

Business and Politics in Muslim World

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National Summary:

The disputed women reservation bill (33% seats for women legislature in both houses) has been passed in Rajya Sabha after fourteen years long struggle. RJD, LJP, SP and some other opposition parties opposed the bill. SP supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav alleged that it was a conspiracy to prevent Muslims, backwards and dalits from entering Parliament and state assemblies. He contended that when not a single Muslim MP was elected to Parliament from several states including Gujarat, MP, Maharashtra, Punjab and Haryana, how Muslim women could be elected without reservation. " Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad declared that the Women's Reservation Bill was 'a political blunder' and a conspiracy hatched by the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party to suppress representation of women from the backward classes.

Senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader and former Union Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha Criticised the Union budget that it would aggravate the problems of price rise and fiscal deficit.

Muslim community decided to reach out the eminent political parties for their support against the reservation of 33% women seats in parliament. The groups, led by Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind, All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat and the All India Milli Council have decided to reach out to as many parties as possible barring the BJP and convey to them that those supporting the Bill could face a Muslim "backlash".

The Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT) has summoned chief minister Narendra Modi for questioning regarding the murder of ex-Congress MP Ahsan Jafri and 68 others in the Gulburg Society massacre of February 28, 2002.

Union Home Secretary G.K. Pillai said the objective of the Maoists engaged in an armed 'liberation struggle' is to overthrow the Indian state by 2050, as indicated by documents seized from them. Maoists did their homework before launching attacks and their approach was that of a well-trained army surveying the place, making notes and studying every aspect. The analysis is as good as any that the armed forces of any country do," he said. 908 people lost their lives last year the highest since 1971 in naxal violence. The Home Secretary said that even though the joint anti-naxal operations were going on, the rebels had not suffered any significant reverses, and that the government would need seven to eight years to have full control over the areas lost to the Maoists.

Human rights activist and civil society criticised the use of force by government against rebels. Writer and human rights activist Arundhati Roy said: "The government's use of the military to solve political problems is not new. The government has long since followed a policy of extermination against the Maoist movement. But each time the movement has come back stronger and better organised as it is not the people but an ideology under attack and this ideology cannot be wiped out by attacking tribals in the name of defeating Maoism. Home minister P Chidambaram said government has the legitimate right to use as much force as necessary to regain control of areas dominated by

the Maoists and made it clear that talks with it could only take place if the ultras abjured violence. Terming Naxalism as a "graver problem" than jihadi terrorism, P Chidambaram vowed to effectively tackle the threat from Maoists, who have declared a war against the Indian state, before the term of the government ends.

India continued to be the most optimistic nation in terms of hiring plans for the next three months, driven by strong job opportunities across all sectors including finance and realty sectors, global staffing services firm Manpower said. According to the quarterly 'Employment Outlook Survey', India Inc's hiring outlook improved by 4 percentage points for the April-June period compared to the previous quarter. Indian companies have rated cyber security as a major concern. In the light of increased cyber attacks, over 42 per cent of enterprises perceive cyber crime as a bigger threat than terrorism, crime and natural disasters. This was one of the findings of '2010 State of Enterprise Security Study,' a global study carried out by Symantec Software Solutions Pvt. Ltd., where Indian companies from sectors such as telecom, hospitality, manufacturing, retail and technology participated.

India believes sanctions on Iran are counter-productive, the government told Parliament in the first public articulation of the government's views on U.S. efforts to impose sanctions on Iran. Indian government "has conveyed to the U.S. government that sanctions on Iran have proved to be counter-productive and that all differences with Iran should be resolved peacefully through dialogue and negotiation."

Pakistan's allegation that India is violating Indus Water Treaty by stealing its share of water is refuted by India. According to New Delhi's assessment, Pakistan's water troubles are an outcome of its own "poor water management" Pakistan has not built enough water storage capacity and is, therefore, leaving surplus water go completely unutilized. This is, therefore, giving rise to water scarcity in the face of a rapidly growing population in Pakistan.

According to a report prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) India has the maximum number of women dying in the Asia-Pacific region because of discriminatory treatment in access to health and nutrition and sex-selective abortion, report reveals shocking levels of gender disparity in the country.

Regional Summary:

Over 20,000 youths from Punjab attempt illegal migration every year to 57 different countries. The trend is also spreading to the neighbouring states of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, says a report "Smuggling of Migrants from India to Europe and in particular to UK from Punjab and Haryana" released by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

A month has passed since West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee

announced that the state government would provide for a reservation of 10 per cent in government jobs for Muslim OBCs and that a committee would be formed to facilitate it, nothing has been done so far. In fact, officials of the Backwards Classes Welfare department are wondering whether such a committee can mark out Muslim OBCs. The chief minister said at his press conference on February 8 that a committee comprising officials from the minorities department, the BCW department, the Minorities Commission and the BCW Commission will be set up to look at the issue. No such committee, however, has been formed so far. Most of the officials at the BCW department this reporter talked to said they had no idea about such a committee.

MNS chief Raj Thackeray said the Hindi language should not be forced on the people. "I am not opposed to Hindi but do not force Hindi on us,"

National Report

Politics:

Centre takes one more step forward on Women's Bill

The Central government on Friday took one more step forward in preparation for the Constitution amendment that would, if passed, bring 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal invited the whips of all political parties for lunch where he requested them to direct their members to be present in the Rajya Sabha when the Constitution (One Hundred and Eighth Amendment) Bill 2008 was taken up for consideration and passage on March 8. After Monday, the Bill would be renamed the Constitution (Ninety-sixth Amendment) Bill 2010. The Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party and all the Left parties have issued whips, asking their members to be present and vote for the Bill. Some other parties would also be doing so, Mr. Bansal said. The Samajwadi Party has let it be known that it would issue a whip, asking its MPs to vote against the Bill. Janata Dal (United) president Sharad Yadav said there was no change in his party's stand. It favoured reservation but with a sub-quota for women of backward classes. Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad has also expressed himself against the Bill. A BJP leader said: "The Bill has not been passed for over a decade because there were some parties and MPs actively opposing it and there were a large number of MPs in all parties, including those who favour the Bill, who are passively and silently opposing the Bill."

The options

While the government is tight-lipped on how it intends handling those who oppose the Bill, it has several options. One, the Chair could order marshals to take members disturbing the proceedings out of the House. This, MPs say, would be an extreme step. Two, the Chair could put the Bill to vote, asking the MPs to press the "yea" or "nay" button. This could be done despite some MPs moving into the well or making noise. Or, the Chair could desist from pushing through a Constitution amendment in a less than peaceful and orderly atmosphere. (The Hindu)

Dialogue with Pakistan only way ahead, says Manmohan

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday told both Houses of Parliament that the only way ahead to resolve contentious issues with Pakistan was to engage it in dialogue, even as he asserted that Saudi Arabia's intervention was not sought. Replying to the debate on the motion of thanks on the President's address to Parliament, he said: "I never believed that the channels of communication with Pakistan should break down. The chances of miscalculation can only increase in an environment of no contact." Dr. Singh said the resumption of talks at the Foreign Secretary level was not sudden. It was a calculated one based on all costs and benefits. Not talking to Islamabad would not isolate it as the rest of the world was talking with it. "We have made our point strongly, but we cannot wish away the problem by not talking to them ... Dialogue is the only way forward to resolve

our problems,” he said, but pointed out that meaningful dialogue was possible only when Pakistan controlled the terror machine even if non-state actors were at work. Expressing his distress at the manner in which leaders like L.K. Advani and N. Chandrababu Naidu accused him of acting under U.S. pressure, he said: “I think we do a disservice to any government and Prime Minister of this proud country if we say that such fundamental matters of national security and foreign policy were based on anything but our supreme national interest.” (The Hindu)

Women quota bill a conspiracy against Muslims, Dalits: Mulayam

Slamming the women's reservation bill as a ‘dangerous’ one, SP supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav alleged that it was a conspiracy to prevent Muslims, backwards and dalits from entering Parliament and state assemblies. "SP is not against reservation to women, but we are against the present format of the bill, which is a big conspiracy by the Congress and the BJP to prevent Muslims, backwards and dalits to get elected to the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas," Yadav, whose party has steadfastly opposed the bill, told reporters. Attacking the two parties, he said, "It's not an allegation, it's the reality as Congress and BJP had always been anti-Muslim, anti-backwards and anti-dalit. Therefore, they want to amend the Constitution." He contended that when not a single Muslim MP was elected to Parliament from several states including Gujarat, MP, Maharashtra, Punjab and Haryana, how Muslim women could be elected without reservation. "This bill is dangerous.... If it is enacted, Muslims and OBCs will be at the receiving end," he said. "It's a big conspiracy not to allow the leadership to grow among Muslims, OBCs and dalits," he claimed. Yadav said that if the intention was to promote women, then why reservation was not being offered in government jobs and in the education sector. "If they want uplift of women why don't they offer 40 to 50 per cent reservation in government jobs or in the education sector? We have no objections," he said. (The Indian Express)

A political blunder: Lalu

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) supremo Lalu Prasad declared that the Women's Reservation Bill was ‘a political blunder’ and a conspiracy hatched by the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party to suppress representation of women from the backward classes. Talking to journalists before leaving for Delhi to elicit support against the passage of the Bill, Mr. Prasad said: “Why only 33 per cent? I am for 50 per cent reservation for women if you like. But you cannot ignore the interests of women belonging to Other Backward Classes [OBC], Scheduled Castes [SC], Scheduled Tribes [ST] and backward sections of the Muslim community.” “Women like Sushma Swaraj never needed a ‘reservation plank’ to reach the top. It proves that the proposed Bill will only serve to further the interests of the elite classes.” Severely censuring Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's U-turn on the Bill, Mr. Prasad remarked that he had been a member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee in 1997 to examine the Bill, and had submitted a note of dissent then. Dubbing Mr. Kumar a bahurupiya (one who changes colours), Mr. Prasad said the Chief Minister's opportunistic tactics were merely to appease his alliance partner, the BJP. Stating that the RJD would not give up the fight to oppose the Bill, Mr. Prasad said: “We will fight it tooth and nail and are even prepared to be marshaled out for that matter.” Further, he revealed that

certain top leaders from the BJP and the Congress were in constant touch with him and told him if their parties had not issued the whip they would have voted against the Bill. Stating that the Centre did not have the guts to implement the Ranganath Mishra and the Sachar panel reports, Mr. Prasad said the renewed focus on Women's Bill was a “diversionary tactic” to draw attention away from real issues. (The Hindu)

Mayawati opposes Bill in present form

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati has made it clear to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that her party would not support the Women's Reservation Bill in its present form. Ms. Mayawati sought separate reservation for women belonging to the Dalit, Backward Classes, religious minorities and the poor upper castes within the proposed 33 per cent for women in Parliament and Assemblies. At the same time, the existing system of 22 per cent reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes should not be disturbed, she said. Ms. Mayawati's stand was spelt out in a letter sent to the Prime Minister on Sunday. BSP national general secretary and Rajya Sabha member Satish Chandra Mishra told reporters here on Sunday that if the necessary amendments were not made, his party will not support the legislation in Parliament. (The Hindu)

Women's Bill passed after high drama

High drama surrounded the passage of the historic Women's Reservation Bill with the process beginning with unprecedented unruly scenes in the Rajya Sabha and culminating with the suspension and forcible eviction of the disruptive members. The histrionics witnessed in the House when the bill was moved for consideration with the opponents of the proposed legislation disrupting the proceedings. However, acting tough, the government moved a motion for suspension of seven members -- four from SP, one each from RJD and LJP and an unattached member. They defied the action and squatted on the floor of the House for over three hours after their suspension from the Rajya Sabha around noon. As the Rajya Sabha re-convened after three adjournments and Chairman Hamid Ansari took up the bill for discussion, the suspended members began their protests by shouting slogans. They were joined other RJD and SP members. When Leader of the Opposition Arun Jaitley rose to speak, the protests by the seven suspended members -- Veerpal Singh Yadav, Nand Kishore Yadav, Amir Alam Khan and Kamal Akhtar (all SP), Subhash Yadav (RJD), Sabir Ali (LJP), and Ejaz Ali (unattached) -- grew louder. Repeated requests by Ansari went unheeded and the suspended members were joined by Rajniti Prasad and P C Gupta (both RJD) and Brij Bhushan Tiwari, Ram Gopal Yadav and Ram Narayan Sahu (all SP). (The Indian Express)

The 14-year-journey of Women's Reservation Bill

The 14-year journey of the Women's Reservation Bill was marked by high drama and hit roadblocks in each of its outings in Parliament before the historic measure cleared the first legislative hurdle. The battle for greater representation to women in Lok Sabha and state Assemblies was routinely punctuated by frayed tempers and war of words which sometimes got physical, as different governments since 1996 tried to get the Women's Reservation Bill passed in Parliament without success. The Bill also lapsed each time the

House was dissolved and was reintroduced by the Government of the day. The pathbreaking Bill greenlighted by the Rajya Sabha after some hiccups to create legislative history was first introduced in the Lok Sabha by the Deve Gowda government on Sept 12, 1996. Snatching of Papers from presiding officers and Ministers and scuffles became a familiar scene each time the Bill made its way to Parliament before it was aborted. Once, Union minister Renuka Chowdhury pushed a Samajwadi member away when a Samajwadi member tried to snatch a copy of the Bill from her Ministerial colleague H R Bhardwaj in the UPA government's first term when it was being introduced. Bharadwaj also took his seat between two women ministers and was guarded by some women MPs to ward off any attack on him by some Opposition members. And the opposition to the Constitution Amendment Bill to reserve one-third of seats in the Legislatures hit a nadir yesterday when some opposition members tried to attack Rajya Sabha Chairman Hamid Ansari and disrupted tabling of the Bill. The opposition to the Bill had its own share of lows when JD(U) veteran Sharad Yadav, a critic of the legislation, asked in June 1997, "Do you think these women with short hair can speak for women, for our women...". In the Bill's previous foray on May 6, 2008, a resolute government introduced the legislation in the Rajya Sabha yet another time amid high drama and scuffles between members. With Congress Parliamentarians providing protective cover, Law Minister H R Bhardwaj introduced the Bill in the midst of Samajwadi Party members trying to snatch its copies from the hands of the Minister. Samajwadi members stormed the well soon after the House resumed at noon in an apparent attempt to stall introduction of the Bill, which they have been opposing along with JD(U.) However, the disruptions could not dissuade the government from going ahead and introducing the Bill. As agitated SP member Abu Asim Azmi and his party colleagues tried to snatch the Bill copy from Bhardwaj, Congress members intervened and Renuka Chaudhary, then the Women and Child Development Minister, repulsed the attempts by pushing Azmi away. Expecting trouble, Bharadwaj was seated in the middle row of the treasury benches flanked by two women ministers Kumari Selja and Ambika Soni. On top of it, Congress women Parliamentarians Jayanti Natarajan and Alka Balram Kshatriya guarded Bharadwaj from SP members who had taken the position for the go. Top leaders, including Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Leader of Opposition Jaswant Singh, were witness to the high drama. Several Lok Sabha lawmakers were also seated in the gallery. "Take back the Women's Reservation Bill" was among the slogans raised by the SP members from the well of the Rajya Sabha. After the Bill introduced by the Deve Gowda government on September 12, 1996 failed to get approval in Lok Sabha, it was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee chaired by Geeta Mukherjee, which presented its report to the Lok Sabha on December 9, 1996. Atal Bihari Vajpayee's NDA government re-introduced the bill in 1998 the 12th Lok Sabha. When Law minister M. Thambidurai rose to introduce the bill on July 13, 1998 RJD MP Surendra Prasad Yadav goes to the well of the House, snatches it from Speaker G.M.C. Balayogi and tears it to bits. The NDA government re-introduced the bill in the 13th Lok Sabha in 1999. It moved the Bill again amid pandemonium in 2002 and Left parties and the Congress give assurances to support the bill if it is taken up. The Bill was introduced twice in Parliament in 2003 and after an all-party meeting, BJP spokesperson Vijay Malhotra said, "We want the Bill passed in this session itself, with or without consensus". In May that year, at an all-party meeting, Speaker Manohar Joshi announced deferring of the Bill. Protesting MPs rush to the well of the House during

Question Hour, saying they would never allow the Bill to be passed in the present form. Just before the Lok Sabha elections in 2004, Vajpayee blamed Congress for stalling the Bill and said BJP and its allies would pass the legislation after getting a decisive mandate in 2004 elections. In 2004, the UPA government includes it in the Common Minimum Programme, which said: "The UPA government will take the lead to introduce legislation for one-third reservations for women in Vidhan Sabhas and in the Lok Sabha." In 2005, BJP announced complete support for the bill. Subsequently, it yields to the objections of Uma Bharati and several others within the party, who stress on quota within quota for women on caste basis. In 2008, the government tabled the bill in the Rajya Sabha so that the legislation does not lapse. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice, and Personnel recommended passage of the Bill in Dec 2009. The Bill was cleared by the Union Cabinet on February 25, 2010. (The Indian Express)

Passing women's bill realisation of Rajiv's vision: Sonia

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi Friday said the passage of the women's reservation bill in parliament would be the realisation of her late husband and former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's vision to politically empower women. Addressing a meeting of Congress office bearers and state party chiefs, she said: "Women reservation bill... when it comes to fruition, it would be the realisation of Rajiv Gandhi's vision to empower women politically." The meeting was organised to finalise programmes for the party's 125th anniversary celebrations. The state unit chiefs passed a resolution lauding the leadership provided by Sonia Gandhi in getting the women's reservation bill passed in the Rajya Sabha, party sources said. The bill, passed by the Rajya Sabha Tuesday, provides for 33 percent reservation for women in parliament and the state legislatures. It is yet to be passed by the Lok Sabha and no dates have been decided so far for discussing the bill in the lower house of parliament which will go for a near four-week recess next week. Addressing the meeting, Gandhi laid stress on the 125th anniversary celebrations conveying the message of the party's "abiding commitment to the empowerment of aam aadmi (common man)". She said the year-long commemoration will be launched "by holding a special public function at Jallianwalla Bagh in Amritsar April 13, a date which symbolizes the sacrifice and martyrdom of thousands of men and women and holds emotional and patriotic appeal for people." Listing the Right to Information Act, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Right to Education and women's reservation bill as among the significant achievements of the government, she said programmes to commemorate the party's 125th anniversary "must not be simply routine". "The message must be properly articulated, drawing on the past, building on the present and projecting a vision for the future," she said. The Congress president said effective coordination was essential between state unit presidents, chief ministers, legislative party leaders and the general secretaries in charge of the states. Citing the results of the 2009 general elections, she said these were an affirmation of the abiding faith of the people in the values and programmes of the Congress. She said young people must be made aware of the history of the struggle for Independence. "We need to reach out to them as they hold the key to the future." She said the AICC national preparatory committee has drawn up a list of historical landmarks in the freedom struggle, including those of the "satyagrahas" of Mahatma Gandhi, and befitting activities should be held at venues associated with these events. "No other party can claim to have a legacy as rich as ours," she said. Gandhi said

the party was planning a series of national seminars, each of which is associated with freedom struggle. A list of significant Congress resolutions was being compiled and a primer was being prepared for party workers. The Congress president said the party will also bring out a number of publications to mark its 125 years. She said four volumes of the history of the party were published during the Congress centenary and two more were being published to cover the years since 1964. The year-long celebrations will culminate in a special session in December 2010 when the party will complete 125 years of its existence. State presidents told the meeting about the programmes chalked out by them to commemorate the party's 125 years. (The Times of India)

Narendra Modi should resign on moral grounds: Congress

With the Special Investigation Team (SIT) summoning Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi for questioning in connection with the post-Godhra riots, Congress on Friday demanded that he should quit on moral grounds. "Modi has no right to be the chief minister once the SIT has summoned him. He should resign on moral grounds," Congress state in-charge P Sudhakar Reddy said here on Friday. Reddy, who is also AICC secretary, was speaking to media after participating in a 10-km-walk organised by the state Congress from Gandhi Ashram to Kochrab Ashram on 80th anniversary of the Dandi March. Reddy said it is shameful for the people of Gujarat that their chief minister has been summoned by the Supreme Court appointed probe panel. Modi would be questioned for the first time for his role in the 2002 Gujarat riots with the apex court-appointed SIT summoning him for questioning him on March 21. The 60-year-old senior BJP leader suffered the ignominy of being the first-ever chief minister of any state to be called for questioning in a criminal complaint after he and his administration were accused of aiding and abetting riots in one area here. The summons by the SIT eight years after the post-Godhra riots, were issued on a complaint by Zakia Jaffery, widow of former Congress MP Ehsan Jaffery who was killed along with 69 others in the communal violence at Gulburg society. (The Times of India)

Manmohan Singh to get World Statesman award

The Appeal of Conscience Foundation has announced it will felicitate Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with its prestigious World Statesman Award for the year 2010. The award would be presented to the Prime Minister in September, said John Negroponete, the former Deputy Secretary of State, at a reception hosted at the residence of Indian Ambassador to the US Meera Shankar, in Washington. Shankar said the Prime Minister has graciously accepted the award. Among the past recipients of this prestigious award include British Prime Minister Gordon Brown (2009), French President Nicolas Sarkozy (2008), German Chancellor Angela Merkel (2007) and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (2006). The Appeal of Conscience Foundation was founded by Rabbi Arthur Schneier in 1965. It has worked on behalf of religious freedom and human rights throughout the world. This interfaith coalition of business, religious and foreign policy leaders promotes peace, tolerance and ethnic conflict resolution. It also provides a voice of conscience to protect minorities at a time of increasing ethnic conflict in many regions of the world. (The Times of India)

Budget 2010-11:

Budget will aggravate price rise, says Yashwant Sinha

Criticising the Union budget as one that would aggravate the problems of price rise and fiscal deficit, senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader and former Union Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha said on Friday that he is “deeply disappointed with Pranab Mukherjee's budget.” Speaking at an interactive session on the budget organised by the Swadeshi Research Institute, Mr. Sinha pointed out that rather than prioritising the issue of rising prices of essential commodities, the budget has taken recourse to measures like increase of service tax, indirect tax and hike in price of petroleum products, which he alleged, will have a “cascading effect on the economy.” “At a time when the situation is already taut, people have been pressurised from three sides. Excise duty has been increased by two per cent in the name of rollback of stimulus, service tax has been increased and also the price of petrol has been hiked...this will not only lead to the increase of price of goods, it will also affect the money market,” he said. Mr. Sinha underscored the point that the budgetary measures would result in higher interest rates and lower investment while price of all production goods would increase due to the hike in price of coal and petrol. “My direct allegation is that this situation is self-inflicted and that the Centre has no real intention to tackle the price-rise issue at all,” he added. On the food inflation, Mr. Sinha accused Mr. Mukherjee of bypassing the issue in his budgetary speech. Taking a dig at the Finance Minister's decision to withdraw excise duty on toy balloons, Mr. Sinha said: “When crop failure and escalating prices of food grains and other essential commodities are such serious issues, the Finance Minister referred it as a problem of last year and claimed that the crisis has been weathered.” Alleging “wide-scale mismanagement and corruption” to be the reasons behind the soaring price of sugar, he demanded for a Joint Parliamentary Committee to probe the matter. (The Hindu)

Minorities' Issues:

Muslim groups galvanise support against Bill

Encouraged by Mulayam Singh Yadav and Lalu Prasad and buoyed by Mamata Banerjee's surprise turnabout, prominent Muslim groups have begun an exercise to galvanise support for the sub-quota demand before the Women's Reservation Bill comes up in the Lok Sabha. The groups, led by Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind, All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat and the All India Milli Council, intend to send a message to the political parties that “injustice” is being meted out to the community. They have decided to reach out to as many parties as possible barring the BJP and convey to them that those supporting the Bill could face a Muslim “backlash”. The Muslim groups have had separate meetings with known opponents of the Bill — Lalu, Mulayam, JD(S) supremo H D Deve Gowda and LJP leader Ram Vilas Paswan and will be meeting NCP boss Sharad Pawar, Left leaders Sitaram Yechury and A B Bardhan and leaders of the regional parties in the coming days. “Whether they (those who are supporting the Bill) agree or not, the message will be conveyed to them that a big chunk of the population is against this Bill in its present format,” Mushawarat chief Zafarul-Islam Khan said. (The Indian Express)

'Muslim women can't discard purdah for politics'

Soft spoken and mild-mannered Maulana Saidur Rehman Azmi Nadvi heads Nadva-tul Ulema, the biggest Islamic seminary in north India. However, his tone hardens at the mere mention of women's reservation bill. He says politics makes an unlikely profession for well brought up 'khawateen'. "Islam doesn't permit women to discard the purdah, deliver lectures in public (taqreer) and demand their due. They have clear guidelines to follow stay at home in hijab, and take care of household chores. They are also free to get educated and serve the nation," he says, but is quick to rule out any compromise over their entry into politics. "Contesting elections is by no means a cake walk. There's only one option for female aspirants turn into 'mard' (man)," says the Maulana, who is also a senior member of All India Muslim Personal Law Board. Darul Uloom, Deoband, is severe in its chastisement of the worrying "un-Islamic behaviour" of politically oriented women. It had said the same thing five years ago while announcing a fatwa against women contesting elections. (The Times of India)

Gujarat riots: SIT summons Narendra Modi

The Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT) has summoned chief minister Narendra Modi for questioning regarding the murder of ex-Congress MP Ahsan Jafri and 68 others in the Gulburg Society massacre of February 28, 2002. Modi has been asked to present himself before the SIT on March 21. The questioning will be on the basis of the FIR filed by Zakia Jafri, Ahsan's widow, who has accused Modi and 62 others, including ministers, bureaucrats and police officers, of complicity in the Gujarat riots that killed nearly 2,000 persons. If Modi responds, this will be his first statement on record in the post-Godhra riot case in the past eight years. The timing of his summoning has raised a few eyebrows because it comes at a time when the SIT's credibility has been called into question by none other than the special public prosecutor. Accused among the police officers is one of SIT's own members and now Surat city police commissioner, Shivanand Jha. Jha's statement was recently recorded in the case. The development also comes at a time when SIT chief R K Raghavan is to file a report on March 15, updating the SC about the investigations in the Jafri case. Raghavan was quoted saying that Modi's questioning will be like that of any common person. To TOI, he merely said, "We have called Mr Modi on March 21 to record his statement on the Jafri case." Asked whether the SIT had any evidence against Modi, he said, "I cannot comment on that." He also refused to comment on the allegations made by special public prosecutor R K Shah in his resignation letter addressed to him. The Gulburg massacre trial is already going through a crisis with special public prosecutor R K Shah and his assistant Nayana Bhatt resigning from the case levelling serious charges against the SIT. Witnesses in the Gulburg massacre trial, like Imtiyaz Pathan and Saira Sandhi, have told the riot court that they had heard Ahsan Jafri calling up Modi for help when mobs had surrounded Gulburg society, and that Modi had allegedly abused the ex-MP on phone. Zakia Jafri had filed the FIR in 2006, charging the Modi government of aiding and abetting the accused in the carnage that shook Gujarat between February 2002 and May, 2002. Her FIR says, "Top-level meetings were held between the chief minister, some of his cabinet and top-level bureaucrats in which illegal instructions were issued and policemen and bureaucrats were instructed to, in fact, perform illegal acts." Politicians already questioned in this case are former CM Suresh Mehta, former ministers I K Jadeja and Gordhan Zadaphia. (The

Times of India)

Hindu Fundamentalism:

Shiv Sena to oppose Women's Bill

Shiv Sena, an ally of NDA which voted for the Women's Reservation Bill in Rajya Sabha, on Thursday said it will oppose it if marshals were called in and force was used to pass the measure in Lok Sabha. "We will not allow the Bill to be passed in Lok Sabha with the use of marshals and force. We will strongly oppose it," Anant Geete, Leader of the Party in Lok Sabha told reporters. Opposing the Bill in its present form, Geete alleged the government was hardly interested in the welfare of women but only wanted to take credit for the legislation. Senior party leader and former Lok Sabha Speaker Manohar Joshi said the party is not opposed to 33 per cent reservation for women but constituencies should not be reserved and instead it should be made mandatory for the parties to give 33 per cent reservation to women. "Our party has made it clear that it supports 33 per cent reservation. But parties should decide and reserve this and constituencies should not be reserved," Joshi said, seeking an amendment in the Bill. Asked what would the party do if the government brought the Bill in the same form in the Lower House, he said, "We will decide the strategy when the Bill is brought in Lok Sabha".(The Indian Express)

Insurgency Movements:

Maoists aiming to overthrow Indian state by 2050: Centre

The Union government on Friday said the objective of the Maoists engaged in an armed 'liberation struggle' was to overthrow the Indian state by 2050, as indicated by documents seized from them. Union Home Secretary G.K. Pillai said that an in-depth analysis of Maoist operations also pointed to assistance by former Army men. Speaking at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, Mr. Pillai said the Maoists did their homework before launching attacks and their approach was that of a well-trained army surveying the place, making notes and studying every aspect. "After every attack, they do a post-mortem and analysis. The analysis is as good as any that the armed forces of any country do," he said. Mr. Pillai said as many as 908 people lost their lives last year — the highest since 1971 — in naxal violence. "It is quite likely that the violence will go up in 2010 or 2011 before the tide begins to turn," he added. The Home Secretary said that even though the joint anti-naxal operations were going on, the rebels had not suffered any significant reverses, and that the government would need seven to eight years to have full control over the areas lost to the Maoists. "The operations have not hit even five per cent of hardcore militants. The real armed cadres are yet to come out," he said. According to him, they would not come for talks unless they felt the heat and that whatever statements they were making about peace were not serious. Referring to the offer to halt anti-naxal operations, Mr. Pillai said the left-wing extremists were against allowing any kind of development. "They destroy school buildings, health centres and blast mobile towers." The Maoist influence was spread over 34 districts in eight States, he said. Mr. Pillai said the rebels were looking to regroup and building their own army to implement their plans.

He added that if they were willing to hold talks with the government, they should first give up violence. “Under-development and administrative vacuum at some places are coming in handy for them,” Mr. Pillai said. He stressed the need for training and strengthening the police forces. Sources in the Home Ministry said that in the nine days following the offer of talks on February 22, there have been 22 acts of violence involving Maoist cadres — seven in Bihar, four in Chhattisgarh, six in Jharkhand, three in West Bengal, and one each in Karnataka and Orissa — in which 12 civilians and two security personnel lost their lives. Meanwhile, the Maoists said a cessation of hostilities by both sides for a specific time-period was the minimum requirement before talks. “If the rulers think the Maoists are proposing ceasefire from a position of weakness, they are gravely mistaken. It is because the CPI (Maoist) has great concern for the oppressed people that it has proposed a ceasefire that could be of some help to poor Adivasis living in conditions of the worst famine of the decade and brutal state terror,” a statement from Azad, spokesperson of the Central Committee of the CPI (Maoist), said. (The Hindu)

Ideology can't be wiped out by attacking tribals: Arundhati Roy

Dubbing the Centre's talk of ceasefire and talks with naxals “non-serious,” members of democratic and civil rights organisations on Friday demanded that the state stop the military offensive, Operation Greenhunt, “against its own people” and initiate back-channel talks with the CPI (Maoist). Addressing a press conference, writer and human rights activist Arundhati Roy said: “The government's use of the military to solve political problems is not new. The government has long since followed a policy of extermination against the Maoist movement. But each time the movement has come back stronger and better organised as it is not the people but an ideology under attack and this ideology cannot be wiped out by attacking tribals in the name of defeating Maoism. Moreover, considering the fact that no one has defined the word ‘Maoist’, if the government talks of wiping them out, then it refers to a genocidal language where it could be dispensing with lakhs of people who are anyway fragile and on the brink of survival.” Ms. Roy said: “We are in a situation wherein corporatisation of natural resources such as coal and iron ore has led to scandals galore and it is this money which can buy governments, elections, courts and media, making our democracy the best democracy that money can buy today. Despite a large number of farmer suicides and a majority of the population living below poverty line, we have the most expensive elections in the world and the money for the same comes from the iron ores of Karnataka and Chhattisgarh and bauxite in Orissa which is then used to cleverly subvert democracy and wage war against its own people.” Sumit Chakravarty, Editor, Mainstream magazine, said: “The Union government has undertaken the task of launching a full-scale war against the indigenous tribal population in the vast tribal heartlands. The most important thing for talks to be successful between the CPI (Maoist) and the government is that it has to be a mutual affair of cessation of hostilities. It cannot be one-sided. While asking the Maoists to abjure violence, the Centre should also do the same and initiate back-channel talks, but so far this seriousness and initiative on the part of the government has been lacking.” Alluding to the treatment meted out to social activists working in naxal-affected areas in Chhattisgarh, he said: “The government's allegation that the Maoists are not allowing development works to take place is hollow

because if that was true, then why would civil society and voluntary organisation representatives working for the uplift of the Maoists be targeted? Since the government is not interested in the development of tribals, a large number of them have joined the Maoists as it is a question of survival for them." (The Hindu)

Govt has right to use force to tackle Maoists: Chidambaram

Government on Friday said it has the legitimate right to use as much force as necessary to regain control of areas dominated by the Maoists and made it clear that talks with it could only take place if the ultras abjured violence. Terming Naxalism as a "graver problem" than jihadi terrorism, home minister P Chidambaram vowed to effectively tackle the threat from Maoists, who have declared a war against the Indian state, before the term of the government ends. Chidambaram said the goal of the Maoists was armed liberation struggle and the sole purpose was to seize power. Referring to the offer of talks made by the government to the Maoists recently, he asked, "Why aren't the Maoists making a simple statement that we abjure violence?" He said in such a situation, it was the legitimate right of the government to use as much force necessary to regain the areas and hoped that once the government regains control in two to three years, it would usher in development. "We are confident that before the term of UPA II ends, we will get rid of naxals and will have considerably strengthened our security to face any threat," he said addressing a conclave here. "They (Maoists) have declared a war on the Indian state...They are anti-development. They do not want the poor to be emancipated or become economically free," Chidambaram said, adding civil right groups naively think that naxalites are pro-poor. With the serious threat of jihadi terrorism centred around Pakistan and Afghanistan and also affecting Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Chidambaram said South Asia is, therefore, duty bound to work together to end the menace. The home minister referred to the "splendid cooperation" from Bangladesh in tackling militancy after Sheikh Hasina's government came to power but expressed concern over recent developments in Nepal where, he said, there was "sprouting of anti-India activity". (The Times of India)

Green Hunt: Forces employ Naxal tactics, win over locals

The CRPF personnel have started massing under the cover of medical camps on the Bengal side the same tactics as the Maoists used to get a toehold in the state. Preparations are on to link up with the forces driving Maoists out of strongholds in East and West Singhbhum in Jharkhand. The operation that started on Sunday seems to be giving desired result winning the trust of the locals claimed senior police officers. Villagers, in West Midnapore and Purulia (Bengal) and Ghatsila (Jharkhand) are coming forward with information on Maoists. State police and CRPF units have started getting local intelligence inputs even in areas such as Jorma, Jamaimari, and Sakhabhanga on the Bengal side and over a dozen villages like Basodera, Burudih, Dayanmara and Digha in Jharkhand. These are the areas where the Maoists had the final word until Operation Green Hunt started. It is clear by now that this operation is taking place under direct orders of the Centre and the supervision of CRPF. Home secretary Ardhendu Sen said, "This is no recce. It was an operation. We are analysing the results." There may not have been any gunfights yet on the Bengal side but hundreds of Bengal policemen are fighting shoulder to shoulder with their Jharkhand counterparts and 5,000-odd CRPF jawans in

combat operations across the border, said sources. The forces have changed their tactics this time. Instead of moving in large numbers, they are operating in small groups, increasing mobility and stealth. At the same time, CRPF is setting up medical camps in far-flung forest hamlets in Gidhighata, 15 km from the border, said CRPF deputy commandant P K Mandal. Maoists had penetrated these villages in the same way. This is part of the "build-up" that Bengal IG (law and order) Surajit Kar Purakayastha had hinted at before forces go the whole hog against Maoists. According to police, 10 more CRPF companies, including two COBRA units, will be deployed. The pressure is telling on the Maoists. Many of them are trying to flee to Sundergarh in Orissa. Out of frustration, the rebels blew up a deserted police camp at Sutan in Barikul on Tuesday, achieving little. (The Times of India)

Economic Front:

India ranks 1st in exporting generic medicines

India ranks first in the world in exporting generic medicines, Union Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilisers Srikanta Jena has said. These medicines are worth Rs 50,000 crore per annum, Jena said after inaugurating three generic medicine stores at Khurdah. The quality of the medicines was being maintained with the help of the Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited, Jena said. Jena said Orissa was the fifth state in the country and first in eastern India to have launched 'Jan Ausadhi Abhiyan', the national campaign to ensure universal reach of generic medicines. Stating that generic medicine stores would be opened in all 626 district headquarters hospitals in the country soon, the Union minister said the same would be extended to all sub-divisional and blocks hospitals in phased manner. (The Indian Express)

'India most optimistic nation on hiring'

India continued to be the most optimistic nation in terms of hiring plans for the next three months, driven by strong job opportunities across all sectors including finance and realty sectors, global staffing services firm Manpower said. According to the quarterly 'Employment Outlook Survey', India Inc's hiring outlook improved by 4 percentage points for the April-June period compared to the previous quarter. "With Net Employment Outlook of 39 per cent, Indian employers report the most optimistic forecast among all 36 countries and territories participating in the survey," it said. "Employers remain optimistic on account of strong domestic growth. We are witnessing improved opportunities for job seekers across all industry sectors with employers indicating that hiring in India's Services and Finance, Insurance & Real Estate sectors will accelerate in the months ahead," Manpower India Managing Director Sanjay Pandit said. India has been reporting the strongest hiring plans globally since the third quarter of 2008. The survey stated that job seekers in the services industry sector --finance, insurance, realty, manufacturing sector and mining & construction, can look forward to the most favourable hiring environment in the April-June time frame. Moreover, job prospects in the Asia Pacific region remain strong, with the exception of Japan, and hiring outlook continue to improve modestly in most of the American region. (The Indian Express)

Cyber attacks worry firms more than terrorism

When it comes to threats, natural or man-made, Indian companies have rated cyber security as a major concern. In the light of increased cyber attacks, over 42 per cent of enterprises perceive cyber crime as a bigger threat than terrorism, crime and natural disasters. This was one of the findings of '2010 State of Enterprise Security Study,' a global study carried out by Symantec Software Solutions Pvt. Ltd., where Indian companies from sectors such as telecom, hospitality, manufacturing, retail and technology participated. "Indian enterprises are experiencing frequent cyber attacks and the losses incurred due to them are escalating. In the past 12 months, 66 per cent of the companies experienced cyber intrusions and 51 per cent of them reported repeated attacks, while 34 per cent have experienced high number of malicious hits. On the other hand, 31 per cent said there were internal attacks as well," said Vishal Dhupar, managing director, Symantec, at a press conference here on Tuesday. Also, each cyber attack had a financial impact, as organisations reported loss of revenue. "Apart from financial loss, companies will have to put up with damaged brand reputation, loss of customer trust. The average revenue lost by companies due to the virtual attacks was recorded at Rs. 58.59 lakh in 2009." Interestingly, with IT security becoming a daunting issue for enterprises, the study pointed out that implementation of enterprise security is turning into a difficult task. "Enterprise security is understaffed and the most affected areas in organisations are network security, web security and data-loss prevention. To tackle the issue, companies need to secure their messaging and web environments and defending critical internal servers. They should also have the ability to back up and recover data and respond to threats rapidly." To overcome such threats, companies should develop and enforce IT policies to secure data breach in anyway possible. "By prioritising risks and defining policies, companies will not only be able to identify threats but also come up with remedies. Also, they should know the location of sensitive information and how it's coming or leaving the organisation. Companies should be able to monitor and report their systems status and be ready for any kind of threat." (The Hindu)

Foreign Relations/Geo-strategic developments:

Karzai assures India of steps to protect Indians

National Security Adviser Shiv Shankar Menon met President Hamid Karzai and discussed the situation. Mr. Menon, who also met his counterpart Dadfar Rangin Spanta, reiterated India's commitment to the reconstruction of Afghanistan and recalled the historical and friendly relations between people of both countries. Mr. Karzai said his government would take all steps to protect the lives of people engaged in the humanitarian and reconstruction work. Diplomatic sources said both sides also discussed bilateral issues. The Afghan side informed Mr. Menon that investigation into the February 26 attack was likely to be concluded soon. After the initial probe, the Afghan investigators said Lashkar-e-Taiba's hand in the attack was suspected. Reaching the city exactly a week after the attacks on the Noor Guest House and the nearby Park Hotel in which seven Indians, including two Army officers, lost their lives, Mr. Menon had a full day despite a weekly holiday. (The Hindu)

Sanctions on Iran counter-productive, says India

India believes sanctions on Iran are counter-productive, the government told Parliament on Tuesday in the first public articulation of the government's views on U.S. efforts to tighten the screws on the Islamic Republic. The statement was made in response to a question about whether Washington had objected to Indian gasoline sales to the Islamic Republic. In a written answer to the Rajya Sabha, Jitin Prasada, the junior minister for petroleum and natural gas, said, Reliance Industries Ltd was the only Indian company to supply petrol to Iran in 2009. "The U.S. government has not raised the matter [of Reliance exports] with the Government of India," he said. But the Minister added that the Indian government "has conveyed to the U.S. government that sanctions on Iran have proved to be counter-productive and that all differences with Iran should be resolved peacefully through dialogue and negotiation." Due to shortage of refining capacity, Iran imports a substantial amount of refined products for domestic consumption. (The Hindu)

Water row: India to put facts before world

Days after Lashkar-e-Toiba chief Hafiz Saeed accused India of waging a water war on Pakistan, India says its planning to lay the facts before the international community and call Islamabad's bluff over water-sharing. Sources have told The Indian Express that it is "important to bring out the facts in the public domain", and added, "we want to share this information with friendly countries". The water-sharing issue was raised during the recent Foreign Secretary-level talks on February 25 in which New Delhi had emphasised on resolving it within the 50-year-old Permanent Indus Commission — which was in effect even during the wars between the two countries in 1965 and 1971. Even after 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, sources said the Indus water commissioners met twice in the last 15 months (in May 2009 and Feb 2010) and are planning to meet again by May 2010. There have been 103 meetings and 111 tours in the last five decades — averaging two meetings per year. What has India concerned is that Pakistan's establishment and political leaders began upping the ante only in the recent months — even putting it on the same level as the Kashmir issue — although New Delhi says it's under utilizing the water entitled to itself as per the treaty. According to New Delhi's assessment, Pakistan's water troubles are an outcome of its own "poor water management" although Indus, Jhelum and Chenab (rivers belonging to Pakistan) have four times more water than Ravi, Beas and Sutlej (rivers belonging to India). There are two bases, according to sources, to establish this. First, Pakistan government's documents, accessed by sources in New Delhi, show that about 20 per cent of water received from the six rivers are available as "surplus". Secondly, about 28 per cent of water available from Pakistan's rivers — Indus, Jhelum and Chenab — flow unchecked into the sea and are wasted. Going by these documents, Pakistan has not built enough water storage capacity and is, therefore, leaving surplus water go completely unutilized. This is, therefore, giving rise to water scarcity in the face of a rapidly growing population in Pakistan. (The Indian Express)

Indian Occupied Kashmir:

In 20 yrs, J-K witnesses 820 clashes

As many as 577 ultras were killed in various group clashes between different militant

outfits during past two decades of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir. As per the recent State Home Ministry statistics, as many as 820 incidents of group clashes have taken place between various militant outfits due to turf war in last 20 years of militancy and 577 militants and 173 civilians were killed in these incidents. Around 102 terrorists and 398 civilians were injured in these incidents, the report said. "The militant outfits clash with each other over turf war, women, land disputes and supremacy. Group clashes between foreign militants and locals were also witnessed more this time," a senior police officer said. The highest number of 170 group clashes took place in 1995 in which 108 militants and 35 civilians were killed and 23 militants and 57 civilians were injured. It was followed by 168 incidents in 1994 in which 110 terrorists and 29 civilians were killed and 15 militants and 47 civilians injured. Similarly, 121 incidents took place in 1993 followed by 103 in 1992, 87 in 1996 in which 74 militants and 30 civilians were killed. In 1992, 64 militants and 41 civilians were killed. (The Indian Express)

Social front:

Reality check: UN shows shocking gender disparity

India has the maximum number of women dying in the Asia-Pacific region because of discriminatory treatment in access to health and nutrition and sex-selective abortion, according to a report prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that reveals shocking levels of gender disparity in the country. In 2007, the latest year for which figures were available, 42.7 million women died due to this reason. The report, released on the occasion of the International Women's Day, pointed out that "Asia has the highest male-female sex ratio at birth in the world, with sex-selective abortion and infanticide leaving approximately 96 million missing women" in seven countries. In 2007, an estimated 42.6 million women died in China, while the figure was 6.1 million in Pakistan. UNDP said "missing women" meant those who have died as a result of discriminatory treatment in access to health and nutrition or through pure neglect or because they were never born in the first place. India also has the lowest percentage of female population after Bhutan in the Asia-Pacific region despite a better sex-ratio at birth, the report said. According to the report "Power, Voice and Rights", India also has a large number of cases of women being married off early. Only Nepal and Bangladesh have reported more such cases than India. The mean age at marriage in India is 20 for women and 25 for men, it said. There is also a wide disparity between male and female child mortality rates in India. While on an average 72 out of 1,000 male children under the age of five died in 2006, it was 81 in the case of female children. The report said women suffer from some of the world's lowest rates of political representation, employment and property ownership in the Asia-Pacific region. The report showed that India has 0.3 per cent of its people in the age group of 15-49 vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. The corresponding figure for Pakistan is 0.1 and Bangladesh 0.5. (The Indian Express)

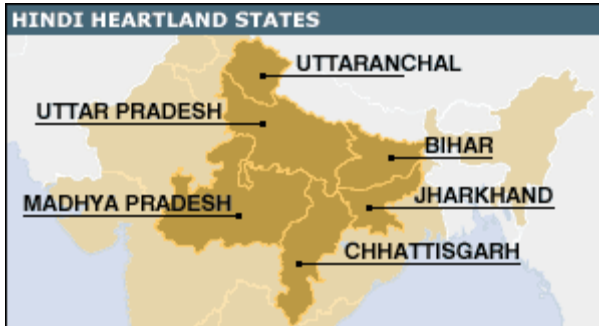
Riots escalate in Bareilly, top cop hurt

Rioting escalated in western UP city of Bareilly on Friday, engulfing fresh areas, leaving dozens injured and extension of curfew in fresh areas. Though there were no reports of casualties, the condition was reported to be quite tense until Friday evening. At least four buses and trucks were burnt on Friday morning on Budayun Road and several shops and

establishments torched in fresh rioting and arson incidents in Subhash Nagar and Sanjay Nagar localities. There were also reports of stray firing incidents in these areas. At least two persons, including a 12-year-old boy Ajay, were admitted to the district hospital in a critical condition. Riots, which spread across the new city areas on Thursday, also left the city SP city Rakesh Jolly injured in a stoning incident in Subhash Nagar. Police had to open a mild lathicharge to disperse the crowd following the incident. Meanwhile, unconfirmed reports said Commissioner Majid Ali too has been transferred by the Mayawati government for failure to contain riots. Administration had already named new DM and DIG for the city on Wednesday and Thursday. The curfew, in its eleventh day on Friday, was extended to another police station area of Subhash Nagar, bringing the total areas under curfew to five. The fresh incidents were sparked off last night after the UP administration informed the court that it was withdrawing all charges against a prominent local leader in connection with rioting. Following this, he was immediately released, sparking off rioting and arson from both sides. Members of the other community alleged that the police had enough proof of his complicity in riots, but he was released as UP administration caved under pressure from members of the other community from within the ruling Bahujan Samajwadi Party, as well as Samajwadi Party and Congress. Permission for a high-profile Ram Barat on Friday, which had been taken out across city's main streets as a precursor to Ram Navmi celebrations for past 149 years, was cancelled in view of the prevailing conditions. Several thousand people from the arrested leaders' community had been out on the street since Wednesday evening, leading to a dangerous situation in the city. They were demanding an unconditional and immediate release of their leader Maulana Tauqir Raza Khan, national president of the powerful Itihad-e-Millat Council (IMC) that holds considerable clout in the community. Meanwhile, local police and intelligence units are investigating if any group linked with the banned Students' Islamic Movement of India played a role in the riots, leading to such flare-up in a city not known for communal violence. (The Times of India)

Regional Report

Central India (Hindi Heartland)

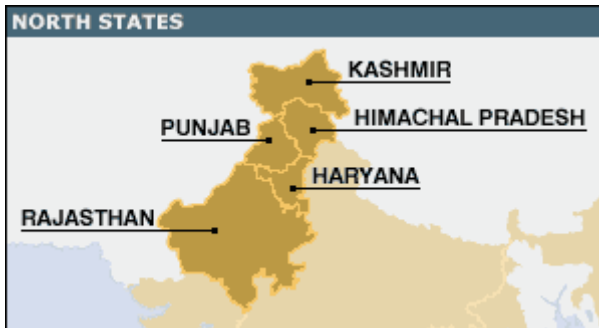


Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

The North



Politics:

Social front:

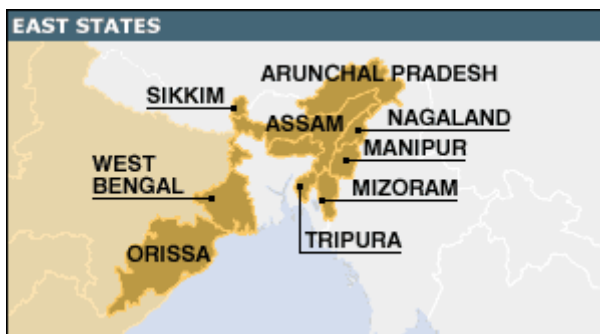
20,000 Punjabi youths migrate illegally every year: UN report

Over 20,000 youths from Punjab attempt illegal migration every year to 57 different countries. The trend is also spreading to the neighbouring states of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, says a report “Smuggling of Migrants from India to Europe and in particular to UK from Punjab and Haryana” released by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The report, released on Thursday, says forged visas of 41 countries are being used, and many instances of forged visas for Italy, Greece, France, Spain and UK have come to light. Over one lakh Punjabi youths are behind bars in foreign countries and face deportation. In the last one year, 20 countries have approached the Indian government to deport 1,195 Punjabi youths, with Ukraine topping

the list with 282 persons, adds the report. While illegal migration is reported from Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala and Nawanshahr districts of Punjab, in Haryana such cases are witnessed in Ambala, Kurukshetra, Karnal and Kaithal. As per the report, the reasons for illegal migration are varied: high unemployment rate, general attitude of youth that migration is the best alternative, potential illegal migrants consider other successful migrants their role models, and illegal migration not being a stigma amongst families. While illegal migrants have attempted to go to 57 destination countries, almost half (47 per cent) of the illegal migration cases relate to destination countries in Europe, says the report, recommending an independent legislation to check migrant smuggling. Punjab Chief Secretary S C Aggarwal, releasing the report, said the Punjab government had already taken stringent legal steps to check illegal migration, and drafted a legislation the Punjab Prevention of Human Smuggling Act, 2010 which awaited the Centre's approval. (The Indian Express)

Economic Front:

The East



Politics:

CM's Muslim reservation promise stuck at start

A month has passed since Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee announced that the state government would provide for a reservation of 10 per cent in government jobs for Muslim OBCs and that a committee would be formed to facilitate it, nothing has been done so far. In fact, officials of the Backwards Classes Welfare department are wondering whether such a committee can mark out Muslim OBCs. The chief minister said at his press conference on February 8 that a committee comprising officials from the minorities department, the BCW department, the Minorities Commission and the BCW Commission will be set up to look at the issue. No such committee, however, has been formed so far. Most of the officials at the BCW department this reporter talked to said they had no idea about such a committee. Chief Secretary Asok Mohan Chakrabarti, who was supposed to issue the notification, admitted no such committee has been formed. "I will have to find out why this did not happen," he said when pressed for an answer. Chairman of the Minorities Commission S Z Adnan said, "I too am yet to get any communication from the government." Meanwhile, Left Front ministers are facing people's anger for the delay. At a seminar at Beniapukur, which was attended by former

MP Syed Sahabuddin, a section of the audience got angry and asked Tourism Minister Manab Mukherjee, who was the chief guest, what the government was doing regarding the chief minister's promise. When the minister could not give a satisfactory answer, he was booed at by the audience. According to officials of the BCW department, while it is only the BCW Commission which can decide on which group can be included in the OBC list, no member of the two commissions can become members of another committee. "The commissions are quasi-judicial body and we don't know how one of their members can become members of another committee," said a senior official of the department. At present, 12 Muslim communities are already in the OBC list and three new ones are going to be added. In all, 33-34 lakh of people from the Muslim population are in the OBC group currently enjoying reservation. (The Indian Express)

Muslim group asks Trinamool to clarify stand

A prominent Muslim outfit has asked Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee to clear her stand on the Women's Reservation Bill after she neither opposed nor supported the Bill, but abstained from voting in Rajya Sabha on Tuesday evening. At a rally where Jamiata-ulema-e-Hind canvassed for Muslim quota in jobs, the outfit's state secretary, Siddiqullah Choudhury, said, "We don't know what Mamata Banerjee is up to. Being a part of the UPA, she is abstaining from the vote. What does this mean? She has to come out clear." "The CPM and Congress supported the Bill, while RJD and SP opposed it. But Mamata Banerjee abstained," said the former ally of Trinamool. In a bid to mount pressure on the Left Front government regarding 20 per cent reservation for Muslims in jobs and educational institutes, Choudhary threatened to launch a state-wide movement for it. He also said that 20 per cent quota for Muslims be extended to the posts of elected representatives like MLAs and MPs. Choudhury also urged Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee "to fulfill the promise of 10 per cent job quota for Muslims and implement it immediately". The rally criss-crossed the Muslim dominated areas of North and South 24 Parganas like Joynagar, Barasat, Mograhat and Baruipur. "We call a bangla bandh on the issue," said Choudhury, adding that a similar rally will be held in Murshidabad on March 15. (The Indian Express)

Social front:

Economic Front:

The South



Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

West India



Politics:

Don't force Hindi on us: Raj Thackeray

A day after the Supreme Court asked him to desist from making provocative speeches targeting north Indians, MNS chief Raj Thackeray on Tuesday chose to speak on Hindi saying the language should not be forced on the people. "I am not opposed to Hindi but do not force Hindi on us," he told party workers at a function organised to celebrate the fourth foundation day of his party. The Supreme Court had asked him not to make provocative speeches targeting north Indians which has led to several criminal cases being lodged against him in different parts of the country. Mumbai's water woes would aggravate due to the hordes of migrants coming here, Raj said, asking party workers to thrash those indulging in water theft by breaching pipeline supplying water to Mumbai. The MNS chief asked party workers to ensure that announcements were made in Marathi at railway stations and airports. Noting that MNS totally supported the women's reservation bill, Raj ridiculed the bill's opponents Lalu Prasad and Mulayam Singh Yadav, saying their opposition "shows what kind of culture they have". MNS chief Raj

Thackeray asked party workers to remove the `tail' from mobile service provider Airtel for failing to launch announcements in Marathi. Soon afterward, a section of media reported that taking a cue, alleged MNS workers attacked the company's showroom in neighbouring Thane. However, police said no such attack took place. Expressing displeasure with the company for not launching interactive voice response (IVR) in Marathi, citing technical reasons, Raj said that the deadline for technical reasons as an excuse to delay launch of IVR in Marathi was over. "Now, you (MNS activists) should remove the tail from Airtel," Raj had said, addressing the fourth Foundation Day function of his outfit, at Yashwant Natyagruha in Matunga. "Vodafone has started IVR in Marathi but Airtel is citing technical problems," Raj said. Meanwhile, MNS sources said a mobile service provider has sent a letter to Raj Thackeray, saying the company would launch IVR in Marathi. (The Indian Express)

Social front:

Economic Front: