

# **Business and Politics in Muslim World**

**India**  
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### **Economic Front:**

## **National Summary:**

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) President Lalu Prasad Yadav along with other regional parties including the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP) is determined to oppose the women reservation bill in the Lok Sabha. These parties are apprehensive that just a few upper class women would only be benefited. They have demanded reservation-within-reservation, seeking reservation for deprived classes and Muslim women within the quota.

The government decision to introducing a Bill in the Lok Sabha regarding the limiting compensation in case of a nuclear accident is criticised by BJP and Left parties. The Bharatiya Janata Party and the Left parties have resolved to oppose the Bill and seek its referral to the Standing Committee for closer scrutiny. The BJP, the Left parties and environmental organisations are opposed to several clauses, including compensation from foreign companies in case of an accident. They are also against another clause that frees operators from any liability if the accident was due to grave national disaster of exceptional character, armed conflict or act of terrorism. The passage of the Bill is crucial to operationalise the India-U.S. civil nuclear agreement and allow the entry of private U.S. companies which have already been assigned land for a nuclear park. France and Russia have also been informed of land being earmarked for their companies and the Bill will also benefit them.

Deobandi and Barelvi sects are warming up in UP to each other to oppose the Women's Reservation Bill which has already created unrest among Islamic scholars and bodies. This development caused concerns for Congress which is trying to revive itself in the Hindi heartland.

The Bombay Stock Exchange's Sensitive Index, or Sensex, gained 218.19, or 1.3 percent, to 17,383.18, the highest level since Jan. 20. Gross domestic product in the country may expand 8.2 percent in the 12 months from April 1, from an estimated 7.2 percent this year. Foreign fund inflows into India's stock market climbed to a record 834.2 billion rupees in 2009, beating the previous high set two years earlier in local currency terms, as the biggest rally in 18 years lured foreign investors. The inflation rate is expected to reach the two-digit mark in the coming months.

India and Russia signed several agreements in the defence and strategic spheres, besides taking steps to extend their partnership in new areas such as energy and fertilizers during the visit of Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Agreements including supplementary agreements on the aircraft carrier Admiral Gorshkov to finalise cost and technical issues, and a deal in the military aviation sphere that includes the purchase of more naval version MiG-29 fighters. Russia will build up to 16 nuclear reactors for power stations in India. Russia wants to boost trade with India to \$20 billion by 2015 from the current \$8 billion.

Indian and Chinese officials struck a positive note on Sino-Indian ties, saying the long-running border dispute had become increasingly less relevant to bilateral relations,

in spite of renewed tensions seen in recent months.

Despite growing ties India and US disagree on issues regarding Afghanistan and Pakistan. At a time when Washington is searching for an exit strategy from the Af-Pak region, India emphasis that it is important for the international community to stay the present course in Afghanistan for as long as it is necessary. India is upset on the proceeding of the Af-Pak issue where it is losing ground and all efforts to replace Pakistan's role in the region have not brought results.

Pakistan is determined to bring water issue on table along with Kashmir dispute. It proposed some measures to make Indus Water Treaty more effective but India refuses to accept allegations.

India's cabinet approved a proposal to allow foreign universities to set up branches, potentially opening a huge market to international educational institutions. About 160,000 students a year leave India to study abroad, according to the National Knowledge Commission, an advisory group to the prime minister. Analysts say the bill could help accelerate India's economic growth, which has been powered in part by its best educated programmers, engineers and managers. This would give stimulus to quality education and the knowledge economy.

The water of the holiest among holy rivers -- the Ganga -- fails to meet the drinking and bathing standards. For a river water to be fit for bathing and drinking, BOD should be less than 3mg/litre and less than 2mg/litre respectively, DO should be more than 5mg/litre and over 6mg/litre, and total coliform must be less than 500 mpn/100 ml for bathing and less than 50 mpn/100ml for drinking. A report of the Planning Commission submitted to the Supreme Court went deep into the reasons for the pollution in the Ganga and said the main culprit is the discharge of 8,250 million litres of untreated sewage daily into the river. The National River Conservation Plan projects all over India would cost upto Rs 33,000 crore to create additional STP capacity of about 38,000 mld by 2020.

### **Regional Summary:**

Riot hit Bareilly is calm apparently but remained tens. Security forces patrolled the streets this communal violence-hit city. "Though situation is tense, it is completely under control, and no incident of clash or violence has been reported from any part of the city since morning," the forces said. A three-member BJP team led by MP Maneka Gandhi was prevented by Uttar Pradesh authorities from going to the city.

At least 12 people were injured in a bomb explosion in a jeep near Lakshmipur in Bihar's Jamui district on Thursday.

The School Education department of West Bengal has decided to appoint 35,000 primary teachers within the next two months.

The Andhra Pradesh assembly will pass a resolution on Thursday urging the central government to bring an amendment to the Presidential Order to protect jobs for the Telangana people in Hyderabad.

The Gujarat government rejected the Congress demand for the resignation of Chief Minister Narendra Modi, in the wake of the Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT) summoning him for questioning in connection with the 2002 Gulberg Society massacre.

In a suspected case of child sacrifice, five children of a family were killed in a village in Hingoli district and four persons, including three women, have been arrested in this connection.

## **National Report**

### **Politics:**

#### **BJP hits out at Centre's service tax policy**

The Bhartiya Janata Party on Friday attacked the government for its budget proposals, which it said would fuel inflation in food articles, health, education and housing and make the life of the common person more difficult. Initiating a discussion in the Rajya Sabha on the budget, Leader of Opposition Arun Jaitley said he was not at all enthused by the budget proposals. "The devil in the budget lies in details, which are clearly concealed." While raising the issue of the double-digit food inflation, Mr. Jaitley was particularly harsh on the government's proposal to "cleverly add a host of areas under the service tax net," which was designed to hit the "vulnerable sections" in health care, housing, IT, education, travel, property rentals and add to the overall inflation through hike in railway freight. "The service tax is in addition to the other duties that are already there. The more vulnerable you are, the more you will be hit with this budget. We will sink with this budget." He said that in areas like insurance premium on health care and installment payments for middle class housing, the service tax was imposed while the rich were spared. By levying and hiking duties on crude oil and petroleum products, the government would be fuelling inflation further and hit dynamic sectors like real estate, cement and automobiles. While the expectation from the budget was a policy direction and a road map to push up growth, it would instead "unquestionably accelerate inflation," he said. Criticising the government's handling of the 2G spectrum issue, Mr. Jaitley said if properly handled it could have raised Rs. 60,000 crore, which would have been enough to lower the fiscal deficit by one cent if not more. The process kept the global telecom players out of the Indian industry. Even in 3G auctions, the country may not attract the international companies, he added. (The Hindu)

#### **Won't allow passage of Women's Bill in LS: Lalu**

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) President Lalu Prasad Yadav deciding to stall the Women's Reservation Bill in its present form has said that he will not allow it to pass in the Lok Sabha. Addressing a gathering of Muslim Community in Patna, Yadav said, "The government will have to throw me out of the Lok Sabha by deploying marshals or military then only the bill will be passed. I am not against the Bill." "But Muslim women, poor women, backward women and women who are wage labourers, they are also daughters of India and must be brought to Parliament," he added. Other regional parties including the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP), which are apprehensive that just a few upper class women would only benefit, have stoically opposed the bill. They have demanded reservation-within-reservation, seeking reservation for deprived classes and Muslim women within the quota. LJP chief Ram Vilas Paswan meanwhile suggested that the Lok Sabha seats should be increased by a third to accommodate the women candidates and the delimitation of constituencies can then be taken up to reserve seats for backward castes and minorities. "The best way is to increase 1/3rd of seats for women. It should be permanent like general categories. The process of delimitation can take place as it happens in the case of Scheduled Castes

(lower castes) and Scheduled Tribes over ten years. In that case the situation of uncertainty will be over”, said Paswan. History was created in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday (March 9) when it passed the controversial Women’s Reservation Bill that seeks to reserve for women 181 of the 543 seats in the Lok Sabha and 1,370 out of a total of 4,109 seats in the 28 State Assemblies. (The Indian Express)

### **BJP, Left to seek closer scrutiny of nuclear liability Bill**

The government has scheduled for Monday the introduction of a Bill in the Lok Sabha limiting compensation in case of a nuclear accident. The Bharatiya Janata Party and the Left parties have resolved to oppose the Bill and seek its referral to the Standing Committee for closer scrutiny. “I don't think they should try to force through the Bill. In case they try to get it passed amidst the din in the Lok Sabha as they did with the Commercial Benches of High Courts Bill, we will ask that it be referred to the Select Committee when it comes up in the Rajya Sabha. It violates constitutional validity according to many jurists,” said Communist Party of India leader D. Raja. The BJP, the Left parties and environmental organisations are opposed to several clauses, including compensation from foreign companies in case of an accident. They are also against another clause that frees operators from any liability if the accident was due to grave national disaster of exceptional character, armed conflict or act of terrorism. The passage of the Bill is crucial to operationalise the India-U.S. civil nuclear agreement and allow the entry of private U.S. companies which have already been assigned land for a nuclear park. France and Russia have also been informed of land being earmarked for their companies and the Bill will also benefit them, said Department of Atomic Energy Secretary Srikumar Banerjee. The government is keen to get the Bill passed to tie up the loose ends of the India-U.S. agreement from the New Delhi end following reports that the U.S. has concurred with Indian sensitivities on the reprocessing aspect. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will be leaving for Washington to attend a summit meeting on nuclear non-proliferation and could interact with U.S. President Barack Obama on bilateral civil nuclear cooperation. Agencies reported Communist Party of India (Marxist) Polit Bureau member Sitaram Yechury as saying the Opposition would seek to examine in the Standing Committee clauses such as limiting the liability amount in case of each nuclear accident to Rs. 300 crore. “At the introduction itself we will oppose unless the government assures us that it would be sent to a Parliamentary Standing Committee. All these issues are there and we will discuss all that in the standing committee,” Mr. Yechury was quoted as saying by PTI. The Opposition also feels several other provisions of the Bill need to be discussed and clarified by the Standing Committee. These include the proposed Nuclear Damage Claims Commission and a time limit of 10 years for claiming relief. The Left leaders refer to a note by jurist Soil Storable for Greenpeace to support their contention that the draft Bill violates constitutional provisions. “Any such move [to limit compensation] will be in defiance of Supreme Court judgments and will be contrary to the interest of the people of India and their fundamental rights under Article 21 of the Constitution,” he wrote. (The Hindu)



## **Women get one-third share in Gadkari team**

Women have got their place under the sun in Bharatiya Janata Party president Nitin Gadkari's new team of office-bearers and an effort has been made to take forward the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat's 'diktat' on the need to give the party a youthful look. The 121-member new National Executive Committee has as many as 40 women members, nearly one-third of the total, as mandated by the party constitution amended during the tenure of the outgoing BJP president Rajnath Singh. On the all-powerful 12-member Parliamentary Board, all former party presidents — Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L.K. Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, M. Venkaiah Naidu and Rajnath Singh — except Bangaru Laxman find a place, as do RSS point men, general secretaries Ram Lal and Thawarchand Gehlot and Bal Apte. Ananth Kumar retains his position as secretary. Mr. Gadkari has kept Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi out of the board, following the line taken by Rajnath Singh, who dropped him on the plea that no incumbent Chief Minister was its member. Varun Gandhi, who set off a storm of protest after his hate speech during the Lok Sabha poll campaign, has been made secretary. Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa has not been able to get his men on board with his *bête noire*, Ananth Kumar, ensuring that. In contrast, Prem Kumar Dhumal of Himachal Pradesh has walked off with two positions for his State: Shanta Kumar as vice-president and Jagat Prakash Nadda as general secretary, while his son Anurag Thakur is tipped to be BJP youth wing president. For the first time as many as 12 women national office-bearers have been appointed in a list of 36 that includes 11 vice-presidents, 10 general secretaries (not counting 2 joint general secretaries) and 15 secretaries. Vasundhara Raje is the expected star among women appointees, the only one to get the position of general secretary. Ravi Shankar Prasad gets a double promotion — as general secretary and chief spokesperson. Veterans Ananth Kumar, Thawarchand Gehlot, Ramlal and Vijay Goyal retain their positions as general secretaries. Muslim representation in the new Bharatiya Janata Party team of office-bearers has been confined to the more decorative category of vice-presidents where old-timer Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and the more recent Congress-to-BJP convert Najma Heptullah find slots. But, the only Muslim MP to be elected on BJP ticket, Shah Nawaz Hussain, has been given a position of one of six spokespersons, not general secretary as might have been expected. (The Hindu)

## **Minorities' Issues:**

### **For united Muslim stand on women's Bill, Deobandis extend a hand to Barelvis**

In a development that could worry the Congress which is trying to revive itself in the Hindi heartland, the warring, but influential, Deobandi and Barelvi sects are warming up to each other to oppose the Women's Reservation Bill which has already created unrest among Islamic scholars and bodies. Despite both being Sunnis, the Deobandis and Barelvis have been traditionally opposed to each other. It is virtually a no-no for both sects to intermingle, sometimes even while the last prayers of a dead person are in progress. The differences between the two sects owe their origin to their respective interpretations of Islam, with Deobandis taking a more austere view of the tenets and Barelvis having been more influenced by other practices and ceremonies that they have adopted over the years. Indications about the thaw came when prominent Muslim leaders

belonging to the Deobandi school of thought condemned the arrest of noted Bareilvi cleric Maulana Tauqueer Raza Khan by the UP Police on March 8, following incidents of communal violence and rushed to Bareilly to meet him in a show of support. He was subsequently released. Raza, the great grandson of Bareilvi sect founder Maulana Ali Shah Mufti Ahmad Raza Khan, has been at loggerheads with the Deobandi leadership ever since he came out of the All India Muslim Personnel Law Board and floated a parallel board in 2004 reflecting the rift among Muslim clergy on issues involving Shariat. Though the leaders who traveled to Bareilly from Delhi putting aside their differences were not allowed to enter the town by the local administration, they sent across a message to Khan that they condemned his arrest. "He expressed his gratitude and his aides informed us that he would come to Delhi to meet us," Jamaat-e-Islami Hind secretary Mujtaba Farooq said. He said the visit was an attempt to reach out to the Bareilvi leadership at a time when Muslim bodies and clerics are up in arms demanding sub-quota for Muslim women in the Women's Reservation Bill. "We want to engage all groups since we are planning to launch an agitation before the Bill comes up in the Lok Sabha," he told The Sunday Express. Jamiat-ulama-i-Hind leader Abdul Hameed Nomani pointed out that differences in ideology would not come in the way of raising the "legitimate" demands of the community. Besides Farooq and Nomani, representatives of the All India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat and the Muslim Political Council were part of the team that went to Bareilly. (The Indian Express)

### **Hindu Fundamentalism:**

### **Insurgency Movements:**

### **Economic Front:**

#### **India's Sensex Index Climbs to Eight-Week High, Led by Reliance**

Indian stocks rose, driving the benchmark index to an eight-week high, as investors bet earnings growth will be sustained even as inflation accelerates. Reliance Industries Ltd., India's most valuable company, climbed on speculation its profitability will improve. Larsen & Toubro Ltd., an engineering company, added 2.9 percent. Morgan Stanley recommended investors buy the nation's stocks saying they will benefit from faster economic growth and the central bank will contain inflationary pressures by raising interest rates. "Policy makers will try to balance growth and inflation," said Tejas Doshi, vice president of equity research at Sushil Financial Services Pvt. in Mumbai. "We are positive on the long-term growth story." He recommends engineering, infrastructure and power companies. *The Bombay Stock Exchange's Sensitive Index, or Sensex, gained 218.19, or 1.3 percent, to 17,383.18, the highest level since Jan. 20. The S&P CNX Nifty Index on the National Stock Exchange advanced 1.4 percent to 5,198.10. The BSE 200 Index added 1.1 percent to 2,175.71. Reliance Industries rose 3.9 percent to 1,067.95 rupees, its highest since Jan. 20. The company paid 7.7 billion rupees (\$169 million) in advance tax for the fourth quarter, Bloomberg- UTV reported.*

Profit Outlook

“The advance tax payment validates our view that Reliance will increase profits,” said Deven Choksey, chief executive officer of K.R. Choksey Shares & Securities, who manages about \$118 million for wealthy individuals. Larsen & Toubro added 2.9 percent to 1,599.2 rupees. Tata Motors Ltd., the nation’s biggest truck maker and owner of Jaguar Land Rover Ltd., advanced 2.2 percent to 786.05 rupees. *Gross domestic product in the world’s fastest growing major economy after China may expand 8.2 percent in the 12 months from April 1, from an estimated 7.2 percent this year, India’s finance ministry forecast Feb. 25. GDP growth averaged 9.5 percent per annum between 2006 and 2008. Earnings in India may grow 20 percent over the next three years, according to estimates by Sukumar Rajah, chief investment officer at Franklin Templeton Asset Management India Pvt. Accelerating inflation has fanned expectations central bank policy makers may raise interest rates when they next meet on Jan. 20. Consumer prices rose at the fastest pace in 16 months in February, according to a government report yesterday.*

### Borrowing Costs

The odds have risen for a 50-basis point increase in India’s benchmark interest rates after consumer prices rose last month, according to report published by DBS Group Holdings Ltd., Southeast Asia’s largest lender. The central bank has kept the reverse repurchase rate at a record low of 3.25 percent since April. India began withdrawing monetary stimulus in October by ordering lenders to place a greater proportion of deposits in government bonds and raised the bank’s reserve requirements to 5.75 percent in January. Overseas investors bought a net 3.89 billion rupees of Indian stocks on March 12, taking their total purchases of the equities this year to 122.14 billion rupees, according to the nation’s market regulator. *Foreign fund inflows into India’s stock market climbed to a record 834.2 billion rupees in 2009, beating the previous high set two years earlier in local currency terms, as the biggest rally in 18 years lured foreign investors. They sold a record 529.9 billion rupees of shares in 2008, triggering the biggest ever annual decline.*

The following were among the most active on the exchange:

Bharti Airtel Ltd. (BHARTI IN) fell 1.6 percent to 294.8 rupees. India’s largest mobile-phone operator may owe the government 1.74 billion rupees, the Business Standard reported, citing a special audit. Bharti Chief Financial Officer Sarvjit Singh Dhillon wasn’t immediately available for comment on the report. Idea Cellular Ltd. (IDEA IN) jumped 4.8 percent to 62.35 rupees. The mobile phone services operator was rated “buy” in new coverage at Nomura Holdings Inc., which cited the company’s “solid execution” and improving financials. Nomura expects Idea Cellular to trade at 78 rupees per share within the next 12 months. Indian Oil Corp. (IOCL IN) gained 1.6 percent to 302.2 rupees. The nation’s largest state-run refiner plans to increase jet fuel prices by 2.5 percent starting today, a company official said yesterday. Jet Airways (India) Ltd. (JETIN IN) rose 2.6 percent to 484.4 rupees. The nation’s largest carrier had a 31 percent rise in its international traffic and 22 percent growth in domestic traffic in February compared with a year earlier, according to its e-mailed statement. KRBL Ltd. (KRB IN) advanced 3.7 percent to 25.4 rupees. The food processor will allow foreign institutional investors to buy as much as 49 percent of its paid up capital, the Reserve Bank of India said on its

Web site. Novopan Industries Ltd. (NOVO IN) dropped 2.8 percent to 35.2 rupees. The manufacturer of wood-based decorative products is awaiting a loss assessment after reporting a fire at its Shadnagar unit. Sun TV Network Ltd. (SUNTV IN) soared 3.4 percent to 427.5 rupees. The nation's biggest television broadcaster by market value was upgraded to "buy" from "reduce" by Mihir Shah, an analyst at Alchemy Share & Stock Brokers Pvt. Shah raised his price estimate on the stock to 494 rupees from 401. Separately, Sun TV was rated "buy" in new coverage by Anirudh Gangahar, an analyst at JM Financial Institutional Securities. Gangahar expects the shares to trade at 474 rupees within the next 12 months. (Business Week)

### **Pranab: inflation rate can reach double-digit mark**

Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee on Tuesday cautioned that the inflation rate could reach the two-digit mark in the coming months but gave an assurance that the government was taking all possible steps to protect vulnerable sections. He identified the three main objectives of the budget as price control, fiscal consolidation and expansion of the economy. Replying to the debate in the Rajya Sabha on the Union budget, Mr. Mukherjee maintained that while there were other options, the government opted for hiking taxes on petroleum products in order to share the proceeds with States. With the Rajya Sabha approving the budget through a voice vote in the presence of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Parliament has passed the Vote on Account and Appropriation Bills which authorise the government to withdraw money from the exchequer. The Lok Sabha approved the budget last week. On the tax on petroleum products, the government could have opted for the softer option of revising the administered price mechanism. But then the Centre would have deprived the States of their 32 per cent share in estimated net tax increase of Rs. 26,000 crore. "I have to introduce the Goods & Services Tax (GST) in the next fiscal. Therefore, should I not have conveyed the message that I am moving in the right direction by carrying the States with me? Without convergence of views [between the Centre and the States], we can't have the GST. But I have taken care to ensure it won't affect consumers," he explained. But he acknowledged that the fallout would be a higher inflation rate. "I will not be surprised if it reaches double digit in March. But in the past we have lived with high rates. Yes, it is hurting people and is a matter of concern. We are removing supply bottlenecks and ensuring the supply of essentials at reasonable rates." (The Hindu)

### **Foreign Relations/Geo-strategic developments:**

#### **India and Russia ink pacts in defence and strategic spheres**

India and Russia on Friday sealed agreements in the defence and strategic spheres, besides taking steps to extend their partnership in new areas such as energy and fertilizers. In all, the two sides signed five agreements two each in the nuclear sphere and fertilizers and one in the civilian space segment in the presence of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the visiting Russian Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin. Several other pacts were signed on the sidelines, including supplementary agreements on the aircraft carrier Admiral Gorshkov to finalise cost and technical issues, and a deal in the military

aviation sphere that includes the purchase of more naval version MiG-29 fighters. Commercial level agreements were signed between Gazprom and ONGC; NPCIL and Atomostroy export (for the next two units at Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu); and Alrosa and Diamonds India Limited, besides two between companies also engaged in the diamond sector. "The range of agreements points to the diversification of our ties," pointed out a Foreign Office official. Both sides had discussions on regional and global issues and agreed to intensify consultations on Afghanistan and the challenges posed by terrorism and extremism in the region. "In the run-up to and during Prime Minister Putin's visit, we finalised several important and long pending defence cooperation projects which will deepen our longstanding partnership in this vital sector. We have signed the Inter-Governmental Agreement on Cooperation in Atomic Energy and agreed upon a road map for construction of nuclear power plants. A MoU for bilateral cooperation in Russia's satellite navigation system has been agreed upon," Dr. Singh said in a statement shortly after concluding delegation-level talks with Mr. Putin. Dr. Singh also referred to the agreement on strengthening cooperation in hydrocarbons through greater collaboration between gas companies. "We have identified information technology and telecommunications as focus areas for our future economic cooperation," he added. Exhaustive discussions between officials from both sides closed deals pending for months and years, identified new areas of cooperation and narrowed divergent views in some areas. "We should not see this visit as a one-off affair. Rather, the discussions today are a continuation of the dialogue that has been taking place nearly every month between specialised delegations. We have several military agreements that have been in the pipeline for a long time. We also have another MoU in energy that takes discussions on this subject forward. Space and nuclear cooperation are the other areas where, like energy, there has been steady progress," said the official. Describing Mr. Putin as the "architect" of the strategic partnership between India and Russia, Dr. Singh said India owed a "deep sense of gratitude" to him for bringing the two countries closer to each other. Mr. Putin made the first of his five visits to the country a decade ago and since then was the chief guest at the Republic Day parade in 2007. On his visit to Moscow in December last year, Dr. Singh was closeted with the former two-term Russian President, both sides discussing ironing out the wrinkles in bilateral relationship and expanding their cooperation. (The Hindu)

### **Nuclear cooperation will cover all areas: Putin**

India-Russia cooperation in civil nuclear energy will be wide ranging and cover areas such as nuclear waste and safety of reactors as well, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said, during a video conference with businessmen from the country's main metros. *Mr. Putin also advised a section of Indian business and strategic community to be "realistic" in its attitude towards Pakistan and take into consideration the action taken by Islamabad against some militant organisations operating along its border with Afghanistan.* Indian officials have already described the civil nuclear cooperation between the two countries as "beyond the Indo-U.S. 123 agreement" since the Indo-Russian pact has "forward looking" language on enrichment and reprocessing, technology transfer and fuel supply assurances. "Our cooperation is in construction and building of nuclear reactors, supply of nuclear fuel and India has expressed interest for help in

disposal of nuclear waste," Mr. Putin said. In the area of safety, Russia had put the Chernobyl mishap behind it and was committing to sharing the best practices with India. In fact, he assured that Russia would provide the latest safety features while constructing the reactors in India. Russia had 30 operating reactors and was planning to put up another 28. All of them had the latest safety features which would be incorporated in the reactors to be set up in India. He indicated that Moscow was hoping for orders of up to a dozen reactors from New Delhi which would enable their supply at affordable rates. Mr. Putin also drew attention to the partnership being built upon in space research which was also indicative of the growing Indo-Russia strategic partnership. The Russian Prime Minister termed operations by militant organisations based in Afghanistan and Pakistan as a matter of worry for the "entire region and in fact the whole world." Since India and Russia were near neighbours of the two countries the situation there impacted on their security as well. "Parts of Afghanistan's soil continue to be used by terror groups. We understand the concerns of India regarding the activities of banned outfits in Pakistan," the visiting Prime Minister said. (The Hindu)

### **Pakistan for new measures to energise Indus Treaty**

Affirming its commitment to the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), Pakistan has sought measures to make the mechanism more effective by outlining its concerns, as well as proposing measures that would reduce distrust between the two countries. In a non-paper submitted to India, Pakistan has said construction of projects on the three western rivers should be undertaken only after objections are amicably resolved. It also called upon India to submit full and timely information about new power plants and irrigation works on these rivers. Islamabad has also suggested joint water shed management and joint commissioning of environmental studies that would address emerging concerns arising from reduced flows. Of the six rivers forming part of the IWT, Pakistan has most rights of usage on the three western rivers, while India enjoys similar rights on the three eastern rivers. Both nations have been sparring over India constructing "run of the river" projects on the western rivers, which, Pakistan alleges, contributes to water scarcity. On the other hand, India advises Pakistan to improve its water management and claims any drop in the flow of waters is also because of the overall pattern of receding glaciers and climate change. Pakistan has also drawn attention to "additional concerns," such as deforestation and pollution and India's non-responsiveness to Pakistan's concerns raised in the Indus Water Commission. Islamabad also believes New Delhi has fallen short in meeting the three requirements listed under the IWT — details of new projects six months before their commencement, diversion for storage and farm purposes from western rivers and providing details about ancillary projects. (The Hindu)

### **Russia to build up to 16 nuclear reactors in India**

Russia will build up to 16 nuclear reactors for power stations in India, Russia's deputy premier said on Friday during a visit to India with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to reaffirm decades-old ties. Russia is competing with French and American firms for lucrative contracts to build nuclear power plants for energy-hungry India because Asia's third-largest economy needs to boost its supply to help sustain rapid economic growth. "The agreement sees construction of up to sixteen nuclear reactors in three locations,"

Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov told reporters. Putin pledged on Friday to boost banking and technology cooperation with India, seeking to bolster ties with a Cold War ally that has been shifting focus towards the United States. Russia wants to boost trade with India to \$20 billion by 2015 from the current \$8 billion. Together with China and Brazil, Russia and India make up the so-called BRIC group of major emerging economies, whose global influence is rising. The two nations also seek a greater role in stabilising the region because both share security interests emanating from Islamist militant violence and the war in Afghanistan. "India is our strategic partner ... which is an evidence that our geopolitical interests almost fully coincide," Putin told a conference with businessmen in the Indian capital New Delhi. Setting the tone for his one-day visit mainly aimed at keeping one of the world's biggest arms importers interested in Russian weapons, Putin offered state financial aid for the Indian telecoms unit of Russian conglomerate Sistema. Sistema, controlled by billionaire Vladimir Yevtushenkov, is looking to deepen its investment in Sistema Shyam Tele Services, a joint venture with India's Shyam group. "We are ready to contribute funds for your joint activity," Putin said in response to a question by a Shyam group official. Yevtushenkov later said the Russian government would become a shareholder in Shyam. Putin also vowed to remove hurdles in the banking sector that he said were hampering mutual trade, and signalled that the government was ready to encourage joint ventures and acquisitions in the sector.

#### U.S. INFLUENCE

India struck a landmark civilian nuclear deal with the United States in 2008, ending the isolation it had experienced since an atomic test in 1974 and giving it access to U.S. technology and fuel, while also opening up the global nuclear market to India. As India begins to lean more on the United States, Moscow fears losing not only influence over New Delhi but the bulk of its \$100 billion defence market as well. Putin's visit is likely to produce deals worth more than \$10 billion mainly in defence contracts, nuclear reactors and trade. Ivanov also said Russia would deliver the refurbished Gorshkov aircraft carrier to India by the end of 2012, an issue which has troubled relations between the two powers. Russia and India signed a contract worth \$1.5 billion on Friday for Moscow to supply 29 MiG 29 K fighters, the CEO of Russian plane maker Sukhoi, Mikhail Pogosyan, said. Pogosyan also said he expected a joint venture with the state-run Indian company Hindustan Aeronautics Limited to manufacture around 200 fifth-generation fighter jets. Fifth-generation jets, such as the U.S. F-22 Raptor stealth fighters which first flew in 1997, are invisible to radar and boast "intelligent" on-board flight and arms control systems and supersonic cruising speeds. Putin sought to assure Indian businessmen that Russian nuclear reactors were safe. Russia has almost completed equipment delivery for two reactors at Kudankulam nuclear power station and is in talks to build two more reactors. "Our reactors can sustain a crash of a medium-range passenger plane," Putin said, seeking to demonstrate that Russian plants could withstand even Sept. 11, 2001-style attacks. The two countries also agreed to strengthen cooperation in hydrocarbons through greater collaboration between oil and gas companies, but did not announce any firm energy deals. (The Indian Express)

#### **India, China play down border dispute**

Indian and Chinese officials on Tuesday struck a positive note on Sino-Indian ties, saying the long-running border dispute had become increasingly less relevant to bilateral relations, in spite of renewed tensions seen in recent months. Speaking in Washington, Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao said ties between the two countries had “improved significantly” in the last two decades to a “multi-dimensional relationship,” which was “not just focused on the boundary question.” Her comments were favourably received in Beijing, where officials said continued engagement between the two countries on various fronts would help create the conditions for resolving the border issue, over which talks have made little progress so far. The two countries had made “significant progress” in enhancing relations in various other fields and taking ties beyond the border issue, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Qin Gang said. “China is ready to work with the Indian side to enhance the friendship and to be good partners,” he said in reply to a question on Ms. Rao's comments. He said differences over the border were “inevitable,” but what was important was that leaders of the two countries had reached consensus to “properly handle” the dispute, pending a final resolution. “With the development of relations between China and India, China believes the border issue will gradually be resolved,” Mr. Qin said. Tuesday's statements mark a striking departure from the barbs the two governments routinely traded over the boundary dispute for much of last year. In a speech in London in February, Ms. Rao described the relationship between the two countries as a “dynamic equilibrium” of both “competition and collaboration,” although only one aspect of that equation was most evident last year. As recently as October, China accused India of “stirring up trouble” along the border areas, when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Arunachal Pradesh during Assembly elections in the State, parts of which China claims. Beijing then accused New Delhi of “disregarding its grave concerns,” while China's State-run media launched a coordinated onslaught accusing India of “recklessness and arrogance.” Officials in Beijing point to the October 24 meeting between Dr. Singh and his counterpart, Wen Jiabao, in Hua Hin, Thailand, as playing a vital role in calming the tensions. The two sides agreed then to refrain from publicly voicing any differences, and instead use official mechanisms to discuss issues. One senior Chinese official told The Hindu that following the meeting, officials at the Foreign Ministry here held regular meetings with State-run media outlets, including the nationalistic Communist Party-run People's Daily and its English-version Global Times newspaper, instructing them to cool down their anti-India rhetoric. State media here have also struck a noticeably warmer tone towards India following co-operation between the two countries at the climate summit in Copenhagen last year, which was framed as a battle between the developing world and the West. (The Hindu)

### **India out of the loop on Af-Pak**

The atmospherics are good but the ground realities are unfavourable. India is struggling to stay relevant and advance its geo-political equities with the United States at a time Washington is buffeted by domestic pressures and international crises that are undercutting its resolve to put ties with New Delhi on a higher plane. Good intentions, broad agenda, and packed schedules notwithstanding, Indian diplomatic foray into Washington this week was notable for gripes and grievances than any significant advancement towards the stated goal of achieving a strategic relationship with the US,



foreign secretary Nirupama Rao had a series of meetings on Tuesday, including a drop-in by secretary of state Hillary Clinton at a state department meeting with her counterpart William Burns, but in the end there was no meeting of minds on the most fundamental security issue of the times. *India and US disagree on Afghanistan and Pakistan*. That much became clear towards the end of the foreign secretary's visit although elaboration on this issue was foiled by the cancellation of Rao's wrap-up press meet (Indian Embassy said she was unwell). At a time when Washington is searching for an exit strategy from the Af-Pak region, a statement released at the end of her visit (in lieu of the cancelled press conference) tersely noted that "she (Rao) reiterated India's long-held position that it was important for the international community to stay the present course in Afghanistan for as long as it is necessary." The international community on the other hand wants to get the hell out of Afghanistan yesterday. There were other unresolved issues. Rao's engagement was also partly torpedoed by the withdrawal by the government of the nuclear liability bill in Parliament hours after her arrival. As a result, there was little progress on tying up loose ends of the civilian nuclear deal including an agreement on reprocessing although there were brave words about the deal being on track and on schedule. Most notably, on the issue of high-tech cooperation, the Indian side was still pleading for removal of some its organizations from the so-called Entities List, seven years after the establishment of the group. "The Indian side requested the US department of commerce to review US export controls applicable to India and update them to bring them in keeping with the changed political realities that contextualize India-US strategic partnership today," the concluding statement said. To say India has become a mere sideshow in Washington would be overstating it (besides meeting Clinton, Rao also called on the NSA Jim Jones and two key lawmakers on a day Washington was awash with the health care issue and the US-Israel spat). There were important advances in bilateral matters, including setting the stage for external affairs minister S M Krishna's visit to Washington shortly leading in turn to President Obama's visit to New Delhi later this year. *But on the Af-Pak issue, India is clearly out of the loop*. Pakistan is again the new game in town. Even as the Indian foreign secretary made the rounds of a capital in political and legislative ferment (over the health care bill), diplomatic corridors were abuzz with Afghan president Hamid Karzai's own outreach to the Taliban through his brothers and Pakistan's effort to impose itself on that engagement. Rao meanwhile was telling think-tankers that Taliban remained untouchables for New Delhi. India's gripe about US arms to Pakistan also went largely unaddressed. In fact, even as Rao was complaining about the potential use by Pakistan of US-supplied weapons against India, Washington had delivered from its base in Jordan a squadron of 14 AH-1 Cobra advanced helicopter gunships to Pakistan. (Times of India)

### **Indus water dispute: Pak may rope in British lawyer**

Pakistan is reportedly considering to rope in a Pakistan-born London lawyer, Kaiyan Homi Kaikobad, in the event it approaches International Court of Arbitration to arbitrate on India's alleged violation of the Indus Waters Treaty. New Delhi has consistently refuted any violation, but Islamabad maintains that India is building various barrages and dams amounting to 15-20% diversion and pilferage of the waters. This, Pakistan claims, is affecting agriculture in Pakistan to the tune of \$12 billion. Kaikobad, a law professor at

Brunel University and a specialist in title to territory both land and maritime, neither confirmed nor denied the reports. "I cannot discuss the matter," said Kaikobad, who is recognised for his work on adjudication and arbitration. Sources said a partner in Mandviwalla and Zafar, a Karachi law firm, has sent some background material on the dispute to Kaikobad. Dispute resolution and arbitration is among the firm's area of authority. It's unclear whether Islamabad has officially sought Kaikobad's services. The Pakistani High Commission in London declined to comment. Islamabad has lately raised a rumpus over the treaty and suggested the issue was a "core" dispute with India along with Jammu & Kashmir. (Times of India)

### **Indian Occupied Kashmir:**

#### **Social front:**

#### **India cabinet approves foreign-school plan**

India's cabinet approved a proposal on Monday to allow foreign universities to set up branches, potentially opening a huge market to international educational institutions. The cabinet plans to introduce the Foreign Education Providers (Regulatory) Bill in parliament next month. The bill would then have to be passed by parliament before becoming law. "This is a milestone which will enhance choices, increase competition and benchmark quality in education," said Minister of Human Resources and Development Minister Kapil Sibal, who handles education. A similar bill introduced earlier was blocked by the government's former leftist coalition partner, the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The chances for the bill becoming law this time are greater because the left is no longer a part of the ruling coalition. About 160,000 students a year leave India to study abroad, according to the National Knowledge Commission, an advisory group to the prime minister. More than 100 foreign educational institutions offer programs in India, but most are vocational or technical and run for only a few weeks or months. Universities around the world have been trying for years to find ways to expand into India's untapped education market. Analysts say the bill could help accelerate India's economic growth, which has been powered in part by its best educated programmers, engineers and managers. "This would give stimulus to quality education and the knowledge economy," says Anwarul Hoda, the chair professor of trade policy at the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, a New Delhi think tank. According to the bill, foreign colleges and universities will be granted "deemed" university status, which will enable them to also offer degree courses in India. Duke University's Fuqua School of Business—which has a tie-up with the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, for a corporate program—plans to expand its reach in India. Any relaxing of restrictions that prevent foreign institutions from running full-fledged graduate-degree programs in the country, will aid that process, says Jaivir Singh, adviser to Duke University in India. "There is a huge base of students from India who travel abroad and also a large number that are interested in coming to India. We are trying to gain access to all those students." (The Wall Street Journal)

## **Court strikes down gender discrimination in Army and Air Force**

Ruling that not granting permanent commission to Short Service Commissioned women officers in the Air Force and the Army amounts to gender discrimination, the Delhi High Court on Friday directed the two defence services to give permanent commission to all such women officers who were recruited before May 2006. The judgment by a Division Bench of the Court comprising Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Justice M. C. Garg came on a bunch of petitions by some Short Service Commissioned women officers. Their contention was that the Air Force had promised in its advertisement for recruitment that the Short Service Commissioned officers would be offered permanent commission after completion of five years in service and subject to availability of vacancy and suitability of the candidates. However, the Air Force changed the recruitment policy in May 2006 saying that no Short Service Commissioned officers whether male or female would be given permanent commission. The women officers submitted before the Court that they were not given permanent commission when they applied for it. However, their counterpart male officers working with them were granted permanent commission which was discriminatory. The women Short Service Commissioned officers of the Army had sought their absorption in the permanent commission on the ground of parity with the Air Force women officers. They further argued that they were discriminated against vis-à-vis male officers as the latter were granted permanent commission while they were denied the same despite working in the same department and having equal merit and experience. Counsel for the Army and the Air Force opposed the petitioners' contentions submitting that the matter was related to a policy decision which was the privilege of the Executive and the Court should not interfere with it. Allowing the petitions, the Bench said: "The Short Service Commissioned women officers of the Air Force who had opted for permanent commission and were not granted the same but granted extension of Short Service Commission, and of the Army are entitled to permanent commission at par with male Short Service Commissioned officers with all consequential benefits." "This benefit would be conferred to women officers recruited prior to change of policy. The permanent commission shall be offered to them after completion of five years. They would also be entitled to all consequential benefits such as promotion and other financial benefits. However, the aforesaid benefits are to be made available only to women officers in service or those who have approached this Court filing these petitions and have retired during the course of pendency of the petitions," it said. However, the Court refused to entertain the claim of absorption in permanent commission by the petitioners in areas of operation not open for recruitment of women saying that, being a policy decision, it could not be sustained. "The policy decision not to offer permanent commission to Short Service Commissioned officers across the board for men and women being on parity and as part of manpower management exercises is a policy decision which is not required to be interfered with," it ruled. The Court also made it clear that women officers who have not attained the age of retirement available for permanent commissioned officers shall, however, be reinstated in service and granted all consequential benefits including promotion except for pay and allowance for the period they have not been in service. The Court asked the Air Force and the Army to take necessary steps including release of financial benefits within two months of this order. (The Hindu)

## **Curfew relaxed for four hours in Bareilly**

Security forces on Sunday patrolled the streets while a chopper kept aerial vigil over this communal violence-hit city. “Though situation is tense, it is completely under control, and no incident of clash or violence has been reported from any part of the city since morning,” the forces said. Meanwhile, the district administration has decided to relax curfew for four hours on Monday in the five police station areas — Prem Nagar, Subhash Nagar, Kotwali, Baradari and Qila — which are under the restriction for the last 72 hours. Curfew will be relaxed from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., however, schools will remain closed till further orders, IG Bhanoo Pratap Singh and Commissioner Majid Ali told a press conference. Around 30 shops were allegedly torched in Qutubkhana sabzi mandi, one of the oldest markets in the city, on Saturday. The district administration, however, later claimed that the fire broke out due to a short circuit. Curfew was clamped down in the city on March 2 following communal clashes over a barawafat procession. (The Hindu)

## **26/11 trial likely to end in a week**

The special court hearing the 26/11 terror attacks case has urged the prosecution and defence lawyers to finish final arguments by Monday so that it can reserve its judgment. Special Public Prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam informed the court that he would take a maximum of two days before he concludes his final arguments. And after the prosecution, the two defence lawyers will take a day each to argue their case. Judge ML Tahaliyani said that the judgment would be reserved on Saturday or Monday. After that, the judge is likely to indicate by what time the court would deliver its judgment. Judge Tahaliyani will have to go through a huge list of documents and evidence of 658 witnesses submitted by the prosecution. Meanwhile, Nikam also presented his final arguments about the applicability of the sections pertaining to waging war and conspiracy to lone arrested terrorist Mohammed Ajmal Kasab. Nikam has already finished arguing about the encounter of Abu Ismail at Girgaum Chowpatty, shootout at CST, shootout outside and inside Cama Hospital and hijacking of a Skoda car. (The Indian Express)

## **'Rs 33k cr needed to clean India's rivers'**

Diehard devotees may not believe this. But it's true that the water of the holiest among holy rivers -- the Ganga -- fails to meet the drinking and bathing standards after it leaves Garhmukteshwar and is most polluted in Kanpur. The national river meets all three standard parameters -- Bio-Oxygen Demand (BOD), Dissolved Oxygen and total coliform -- only at Rishikesh. For a river water to be fit for bathing and drinking, BOD should be less than 3mg/litre and less than 2mg/litre respectively, DO should be more than 5mg/litre and over 6mg/litre, and total coliform must be less than 500 mpn/100 ml for bathing and less than 50 mpn/100ml for drinking. The water meets the BO and DO standards till it reaches Garhmukteshwar but even there the total coliform count recording is a high 7,500. At Kanpur, it is virtually a drain with the total coliform count recording an unbelievable 2,40,000. But, the inherent recharging ability of the Ganga, despite all the pollution, saw it maintaining a high DO level of over 6 throughout. A report of the Planning Commission submitted to the Supreme Court went deep into the reasons for the pollution in the Ganga and said the main culprit is the discharge of 8,250 million litres of

untreated sewage daily into the river. "Domestic sewage generation and existing sewage treatment plant (STP) capacity in the Ganga Basin is about 12,000 mld and 3,750 mld. In class I and II towns along the main stem of Ganga river, the corresponding figures are 2,900 mld and 1,017 mld respectively," the report said. It admits, "There is a wide gap between domestic sewage generation and STP capacity installed, to the extent that 65% sewage flows into the river and other water bodies untreated." It takes into account the similar state of affairs with other rivers and says a rough estimate indicates that the National River Conservation Plan projects all over India would cost upto Rs 33,000 crore to create additional STP capacity of about 38,000 mld by 2020. "For the Ganga basin alone, the resources required to create 8,250 mld of additional capacity to meet the present shortfall can be to the tune of Rs 7,180 crore," it said and the project requirement till 2020 could be to the tune of Rs 9,788 crore. Regarding the funding, it said: "The resources required are large, but not daunting. This could be provided under the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNURM). The Ganga Action Plan (GAP) I&II were initiated to control direct discharge of sewage and industrial effluent into the river from 29 major and 23 small cities, as well as 48 towns, from Uttarakhand to West Bengal. Though over Rs 1,000 crore was spent, its results were abysmal. The CAG has in the past taken a dim view of the implementation of the clean Ganga initiative and said Rs 1,000 crore had gone down the drain without any tangible improvement in the water quality. (Times of India)

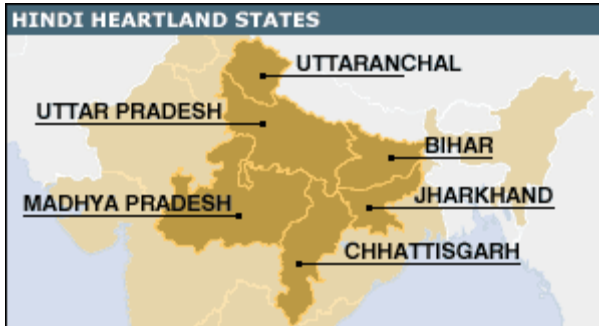
### **The chilli hand grenade is ready to explode!**

It's ready to explode and not just in the mouth. The 'bhut jolokia' - recognised as the hottest of spices - will pack a punch when mixed with hand grenades to deal with terrorists, as trials by Indian defence scientists have shown. A defence spokesperson said scientists at the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in Tezpur in northern Assam were making a trial run of the hand grenades and other repellents by using the bhut jolokia. "The chilli grenade is a non-toxic weapon and when used would force a terrorist to come out of his hideouts as the smell is so pungent that it would literally choke them," R.B. Srivastava, a senior scientist and director of the DRDO said. The DRDO scientists had already carried out trials for the hand grenades mixed with the world's hottest chilli and so far the tests have been satisfactory. The bhut jolokia belongs to the capsicum chinese family and is native to Assam. It is recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records as the hottest of all spices. The hotness of the bhut jolokia, measured in Scoville heat units was 1,001,304. It's nearly twice as hot as Mexico's red savina (577,000), the variety it replaced as the hottest. By comparison, a New Mexico green chilli contains about 1,500 Scoville units, while an average jalapeno measures at about 10,000. "Work is on to develop other such things using bhut jolokia for effective utilisation by the security forces in dealing with riots and tackling insurgency and terrorists," Srivastava said. The non-lethal grenades devised by the DRDO could numb the enemy and immobilise them without seriously wounding or killing them. "There are other applications as well, what we call women power. A specially made chilli powder could act as a tool for women to keep away anti-socials and work in this regard is also on," he said. There were also plans to use bhut jolokia paste or powder in teargas shells for dispersing violent protesters or rioters. "We are also trying for a scientific validation

to find out if bhut jolokia could be incorporated into the food menu for soldiers in higher reaches to keep them warm. Physiological studies are on in this regard," Srivastava said. And the chilli powder would also be rubbed on the fences around army barracks in the hope the strong smell would keep animals out of bounds. "The chilli paste could also act as a major repellent against wild elephants in some parts of Assam and other northeastern states," the scientist said. A kilogram of bhut jolokia sells at about Rs.300. (Times of India)

## Regional Report

### Central India (Hindi Heartland)



### Politics:

#### **BJP team not allowed to enter Bareilly**

Security forces on Sunday staged flag marches while a chopper kept an aerial vigil on this riot-torn city, which was made out of bounds to a BJP team led by Maneka Gandhi MP by the State authorities. "Though the situation is tense, it is completely under control and no incident of clash or violence has been reported from any part of the city since morning," official sources here said. Meanwhile, a three-member BJP team led by Maneka Gandhi MP was prevented by Uttar Pradesh authorities from going to the city. Lashing out at the State Government, Ms. Gandhi, who was stopped in Ghaziabad but later allowed to proceed with police escort to Badaun, 250 km from Bareilly, accused the Mayawati Government of "engineering the riots" and taking "one sided action to appease a particular community". Another member of the team, Gorakhpur MP Yogi Adityanath was asked to get down from Gorakhpur-Bareilly Express train at Barabanki, near Lucknow at around 3 a.m., officials said. He was taken to a State guest house and later sent back. Meerut MP Rajendra Agarwal was stopped in Rampur district which shares its border with Bareilly. Accusing the police of harassing her on the directions of the State Government, Ms. Gandhi said in Badaun that she was stopped in Ghaziabad. (The Hindu)

#### **Mayawati rally: FIR lodged in 'bee attack' case**

After UP Chief Minister Mayawati saw a conspiracy in bees invading the stage when she was holding forth at her party rally on Monday, an FIR has been lodged by police to probe who lit the fire that disturbed the beehive and what was the intention. Deputy Inspector General of Police Rajiv Krishna, who is probing into the bee invasion incident, said that prima facie it had been revealed that the bees swarmed Ramabai Ambedkar rally ground during Mayawati's address after being disturbed by smoke. "Initially, a case under Sections 435 (lighting fire to cause damage) and 285 (causing disturbance in any public place) has been lodged at Ashiyana police station," Krishna told reporters. The DIG said that it was a serious incident as in case of a bee attack it could have led to a stampede in which a number of people could have been killed. Likewise, if something would have

happened to people on stage then also it could have led to stampede and death, he said. He said that the opinion of experts in bee behaviour had also been taken. The police are further investigating into the incident as to who lit the fire and what was the objective behind, he added. After the incident, the BSP alleged that appearance of the bees at the rally ground was a conspiracy following which the state government ordered an inquiry. A preliminary inquiry has indicated that some persons intentionally lit fire to disturb a beehive at nearby Ambedkar University in a bid to disturb the rally, official sources said. "According to experts, the bees that swarmed the rally ground were bigger ones, normally found in forest areas," they said. Addressing a meeting of party leaders, MPs and MLAs yesterday, Mayawati alleged that "in a bid to create stampede; under a conspiracy a beehive near the rally ground was disturbed due to which a swarm of bees came towards the stage." (Times of India)

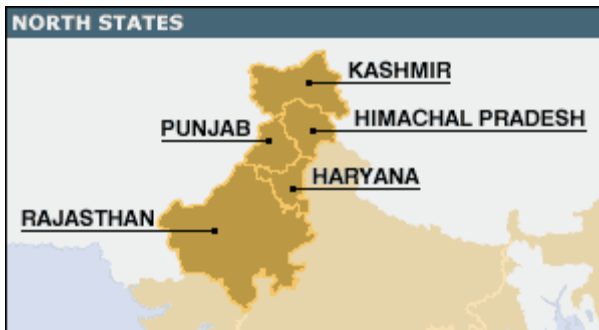
### **Social front:**

#### **12 injured in crude bomb blast in Bihar**

At least 12 people were injured, four of them critically, in a bomb explosion in a jeep near Lakshmipur in Bihar's Jamui district on Thursday. As soon as the jeep carrying passengers from Sangrampur to Jamui reached a petrol pump near Lakshmipur, a crude bomb kept in the vehicle went off, sources said. (Times of India)

### **Economic Front:**

#### **The North**



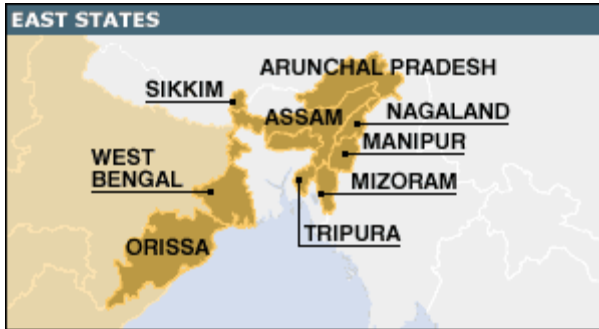
### **Politics:**

### **Social front:**

### **Economic Front:**



## The East



### Politics:

#### **Orissa bats for Vedanta even as govt panel finds violations**

Orissa government has come out in favour of the controversial Vedanta group with the BJD government in the state opposing the views of a central committee that bauxite mining in Lanjigarh was being carried out in violation of SC orders, the Forest Rights Act and the Forest Conservation Act. But with central government mandated to enforce these legislations, the environment ministry has decided to pursue the case on basis of its committee's report and not the state government's representations, sources told. The Orissa government on March 11 wrote two letters to the Centre claiming that as per its assessment, the rights of tribals had been settled under the Forest Rights Act and that no violations of Forest Conservation Act had been found. Sterlite Industries Limited, which was allowed by the Supreme Court to start an aluminium refinery in place of Vedanta Aluminium Limited (both founded by Anil Agarwal), had earlier written to the Centre opposing the terms and composition of the committee. But the environment ministry backed the independent member of the three-member panel, Usha Ramanathan, who had come under attack from Sterlite. While the two forest officials on the committee reported on infringements of forest laws as well as possible impact on wildlife of the mining to be carried out by Orissa Mining Corporation to provide bauxite to the Sterlite refinery, Ramanathan studied the impact on primitive tribal groups in the region and other people. She also dwelt on infringement of SC orders as well as issues of displacement and dislocation. Ramanathan's report was scathing on several counts while the forest officials too pointed out violations. The panel's report was considered by the Forest Advisory Committee of the environment ministry. While the final minutes of the meeting are yet to be written, sources said FAC had accepted the report and advised the government to act on the evidence provided by the report. Ministry sources said Orissa government's defence of Vedanta, Sterlite and OMC in the face of the report had led to an awkward situation but the environment ministry would pursue action based on its report and not the state's representations. The ministry was also contemplating referring the issues pertaining to tribal rights and infringement of Forest Rights Act to the Union ministry of tribal affairs, sources said. (Times of India)

### Social front:

## **Bengal to recruit 35,000 teachers**

The School Education department has decided to appoint 35,000 primary teachers within the next two months, despite objections from the Centre. School Education Minister Partha De on Monday claimed in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly that there are about a hundred litigations against the appointment. But all the cases have been resolved and the Calcutta High Court has given its nod to the appointments. “The government is not flouting any of the rules. We are adhering to the HC directives,” De told the Assembly. He added: “The Centre is intimidating us on the issue, they are saying that unless the PTTI issue is resolved, we cannot appoint teachers. But the HC in its several directives has allowed us to continue with the appointment process.” About six months ago, the state government had decided to fill up 60,000 vacancies in primary schools. De said that already 25,000 teachers have been appointed and the government is keen on filling up the rest of vacancies in the next two months. “Once we are able to fill up all the vacancies, the teacher-student ratio will meet the requirement,” said De. The required teacher-student ratio, as per norms, is 1:40. But, the present strength of the teachers is 1,40,000 — even as the requirement is 1,75,000 — for about 49,000 primary schools. (The Indian Express)

## **Economic Front:**

### **The South**



## **Politics:**

### **Andhra Pradesh assembly to move to protect jobs for locals in Hyderabad**

The Andhra Pradesh assembly will pass a resolution on Thursday urging the central government to bring an amendment to the Presidential Order to protect jobs for the Telangana people in Hyderabad. At an all-party meet convened on Wednesday evening to discuss the Supreme Court's refusal to review its order declaring Hyderabad a "free zone" for recruitments in government jobs, the Congress government agreed to bring the resolution. Leaders of all the parties were unanimous that the relevant paragraph of the Presidential Order relating to jobs for locals in Hyderabad should be amended to set aside the court order. Minister for Information and Public Relations Geeta Reddy told reporters after the meeting that the resolution would be sent to the central government and the home ministry would refer it to the Indian president. The decision came a day after the

Supreme Court refused to admit a petition of the state government, seeking a review of its earlier order declaring Hyderabad a free zone for recruitments in police department. Earlier, opposition parties stalled the proceedings of the state assembly over the issue, forcing Chief Minister K. Rosaiah to invite an all-party meeting to discuss future course of action. Rosaiah told the assembly that he had no objection to passing a resolution urging the central government to bring an amendment to set aside the Supreme Court order. "Hyderabad is part of sixth zone and not a free zone. Nobody needs to have any doubts over this," Rosaiah told the agitated members. He said the issue was sensitive and in Supreme Court and hence could not be discussed in an open house. Later, Congress MPs from Telangana urged Rosaiah to pass a resolution in the assembly. Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) chief K. Chandrasekhara Rao, who had revived movement for separate statehood to Telangana following the Supreme Court order last year, warned the government of serious consequences if it failed to protect the interests of Telangana people. In October last year, the Supreme Court had declared that Hyderabad was not a part of Telangana but a free zone as far as recruitments and postings in government were concerned. This would mean that people from all parts of the state would have equal rights in jobs, postings and promotions in Hyderabad. People of Telangana had so far been enjoying local area status here with 70 percent quota in government jobs all these years. Hyderabad had remained part of sixth zone along with Ranga Reddy, Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda, Nizamabad and Medak districts of Telangana. Telangana, which comprises 10 districts including Hyderabad, was merged with then Andhra State in 1956 to form Andhra Pradesh. But the people of Telangana were given certain safeguards in appointments under the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1956 and a subsequent Presidential Order and six point formula. (Times of India)

### **Social front:**

### **Economic Front:**

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### **Politics:**

#### **No reason for Modi to quit: Gujarat Minister**

The Gujarat government on Friday rejected the Congress demand for the resignation of

Chief Minister Narendra Modi, in the wake of the Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT) summoning him for questioning in connection with the 2002 Gulberg Society massacre. Cabinet spokesman and Health Minister Jaynarayan Vyas said the Congress was “daydreaming” of Mr. Modi's resignation. “The party may wish for anything but there is no reason for Mr. Modi to quit.” The BJP government and Mr. Modi always respected and cooperated with the judiciary and the law and order machinery, and would “continue to do so,” Mr. Vyas reiterated, hinting that the Chief Minister would not try to duck the SIT summons. Sources in the Chief Minister's office, however, indicated that he might seek a change of date in responding to the summons, fixed by the SIT for March 21, because of some prior engagements. The demand for his resignation was made by the former Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Arjun Modhvadia, both inside and outside the House. Talking to journalists, Mr. Modhvadia said the summons was issued based on the court's directives and on the strength of the evidence collected by the SIT, and so Mr. Modi should quit on moral grounds. He expressed the hope that the SIT would not stop with questioning Mr. Modi and would take the investigation to its logical end. (The Hindu)

### **Social front:**

#### **Average domestic salary at IIM-A placements at nearly 15 lakh**

The average domestic salary bagged by the prospective business management post-graduates at the prestigious Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, and this year was Rs. 14.94 lakh per annum while the average international scale was 1.10 lakh dollars per annum. An IIM-A spokesman said on Thursday that the placement process for the flagship Post Graduate Programme in Management (PGP) course had been completed with all the aspirants placed comfortably. As many as 110 companies participated in the placement process, which was for the first time held on a “cohort-cluster based system,” with interviews on every weekend since February 13 instead of the rapid three to five-day continuous placement process. The impact of the global financial meltdown was clearly visible at the placements as for the first time since 2007, more students opted for consulting instead of finance companies, clearly demonstrating the decline in interest in the speculative markets. The spokesman said 40 candidates were placed within the first cohort-cluster on February 13-14. The institute maintained that the investment banks which were almost absent in last year's final placements, returned this year. “While Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs, UBS, Deutsche Bank and Citigroup were among the major recruiters to extend offers through the PPO [Pre-Placement Offers] route, we saw JP Morgan, Merrill Lynch, HSBC and Nomura participate in the finals process,” the spokesman said. According to him, while 27 per cent of students opted for the finance sector, 29 per cent preferred consulting, while marketing, general management and systems attracted 15, 13 and 15 per cent of candidates respectively. Only one per cent preferred the entrepreneurial route this year. The spokesman said there had been a steady decline in the percentage of students aspiring for the finance sector over the years. While in 2007, 47 per cent of candidates opted for finance, in 2008, the percentage came down to 45 and in 2009 it dwindled to 39 before hitting the lowest in four years at 27 this year. (The Hindu)

## **India's first open jail for women opened in Pune**

India's first open jail for women was inaugurated at the Yerawada Central Prison here on Sunday by Maharashtra Home Minister R.R. Patil. Addressing a gathering of prisoners, politicians and police officials, Principal Secretary (Home) of the Prisons department Medha Gadgil termed the measure a “historic moment” unfolding in the centenary year of the International Women's Day. During the winter session of the Assembly last year, MLC Mohan Joshi raised a question about starting an open jail for women. Male prisoners had the facilities of an open jail at the prisons in Yerawada, Aurangabad, Paithan and Morshi. Mr. Patil then announced that an open jail for women would be opened at Yerawada on January 26, 2010. However, due to the model code of conduct in place because of the elections to the Legislative Council, it could not happen. Initially, 50 out of the 500 women prisoners lodged in the Byculla (in Mumbai) and Yerawada (in Pune) jails would be selected for the open jail, said Ms. Gadgil. The number would be increased in future. Inspector-General (Prisons) Uddhav Kamble said women in the open jail would be made to do agricultural work on the 17 acres of land adjoining the prison. This would improve their physical and mental wellbeing. They would also be eligible for remission in their punishment; for every one year served in the open jail, a year of their sentence would be reduced. Additionally, they would also be trained in other skills such as candle-making, screen printing, etc. to help them start a new life after being released from jail. Mr. Kamble said a proposal for increasing the term under life sentence from 14-16 years to 40-60 years had been forwarded to the Centre and the High Court. “Those convicted of heinous crimes like murder and anti-India activities planned in other countries would then not be able to laugh at the slowness of the judicial processes or revel in the government's hospitality,” Mr. Kamble said. He also enlisted a number of prison reforms. An amount of Rs. 5,000 given to prisoners on their release would be increased. Three more prisons were needed in the State as the existing ones were packed to capacity. In order to save on human and financial resources spent while taking prisoners to court, videoconferencing facilities would be provided. Out of the 23,000 people in jails in the State, only 8,000 were convicts, Mr. Kamble said. More prison guards, attendants and officials would be recruited and greater access to the judicial system would be ensured for prisoners. (The Hindu)

## **Five children 'sacrificed' in Maharashtra village, four held**

In a suspected case of child sacrifice, five children of a family were killed in a village in Hingoli district and four persons, including three women, have been arrested in this connection. The boys, aged between 4-12, belong to a family in Digras village in Maharashtra and were killed between December 2009 and March 2010, police said. The killings came to light recently following which police registered a case of murder against six suspects and arrested four persons yesterday after conducting searches at their residence, Police Inspector M A Rauf told PTI. 22. The accused landed in police net after Vandana allegedly tried to sacrifice one more child--Rishikesh Dalvi-- early this month, at the behest of a local self-styled godman, who is absconding, Rauf said. Vandana, who is childless was also allegedly preparing to sacrifice 11 children to fulfil her wish to become a mother, sources said. Police also recovered material like ash, black thread,

unknown poisonous substances and some herbs during the search, he said. Investigators got a breakthrough when Rishikesh complained of the same health problems, detected in the five deceased children, who were allegedly fed some poisonous herbs, before conducting the ritual, sources said. According to doctors treating Rishikesh, the boy also showed effects of same poison, derived from some herb. Rauf said police are trying to rope in a few ayurvedic experts to identify these herbs, which could not be identified in the autopsy. Meanwhile, the viscera of three victims, preserved for chemical tests, would be sent to Mumbai for further analysis, he said adding interrogation of the accused are on. (Times of India)

**Economic Front:**