

Business and Politics in Muslim World

India
Sadia Khanum
1 to 7 May 2010

Presentation Date: 12 May 2010

Report # 118

Summary (Page # 4-6)

National Report

Politics:

- Killing of Dalit father, daughter a matter of shame, says Sonia (Page # 7)
- Uproar in Lok Sabha over motormen's strike (Page # 7)
- Caste census naysayer cite Nehru to nix idea (Page # 8)

Minorities' Issues:

Hindu Fundamentalism:

Insurgency Movements:

- Maoists trigger blasts at school (Page # 9)
- Maoists damage rail track (Page # 9)

Economic Front:

- India to grow at 7.5-8.5%: Survey (Page # 9)
- 'India's exports may cross \$170 bn' (Page # 9)
- Indo-Brazil trade may cross 6 billion dollars this year (Page # 10)
- India as needy of free-trade pact as us: EU ambassador (Page # 10)

Foreign Relations/Geo-strategic developments:

- 'Bilateral trade will stabilise Indo-China ties' (Page # 11)
- 2009 saw drop in Pakistanis coming to India (Page # 12)
- Access to Headley likely this month (Page # 12)

Indian Occupied Kashmir:

- Hurriyat bid to march to U.N. office foiled (Page # 13)

- BJP calls for new Kashmir led by youth (Page # 13)
- Shah Faesal is first Kashmiri to top civil services exam (Page # 14)

Social front:

- PM for 'dramatic reform' in legal education (Page # 14)
- Radiation death raises nuclear safety concerns (Page # 15)
- India to send judgement of Mumbai court to Pakistan (Page # 16)
- India has no middle class? (Page # 16)
- Kasab sentenced to death (Page # 17)

Regional Report

Central India (Hindi Heartland)

Politics:

- BJP contacts parties in Jharkhand (Page # 19)
- BJP lets Soren remain CM for now (Page # 20)
- Will not allow Congress to benefit in Jharkhand: Gadkari (Page # 20)

Social front:

Economic Front:

The North

Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

The East

Politics:

- Mamata criticises Congress for going it alone (Page # 22)
- A jolt to Congress in West Bengal (Page # 22)

Social front:

Economic Front:

The South

Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

West India

Politics:

- Cong boycotts state function, attacks BJP at own event (Page # 24)
- MoU on river projects (Page # 25)

Social front:

- State turns 50, celebrations begin (Page # 26)
- Number of lions in Gujarat goes up by 52 to 411 (Page # 26)

Economic Front:

National Summary:

UPA government wants to restore caste-based census but in the criticism from opposition force it to wait for consensus of all parties in parliament. Opposition does not want to change the decision of the framers of the Constitution and the first Cabinet after Independence which had leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, B R Ambedkar and Maulana Azad. They decided to do away with caste-based census which was seen as divisive. Caste-based census is considered logical as it would be helpful to implement Mandal commission recommendations for OBCs and minorities.

Maoists trigger at least three blasts at a government-run residential school for tribal girls at Dhepaguda in the district on Saturday while damaged rail track and set ablaze two buses to enforce their 48-hour north Bihar Bandh, which began on Thursday.

The CII Business Outlook Survey based on response from 458 companies said that India Inc expects the economy to grow by 7.5 to 8.5 per cent during the current fiscal fuelled mainly by rising capital investment and expanding exports. The industry optimism was also expressed in the Business Confidence Index that rose to 67.6 points for April-September 2010-11, compared to 66.1 points during the second half of 2009-10, according to the survey.

The government said that the value of India's exports for 2009-10 may fall short of the previous year's figures on account of the global economic downturn, but will cross the USD 170 billion mark. The country's exports in 2008-09 had amounted to USD 185 billion.

India and EU are expected to sign FTA this October. Both are working to eliminate differences through negotiations. EU has concerns on Indian policy of market access liberalisation and environment.

India is most likely to get access to American Lashkar terrorist David Coleman Headley this month with the United States indicating that it will communicate the exact date latest by next week. But officials keeping a track on the probe do not seem to be optimistic about any favourable outcome of his questioning.

The number of Pakistanis coming to India in 2009 decreased by almost 50%. The total number of visas issued to Pakistanis by India in 2009 was 51,946, a sudden and sharp fall from the 95,112 issued in 2008. Sources attribute the decline to more stringent norms for issuance of visas to Pakistanis in the aftermath of 26/11.

Hurriyat leader, Syed Ali Gilani was not allowed to lead a march to the United Nations office and authorities kept him under house arrest. However, the day saw youth taking to the streets and clashing with the police, closure of shops and disruption of traffic. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, chairman of the moderate Hurriyat faction, and senior leaders of the conglomerate were also placed under house arrest to prevent them from going to Anantnag district for a rally. Mr. Gilani had called a march to the office of the

United Nations Military Observers Group in India and Pakistan to submit a memorandum, seeking U.N. intervention to grant the people of Kashmir the right to self-determination.

Dr. Shah Faisal becomes the first from Kashmir to top the Union Public Service Commission 2009 examinations. Dr. Faisal chose Public Administration.

The radiation-related death of a scrap metal worker has raised concerns over nuclear safety in India, at a time when the Asian power is wooing foreign players to its \$150 billion civilian nuclear market. Authorities have launched a probe into the unauthorised disposal of a disused machine from the chemistry department of Delhi University, which contained the radioactive material cobalt-60 and ended up in a scrap metal hub in the capital. A man died in hospital from exposure last week, in a case a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was quoted as saying was the most serious worldwide since 2006. Safety standards are a sensitive issue in India, where a gas leak in a Union Carbide factory killed thousands a quarter of a century ago in one of the world's worst industrial accidents.

According to noted economist Nancy Birdsall's (president of the Center for Global Development) new definition of the middle class for developing countries, the middle class in the developing world to include people with an income above \$10 a day. By this definition, India even urban India alone has no middle class; everyone at over \$10 a day is in the top 5% of the country. This is a combination both of the depth of India's poverty and its inequality. Birdsall defines middle class in monetary terms, the broader concept of what a middle class really is, as opposed to merely counting the middle third of a country.

The Special Sessions Court on Thursday sentenced to death Ajmal Kasab, the lone surviving gunman of the November 26, 2008 Mumbai terror attacks. Kasab was given the death penalty on five counts: murder, abetment to murder, waging war, criminal conspiracy and committing terrorist acts. He was also awarded life imprisonment on five counts: attempt to murder in furtherance of a common intention, kidnapping and abducting in order to murder, conspiracy to wage war, collecting arms with the intention of waging war and causing explosion thus endangering life and property.

Regional Summary:

The BJP on Saturday agreed to pleas made by JMM leaders and let Shibu Soren continue as Chief Minister of Jharkhand for some more time, putting on hold a decision on the transfer of power for now. After a marathon meeting of BJP leaders Nitin Gadkari, former president Rajnath Singh and party general secretary Ananth Kumar, with Soren's son Hemant and other JMM leaders as well as allies like JD(U) and AJSU, it was decided that the "consultation process, amongst the allies, would continue".

Alleging that the Congress is "providing oxygen to a dying Communist Party of India (Marxist)" by breaking the electoral alliance for the coming civic polls in the State, Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee said on Sunday that "there is no alliance in

West Bengal.” “We were in favour of an alliance...but they [the Congress] did not want it,” She also ruled out the possibility of “friendly contests” with the Congress, as there was no such thing in politics. She determines to contest election with full force against CPM.

Holding the Congress responsible for the break-up of its alliance with the Trinamool Congress for the upcoming polls to civic bodies across the State including the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, Subrata Mukherjee, one of the working presidents of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee (WBPC), is all set to re-join the Trinamool Congress.

Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Ashok Chavan, on Monday signed an MoU to prepare a detailed project report (DPR) for two river interlinking projects to facilitate inter-basin transfer of water to benefit both the states. Union Water Resources Minister Pawan Bansal on Monday signed the tripartite MoU between the Government of India, Maharashtra and Gujarat in the presence of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for the preparation of DPRs of Damanganga-Pinjal and Par-Tapi-Narmada link projects.

A new census in Gir forests has revealed that the population of the Asiatic lion has risen by 52 to reach the figure of 411.

National Report

Politics:

Killing of Dalit father, daughter a matter of shame, says Sonia

Congress president Sonia Gandhi has written to Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, expressing anguish over a Dalit father and daughter being burnt alive in the State. She described the incident as a “matter of shame.” Party sources said Ms. Gandhi asked for “firm and severe” action against the perpetrators and said such incidents “cannot be allowed to happen.” She said it was “totally unacceptable” that the incident happened in the presence of a naib tehsildar and a police officer. Ms. Gandhi also asked the Chief Minister to pay “personal and urgent attention” to protect the Dalits from further violence and take measures to bring perpetrators to justice and ameliorate the sufferings of those who have borne the brunt of the attacks. A Dalit man and his daughter were burnt alive at Mirchpur in Hissar district on April 21. Congress general-secretary Rahul Gandhi visited the village on Thursday. (The Hindu)

Uproar in Lok Sabha over motormen's strike

Lok Sabha proceedings were disrupted on Tuesday over the ongoing strike by the motormen of Mumbai's suburban railways with two members almost coming to blows over the issue. The intervention of other MPs prevented the situation from taking an uglier turn. Ramchander Dome of the CPI (M) and Sudip Bandopadhyay of the Trinamool Congress almost came to blows when the latter reportedly used unparliamentary language for the CPI (M) leader Basudeb Acharia who was demanding a statement from the Railways Minister Mamata Banerjee on the strike. Tempers ran high as the Ms. Banerjee came under sharp criticism from the entire House, including the Congress, for her “failure” to resolve the motormen's demands despite several notices and particularly her absence from the Lok Sabha when the matter was being discussed. Cutting across party lines, the members criticised the government for imposing Essential Services Maintenance Act under which several striking suburban railway employees had been arrested, placed under suspension and dismissed from services. While Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal tried to pacify the House by saying that the government would make a statement on the issue within two days, Mr. Bandopadhyay said he would convey the matter to Ms. Banerjee at the earliest. He said she was busy with the municipal elections in West Bengal and hence could not attend the House. Mr. Basudeb Acharia was responding to this when Mr. Bandopadhyay interrupted him resulting in a verbal duel between him and the CPI (M) members. As Mr Dome came rushing towards Mr. Bandopadhyay, several MPs including Mr. Bansal, Ambika Soni, Jagdambika Pal, Lalu Prasad and those from the National Democratic Alliance intervened to pacify the situation. When things started going out of hand, Speaker Meira Kumar adjourned the House. When the House assembled this morning, the members raised the issue of motormen's strike that had paralysed Mumbai, the controversy involving Union Telecommunications Minister A. Raja and a demand for caste-based census that led to the first adjournment with most members storming into the well. Speaker Meira Kumar

allowed Shiv Sena's Anant Geete to raise the matter when the House met at who drew the attention of the House towards the hardships caused by the strike and wanted the government to make a statement. He was supported by Sanjay Nirupam (Congress), Gopinath Munde (BJP), Basudeb Acharia (CPI-M), Gurudas Dasgupta (CPI), Sanjay Naik (NCP) and Lalu Prasad (RJD) all of whom demanded negotiations with the striking employees and withdrawal of suspension and dismissal order issued by the Railways Ministry. Chaos continued to prevail when the House met again at 2 p.m. with the opposition demanding an apology from Sudip Bandopadhyay over his remarks against Mr. Acharia. Deputy Speaker Karia Munda adjourned the House within minutes after the government said a statement would be made on the issue in the evening. (The Hindu)

Caste census naysayer cite Nehru to nix idea

Even as the government could not spell out its stand on the restoration of caste-based census in Parliament because of disturbances in Lok Sabha, there is little possibility of caste being included as a criterion in the ongoing decennial population count. Home minister P Chidambaram is to announce the government's stand on Thursday after the matter has been debated in Lok Sabha. But the strong opposition to the revival of caste-based census in the meeting of the Union Cabinet on Tuesday may have, for all practical purposes, eliminated the possibility of the inclusion of caste during the second phase of the census which will be focused on preparing social profile of the country's population and is some six months off. Government, for all practical purposes, seems reconciled to having a first full-scale caste survey, but is split on making the national population survey the main vehicle for the task. The Cabinet meeting on Tuesday saw spirited opposition to the idea from a section of the Cabinet. Commerce minister Anand Sharma, according to sources, forcefully questioned the proposal of the law ministry seeking the inclusion of caste. The framers of the Constitution and the first Cabinet after Independence which had giants like Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, B R Ambedkar and Maulana Azad decided to do away with caste-based census which was seen as divisive. What had suddenly happened to justify a reversal of the decision taken 63 years ago by people who were connected with the aspirations of the people and who grasped the social complexities so well, Sharma is believed to have asked. Sharma questioned the suggestion that caste-based population census was a logical corollary to the implementation of Mandal Commission, stressing that the announcement of the 'Mandal award' for OBCs was the result of a power tussle between V P Singh and Devi Lal. Telecom minister A Raja forcefully argued for the revival of caste-based census. Pointing out that census enumerated members of SCs like him, he said there would be no harm if OBCs were counted as well. Urban development minister S Jaipal Reddy also spoke for the return of caste-based census, arguing that the social reality of caste could not be swept under the carpet. Minister for non-renewable energy Farooq Abdullah also supported the restoration of caste-based census. However, the argument was opposed by others like heavy industries minister Vilasrao Deshmukh and social justice minister Mukul Wasnik. Deshmukh is learnt to have stressed the problem in mapping the OBC population, pointing to regional and sub-regional variations in social status of individual castes. A school in Congress also holds that issues like methodology need to be worked out so that the findings are authentic, and doubts that enumerators engaged can accomplish task without proper briefing. (Times of India)

Minorities' Issues:

Hindu Fundamentalism:

Insurgency Movements:

Maoists trigger blasts at school

Maoists triggered at least three blasts at a government-run residential school for tribal girls at Dhepaguda in the district on Saturday night. The school is just a few metres away from a BSF camp. (The Hindu)

Maoists damage rail track

Maoists damaged rail track and set ablaze two buses to enforce their 48-hour north Bihar Bandh, which began on Thursday. (The Hindu)

Economic Front:

India to grow at 7.5-8.5%: Survey

India Inc expects the economy to grow by 7.5 to 8.5 per cent during the current fiscal fuelled mainly by rising capital investment and expanding exports, a CII survey has said. "Majority (of respondents) expects economic growth to be in the 7.5-8.5 per cent range," said the CII Business Outlook Survey based on response from 458 companies. The economy, according to RBI, is estimated to grow by 8 per cent in the current fiscal, up from 7.2 per cent in 2008-09. However, the government and Planning Commission expect 8.5 per cent GDP growth in 2010-11. The industry optimism was also expressed in the Business Confidence Index that rose to 67.6 points for April-September 2010-11, compared to 66.1 points during the second half of 2009-10, according to the survey. (The Indian Express)

'India's exports may cross \$170 bn'

The government said that the value of India's exports for 2009-10 may fall short of the previous year's figures on account of the global economic downturn, but will cross the USD 170 billion mark. The country's exports in 2008-09 had amounted to USD 185 billion. "Though I sincerely hope that it (exports in 2009-10) turns out to be well in excess of USD 170 billion, we can expect a shortfall," Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma told reporters at the sidelines of a FICCI function here. In terms of percentage, the shortfall is likely to be in single digits, he added. The official trade data for 2009-10 is likely to be released later this week. Due to the global slowdown, the country's exports kept contracting for 13 months in a row since October 2008. The dip was at its worst at 39 per cent in May 2009. It, however, entered into positive territory in November last year. "...much of the growth in December (2009), January and February was against a low base of the previous years, when the economy downturn was galloping," Sharma said. He said the government's stimulus packages, besides policy intervention by his ministry, helped exporters counter the global demand slowdown.

Since December 2008, the Centre had announced a string of measures, such as interest subsidy for exporters, to tackle the financial crisis. In August 2009, more sops like market-linked incentives were announced in the Foreign Trade Policy. Expanding for the fourth straight month, exports surged by 34.8 per cent to USD 16.09 billion in February, against USD 11.94 billion in the year-ago period. (The Indian Express)

Indo-Brazil trade may cross 6 billion dollars this year

Bilateral trade between India and Brazil is expected to cross six billion dollars this year, the Brazil-India Chamber of Commerce has said. This was announced by Roberto Paranhos, president of the Brazil-India Chamber of Commerce at an Indo-Brazil meet organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) here. A delegation from Brazil has come to Gujarat to explore possibilities of JVs with firms here in sectors such as agricultural equipment, textile, oil and gas, and pharmaceuticals. “We aim to cross the 10 billion dollar mark by 2012, as many companies in both nations are exploring the possibilities of forming joint ventures. In order to get a strong foothold in Asia, Brazil is viewing India as an ideal location,” Paranhos said. Brazilian companies have invested close to 600 million dollars in India so far, while Indian firms have made an investment of 1.5 billion dollars in Brazil, he said. Among the major Brazilian investments in India so far is the JV between Tata Motors and Marcopolo of Brazil, which has a facility near Bangalore, he said. Paranhos said sectors like automotive, real estate and oil and gas are growing fast in Brazil, adding that the Amazon region offers a lot of opportunities to Indian firms. “From the Chamber’s side, we have been pursuing with the government to improve logistics in the country so as to make freight rates more competitive and the business environment conducive,” Paranhos said adding that China has a good presence in Brazil. (The Indian Express)

India as needy of free-trade pact as us: EU ambassador

While declaring that negotiations for a free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the European Union (EU) are on target for completion this October, the EU’s ambassador to India told reporters on Monday that India stands to gain as much from an FTA with the EU as the EU does, if not more. Citing negotiations over market access liberalisation, Danielle Smadja said the EU is hardly acting at the behest of India’s Ministry of Commerce and Industry, which has painted a picture of authority and control over inter-sessional negotiations. Experts and chief negotiators closed the 9th round of FTA dialogue in Brussels, Belgium, last week with marked progress being made at both levels, said Smadja without detailing the sectors where breakthroughs may have been made. But while laying out the roadmap for further dialogue between the countries’ trade leaders, Smadja made sure to point out exactly how much India stood to gain from the culmination of a trade deal. “It’s not only the EU that’s looking for a strong and robust IPR regime... it’s not just the EU that’s interested in gaining market access,” Smadja said, while insisting that FTA negotiations are on target for completion by October’s ministerial meeting. “The EU is definitely interested in India’s services, whether it be insurance or telecom, but India is also interested.” In recent weeks, the MoC has been clear in its position on many issues, especially EU’s insistence on including labour and environment clauses into the FTA, while holding legal threats over the EU after Dutch customs unlawfully seized Indian generic drugs headed for Brazil last year. In March,

Commerce Secretary Rahul Khullar told an audience at an ASSOCHAM seminar on FTAs that India's "mercantilist mentality has the world chasing Indian FTAs." Pertaining to the EU, Khullar has told that when "you've come to talk to me, you won't push me into doing something I'm not ready to do." Although both sides are painting a picture of progress, the same issues of labour and environment which divided the table when negotiations began in 2007, remain divisive issues today. Although Khullar and Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma have been adamant in their declaration that social issues will not be part of these negotiations, Smadja remains similarly stubborn. "This issue of trade continues to be discussed by chief negotiators and each time it comes up, the EU further explains our position," she said. "All I can say is that India took note of our explanation; If we are serious about an agreement, we have to be serious about all the sensitivities." (The Indian Express)

Foreign Relations/Geo-strategic developments:

'Bilateral trade will stabilise Indo-China ties'

Beijing's increasing influence in immediate neighbourhood of India has made it a bit nervous, but bilateral trade between the two Asian giants would be the stabilising force in Indo-China relationship, a noted American expert on China has said. "India is contiguous with China. Whereas China is authoritarian, India is a democracy. I think India is playing a great game with China over Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and to an extent in Nepal," Robert Kaplan, Senior Fellow at the Center for a New American Security, said. Kaplan, a noted journalist, said both China and India are offering the governments in these countries various aid packages. "I think it was loans that India offered the Prime Minister of Bangladesh back last January were a result of what China was offering them," he said. "China has been basically supplying the Sri Lankan armed forces from top to bottom, from assault rifles up to fighter jets, and was an indirect influence in helping the Sri Lankan government winning the civil war against the Tamil tigers. This makes India very nervous obviously," he noted. "India and China have, I think, the world's largest bilateral trading relationship. Their economies are complementary rather than competitive. This will be a stabilising force in Indian-Chinese relations," said Kaplan. In his piece "The Geography of Chinese Power" in the latest issue of the Foreign Policy magazine, Kaplan said it is India that can balance the military power of China in Asia. "Europe is declining as a military -- as a sphere of military power as Asia is increasing. India will balance against China. India's building a great navy, going from the fifth-largest navy in the world to perhaps the third. So this is an area of the world where nationalism still lives, where militaries are not something to be embarrassed or ashamed about the way they are in parts of Europe," he said. "As China moves south -- in other words, expanding its influence along the Indian Ocean littoral -- India seeks to move in terms of influence east and west, out to the borders of former British India, and this is going to mean a very tense relationship between India and China in the future," Kaplan said. China's growing influence, which would be a geo-political challenge, would become a sort of hegemony in the eastern hemisphere like the US' in the western hemisphere, he added. (The Indian Express)

2009 saw drop in Pakistanis coming to India

It was always clear that the Mumbai attacks would hit people-to-people contact between India and Pakistan, but the enormity of the impact is exemplified much more by numbers. The number of Pakistanis coming to India in 2009 actually went down by almost 50% from previous year, going by the figures accessed by TOI. The total number of visas issued to Pakistanis by India in 2009 was 51,946, a sudden and sharp fall from the 95,112 issued in 2008. Sources attribute the decline to more stringent norms for issuance of visas to Pakistanis in the aftermath of 26/11. Whether it is general category or business, or even conference, the number of visas issued in 2009 went down drastically. In general visa category, the figure for 2008 was 81,339 but in 2009 it came down to 42,032. In business category, the figure for 2009 was 2,733 as against 8,156 in previous year. (Times of India)

Access to Headley likely this month

India is most likely to get access to American Lashkar terrorist David Coleman Headley this month with the United States indicating that it will communicate the exact date latest by next week. But officials keeping a track on the probe do not seem to be optimistic about any favourable outcome of his questioning. Sources in the home ministry said that the US would convey to India by May 15 when a team of Indian investigators should visit Chicago for "direct access" to Headley. The dates would be indicated after coordinating availability of the lawyer of the prosecuting agency as well as Headley's defence lawyer for the purpose, they added. "India in all likelihood will get direct access within this month only," they said, adding apart from National Investigating Agency (NIA) and Mumbai Police officials, a team comprising a magistrate, legal experts and home ministry officials will go to the US to interrogate Headley. Expressing their doubts over the outcome of such an access, officials said it was highly unlikely that Headley -- suspected to be a double agent who first worked for the US intelligence agencies before being driven towards Lashkar would say anything more than what he had already told the FBI interrogators. An official said: "Even the US agencies may not like him to say much. It is possible that they might have already told him what replies to give to questions, apprehending that anything more may expose the US for whom Headley had worked." Headley was arrested in Chicago by FBI in October last year when the US probe agency found him planning a terror attack on a Danish newspaper office in Copenhagen. Later during the probe, it was found that he was the man who had identified targets for the perpetrators of the 26/11 Mumbai carnage and did surveillance for many other targets for future attacks. The government, meanwhile, on Wednesday told Rajya Sabha that India had indicated to the US, at different levels, that it would like Headley to be extradited on charges linked to the 26/11 terrorist attack in Mumbai. Union home secretary G K Pillai had on April 30 first indicated that Indian investigators would be given direct access to Headley. "This is a significant achievement and should put an end to the doubts expressed in certain quarters," he had said. A two-member team led by solicitor general Gopal Subramaniam had visited the US for five days to discuss modalities of gaining access to Headley. On its return, Subramaniam had said: "All the bottlenecks (for access to Headley) are removed and we have a way forward. So it's up to us to operationalise the plan forward." (Times of India)

Indian Occupied Kashmir:

Hurriyat bid to march to U.N. office foiled

Authorities on Friday prevented the hardline Hurriyat leader, Syed Ali Geelani, from leading a march to the United Nations office and kept him under house arrest. However, the day saw youth taking to the streets and clashing with the police, closure of shops and disruption of traffic. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, chairman of the moderate Hurriyat faction, and senior leaders of the conglomerate were also placed under house arrest to prevent them from going to Anantnag district for a rally. The police detained Mr. Geelani outside his Hyderabad residence when he tried to break a police cordon to lead the march. He was whisked away in a police vehicle to the police station at Humhama. Mr. Geelani had called a march to the office of the United Nations Military Observers Group in India and Pakistan to submit a memorandum, seeking U.N. intervention to grant the people of Kashmir the right to self-determination. "As our leader had announced, we will march to the U.N. office demanding the right to self-determination," his spokesman Saif-Ullah told journalists. Even as he was addressing the media, the police appeared on the scene. This irked youth near Koker Bazar and Maisuma, who staged demonstrations. They pelted the police with stones and bricks. The police fired teargas shells. As the clashes spread to Madina Chowk and Basant Bagh, shopkeepers downed the shutters and traffic was also hit. Earlier, youth took to the streets in Rajouri Kadal, Nowhatta, Kawdara, Fateh Kadal, Baba demb, Nawab Bazar, Habba Kadal and other areas of the old city in response to the Hurriyat's call and staged demonstrations. They tried to march towards the Sonwar office of the U.N. However, the CRPF and the police resorted to a lathi charge and the protesters threw stones. The ding-dong battle continued for several hours. Early in the morning, Mohammad Shafiq Sheikh, 40, was critically injured when a bus in which he was travelling was hit by a hail of stones near the Batmaloo bus stand, the police said. Shafiq, who suffered a serious head injury, was rushed to the SMHS Hospital, from where he was referred to the SK Institute of Medical Sciences. But he died on the way. As news of his death spread in Natipora and adjoining areas, shops were closed, and groups of youth, shouting slogans, engaged police and CRPF personnel in pitched battles that lasted several hours. (The Hindu)

BJP calls for new Kashmir led by youth

There was need to build a new Kashmir, led by youth, for ensuring peace and prosperity in the State, BJP national spokesperson Tarun Vijay said. "I have found the people, the common Kashmiris, peace-loving, wanting to have a prosperous and harmonious future, especially the youth of the Valley. I bring good wishes and prayers for happy times for them on behalf of party president Nitin Gadkari and the entire cadre," he said. "It is time for a new Kashmir led by youth to rise, leading to an era of peace, prosperity and progress. The wise, brilliant, futuristic path is at a stone's throw, spreading its arms that will ensure liberalism and happiness. We must lend an ear and guide them for the future, He said. "Their anger should be channelised into employment avenues. Our party president has given a special message of goodwill for the youth of Kashmir, wishing them happiness and a peaceful time ahead that must make every Indian proud." "I would

also like to salute the Kashmiri mothers, who painstakingly tried and succeeded to a great extent keeping away their children from terrorism and destructive activities. Their heart and soul witnessed mayhem, upsetting the real spirit of a composite culture of Kashmiriyat and they have stood firmly for saner and civilised values. Let's walk together. "I invite the youth and the women power to join the BJP and create progressive entrepreneurship in the region of science, technology and protection of the environment that can become an example for the rest of India". Mr. Vijay complimented the Kashmiri Muslims for being in the forefront in helping Hindus. "A number of incidents have been noticed where the local Muslims have courageously stood with their Kashmiri Hindu brethren and helped. A large number of them want the Hindus to come back and also support those who have stayed back. "It is a welcome sign that must get the national attention and accelerate the creation of a situation where all Hindus feel safe to return. One example, amongst many I heard is of Fateh Kadal, where a Shri Rama Shaiv Ashram was rebuilt by the active help from local Muslim friends. "I wish such examples are highlighted by the media also," said Mr. Vijay, a former editor of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh mouthpiece Panchjanya. (The Hindu)

Shah Faisal is first Kashmiri to top civil services exam

Transforming a hurdle into an opportunity, Dr. Shah Faisal coped with personal tragedy to become the first from Kashmir to top the Union Public Service Commission 2009 examinations. The untimely death of his father in 2002 at the hands of "unidentified militants" days before his Pre-Medical Test did not deter Dr. Faisal from clearing the examination or becoming the first candidate from Kashmir in several years to be selected to the Indian Administrative Service through open merit. Dr.Faisal, who turns 27 on May 17, was only 19 when his father, a teacher, was killed in Kupwara. As friends, well-wishers and the media on Thursday thronged the Hamdard Study Circle premises, where the doctor took coaching for the Civil Services examination, Dr. Faisal said: "I had only two choices — to be bogged down or to stand up and face the challenge." A festive atmosphere prevailed as Dr. Faisal, attired in brown formals, articulated himself in well thought-out and measured words, surrounded by people eager to shake hands with him and present him sweets. Asked why he chose not to pursue medicine, he said: "I felt that I could not have made a change by being at a hospital and wanted to work with the government." For the Prelims, Dr. Faisal chose Public Administration. He chose Public Administration and Literature of Urdu Language for the Mains. Appearing resolved about which service he wanted to get into, Dr. Faisal said: "I have chosen the Indian Administrative Service already." He would like to serve from Kashmir, as he was familiar with the environment and had a vision for it. However, he would not mind serving in any part of the country. (The Hindu)

Social front:

PM for 'dramatic reform' in legal education

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday said "dramatic reform" was necessary in the legal education system to make it sensitive to the needs of the marginalised sections. Inaugurating a National Consultation for Second Generation Reforms in Legal Education,

Singh said, "If we are to have a society where the common man gets speedy and affordable access to justice, if we are to have the rule of law in our country, if we are to have an economic environment where contracts are easily enforceable, we must ensure that our law teachers, practising advocates, corporate lawyers, legal advisors, judicial officers and legal facilitators are of a very high standard," he said. "This is possible only if there is dramatic reform and improvement in the scope and quality of the legal education system," he added. Singh said, "We need good law teachers to shape and nurture young legal minds. The sad reality is that when we look for experts to head new law schools and the new faculties, we have precious few to choose from. There is an obvious need to provide more uniform but calibrated and better salaries, accompanied by considerably improved terms of service for our teachers." "Today, some fortunate students who have the right contacts have the luxury of plenty in terms of options while several of their talented but less resourceful colleagues go abegging for placements." Earlier, Union Law Minister M Veerappa Moily unveiled a vision statement that called for "an inclusive philosophy" to guide legal reforms. (The Indian Express)

Radiation death raises nuclear safety concerns

The radiation-related death of a scrap metal worker has raised concerns over nuclear safety in India, at a time when the Asian power is wooing foreign players to its \$150 billion civilian nuclear market. Authorities have launched a probe into the unauthorised disposal of a disused machine from the chemistry department of Delhi University, which contained the radioactive material cobalt-60 and ended up in a scrap metal hub in the capital. A man died in hospital from exposure last week, in a case a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was quoted as saying was the most serious worldwide since 2006. The death raised concerns over the handling of nuclear material in India at a time when the ruling Congress party is trying to push through legislation in parliament to help foreign players access its lucrative nuclear energy market. India, one of a handful of countries which refuses to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, inked a landmark civilian nuclear agreement with United States in 2008, taking it out of three decades of nuclear isolation. "As a historic accord between India and the U.S. takes our country forward on its path to nuclear commerce, the ability to effect safeguards is going to be critical," wrote the Financial Express newspaper in an editorial this week. "Against this backdrop, the first radiation-related death of a common man provides a wakeup-call that must be taken very seriously." The government is due to introduce a bill in parliament by the end of this week, the last week in the current session, which underwrites the compensation liability for foreign firms in the case of industrial accidents. The Communist Party of India (Marxist), a former government ally and vocal critic of the nuclear deal and the pending nuclear liability bill, raised the worker's death in parliament. Safety standards are a sensitive issue in India, where a gas leak in a Union Carbide factory killed thousands a quarter of a century ago in one of the world's worst industrial accidents. Memories of the disaster have helped shape the debate around the current nuclear bill, which had been shelved after protests by the opposition who said it favoured private foreign companies. French and Russian nuclear firms plan to set up in India, and New Delhi has offered to tender construction of two plants to U.S.-based firms GE-Hitachi and Westinghouse Electric, a subsidiary of Japan's Toshiba Corp. Om Pal Singh, secretary of India's Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, which is looking into the

death, told Reuters the incident should be seen in the context of similar scares in Europe and the United States and not only in terms of Indian regulation. He said Indian authorities were taking measures to reduce the risk of nuclear exposure, such as scanners at port checks for material coming from abroad, or giving scrap dealers the equipment and training to check radiation levels. "My feeling is that, with time, these incidents are decreasing, and maybe after some more time, the chances will become almost negligible. More and more people are getting sensitized," he said by phone. "A lot of measures are being taken, and have been taken, to prevent such instances." The apparent ease with which radioactive material could be disposed unsupervised has also raised fears such material could fall into the hands of militants to make so-called "dirty bombs". Ajai Sahni, Executive Director, Institute for Conflict Management, said nuclear security in India is concentrated on high-profile installations such as power plants and research facilities, but less attention was paid to low-end applications. But he said there was scant evidence of militants trying to get hold of nuclear material from discarded equipment because the process is complicated: "The handling of such materials is extremely problematic," he said. (The Indian Express)

India to send judgement of Mumbai court to Pakistan

India may hand over to Pakistan the judgment convicting Ajmal Amir Kasab and press for the extradition of terrorists like Hafiz Saeed and Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, who were also found guilty by a special court for the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks. Government sources said the fresh documents will be sent incorporating all the evidence given to the court after receiving the copy of judgement delivered by special judge M L Tahilyani in Mumbai. New Delhi will tell Islamabad that as the Mumbai Special Court has indicted LeT founder Saeed and operations chief Lakhvi on the basis of solid evidence, they should be extradited to India to face the law here, the sources said. India will also tell Pakistan to expedite its own trial taking into account the Mumbai Court's speedy trial process, which was completed a little over one year. During the Foreign Secretary level talks on February 25, India had given three dossiers. In the first dossier, India, which has accused Pakistan of not being serious in prosecuting those involved in the 26/11 conspiracy, demanded that besides Saeed and Lakvi, Lashker operatives Muzzamil, Abu Hamza, Abu Khafa and Usman should be handed over to it. All of them have been named in the chargesheet filed by Mumbai police in connection with the 2008 Mumbai attack which left 166 people dead. In the second dossier, India demanded handing over of Illyas Kashmiri, a militant whose links with global terror group Al-Qaeda had even been established by the FBI. The third dossier demanded handing over of seven Khalistani militants and 17 Indian Mujahideen terrorists which includes five Pakistani nationals. Before the Foreign Secretary level talks, India has given seven different dossiers related to the Mumbai terror attack. (The Indian Express)

India has no middle class?

Could the Great Indian Middle Class be the Great Indian Mythical Class? A proposed new international definition of what constitutes the middle class in a developing country has thrown up a startling conclusion by global standards, India has no middle class.

Noted economist Nancy Birdsall, president of the Center for Global Development, has proposed a new definition of the middle class for developing countries in a forthcoming World Bank publication, *Equity in a Globalizing World*. Birdsall defines the middle class in the developing world to include people with an income above \$10 a day, but excluding the top 5% of that country. By this definition, India even urban India alone has no middle class; everyone at over \$10 a day is in the top 5% of the country. This is a combination both of the depth of India's poverty and its inequality. China had no middle class in 1990, but by 2005, had a small urban middle class (3% of the population). South Africa (7%), Russia (30%) and Brazil (19%) all had sizable middle classes in 2005. While many economists have in the past as well attempted to define the middle class, Birdsall puts into monetary terms the broader concept of what a middle class really is, as opposed to merely counting the middle third of a country. In socio-political terms, the middle class is traditionally that segment of society with a degree of economic security that allows it to uphold the rule of law, invest and desire stability. They do not, unlike those defined as rich, depend on inheritances or other non-productive sources of income. Birdsall argues that while the equivalent of \$10 per day in 2005 as a lower limit is on the low side by the standards of industrialized countries, somewhere around \$10 a day per person household members are able to care about and save for the future and to have aspirations for a better life for themselves as well as their children because they feel reasonably secure economically. OECD countries define their poverty lines as 50% of median income which works out in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) terms to about \$30 a day. In US the poverty line for a single individual in 2008 was \$29 per day and for each individual in a four-person household was about \$14 per day. However, people in developing countries living on even \$10 a day still have extremely low social indicators. Economist Lant Pritchett has shown that infant mortality of households in the richest quintile in Bolivia was 32 and Ghana 58 per 1,000. Fewer than 25% of people in the richest quintile in India complete 9 grades of school, Pritchett showed. "An upper limit of the 95th percentile, while on the high side, is just about sufficient to exclude the country's richest," Birdsall adds. (Times of India)

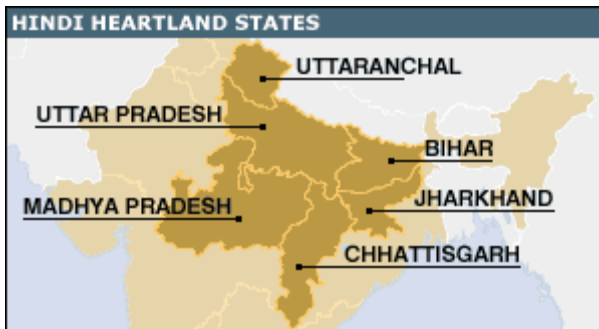
Kasab sentenced to death

Mohammad Ajmal Amir Kasab "shall be hanged by neck till he is dead." Pronouncing these words, the Special Sessions Court on Thursday sentenced to death the lone surviving gunman of the November 26, 2008 Mumbai terror attacks. Kasab was given the death penalty on five counts: murder, abetment to murder, waging war, criminal conspiracy and committing terrorist acts. He was also awarded life imprisonment on five counts: attempt to murder in furtherance of a common intention, kidnapping and abducting in order to murder, conspiracy to wage war, collecting arms with the intention of waging war and causing explosion thus endangering life and property. 'Aapko char offences ke liye saza-e-maut di jaati hai. [You have been sentenced to death for four offences],' Judge M.L. Tahaliyani told Kasab after he read out the order. "You have been given the death penalty for murdering Indian citizens, police officers, conspiring with Lashkar leaders and committing terrorist acts. The court has said while giving the judgment that you shall be hanged unto death," Mr. Tahaliyani told Kasab. While the sentence was being read out, Kasab sat still, his face sunk deep in the cup of his palm. He

listlessly waved when asked by the court to give an opinion on his sentencing. Anxiety drew him to ask for water and he had to be taken out of court. “ Shukriya saab [Thank you, sir],” was all the 26/11 convict could say on his way out of the courtroom. The court wholly accepted the prosecution's arguments for awarding the death sentence, noting that the “aggravating circumstances” fully outweighed the “mitigating circumstances.” It found that the defence could not make out a case for the lesser punishment of life. “In my opinion, the circumstances demand that death penalty be imposed in this case. The court has no option but to impose death sentence. This man has lost the right of getting humanitarian treatment,” the court observed. The court also referred to the Kandahar hijack incident triggered by the presence of the accused in the custody of the Government of India. Mr. Tahaliyani noted, “By keeping such a person alive there would always be a danger hanging over the government. He is a constant danger. He is a menace to society. He has no right to live.” The Indian Penal Code Sections under which Kasab has been given death penalty are: 302 (murder), 302 read with 120 B (criminal conspiracy), 121 (waging war), 302 read with 34 (common intention) and 302 read with 109 (abetment) read with 120 B. In addition, he has been given death for the offence punishable under Section 16 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. For the other offences, he was awarded rigorous imprisonment, simple imprisonment and imposed with fines. Special Public Prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam told reporters that a confirmation of the death penalty from the Bombay High Court was awaited. Kasab would continue to be housed at the high security Arthur Road jail till further orders by the government. (The Hindu)

Regional Report

Central India (Hindi Heartland)



Politics:

BJP contacts parties in Jharkhand

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Friday announced its intention to start serious negotiations for formation of a government in Jharkhand minus the incumbent Chief Minister, Shibu Soren. The former Chief Minister, Arjun Munda, is emerging as the front runner for the top job. This, of course, hinges on the BJP getting the promised support of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha to lead the government. But so far there has been no direct word from Mr. Soren that he is ready to resign to make way for a new government. Party leaders have begun contacting all the coalition partners which together set up the Shibu Soren government four months ago. Hemant Soren, son of the Chief Minister, and Sudesh Mahto, leader of the All India Jharkhand Students' Union, have been asked to come to Delhi for negotiations. The talks are expected to be held in right earnest on Saturday. The former BJP president, Rajnath Singh, who played a key role in the formation of the previous Arjun Munda government, has again emerged as the BJP point man for this exercise. After a morning meeting of its Parliamentary Board, it became clear that the BJP was formally taking up the offer that came from Mr. Hemant Soren, who is the legislature party leader of the JMM, that his party was ready to support a BJP-led government. The party leadership disclosed that it was aware of differences between the Sorens and it was not very clear how these would be sorted out without a split in the 18-member JMM legislature party. The earlier BJP decision of withdrawal of support to Mr. Soren's government, taken in anger after he had voted against the Opposition-sponsored cut motion in the Lok Sabha has for the moment been "kept on hold." Its legislature party leader and Deputy Chief Minister Raghuvar Das has been told not to meet the Governor to withdraw support. On Thursday, there were whispers among BJP leaders that the party decision on the withdrawal of support was changed because some central leaders had "business interests" in the State. On Friday when this question was put to deputy leader of the party in the Lok Sabha Gopinath Munde, he said: "There is nothing wrong in doing business (business karna galat nahin)." (The Hindu)

BJP lets Soren remain CM for now

The BJP on Saturday agreed to pleas made by JMM leaders and let Shibu Soren continue as Chief Minister of Jharkhand for some more time, putting on hold a decision on the transfer of power for now. After a marathon meeting of BJP leaders Nitin Gadkari, former president Rajnath Singh and party general secretary Ananth Kumar, with Soren's son Hemant and other JMM leaders as well as allies like JD(U) and AJSU, it was decided that the "consultation process, amongst the allies, would continue". The biggest problem, sources said, was that the JMM ranks had developed serious problems with leaders like Tekchand Mahto threatening to go along with the Congress. Moreover, Soren and son Hemant who would be accommodated as Deputy Chief Minister in a BJP-led arrangement had developed "serious differences" on power sharing, with a section of JMM leadership, including minister Hemlal Murmu and Hussain Ansari, demanding that "Soren continue as the Chief Minister". Sources said Gadkari advised the JMM leaders to "sort out their internal problems first so that there are no problems at a later stage". The BJP expects the JMM to hand over a letter pledging the support of JMM MLAs in the Assembly, in the next three days, after sorting out their internal problems, said a leader. JMM leaders, added the BJP leader, "wanted a facesaver for Soren". "Our only concern is that the new government, led by the BJP, should last its full term, and with its good governance plank, the party should expand even under a new coalition in the state," said a BJP leader. After the marathon meeting, BJP general secretary Ananth Kumar told reporters: "The talks amongst all Jharkhand allies were positive, and they would continue. We will present before you a new power sharing arrangement soon." "After the recent communication gap, today's talks were fruitful. Shibu Soren will continue as Chief Minister as long as he wishes to," said Jharkhand minister Hemlal Murmu. Incidentally, Soren has till April 30 to get himself elected to the House. Hussain Ansari, also from the Shibu Soren camp, said the new arrangement could be worked out by next week. However, Hemant, who wants BJP to head the new coalition "as soon as possible", didn't have much to say. "Ananth Kumar had said what needed to be said," he said. (The Indian Express)

Will not allow Congress to benefit in Jharkhand: Gadkari

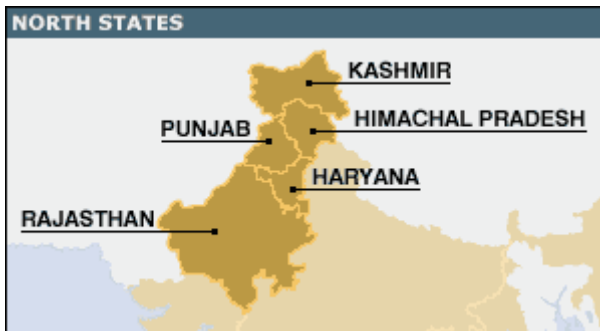
Bharatiya Janata Party president Nitin Gadkari on Thursday declined to say if the party will press for a change in Jharkhand chief ministership. "I would say, wait and watch," he said. The BJP would take all steps to ensure that the Congress did not benefit from the impasse in the State. "We will ensure that the Congress does not benefit from the Jharkhand situation by breaking smaller parties with money and muscle power," he said. Jharkhand plunged into a political crisis after Chief Minister and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader Shibu Soren voted in favour of the United Progressive Alliance government on a cut motion moved by the BJP in the Lok Sabha on April 27. A day after the cut motion, the BJP's parliamentary board decided to withdraw the party's support to the Soren-led government, only to later put its decision on hold and instead ask Mr. Soren to quit and mobilise the JMM's support in favour of the BJP. Mr. Gadkari said the BJP would launch a nationwide agitation on May 12 against "the misuse of the CBI by the United Progressive alliance (UPA) government to blackmail and threaten Opposition

leaders.” “BJP workers will protest outside the CBI offices in all State capitals against the large-scale misuse. We demand this misuse be stopped immediately. We will also raise this issue in the Parliament,” he said. He, however, declined to comment when asked to respond to the action taken against media portal Tehelka.com when the National Democratic Alliance was in power. “I cannot say anything about that now. But all I can say is there was no misuse of the CBI during the NDA regime,” he said. He also accused the CBI of specifically harassing the Gujarat government and its police officers over the issue of fake shoot-outs. The CBI was also used to pressure vulnerable Opposition leaders, particularly those belonging to the BJP, SP and the RJD and harassing those Opposition leaders who were not vulnerable to government pressure, he alleged. He said he had worked out a strategy to enhance the party's vote bank by 10 per cent till the next Lok Sabha elections in 2014 by reaching out to the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, minorities and unorganised labour in a big way. The party would set up a “think tank” to work on the strategy. Mr. Gadkari is on a two-day visit to Goa. (The Hindu)

Social front:

Economic Front:

The North

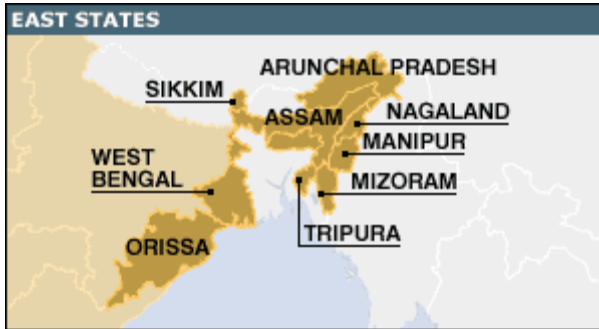


Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

The East



Politics:

Mamata criticises Congress for going it alone

Alleging that the Congress is “providing oxygen to a dying Communist Party of India (Marxist)” by breaking the electoral alliance for the coming civic polls in the State, Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee said on Sunday that “there is no alliance in West Bengal.” “We were in favour of an alliance...but they [the Congress] did not want it,” Ms. Banerjee told journalists. She released a list of Trinamool Congress candidates for all the 141 wards of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC). On Saturday, the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee (WBPCCC) had announced a list of candidates for 88 wards. Asked if the break-up in the alliance would favour the Left parties, Ms. Banerjee said the “CPI(M) will have no advantage” since the public wants change. “Even if the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Congress and the CPI(M) were to unite, it would not be possible for the CPI(M) to win.” She also ruled out the possibility of “friendly contests” with the Congress, as there was no such thing in politics. “Even an inch of land cannot be given to the CPI(M) without a fight,” Ms. Banerjee said, adding that the Trinamool Congress was announcing a comprehensive list as the Congress had not fielded a candidate in several of the 25 seats that had been left for them. Slamming the Congress for relentlessly attacking the Trinamool Congress, she said the Congress will not be successful in the polls as it had “one foot in the CPI(M) camp and the other elsewhere.” Stating that the very purpose of constituting her party was to oust the CPI(M), she rubbished the claim that her actions had given an advantage to the rival. “The day I support the CPI(M) will be the day of my political death,” she said. Even though Ms. Banerjee made no comment on the future of the alliance, WBPCCC working president Pradip Bhattacharya said the failure of the seat-sharing talks for civic polls will have no impact on the alliance for future elections. (The Hindu)

A jolt to Congress in West Bengal

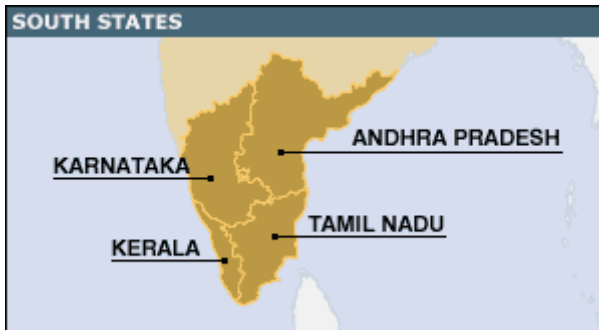
Holding the Congress responsible for the break-up of its alliance with the Trinamool Congress for the upcoming polls to civic bodies across the State including the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, Subrata Mukherjee, one of the working presidents of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee (WBPCCC), is all set to re-join the Trinamool

Congress. Mr. Mukherjee, who will be formally announcing his decision on Wednesday, had left the Trinamool Congress five years ago. One of the main reasons why he had decided to resign from the Congress is that the party has not been sufficiently “opposed” to the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Mr. Mukherjee said. “The alliance (involving the Congress and the Trinamool Congress) should not have broken up. I think it is the Congress that broke it up”, he asserted. Mr. Mukherjee's decision to leave the Congress has been the most significant development in the Opposition camp in the run-up to the civic polls, coming in the wake of Ms. Banerjee's announcement on Sunday that the alliance had collapsed in West Bengal. “My decision is firm and final,” said Mr. Mukherjee who had left the Trinamool Congress following differences with Ms. Banerjee over an electoral tie-up with the Congress that he was in favour of for the 2005 civic polls which saw the Left Front come up trumps. Mr. Mukherjee was Mayor of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation when he was in the Trinamool Congress. He said his decision to officially announce his return to the party a day after the final day of submission of nomination papers for the civic polls discounts speculation that his move is aimed at assuming the office of Mayor in the event of the Trinamool Congress winning a majority. Pradip Bhattacharya, the other working president of the WBPCC, expressed surprise over Mr. Mukherjee's decision to quit the party. Mr. Bhattacharya said Mr. Mukherjee was with him when matters related to seat-adjustments with the Trinamool Congress for the civic polls were being discussed but he never expressed his disapproval. (The Hindu)

Social front:

Economic Front:

The South



Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

West India



Politics:

Cong boycotts state function, attacks BJP at own event

Having decided to boycott the official Swarnim Gujarat celebrations, the state Congress held a parallel function in Gandhinagar. The party criticised Chief Minister Narendra Modi's alleged attempt to make it a one-man show and take all credit for the state's development. The Congress called it an insult to the whole Gujarati community that has contributed immensely to the state's progress. Although they were invited, the former Congress chief ministers who attended the morning programme kept away from the official programme on Saturday evening. At a party convention here following the culmination of 'Gujarat Gaurav Yatra' from eight regions to mark 125 years of the Congress and 50 years of the state, Congress leaders called upon party workers to turn tables on the BJP. Ahmed Patel, political advisor to AICC president Sonia Gandhi said meticulous planning by past chief ministers had formed the basis for development of Gujarat. He said that taking the Narmada project to its present state was the result of hard work of the likes of Rajiv Gandhi and Madhavsinh Solanki. He said the Congress was a means to serve people and not a tool to gain power and asked party workers to focus on service and ignore what others (in the government) are doing. Union Commerce Minister Anand Sharma said the Centre did not discriminate between states; Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dixit said if Gujarat was progressing, so were other states, but it was time the state changed its ways and erased stigmas (of being a communally sensitive state) to reach the pinnacle of progress. Goa Chief Minister Digambar Kamat said in Gujarat, power was in the hands of those who do not believe in democratic values. Former Chief Minister Madahvsinh Solanki said Gujarat has given a lot to India, including Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi. CLP leader Shaktisinh Gohil drew attention to the contrast that while Gujarat founder Ravishankar Maharaj had told his followers not to build his memorial with public money, the present-day rulers are using public money for self projection. MP Rajiv Shukla lamented that Gujarat was reduced to a brand to earn publicity. Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda said that Gujarat's progress has retarded of late and fallen behind states like Haryana, especially after Congress' coming to power there. Hooda, who studied in Sainik School at Jamnagar, said it was time the pride of Gujarat was restored. GPCC president Siddharth Patel welcomed the guests following a colourful dance performance from various tribal areas here. At the function, Shankersinh Vaghela asked his party workers to rise above groupism and deal an effective blow to the BJP by

claiming absolute majority in the next Assembly elections in 2012. (The Indian Express)

MoU on river projects

Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Ashok Chavan, on Monday signed an MoU to prepare a detailed project report (DPR) for two river interlinking projects to facilitate inter-basin transfer of water to benefit both the states. Union Water Resources Minister Pawan Bansal on Monday signed the tripartite MoU between the Government of India, Maharashtra and Gujarat in the presence of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for the preparation of DPRs of Damanganga-Pinjal and Par-Tapi-Narmada link projects. These two link projects envisage inter-basin water transfer. Under the Damanganga-Pinjal link project, surplus water of Damanganga basin will be transferred to Pinjal reservoir to augment water supply to Greater Mumbai city. Under the Par-Tapi-Narmada link, surplus water from west flowing rivers north of Damanganga would be transferred to Gujarat. (The Indian Express)

Social front:

State turns 50, celebrations begin

The Gujarat government organised the state's golden jubilee celebrations with a spectacular event at the Sardar Patel Stadium where around 4,000 artistes performed. The event marked the end of the two-day celebrations for the state's golden jubilee in Ahmedabad and Capital Gandhinagar, but more events will be held in various districts and blocks. The mega event, however, was marked by big chaos when many people stuck outside the venue tried to force their way in, leading to a police lathicharge. Several senior officials, MLAs and mediapersons were manhandled by the security guards, who did not allow them inside the stadium. Subsequently, Chief Minister Narendra Modi expressed regret for the inconvenience caused to the people, who were not given entry and were driven out of the venue. Modi announced that the programme will be repeated on Sunday evening and people will be given entry with invitation cards. Also present at the function were senior BJP leaders L K Advani, Arun Jaitley and Sushma Swaraj as well as Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Chhatisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh. However, state Home Minister Amit Shah did not attend the event. His absence was conspicuous as the entire state cabinet was present on the dais. Modi delivered his address in Hindi, explaining that the entire country is watching "so I am speaking in Hindi instead of Gujarati". He spoke of the state's 200 resolutions for development to be attained in the next five years. The CM sought 100 hours of voluntary service from all and sundry in the areas of health, education, cleanliness and environment. The programme was choreographed by Bollywood artist Chinni Prakash, while A R Rehman scored the music. Earlier in the day, Governor Dr Kamla Beniwal and the Chief Minister paid tributes to martyrs and leaders of the Mahagujarat movement that led to the formation of the state on May 1, 1960. The celebrations started with Modi paying homage to people who sacrificed their lives for the formation of Gujarat at Lal Darwaza here. Modi along with the Governor then paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi at

Sabarmati Ashram and also felicitated the family members of martyrs at a function there. The Congress, however, boycotted official state government functions and organised its own programme to mark the occasion in Gandhinagar. Modi later laid the foundation stone of a grand 'Mahatma Mandir' in Gandhinagar where holy water and sand, brought in from different parts of the country and the world, will be used for construction. (The Indian Express)

Number of lions in Gujarat goes up by 52 to 411

A new census in Gir forests has revealed that the population of the Asiatic lion in its only abode has risen by 52 to reach the figure of 411. Announcing the last month's lion census results, Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi said that the number of Asiatic lions in Gujarat has gone upto 411 against 359 counted during the last census held in 2005. The census was conducted by forest officials between April 24 and 27 in the Gir forest which is spread over in three districts of Junagadh, Amreli and Bhavnagar. "According to the census, presently there are 411 lions in Gir forests," Modi told reporters. "Out of the 411 lions, there are 162 females and 97 males. There are 77 cubs which are less than one year old and 75 cubs aged between 1 and 3 years," he said. (The Indian Express)

Economic Front: