtra

Taking the Shiv Sena and the MNS head-on, RSS on Sunday said that it has asked its volunteers to protect north Indians in Maharashtra and prevent spread of anti-Hindi feelings. "The Sangh Parivar has asked its volunteers in Maharashtra to try and prevent the spread of anti-north Indian and anti-Hindi feelings," RSS leader Ram Madhav told reporters here. He said the RSS was opposed to discrimination on the basis of language and demanded steps to check disturbances on the emotive issue. "There should be no discrimination on the basis of language," Madhav said, when asked about the agitations against Hindi-speaking people by Shiv Sena and Raj Thackeray-led MNS in Maharashtra. Madhav said the Sangh was of strong view that India was one from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. He said steps should be taken to check disturbances being caused over the language issue and people's rights should be protected. (The Times of India)

Insurgency Movements:

ULFA council will decide on talks: Pradip Gogoi

Jailed vice-chairman of United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) Pradip Gogoi on Monday said the general council of the outfit would take the final decision on holding peace talks with the government. "I cannot make any individual comment on it. We will have to discuss it in the general council. I will discuss about it with other leaders currently in jail. However, the talks will depend on the goodwill of the government and in what situation they want to have it," the senior ULFA leader told journalists in the premise of the Designated (TADA) court here when he was asked to comment the Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram's appeal to the jailed ULFA leaders and communiqué from them expressing willingness to hold peace talks. Mr. Gogoi was produced in the court along with two other jailed ULFA leaders finance secretary Chitaban Hazarika and cultural secretary Pranati Deka. The court, however, sought an explanation from the authorities of Central Jail, Guwahati for failure to produce three other jailed leaders including outfit's chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa. The court also fixed February 5 for hearing and passing order on bail applications of Mr. Gogoi and another jailed ULFA leader-former central publicity secretary Mithinga Daimary. (The Hindu)

'Central forces not engaged in any battle in naxal-hit States'

The paramilitary forces are not engaged in any "battle" in the naxal-affected States, Union Home Minister P. Chidambaram said on Monday. "The Centre, at the request of the State governments, sends paramilitary forces, which remain under the control of the State governments," he said at a press conference here. Thirty-three districts remained seriously affected by naxal violence and Maoists were present in 50 others. "There are areas where the writ of civil administration does not run. The security forces are there only to re-establish the authority of the civilian government." Mr. Chidambaram said Prime Minister Manmohan Singh would decide upon the question of reorganising the Home Ministry. And there was no "forward movement" after he proposed a new security architecture in December. "But I would like to delegate more non-internal security work to the two Ministers of State. This is purely an internal reorganisation of the Ministry."

The National Counter Terrorism Centre would be formed by this year-end. There was not any discussion on the role of the National Security Adviser, who advises the Prime Minister. "It is for the Prime Minister to entrust the NSA with any responsibility," he said. (The Hindu)

Economic Front:

India Inc upbeat on hiring; 71% cos hiring

India Inc's hiring activity has increased considerably since September last year and the current recruitment level is one of the highest globally, says a survey by international recruitment firm Antal. The quarterly global survey asked more than 6,000 firms in 30 countries that whether they were hiring at managerial and professional level and planned to do so in the coming quarter as well. As much as 71 per cent of Indian companies surveyed said they were currently hiring compared to around half in September, the survey revealed. Nigeria (79 per cent) is the only country to have a higher rate of hiring than India's. "Confidence is back at its peak in the Indian job markets, its happy days again for job seekers," Antal International Managing Partner Joseph Devasia said. Further, the survey stated that Indian firms plan on increasing their hiring activity even more, with 78 per cent expecting to hire managerial staff over the next three months. "Combined with a very low rate of letting people go (16 per cent and set to drop by a further three per cent) the results indicate a strong employment market which is improving all the time," the Antal report noted about India. China and Pakistan also have high rates of hiring at 71 per cent and 70 per cent, respectively. Although China predicts an increase in recruitment activity, Pakistan forecasts a drop of 25 per cent. "Manufacturing & auto sectors along with the traditional IT, FMCG, pharma companies have ramped up hiring, against what we witnessed in our previous survey. Increased hiring indicates that the need for exceptional talent is now ever more," Devasia added. Antal said that globally although a few countries are still seeing a decline in the employment market, the global picture has definitely improved once again. "As a result we are already seeing the first clear signs of organisations thinking in terms of the 'war for talent' once more with more robust businesses making early moves to snap up the best people in their markets before general recovery becomes too apparent," Antal CEO Tony Goodwin said. (The Indian Express)

Fiscal deficit may fall to 6.41 pct in FY10

A change in the base year used to calculate gross domestic product may help reduce fiscal deficit for 2009/10 to 6.41 per cent of GDP, chief statistician Pronab Sen said. The government in the budget had targetted India's fiscal deficit at 6.8 per cent of GDP in 2009/10. (The Indian Express)

Food inflation rises to 17.56%

Food inflation inched up to 17.56% for the week ended January 23 on account of rising prices of potato and pulses. The wholesale price-based food inflation was 17.40% in the previous week. Potato prices jumped by 44.91% over the last year, while pulses became dearer by 44.43%. The inflation for primary articles, which include food and non-food

items, marginally eased to 14.56% in the reporting week from 14.66% in the previous week. However on weekly basis, the price index for food articles declined by 0.1% on account of lower prices of tea (5%), arhar (3%), and urad, fruits and vegetables, ragi and eggs (1% each). (The Times of India)

Geo-strategic developments:

India proposes talks, Pakistan seeks clarity

Pakistan's foreign ministry has confirmed that India had proposed foreign secretary-level talks with Islamabad but said it was seeking clarification of the content of the talks. Pakistan's foreign office spokesman Abdul Basit told media that the agenda of the proposed talks Pakistan is not so far clear. "We have sought clarification from the Indian government about the agenda and substance of the proposed talks. We will respond to the proposal after we receive the reply from New Delhi," he said. India adopted a very strict position with Pakistan after the Mumbai attacks that left 166 people dead. Since then, India has been blaming Pakistan for not doing enough to prosecute the perpetrators of the attack, while Pakistan was saying that the evidence provided by India was not sufficient. The proposal comes ahead of a visit to Pakistan by India's minister of internal security for a regional meeting this month. Indian Home Minister P. Chidambaram is slated to travel to Pakistan on Feb 26 for a meeting of countries in the region, the first high-level diplomatic visit by a top Indian official in nearly two years. Pakistan's foreign ministry officials said Chidambaram would meet his Pakistani counterpart, Rehman Malik. Since the Mumbai attacks, there have been some meetings of high-ranking officials, such as when Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani last summer on the sidelines of a summit in Sharm-El-Sheikh, Egypt. But India has continued to express its reservations regarding Pakistan's lack of vigor to act against the culprits of Mumbai carnage on its soil. Earlier, Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi also welcomed dialogue proposal from India, saying it was a positive development. Responding to Delhi's call to Pakistan's high commissioner for resumption of dialogue, he said Pakistan shares a viewpoint that bilateral talks is the only way for the resolution of all the issues and "we always focused on resumption of dialogue." He further said that signals were already emanating from Indian side and their home Minister P Chidambaram had already said, "if he went to Pakistan for the SAARC meeting later this month, there was a possibility of bilateral talks." Replying to a question he said "Our agenda is very comprehensive, before Mumbai mayhem we had started fifth round of dialogue and I wish to resume dialogue from that stage." The foreign minister said during meeting in Sharm-El-Sheikh, the prime ministers of Pakistan and India had reached the conclusion that dialogue is the only way forward and we raised the Balochistan issue for the very first time which was also mentioned in the joint statement. (The Times of India)

Indian fighter jets to be armed with BrahMos missiles

India's fleet of Su-30MKI Flanker-H fighter jets could be armed with BrahMos missiles by 2012, the vice president of the Irkut Corporation said at the Singapore Airshow 2010. The corporation is a prime contractor in manufacturing the Su-30MKI multi-role fighters for the Indian Air Force. Its share of Russia's arms exports is 15 percent. "The

modernisation programme includes re-equipping of some 100 Su-30MKI fighters, which are currently in service with the Indian Air Force," Vladimir Sautov said Thursday. "It is being carried out by the Rosoboronexport, the Sukhoi Design Bureau and NPO Mashinostroyeniya. If things go well, we may offer modernized Su-30MKI fighters to our other foreign partners as soon as 2012," he added. The BrahMos missile has a range of 290 km and can carry a conventional warhead of up to 300 kg. It can effectively engage ground targets from an altitude as low as 10 meters and has a top speed of Mach 2.8, which is about three times faster than the US-made subsonic Tomahawk cruise missile. The Indian Air Force originally ordered 50 Su-30MKI aircraft from Russia in 1996 and an additional 40 planes in 2007. India's Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) was also contracted to build 140 aircraft in India between 2003 and 2017 under a licensed production agreement. Sautov also said that as the missile is "large, heavy and powerful", a lighter modification is currently under development, which will enable Su-30MKI fighters to carry not only one but three missiles. Established in 1998, BrahMos Aerospace, a joint Indian-Russian venture, produces and markets BrahMos supersonic missiles. The sea-based and land-based versions have been successfully tested and put into service with the Indian Army and Navy. (The Times of India)

We want 'all-encompassing' talks: Pakistan

Pakistan on Thursday said it wants "all-encompassing" talks with India with the issues of Kashmir and river-water sharing topping the agenda, and wants to be seen as firm that the engagement must take place in the framework of the composite dialogue process. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi told a television channel that Pakistan would welcome India's readiness to hold talks with Pakistan after a 14-month hiatus if the engagement would lead to the resumption of the composite dialogue process. He said, however, that Pakistan "would welcome first of all the resumption of the composite dialogue because we are for a meaningful engagement with India." "I think the process of composite dialogue has been successful in the context of Jammu and Kashmir in generating the possible or the required momentum, and the two countries agreed on a number of confidence-building measures in the context of J&K, so I would not agree with you that the composite dialogue has not been achieved anything concrete," he said. "Pakistan has always believed that it is through genuine and meaningful talks that Pakistan and India can resolve their bilateral disputes, including the long-simmering Jammu and Kashmir and water issues. From our perspective, talks should be all-encompassing and result-oriented," Mr. Basit said, repeating that Pakistan would "therefore, welcome resumption of the composite dialogue." February 5 is annually observed in Pakistan as Kashmir Solidarity Day, and speaking a day ahead, Mr. Basit said Pakistan would take up the Kashmir issue with India "whenever the composite dialogue was resumed." There was no need to be "pessimistic" on Kashmir, the spokesman assured his Pakistani questioner, adding that Pakistan would stand by the people of Kashmir and continue lobbying the international community over the issue until it was resolved in accordance with their aspirations. Mr. Basit also said Pakistan was weighing all options on what he described as a "breach" of the Indus Water Treaty by India. "We will at the end of the day proceed in accordance with our national interests," he said. (The Hindu)

For India and Pakistan, nomenclature triggers more unease than dialogue news analysis

What's in a name? A lot, apparently, as India and Pakistan agonise over whether the dialogue they would both officially like to start should be called 'composite', 'limited', 'measured' or 'open-ended.' When India offered foreign secretary level talks to Pakistan, it decided not to publicise the initiative until Islamabad had responded. But after a fortnight of secrecy, officials here went semi-public on Thursday despite the absence of a Pakistani answer. The reason: to tamp down a potentially damaging controversy over nomenclature. Mindful of the terminological minefield that sub-continental diplomacy can be, the Indian offer was purposely vague and open-ended. Pakistani hawks want nothing less than the immediate resumption of the composite dialogue the multi-track process involving sequential meetings between different sets of officials on a full range of issues from Kashmir and Siachen to trade. Indian hawks want no dialogue or at best, limited dialogue on one topic terrorism. Under the circumstances, the foreign secretary's invitation was crafted to satisfy Islamabad's demand for meaningful discussions that went beyond simply reviewing what progress had been made on the 26/11 case, while sidestepping the right-wing charge at home that India's concerns about terrorism were somehow being diluted. The problem, however, is that the foreign policy and security establishments in both countries are deeply divided. And that for every official batting for the resumption of engagement on either side, there are many who remain unconvinced and some who feel they should bat for the opposite goal. On Wednesday, unidentified officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad told the Aaj channel in Pakistan that India had offered the resumption of the composite dialogue. The leak was untrue, but was perhaps intended to tempt the Indian side to issue a denial, thereby killing the process before it had a chance to begin. A few days earlier, in fact, the waters had already been muddied in Delhi by fleeting Indian wire service reports of "highly placed sources" saying India favoured only "measured" contact with Pakistan and not the resumption of composite dialogue. The identity of these "sources" was never revealed and the comments themselves never got much play in the Indian press after the MEA realised the damage they might cause. But in Pakistan, where officials were mulling over how to respond to the Indian offer of "open-ended" talks on all outstanding issues affecting peace and security, this apparently categorical rejection of the composite dialogue by a "highly placed" official did not go down well. That may have been the reason for the 'leak' to Aaj. As with all damage limitation exercises, however, Thursday's controlled release of information could have unpredictable consequences. Reporters under pressure to cover the story but with no access to additional information get tempted to embellish the barebones narrative with either their own opinion or the views of 'sources'. Stories can thus emerge which end up destroying the carefully crafted ambiguity that officials worked so hard to introduce in the first place. As long as the rose is not named, each side can live in hope that it will prevail. But if the two sides start fighting over names at the first sight of a bud, chances are the rose will never bloom. Given the difficulty with which the latest proposal has emerged out of a divided Indian establishment and the reluctance of a divided Pakistani establishment to do what it takes to build confidence, the battle over what to call the dialogue adds a new and unhelpful layer of complexity. If the amount of skill and energy being expended on talks about talks about talks were

saved up for when the talks really begin, who knows, the two sides might well end up making progress on issues that actually matter. (The Hindu)

Indian Occupied Kashmir:

Curfew-like situation in Srinagar after youth's killing

A curfew-like situation prevailed in some parts of the city as authorities made heavy deployment of security forces to foil any protests against the death of a teenager in tear-gas shelling on Sunday. Prohibitory orders are in force in the city where normal life remained hit for the fourth consecutive day. Fearing trouble during the prayers being held for the departed 13-year-old Wamik Farooq, police and paramilitary personnel have been deployed to thwart attempts by people to take out processions. Residents claimed that police vans fitted with public address system went round the city this morning announcing imposition of curfew. "We are not being allowed to move out of our houses as policemen announced imposition of curfew from 7 AM", a resident of old city Abdul Qayoom said. However, a police spokesman said curfew has not been imposed in any part of the city but prohibitory orders have been enforced strictly. Markets were closed and traffic was off the road. However, in civil line area, barring Batmaloo, Maisuma, Basant Bagh and Gaw Kadal, there were no restrictions on the movement of people. Farooq was hit by a teargas shell at Rajouri Kadal during a clash between police and locals. He later succumbed to injuries, triggering massive protests in the city and elsewhere in the valley. Nearly 300 people, including 50 police and paramilitary personnel, have been injured in clashes between stone-pelting youth and law enforcing agencies in the past three days. (The Times of India)

Social front:

Urgent need to ban porn websites: Chief Justice of India

Chief Justice of India (CJI) K G Balakrishnan on Sunday said there was an urgent need to ban websites that circulate pornography and hate speeches and emphasized the need for cyber law enforcement. "The government can place bans on websites that exclusively circulate pornography and hate speeches. However, it would not be right to place a blanket ban on all categories of websites. It is also important to distinguish between intermediaries such as Network Service Providers, website operators and individual users for the purpose of placing liability for wrongful acts," the chief justice said. "Websites are created and updated for many useful purposes, but they can also be used to circulate offensive content such as pornography, hate speech and defamatory materials. In many cases, the intellectual property rights of authors and artists are violated through the unauthorized circulation of their works. "There has also been an upsurge in instances of financial fraud and cheating in relation to commercial transactions conducted online," the CJI emphasized at a Cyber Law Enforcement Programme and National Consultation meeting here. Citing how more and more people are victimized because of increasing cyber crimes, the CJI said, "There have been numerous reports of internet users receiving unsolicited e-mails which often contains obscene language and amounts to harassment. Those who post personal information about themselves on job and marriage websites or social networking websites are often at the receiving end of 'cyber-stalking'. Women and

minors who post their contact details become especially vulnerable since lumpen elements such as sex-offenders can use this information to target potential victims." Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister of Law and Justice M. Veerappa Moily said: "Cyber law enforcement is the need of the hour as the use of technology is increasing by leaps and bounds. We are able to optimize the use of Information Technology (IT) industry only when our cyber law is strictly enforced." Highlighting how misuse of technology can lead to personal attacks on the individual, Moily said: "In many cases, images or videos are created without the consent of the persons involved and they are unscrupulously circulated for commercial gain. Such practices are a blatant invasion of privacy as well as an attack on an individual's dignity. However, there are inherent difficulties in using criminal laws to clamp down on them, so there is need of cyber law enforcement." (The Times of India)

Maharashtra fugitive emerges as 26/11 suspect

Mumbai police investigators say they may have succeeded in putting a face to until now unidentified Indian Lashkar-e-Taiba operative who played a key role in guiding the operations of the team that attacked Mumbai in November 2008. Based on information provided by India's intelligence services, as well as interviews with arrested jihadists, police believe the Indian national in the Lashkar's control room could be Syed Zabiuddin Syed Zakiuddin Ansari, a Lashkar-linked Maharashtra resident, who has been a fugitive since 2005. The unidentified Indian operative was one of several Lashkar personnel who used Voice-Over-Internet Protocol (VOIP) links to provide orders to the assault team. Last month, *The Hindu* broke the news that one of the operatives in the control station spoke Mumbai-inflected Hindi, in stark contrast to the Punjabi used by the others. Mohammad Ajmal Amir Kasab, the Lashkar terrorist arrested in the course of the assault, said his team had been trained by an Indian national identified as Abu Jindal the alias also used by the unidentified controller, and a *nom de guerre* known to have been adopted by Ansari in the past. Police say Ansari played a key role in a plot to assassinate Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi, an operation meant to avenge the 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat. Ansari is alleged to have been the key leader of an Aurangabad-based Lashkar cell, which received assault rifles and military-grade explosives from Pakistan to stage an attack which would have closely resembled the Mumbai operation. Eleven men linked to the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Students Islamic Movement of India were held for their alleged role in the 2005 Aurangabad-based plot. However, Ansari eluded the police after a high-speed car chase and has been sought by Interpol since then. He was last sighted at a Lashkar safe house in Karachi by Hyderabad-based jihadist Mohammad Anjad Khwaja, who was arrested earlier this year. Imran Babar, one of the two terrorists who took hostages at the Chabad House Jewish prayer centre, was told by the Hindi-speaking controller to call the media with a manifesto to condemn what he described as the Indian government's "two-faced policy" towards Muslims. The Lashkar manifesto demanded that Muslims held in jails be released; the Indian Army be pulled out of Jammu and Kashmir; and the land on which the Babri Masjid stood be returned to Muslims. (The Hindu)

India to have own panel on climate change: Jairam Ramesh

India would soon have its very own panel on climate change, union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh announced on Thursday and added that the country could not depend only on reports from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). "There is a fine line between climate science and climate evangelism. I am all for climate science but not for climate evangelism. I think people misused the IPCC report," Ramesh told a news channel here. Stressing that the IPCC's weakness was that it didn't do original research and derives assessments from published literature, the minister announced a climate change panel for India. He said that IPCC has "had goof-ups on the glaciers, on the Amazon, on the snow peaks." However, he added that the IPCC with a network of 200 scientists worldwide was "a responsible body". "I respect the IPCC. At the same time India is a large country... we can't depend only IPCC. So we have launched the Indian Network on Comprehensive Climate Change Assessment ... It's got 125 research institutions from across the country. We will have international collaborations. It's a kind of an Indian IPCC and not a rival to the IPCC. We will do our own assessment," Ramesh explained. The first climate change assessment from this body would be brought out in November this year, he said. The "four by four assessment" would look at four sectors -- agriculture, health, water and forests -- and four regions. These would be Himalayan ecosystems, coastal areas, Western Ghats and the northeast. "Through this we will demonstrate our commitment to climate science," Ramesh concluded. Ramesh also commented on the IPCC erring report's claim that the Himalayan glaciers would retreat by 2035. "The health of glaciers is a cause for serious concern. Most glaciers are melting... they are retreating. Overall, one can say incontrovertibly that the debris on our glaciers is very high, the mass balance is very low, the snow balance is very low. We have to be very cautious about the future of the glaciers particularly because of water security," the minister said. Ramesh announced the setting up of the National Institute of Himalayan Glaciology at Dehradun (Uttarakhand). "This is going to start a series of programmes on measuring, monitoring, modeling on what is happening to our glaciers and also look at what is happening to them in the regional context with Pakistan, Nepal and others," he informed. (The Times of India)

Indian handler behind 26/11 attacks, says Chidambaram

The ten Pakistani terrorists who attacked Mumbai on November 26, 2008 could have been guided by an Indian handler whose true identity was yet to be ascertained, home minister P Chidambaram has said. "When we say he could be an Indian, he could be somebody who acquired Indian characteristics. He could have been infiltrated into India and lived long enough to acquire an Indian accent, familiarity with Indian Hindi words or he could be somebody who exfiltrated from India to Pakistan and was adopted by the militants there," Chidambaram said. While refusing to speculate on the name of the handler, the Home Minister said investigators had known for long time that there was a handler in 26/11 attack who could be an Indian. "We know him by Abu Jindal that something we have known for many many months now... but he is not Abu Jindal. That is not his real name. We cannot put a finger who he is, unless we get a voice sample. And they won't give us voice sample. "There is a speculation that Abu Jindal could be A, Abu Jindal could be B... but how as a Home Minister I can speculate? I can't speculate," he told a news channel. (The Times of India)

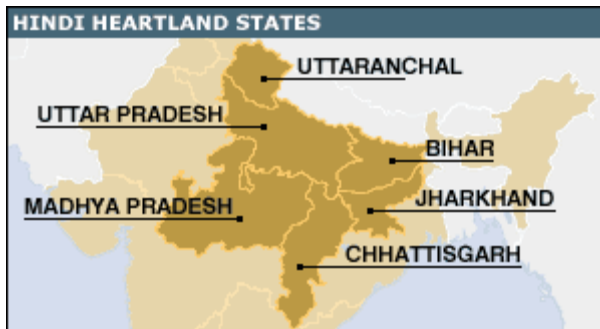
Foreign Relations:

India, Germany to enhance ties

India and Germany will step up security and economic related cooperation by resolving to finalise pacts that would give an impetus in both these directions. In a meeting between visiting German President Host Kohler and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Tuesday, both sides underlined the need for formalised arrangements to underpin closer ties in security and investment. The proposed memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation in security and anti-terrorism will add more muscle to the ongoing security cooperation between the two countries which includes real-time exchange of information between the intelligence agencies of both countries. Germany had sent the proposed draft in July last year and India is currently examining the proposals to train Indian security personnel and expose them to German technology. A framework agreement on economic and technological cooperation worth about Rs. 2,500 crore would give a boost to investment. This pact is also currently under finalisation. Dr. Koehler began his week-long three-city visit with a ceremonial reception at the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Speaking at an industry meet, he announced two new projects the Indo Max Planck Institute for Computer Science, which will be inaugurated on Wednesday, and the establishment of a German House of Science and Innovation under which German institutions will come together and present themselves as partners for the future. (The Hindu)

Regional Report

Central India (Hindi Heartland)



Politics:

BJP record in MP: 119 Muslim candidates, 82 winners

The BJP in Madhya Pradesh is chasing an unusual personal milestone: getting 100 Muslim representatives in urban local bodies. An unprecedented 82 Muslims, including 36 burqa-clad women, were elected on the BJP symbol in the recent elections to 268 urban bodies. “Once the remaining bodies go to polls, the number will easily cross 100,” president of the party’s minority cell, Kamalbai Lalbhai, told The Indian Express on Tuesday, a day after the newly-elected representatives were felicitated at the party headquarters. The Congress was dismissive of the BJP’s “achievement”. Party leaders argued that 82 the number of Muslims who won on BJP tickets was a very small number in comparison to 5,059 the total number of councillors who were elected in the polls. These leaders could not, however, say how many Muslims had won on Congress tickets, or even how many Muslims the party had fielded. “We have no record of this,” said a Congress leader. “We don’t classify councillors according to their religion.” The number of Muslim BJP councillors in the state’s urban local bodies had never crossed 25 earlier, Lalbhai said. This time, the party had fielded an unprecedented 119 Muslims. “Earlier we would find it difficult to get candidates from the community. And we would also not seek their votes,” state BJP president Narendra Singh Tomar told the meet organised by the party’s minority cell on Monday. The felicitation ceremony began with the singing of Vande Mataram. State Minorities’ Welfare Minister Ajay Vishnoi presented councillors with medals. The urban local body elections had paved the way for the entry of Muslims into the Vidhan Sabha as well, he said. The 230-member state Assembly currently has no Muslim member. (The Indian Express)

Amar Singh, Jayaprada expelled from SP

Samajwadi Party dissident and Rajya Sabha MP Amar Singh and Rampur MP Jayaprada were expelled from the party on Tuesday on the charge of indulging in activities inimical to its political interests and damaging its image. Four MLAs, Sandeep Agarwal, Madan Chauhan, Sarvesh Singh and Ashok Chandel, who supported them, were placed under suspension. The party leadership would institute an inquiry into their activities before

taking further action against them. The decision was taken at a meeting of the newly constituted parliamentary board. Party president Mulayam Singh and other office-bearers attended it. No action was taken against Rajya Sabha member Jaya Bachchan, as the parliamentary board felt that she had said nothing against the party, and her family ties with Mr. Amar Singh did not impinge on her loyalty to the party. As for Abu Asim Azmi, the meeting said he was in the party and denied the propaganda that he had supported Mr. Amar Singh, who resigned from all party posts on January 6. The parliamentary board did not take note of the resignation of Sanjay Dutt as general secretary in support of Mr. Amar Singh. Talking to reporters, general secretary and spokesman Mohan Singh termed the expulsion of Mr. Amar Singh and Ms. Jayaprada "corrective surgery." Mr. Mohan Singh blamed Mr. Amar Singh and Ms. Jayaprada for what he called the infiltration into the party of capitalist and communal forces, which threatened to derail it from its Samajwadi moorings and damage its secular character. He charged Mr. Amar Singh with pursuing casteist politics: while the Samajwadi Party followed the policy of "jaati-todo" (casteless), Mr. Amar Singh was promoting "jaati-pakdo" politics. Mr. Mohan Singh said the parliamentary board had taken a serious view of the formation of the Lok Manch by Mr. Amar Singh and felt it amounted to the formation of a separate party. Mr. Mohan Singh referred to Ms. Jayaprada's press conference in New Delhi on Sunday, at which she allegedly made some indecent remarks against the leadership. He accused her of making statements in favour of the former Chief Minister, Kalyan Singh. This, he said, showed that communal forces had infiltrated the party. No leader had the right to publicly voice his or her opinion against the party. As for the membership of Mr. Amar Singh and Ms. Jayaprada in Parliament, Mr. Mohan Singh said legal opinion would be sought and petitions would be presented to the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman. (The Hindu)

SP used me as a dustbin: Amar Singh

Expelled Samajwadi Party leader Amar Singh accused the party leadership of using him as a "dust bin" and shifting the blame on him for decisions that later backfired. "My journey in SP has been from a dust bin to being termed as garbage," he told reporters. Singh said he is being blamed for the various decisions the party leadership took after they backfired including extending the hand of friendship to former BJP leader Kalyan Singh. While claiming that most of the decisions were taken by party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav and his cousin Ram Gopal Yadav, he said, "Now I am being blamed for them... I am a Kshatriya. Had they asked me to take responsibility for the wrong decisions they have taken, I would have readily accepted. But it is a conspiracy to blame me for everything which went wrong". He claimed he was recuperating in a Singapore hospital when both Mulayam and Kalyan shared the dias during the party's convention in Agra last year. "Do you think that I became a ghost and whispered in Mulayam Singhji's ears to place the party's red cap on Kalyan Singh's head," Singh said. The former SP leader said that several Muslim leaders and workers were "shocked" at the party's move to shake hands with Kalyan Singh. "But they were forced to raise slogans like Kalyan Singh zindabad," he said, adding that blaming him for getting close to Kalyan Singh was wrong on part of leaders like national spokesperson Mohan Singh and general secretary Ram Gopal Yadav. (The Times of India)

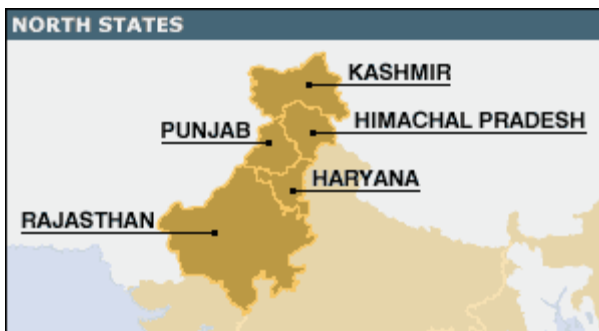
Social front:

Kasab as role model: Top cop praises his passion

An IPS officer in Madhya Pradesh is so smitten by Mohammed Ajmal Kasab, the lone surviving Mumbai attacker, that he gave the terrorist's example to motivate police officers as more than 150 cops listened in disbelief on Tuesday. IG (SAF) Rajendra Kumar praised Kasab's passion, saying he learned to handle sophisticated guns, operate GPS and use a mobile despite training only for a year and having cleared only Class VIII. "How could he do it? He had passion," the 1975 batch officer told his audience in Indore while inaugurating a three-day shooting competition meant for cops. "Why can't we develop such passion?" he asked. "He could do it but we cannot," said Kumar as he stressed the point that the difference in the Pakistani terrorist's training and that of the cops was 'jazba' (passion). He told the cops that they were more educated and were expected to do better (than Kasab). "I used that example only to motivate the cops. He is a terrorist and should be hanged. Why would I ever praise him," Kumar told The Indian Express. "I also gave an example of Sachin Tendulkar, about how he repeatedly watches the recording of his dismissals to learn from them, but only the Kasab part is being highlighted," complained Kumar, who was IG of Indore Range when the Samjhauta Express blast investigations were on. The IPS officer said all he meant was that the cops needed to train better in shooting because the challenges posed by terrorists and Naxalites were different than the problem posed by dacoits 25 years ago. The Congress was not impressed by Kumar's praise for the terrorist and asked the BJP government to punish the IPS officer. (The Indian Express)

Economic Front:

The North

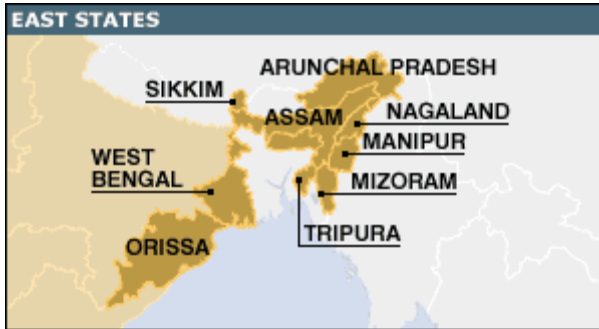


Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

The East



Politics:

Trinamool Congress opposes Parikh Commission recommendations

The Trinamool Congress opposed increase in the prices of LPG and other petroleum products recommended by an expert panel headed by former Planning Commission member Kirti Parikh, saying a new burden of raised prices would hit the common people hard. TC chief Mamata Banerjee said the common people had already been affected too much by the food inflation to withstand a new burden of increased prices. "There has been an abnormal increase in the prices of essential commodities and I am against a fresh increase in the prices of petroleum products, especially LPG," Banerjee said. She said there was no need to implement all the recommendations of the Parikh panel. "Subsidised prices are alright. Subsidy is given by governments in developing countries keeping the interest of common people in mind," she said. A prime minister-appointed panel, which included members Finance Secretary Ashok Chawala and Oil Secretary S Sundareshan, submitted a report to petroleum minister Murli Deora suggesting freeing petrol and diesel prices and called for raising LPG rates by a steep Rs 100 per cylinder and kerosene by Rs 6 a litre. (The Times of India)

Gorkhaland row: Ruckus in plains, Hills on boil

After a lull, Darjeeling is again on fire with all the signs of a major crisis in the making. It started with the district magistrate and several top officials being locked up in their offices in Darjeeling, but took an ugly turn when GJM Vidyarthi Morcha cadres were lathicharged in Siliguri on Thursday evening. The assault on students triggered a surge of emotion in the Hills, with hundreds rushing out of home in response to a Morcha 'mobilisation call' at 9 pm. Huge crowds laid siege to police stations in Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong. In near-coordinated attacks, a police jeep was burnt at Chowk Bazar, next to Sadar police station in the heart of Darjeeling, and a government bus was torched in Siliguri. GJM seems in no mood to free district magistrate Surindra Gupta and the sub divisional officers of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong, who have been confined since 3 pm because they refused to give permission for Vidyarthi Morcha meetings at Dagapur near Siliguri and Birpara in the Dooars (Jalpaiguri district). GJM chief Bimal Gurung was supposed to address these rallies. When TOI finally got through to Gupta, he said: "We denied permission because a report from the additional SP in Siliguri said there could be a breach of peace and tranquillity." Another official said: "We

feared law and order problems.” GJM, which had recently shown signs of a softening of stance, seized on this ‘affront’ to whip up emotions. Along with the gherao of officials in the Hills, GJVM activists began an indefinite hunger strike at Darjeeling More in Siliguri. This group was lathicharged around 7 pm and around 100 taken into custody. IG (North Bengal) K L Tamta defended the lathicharge, saying police wanted to prevent a “head-on collision between pro-and anti-Gorkhaland forces”. “We did not say anything when GJM organised hunger strikes in Darjeeling, Kurse-ong, Kalimpong, Mirik and even Pintail (near Siliguri). But we had to take action at Darjeeling More because Aamra Bangali and Bangla O Bangla Bhasa Bachao Committee are also active in that area,” he said. Bengali outfits have called band-hs coinciding with the two meetings and threatened to march towards Dagapur to take on GJVM. Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad had also warned of serious consequences if the government let GJVM hold meetings at Birpara. The tribal outfit, which opposes GJM’s demand for inclusion of the Dooars and the Terai in its proposed ‘Gorkhaland’, had threatened to bring the two areas to a standstill. Last year, the Dooars had witnessed a number of clashes between ABVP and GJM supporters. Reason enough for the administration to be jittery. (The Times of India)

Social front:

EU team meets Kandhamal riot victims

An 11-member European Union (EU) team on Thursday interacted with riot victims in Orissa's Kandhamal district to find about the situation in the region and heard their accounts, police and eyewitnesses said. Several victims of the riots apprised the visiting team about the steps the state government has taken for their rehabilitation and the difficulties they are currently facing. The team members, led by EU's counsellor (head of political affairs) Christophe Manet, visited several affected villages and rehabilitation camps and saw the restoration work carried out by government and private agencies. They also gave the victims a patient hearing. He said that the team also visited a church nearby. "The government kept us in relief camps, provided food, provided us land... and helped us to build our houses," a victim told the delegation. Some people, including women, were in tears while narrating the hardships they went through and their plight in the aftermath of the violence to the team. Sushama Digal, a woman standing along with over a dozen women at G. Udayagiri village, said: "We are still facing trouble. People are still threatening us." The delegation will also meet local police and district officials and representatives of NGOs working in the region. The team, which comprises members from Spain, Hungary, Poland, Ireland, Finland, Sweden and Britain, had earlier met top police officials, Christian leaders and social activists in Orissa capital before heading for Kandhamal. "Events in Kandhamal had their impact in Europe. Our visit is a reflection of the concern," a member of the team told select media persons. Kandhamal, about 200 km from here, witnessed widespread violence after the murder of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati and four of his aides at his ashram Aug 23, 2008. More than 25,000 Christians were forced to flee their homes after their houses were attacked by rampaging mobs, which held Christians responsible for Saraswati's killing, although police blamed the Maoists. VHP and Bajrang Dal activists staged protests at the Biju Patnaik airport on Tuesday night when the EU team arrived here, saying the visit will only flare up the situation in Kandhamal. There was, however, no

such protest in any part of Kandhamal, Superintendent of Police S. Praveen Kumar told IANS. (The Times of India)

Economic Front:

The South



Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

West India



Politics:

Uddhav after Rahul visit: Mumbai under Mussolini raj

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's visit exemplified the "Mussolini" rule in Maharashtra that prevented Shiv Sena workers from exercising their democratic right of protest, the saffron party's leader Uddhav Thackeray said on Friday. Referring to the tight security blanket thrown for Rahul Gandhi's four-hour trip, Thackeray said Shiv Sainiks all over the city were prevented from their democratic right of protesting by waving black flags. "This shows what kind of a 'Mussolini' raj is prevalent in Maharashtra," Thackeray said, referring to the Italian dictator and Rahul Gandhi's mother Sonia Gandhi's Italian origins. He described Chief Minister Ashok Chavan of the Congress as "a watchman" for waiting

nearly an hour-and-a-half under a tree in Ghatkopar to receive Rahul Gandhi. In an unexpected change of plan, the Congress general secretary decided to take local trains instead of the helicopter to commute about the city. Referring to Rahul Gandhi withdrawing cash from a bank ATM near Andheri railway station to buy a second class suburban train ticket, Uddhav Thackeray said it was expected. "Mumbai means Delhi's ATM," Uddhav said, implying that the city was allegedly being exploited by the rulers in Delhi for its wealth. (The Times of India)

Social front:

‘45000 child malnutrition deaths every yr in Maharashtra’

Of the estimated 45,000 children dying each year due to malnutrition in Maharashtra, only around 12,000 are severe malnutrition cases. The remaining 33,000 children succumb due to mild or moderate malnutrition. Also, malnutrition is the underlying cause in about 480 of the 2,850 maternal deaths each year in the state. Despite this high prevalence of malnutrition, the state government spends just 0.08% of its gross domestic product on the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and the mid-day meal programme. These and other startling statistics about the declining nutritional status of Maharashtra were revealed in a 177-page report titled, ‘A Report on Nutritional Crisis in Maharashtra’, prepared by Pune-based NGO Support for Advocacy and Training to Health Initiatives (SATHI). The findings of the report were presented during a press conference at the Karve Institute of Social Science here on Wednesday. (The Times of India)

Economic Front: