

Business and Politics in Muslim World

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National Summary:

The BJP is stick to its stance on inclusion of caste counting in census despite the opposition of RSS on the issue. BJP wants to bring its old members like Uma Bharti and Ram Jethmalani to regain its lost support in Hindi heartland.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said the all-India strike called by opposition parties against rising fuel prices was successful. The BJP spokesperson said the issue of price rise had first been raised in Parliament through cut motions in the last Budget session, but they were bailed out by "phoney Opposition parties of SP and RJD". Last month, the government decontrolled the price of petrol and raised the cost of diesel by Rs 2 per litre. It also increased the prices of cooking gas and kerosene. While the Union finance minister Mr Pranab Mukherjee said that the Centre will not roll back the fuel price hike as demanded by the Opposition and the UPA's key ally, the Trinamul Congress. Mr Deora also said the Opposition parties are trying to mislead the people as these parties have been instrumental in notifying the deregulation of the prices of petroleum products and reducing subsidies in November 1997 and in implementing the programme from April 2002. Parties opposing the government from the Left and the Right of the political spectrum are hoping that the issue of prices at the heart of the call for Monday's "Bharat Bandh" will pay rich dividends in the form of opposition unity in the coming days in Parliament.

The Shiv Sena has slammed Union Agriculture Minister and newly elected International Cricket Council (ICC) chief Sharad Pawar for favouring cricket matches with Pakistan on Indian soil. The Sena was referring to Pawar's comment after becoming ICC chief that the visit of the Indian Home Minister to Pakistan was a good sign for improving Indo-Pak relations and subject to approval of governments of both countries, the ICC would revive Indo-Pak cricket matches.

Himanshu Kumar, a social activist who is on cycle yatra from Delhi to spread awareness about the struggle of tribals in Chattisgarh said Naxal's fight against the government is the reaction of injustices and deprivation. Government is not taking proper measures to compensate the losses of civilians because of military operation.

The Central government on Tuesday said Army will not be deployed to fight the Naxals, but Air Force will be used to provide non-combat assistance to para-military and police personnel operating in the Maoist-hit regions.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) hiked the short-term indicative interest rates (repo and reverse repo rates) by 25 basis points to mitigate rising inflation and inflationary pressures. It has decided to increase the repo rate, the rate at which the banks borrow funds from the central bank, by 25 basis points from 5.25 per cent to 5.50 per cent and the reverse repo rate, the rate at which banks park their funds with the central bank, by 25 basis points from 3.75 per cent to 4 per cent with immediate effect.

The Central Government suffers an annual loss of Rs 1,800 crore on account of

thousands of coal mafia, which involve themselves in illegal mining across different states. The mafia is primarily active in the main coal-producing states of Jharkhand, Orissa and Chhattisgarh -- which are also affected by Maoist violence.

Global consultant firm Ernst & Young said that it expected inflation to touch 14 per cent in July from 10.16 per cent in May, spurring the RBI to raise short-term rates in its 27 July monetary review for checking spiralling prices.

India is likely to have bumper foodgrain production in the 2010-11 crop year on the back of a good monsoon and a rise in area under cultivation, food and agriculture minister Mr Sharad Pawar said. Foodgrain production dropped by seven per cent in the 2009-10 crop year (July-June) to 218.19 million tonne from a record 234.47 million tonnes in the previous year because of a severe drought that hit almost half of the country. Monsoon rains which is the lifeline of Indian agriculture, have already covered the entire country. About 60 per cent of the total area under cultivation is dependent on the monsoon. According to official data, paddy had been sown in 46.46 lakh hectare of area as on 1 July against 45.43 lakh hectare in the year-ago period.

India expressed "concern" over China's plans to have a rail link with Pakistan through the Karakoram ranges, but said it was doing its own preparations to counter such a move.

India has signed six agreements, including air services and energy pacts, with Iran and both sides also decided to cooperate closely in stabilising the violence-torn Afghanistan. Indian external affairs minister Mr SM Krishna and Iranian finance minister Mr Seyed Shamseddin Hosseini concluded the two-day meeting of the joint commission . The pacts, including an air services agreement and memorandum of understanding (MoU) in new and renewable energy, are part of efforts to boost bilateral trade from \$15 billion to \$30 billion. The two sides identified infrastructure, oil, gas, petrochemicals, mining, transport, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, textiles and agriculture as priority areas of economic cooperation.

Modernising its fighter jet fleet, the Indian Air Force is going to upgrade its 50 SU-30 MKI combat aircraft with the help of Russia. The airframe of these aircraft would also be strengthened to equip them with air-launched version of the 290 km range BrahMos supersonic cruise missile," the sources said.

The law and order situation in Indian Occupied Kashmir is getting worst because of massive protest and strikes throughout the valley. Strikes and protests broke out in reaction to the killings of innocent civilians by the brutal action of Indian forces. The dummy government in the occupied territory calls Indian army for help to restore normality. After seeking the Army's help to restore law and order, the Jammu and Kashmir government on Wednesday virtually banned the media in the Valley by imposing severe restrictions on journalists. Authorities cancelled curfew passes issued to journalists and instructed the police and the CRPF not to allow any mediaperson to move around.

India has possibly the largest number of active non-government, not-for-profit organizations in the world. A recent study commissioned by the government put the number of such entities, accounted for till 2009, at 3.3 million. That is one NGO for less than 400 Indians, and many times the number of primary schools and primary health centres in India. The largest number of NGOs are registered in Maharashtra (4.8 lakh), followed by Andhra Pradesh (4.6 lakh), UP (4.3 lakh), Kerala (3.3 lakh), Karnataka (1.9 lakh), Gujarat (1.7 lakh), West Bengal (1.7 lakh), Tamil Nadu (1.4 lakh), Orissa (1.3 lakh) and Rajasthan (1 lakh).

Regional Summary:

Nationalist Congress party (NCP) General Secretary Tariq Anwar said Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's love for the Muslims was nothing but a 'damage control' move after his pictures came up in local dailies holding the hands of Gujrat Chief Minister Narendra Modi.

Normal life was disrupted in West Bengal Monday as road and rail services were affected and government offices were closed following a 12-hour shutdown called by non-Congress parties in the country. Supporters of the state's ruling Left held rallies from early morning in several parts , put road blocks and forcibly prevented people from going to work.

In Marxist-ruled Bengal, about seven lakh people living below poverty line are being deprived of the benefits of several pension schemes only because they aren't or are assumed not to be supporters of the political parties running the local bodies of the area where they live.

Leaders of both the Trinamool Congress and the Congress said on Monday that though the 12-hour strike was called separately by the Left along with six other non-Congress parties and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in protest against the rise in prices of petroleum products it was indicative of a covert understanding "between the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the BJP"

By-elections to 12 Assembly seats in Telangana region on July 27 and the obvious power game in the ruling Congress party in Andhra Pradesh have risen the political temperature in the State. The rebellious young MP from Kadapa, Y S Jaganmohan Reddy' Odarpu Yatra" (tour to console people) from July 8 has fuelling the atmosphere.

National Report

Politics:

BJP sticks to caste count

The Bharatiya Janata Party may well be coming back to its “social engineering” agenda taken up in a big way by the former general secretary and ideologue, K.N. Govindacharya, who is no longer with the party. It has decided to stick to its view that there should be caste enumeration in the ongoing census exercise, despite the strong reservations expressed by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. On Friday, a top BJP leader categorically said the party would reiterate its position as had been made clear in the last session of Parliament. If the RSS thinks differently, “you should ask the RSS. I speak for the BJP,” the leader said. Another piece in the “social engineering” agenda is the attempt to bring Uma Bharti back to the party. She is a backward caste leader with a mass following and appeal, and the BJP thinks she could be extremely useful in helping to revive its fortunes in the Hindi heartland.

Stiff resistance

“The process [of bringing back Ms. Bharti] is on although it is not yet clinched,” a senior leader said. However, her return may not be that easy given the stiff resistance by the Madhya Pradesh unit led by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan. Also, she has few friends among the central leaders, having annoyed them many a time with her brusque remarks. However, after the Group of Ministers on caste enumeration decided on Thursday that all parties be asked to give their views in writing, some BJP leaders have been saying the party will make its views known after the government takes a decision. But a top party leader has now said categorically the BJP will stick to its view favouring caste enumeration. Ironically, there are some in the BJP who hope that the Congress-led government will not take a favourable decision and this would resolve their tangle with the RSS on the issue. In the Congress, there is also the feeling that the RSS opposition would dilute the BJP's support for caste enumeration and thus the backing for a caste count, witnessed in the Lok Sabha in the last session, would be weakened. (The Hindu)

The fight is to avoid another Bhopal, says Karat

“The fight for justice for the people of Bhopal is not just for compensation, but to ensure that Bhopal is not repeated,” said CPI(M) general secretary Prakash Karat. The Marxist leader emphasised the need to ensure that another American corporation did not risk the lives of the citizens of this country for the sake of profit. “The governments of our country have not been able to either extradite [former Union Carbide chief] Warren Anderson or ensure fair compensation to the victims of the tragedy. It is only the grit and determination of the people of Bhopal that has kept the struggle for justice alive,” said Mr. Karat. He visited the Union Carbide factory and participated in a human chain formation at the site. Survivor-organisations, however, expressed their displeasure at not being made a party to the discussions at the Gandhi Bhavan. Four survivor-organisations,

the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Stationery Karmachari Sangh, the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Purush Sangharsh Morcha, the Bhopal Group for Information and Action and Children Against Dow Carbide, wrote a letter to Mr. Karat in this regard. "We welcome your initiative in supporting the 26-year-old struggle of the survivors of Bhopal we regret that except what has appeared in the media none of us has any information on your visit. We hear that there will be a public meeting, but have no information on where it will be and at what time ... three of our organisations were not even informed, let alone consulted," read the letter. "We are thankful for the support we have received over the years from members of Parliament belonging to your party. At the same time, we wish to convey our dismay that the West Bengal government eagerly sought investment by The Dow Chemical Company, current owner of the Union Carbide, to set up a chemical complex near Haldia." (The Hindu)

Jaswant's Jinnah book old issue, closed chapter: Gadkari

BJP President Nitin Gadkari has termed as "closed" the issue of Jaswant Singh's book praising Pakistan founder M A Jinnah and said return of leaders like him will strengthen the party. "To add people to the party is going to strengthen it... It is a good thing for the party," Gadkari said when asked about return of leaders like Jaswant Singh and Ram Jethmalani to BJP. On the former defence minister not apologising for writing the book praising Jinnah which had led to his expulsion ten months ago, Gadkari said, "These are old issues. The issue is closed. Apart from the views, he is loyal to the party." "As a person, Jaswant Singh is a good man. He is a senior and experienced leader. At the time of foundation of the party, he was there. I respect him", he added. (The Indian Express)

BJP deploys leaders to make 'Bharat Bandh' a success

In an attempt to make Monday's nation-wide strike against fuel price hike a success, BJP on Sunday decided to send its senior leaders out to various state capitals to lead demonstrations and protest marches. According to the decision, party president Nitin Gadkari and Rajnath Singh will lead the protest in New Delhi. Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Sushma Swaraj will lead a protest in Bhopal while Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Arun Jaitley and vice-president Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi will do so in Lucknow. Among other leaders, Venkaiah Naidu will be in Hyderabad, Anant Kumar in Bangalore, Gopinath Munde in Mumbai and Vasundhara Raje in Jaipur, Naqvi said. He said the party leaders have been deputed to states to ensure success of the nation-wide 'bandh' called against rise in prices and "arrogant attitude of the Central government".(The Indian Express)

Govt bans book that says Nehru-Gandhis family of 'half-castes'

The Centre has banned a book that says the Nehru-Gandhis are a family of "half-castes" intent on destroying the country. The Union Home Ministry in March ordered an immediate stop to the publication and sale of Nehru Gandhi Parivar: Secular ya Varnasankar (Nehru-Gandhi Family: Secular or Half-Castes), saying the allegations against the family in the book were malicious and insidious, and unsupported by documented facts. It said that statements in the book against Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi were defamatory and scandalous, and intended to disrupt communal harmony. The book, which has chapters on Sonia Gandhi and on the 'business dealings' of Rahul

Gandhi, is a Hindi translation of a collection of articles in English posted on the Internet. Though the book has been banned, these web posts can still be accessed on the Internet. Hariram Gupta, a resident of Bhopal who has authored the book, has said his intention is to “expose the so-called secularists and enlighten the public so that Indian Hindu society is freed from their clutches”. He has said Janata Party leader Subramaniam Swamy guided him in writing the book. While Gupta was not available for a comment, Swamy told The Sunday Express that he was not aware of the book, and not very certain of having met the author. “I have not had a one-to-one session with him. He must have met me in some public meeting and made queries. My views (on the Gandhi family) are on my website and I am not responsible for anything extra that he may have written,” Swamy said over the phone from the US. The Ministry order came after advocate Dinesh Kumar Tripathi approached Allahabad High Court seeking a ban on the book that he said contained “no iota of truth”, and had “the potential of inciting communal and religious hatred”. The court asked the Union and state home ministries in February to take immediate notice of the allegations. It also asked the UP home secretary to “seize all copies” and “immediately stop the publication, circulation and sale of the book” in the state. A court hearing is scheduled on July 19. (The Indian Express)

Strike is a success: BJP

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said the all-India strike called by opposition parties against rising fuel prices was "successful", based on initial reports it had received from various parts of the country. "The bandh (strike) has been successful as far as reports received. Even reports from Congress-ruled states are saying that people have been closing down shutters," BJP spokesperson Ms Nirmala Sitharaman said. "People can't take the price spiral any more," she added. Ms Sitharaman admitted that calling a total shutdown may not be the best way to protest, but claimed there was no alternative. "A bandh is not a constructive way to protest... but how else do people protest, if the government does not listen to them...does not notice their voice? It is the only way for them to say what they want to say," she said. The BJP spokesperson said the issue of price rise had first been raised in Parliament through cut motions in the last Budget session, but they were bailed out by "phoney Opposition parties of SP and RJD". Last month, the government decontrolled the price of petrol and raised the cost of diesel by Rs 2 per litre. It also increased the prices of cooking gas and kerosene. "As if the runaway price spiral rise wasn't enough, fuel prices have been raised. Hike in diesel prices will have a cascading effect. It is not a sensitive government," Ms Sitharaman said. Justifying coordination of Left's strike with that of BJP-led NDA, CPI-M politburo member Mrs Brinda Karat said price rise was not “political party issue” but concerns all sections of the society. “The signal for the government is widespread Opposition to this hike among the people. This is not a policy of this or that political party. This is because of the impact on aam aadmi (common man),” she said. “If a government of the day which is voted into power on certain assurances, including price control, totally fails and then refuses to reverse the wrong policies which have led to price rise, then people have no alternative but to go in for such actions. This is entirely because of the attitude of the government which is totally undemocratic,” she said. Describing the strike as “unprecedented”, CPI-M general secretary Mr Prakash Karat said it “shows the people's anger against price

rise.” He said the momentum of this strike will have to be carried forward because this is an issue which affects all sections of the people. Addressing a rally at Chandni Chowk area, Mr Gadkari said, “price rise has nothing to do with your religion, caste, creed or language. Wrong economic policies and bad governance of the government are the basic reasons of price rise. (The Statesman)

No roll-back, says Centre

Supported by major Opposition parties, Bharat bandh over the hike in fuel prices is expected to disrupt normal life across the country, even as the government maintained the increase in oil prices was justified and a strike was no solution. The BJP-led NDA held a meeting to express its “outrage” at the government’s insensitivity to raising petroleum prices while inflation was rising, while the CPI (M)’s politburo condemned the government’s refusal to reconsider its decision by which it was “directly responsible for the spiralling price rise of food items and essential commodities.” The petroleum and natural gas minister, Mr Murli Deora, said in a statement that the shutdown called by Opposition parties against the fuel price hike was “totally unjustified” as the increase will have “minimal impact” on the common man. In Kolkata, Union finance minister Mr Pranab Mukherjee said that the Centre will not roll back the fuel price hike as demanded by the Opposition and the UPA's key ally, the Trinamul Congress. Mr Deora also said the Opposition parties are trying to mislead the people as these parties have been instrumental in notifying the deregulation of the prices of petroleum products and reducing subsidies in November 1997 and in implementing the programme from April 2002. The NDA working chairperson, Mr LK Advani, said after a meeting of NDA leaders: “This may be the first time in the history of India’s politics that almost all political parties will participate in the Bharat bandh.” He gave credit to NDA convenor and JD (U) president Sharad Yadav for bringing together even the non-NDA political parties for the one-day strike. Along with the NDA, the bandh will have the backing of four Left parties led by the CPI (M), which claimed the support of about a dozen additional parties. Referring to an advertisement in newspapers by the petroleum ministry claiming that a strike would not bring down prices of petroleum products, Mr Advani said, “Even we do not claim that prices will come down due to Bharat bandh. A solution lies in the hands of the government. Unfortunately, there is no indication that the government has a solution.” He alleged that the government had become “insensitive” to the issue of price rise. Mr Yadav claimed that tomorrow’s agitation would be “extraordinary and unprecedented” as people were “completely fed-up” with price rise. The CPI (M) appealed to all sections of the people to join the all India hartal and make it a big success. “This powerful all India protest action should serve as a warning to the government not to heap burdens on the people and to withdraw the price hike measures.” The deregulation of prices was meant to help private oil companies and place the people at the mercy of market-controlled oil MNCs and the domestic corporates, the party said. In a statement, the NDA said, “We can come to only one conclusion: Either the highly-reputed economic “wizards” in the government, such as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia, are nowhere as competent as claimed by the Congress Party, or that the government has succumbed once more to the pressure of greedy MNCs that control the bulk of international oil trade.”

Over a thousand held. In a bid to avert any untoward incident in the metropolis during tomorrow's nationwide shutdown, Mumbai police arrested over 1,000 "trouble makers" as a preventive measure. (The Statesman)

Bandh fuels hopes of Opposition unity

Parties opposing the government from the Left and the Right of the political spectrum are hoping that the issue of prices at the heart of the call for Monday's "Bharat Bandh" will pay rich dividends in the form of opposition unity in the coming days in Parliament. But they also know there are some gaping holes in this unity that the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance could continue to exploit successfully. The parties led by the Left and those by the Bharatiya Janata Party under the banner of the National Democratic Alliance have been at pains to make the point their calls for the bandh the same day was the result of entirely separate decisions. They were "not together" on this, but were espousing the same cause of the people — rise in prices which will be spurred further by the recent increase in the prices of petroleum products and deregulation of prices in this sector. Elated at the "most successful Bharat Bandh for more than 30 years," they are hoping for better, even if somewhat off-public-gaze floor coordination in the coming session. "The Left is with the people, we are also with the people. I have not said the Left and the NDA are together," Janata Dal (United) president and NDA convener Sharad Yadav said. "But unity seen today [Monday] on the streets will lead to political unity of action in Parliament," he emphasised, while not hiding the fact he was the link between the Left and the NDA in the coordination for the bandh. BJP president Nitin Gadkari indicated that prices were not a "political issue," on which there could be differences; neither was it related to the caste, region or religion. However, in the past the Congress was successful in weaning away potential opposition unity partners. The BJP and Left positions coincided somewhat on the India-United States civil nuclear agreement in the last year of UPA-I. But by the showdown time in Parliament, when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh moved a trust vote on the issue, the Congress had weaned away the Samajwadi Party. When a cut motion was moved by the BJP in the budget session earlier this year, the ruling party managers were again successful this time they got the SP and the Rashtriya Janata Dal MPs to walk out of the House rather than support the opposition-sponsored motion. In Uttar Pradesh, Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party did not join the bandh but has given a separate call for a bandh on Tuesday. (The Hindu)

Army to remain in Srinagar till necessary: Centre

With the Army being called out in Srinagar, the government on Wednesday said the force would remain on the streets till it was necessary, but it would like it to be short. "Army steps in only when things go out of control. It is not a situation the Army would like to be in. But whenever it is necessary and in the interest of the nation, we step in," Minister of State for Defence M M Pallam Raju told reporters here. "(Army will stay) as long as it is necessary. But we would like to make it as short as possible," Raju said, when asked about the presence of the army in Srinagar. He was interacting with the media on the sidelines of a CII-sponsored seminar on anti-tank missiles here. The minister said it became necessary for the army to stage a flag march in the state's capital at the request of the state government in view of the ground situation. "The moment the situation is under

control, everything will return to normal," he said. Indefinite curfew has been imposed in the city following violence yesterday that left three persons dead and over 70 injured. (The Hindu)

Minorities' Issues:

Attack against Islamic tenets: Muslim leaders

Several Muslim organisations have condemned the violent attack on and chopping off of the hand of T.J. Joseph, a professor in Kerala's Ernakulam district by some miscreants on the pretext of avenging blasphemy. In a joint statement, they said: "We feel that law was taking its due course against the professor for his misdeed and he was already suspended from his college for a year due to his insult to the Prophet of Islam ...". The signatories are Manzoor Alam, secretary-general, All India Milli Council; Mohammad Jafar, Naib Ameer, Jamaat e Islami Hind and acting president, All India Muslim Majlis-e Mushawarat; Zafarul-Islam Khan, former president, All India Muslim Majlis e Mushawarat and Editor of The Milli Gazette; Niaz Farouqui, secretary, Jamiat Ulama e Hind; Navaid Hamid, general secretary, Movement for Empowerment of Muslim Indians and member of the National Integration Council. The statement said: "Those who attacked Mr. Joseph forgot that the Prophet of Islam, upon whom be peace, in his own life had pardoned a Jewess who used to throw garbage on him and when she did not do so one day, the Prophet enquired about her and upon being told that she was ill, went to wish her early recovery and good health. The Prophet forgave the people of Mecca after its conquest although they had pained him, expelled him from his hometown and had waged war against him for years." The attack on the professor was against the basic tenets of Islam and the Sunnah of the Prophet which laid emphasis on forgiveness. Islam explicitly forbade one from taking the law into one's own hands when there were competent authorities to deal with an issue. "We hope that the law will take its due course to punish the criminals who attacked Mr. Joseph. They have clearly sinned and defamed Islam by committing this crime which we condemn without reservations. We also appreciate the youth wing of the Jamat-e-Islami Hind and workers of Solidarity for donating blood for Mr. Joseph in hospital." the statement said. Condemning the attack, Citizens for Justice and Peace secretary Teesta Setalvad said: "Though the identity of the assailants is still under investigation, media reports suggest that the professor was attacked by three persons armed with swords — who police reports say, belong to the Popular Front of India." If his remarks in the question paper were either inflammatory or defamatory, there were saner and democratic means to deal with them. "Are we so fickle in our convictions and in our faith that we cannot tolerate discussion and debate? If the words or thoughts or sentiments of anyone hurt us, do we have the right to resort to barbaric and unlawful means of redressal," she asked in a statement. "Outfits like the PDP and NDF in Kerala have been allowed to carry out a brand of intolerant acts unchecked. This is dangerous to the syncretic traditions of Kerala and the secular traditions of the country as a whole." (The Hindu)

Hindu Fundamentalism:

Sena slams Pawar for favouring Indo-Pak matches in India

The Shiv Sena has slammed Union Agriculture Minister and newly elected International Cricket Council (ICC) chief Sharad Pawar for favouring cricket matches with Pakistan on Indian soil. The Sena, in an editorial comment in its mouthpiece 'Saamna' on Saturday, said though it had no option but congratulate Pawar for being the second Indian and the first Maharashtrian to head the ICC, it would oppose any move to invite Pakistani cricketers to play in India. "Until Pakistanis stop the bloodbath on Indian soil, they should not touch Indian soil," the Sena stated. "It is sin even to think of playing cricket with Pakistan...While the Marathi flag is fluttering on ICC, Pawar should refrain from his mean attempt to hoist a green rag." The Sena was referring to Pawar's comment after becoming ICC chief that the visit of the Indian Home Minister to Pakistan was a good sign for improving Indo-Pak relations and subject to approval of governments of both countries, the ICC would revive Indo-Pak cricket matches. The Sena editorial also raised suspicions that Pawar being made the ICC chief could be an "international conspiracy" to keep him busy with cricket so that agricultural issues in India are ignored. Expressing concern over Pawar becoming too busy with his new post, the Sena, in its trademark style, asked whether he would quit as Union Agriculture Minister or shift the office of international cricket to Krishi Bhavan in Delhi. (The Indian Express)

Insurgency Movements:

'Govt apathy forced tribals to join Naxalites'

People need to see the other side of the picture of attacks in Chattishgarh, rather than solely blaming Maoists. "Around 650 villages were burnt under Operation Salva Jurum of the Central government and hence 3.5 lakh villagers were displaced in 2005. They were never rehabilitated by the government and hence villagers were forced to join the Naxalites to fight against their own government," said Himanshu Kumar, a social activist who is on cycle yatra from Delhi to spread awareness about the struggle of tribals in Chattisgarh. From Chandigarh, Kumar reached Ludhiana on Saturday. He will be on 15-day visit to Punjab. In the state, Operation Green Hunt Virodhi Democratic Front is supporting Himanshu and a programme was also organised by the front at Punjabi Bhawan to address the masses. Kumar was also running NGO as Vanvasi Chetna Ashram in Dantevada. He said, "I along with 250 workers tried to repose the trust of people in judiciary, but were labelled as Naxalite sympathisers by the government and even my ashram was also demolished. Our NGO rehabilitated around 30 villages. We worked with UNICEF and even the state government to rehabilitate the tribals." Kumar did not support the Naxalite action, but he added, "People should understand that why people are rebelling. Tribal women are being raped and when they go to file police complaint, they are beaten up by security. They are not getting justice and hence are picking up weapon in distress. So it is high time for government to repose trust of the tribals." He added, "our NGO was making the last effort in making people trust the judiciary, but government did not let it work out." Kumar will be visiting Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra on bicycle. Another tribal leader Abhay Singh Rathva is also along with Kumar on bicycle

yatra. (The Indian Express)

Maoists call 48-hour 'Bharat Bandh' from July 7

Maoists called for a 48-hour 'Bharat Bandh' from July 7 to protest against the killing of their senior politburo member Cherukuri Rajkumar alias Azad at Adilabad in Andhra Pradesh by the police, top Maoist leader Kishenji said on Sunday. Railways, milk, ambulance and fire services have been exempted from the shutdown. Kishenji claimed that Azad, the Maoist spokesman, was arrested from Nagpur along with another Maoist Sukdeb and taken 150 kms away to Adilabad where both were shot dead. Kishenji said from an undisclosed location that Azad had been proceeding to Dandakaranya for a meeting of the CPI (Maoist) central committee when he was caught by the police. He said the top ultras were to attend the central committee meeting to discuss developments in the context of Union Home Minister P Chidambaram's recent communication to Swami Agnivesh on talks with the Maoists. Criticising Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Union Home Minister P Chidambaram and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Konijeti Rosaiah, the elusive leader said, "It is apparent that the Centre does not want talks, because it is speaking of dialogue and yet killing our members." With Azad's killing on July 2, six of the 13 Maoist Politburo members have either been eliminated or were behind bars, he said. Speaking about the Chief Minister's meet convened on July 24 to decide on use of Indian Air Force for anti-Maoist operations, Kisenji said the IAF should not be used against poor people. "You are Indian citizens, you should not use your guns on the poor," he said in an appeal to IAF personnel. (The Indian Express)

No Army, but IAF included in anti-Naxal fight

The Central government on Tuesday said Army will not be deployed to fight the Naxals, but Air Force will be used to provide non-combat assistance to para-military and police personnel operating in the Maoist-hit regions. There was no need at present to deploy Army personnel in the Maoist-hit regions, but IAF would be used to assist the troops, Union Home Secretary G K Pillai said. Pillai is in Chhattisgarh to review the security and development situation against the backdrop of a spurt in Naxal attacks on security forces in the state. "The Air Force will only be engaged in air-lifting injured security personnel and will not take part in offensive against the Maoists," Pillai told reporters. The Centre is assisting the Chhattisgarh Government in tackling the Naxal menace, he said adding, funds have been provided to procure modern equipment for the security forces. Seven Indian Reserve Battalions (IRB) had been sanctioned for Chhattisgarh, which has requested for three more, he said. Pillai denied any rift between the state police and CRPF, saying both were coordinating and working together. He said the government was speeding up development work in the Naxal-hit regions and the Planning Commission was preparing an integrated development plan for these areas. Pillai reviewed the situation in the state at a meeting with top officials. (The Indian Express)

Economic Front:

RBI hikes short-term rates to tame inflation

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) hiked the short-term indicative interest rates (repo and

reverse repo rates) by 25 basis points to mitigate rising inflation and inflationary pressures. It has decided to increase the repo rate, the rate at which the banks borrow funds from the central bank, by 25 basis points from 5.25 per cent to 5.50 per cent and the reverse repo rate, the rate at which banks park their funds with the central bank, by 25 basis points from 3.75 per cent to 4 per cent with immediate effect. These monetary measures should contain inflation and anchor inflationary expectations going forward, while not hurting the recovery process. Easing liquidity and raising rates at the same time may seem apparently inconsistent. It should be noted in this context that the liquidity easing measures have become necessary to manage what is essentially a temporary and unanticipated development. In no way should they be viewed as inconsistent with the monetary policy stance of calibrated exit, which remains focussed on containing inflation and anchoring inflationary expectations without hurting growth. The RBI has also decided to extend liquidity management measures: Additional liquidity support to scheduled commercial banks to the extent of up to 0.5 per cent of their net demand and time liabilities (NDTL) currently set to expire on July 2, 2010 is now extended up to July 16, 2010. For any shortfall in maintenance of statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) arising out of availment of this facility, banks may seek waiver of penal interest purely as an ad hoc measure; Further, the second Liquidity Adjustment Facility (SLAF) will be conducted on a daily basis up to July 16. Explaining the rationale for extension of liquidity management measures, the RBI stated that in late May 2010, in anticipation of the liquidity pressures on account of payments for 3G spectrum and advance taxes, the Reserve Bank took certain liquidity easing measures. Even as the liquidity situation has begun to ease, these measures are being extended since liquidity tightness may persist. RBI stated that there have been significant macroeconomic developments since the April 2010 Monetary Policy Statement. At the global level, the recovery is strengthening. However, the outlook continues to be clouded by uncertainty in the Euro area. On the domestic front, RBI stated that the revised growth estimates by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) for 2009-10 and for fourth quarter of 2009-10 suggest that the recovery is consolidating. The manufacturing sector has recorded robust growth in recent months, aided among others, by expanding exports. The strong underlying growth momentum is also evidenced by the sharp upturn in the capital goods sector, acceleration in credit growth and the widening current account deficit. The developments on the inflation front, however, raise several concerns, it said. Overall WPI inflation increased to 10.2 per cent in May, up from 9.6 per cent in April. Food price inflation and consumer price inflation remain at elevated levels. There has been some moderation in food price inflation, but the price index of food articles continues to increase. "More importantly, the prices of non-food manufactured goods and fuel items have accelerated in recent months". "Although entirely justified in terms of long-term fiscal and energy conservation objectives, the recent increase in fuel prices will have an immediate impact of around one percentage point on WPI inflation, with second round effects being felt in the months ahead. "This mid-cycle policy action has been warranted by the evolving macroeconomic situation. Even as data for real GDP growth and WPI inflation became available by mid-June 2010, it was considered inadvisable to raise the policy rates as the financial system was dealing with liquidity pressures triggered by sudden build-up in government cash balances occasioned by the larger than anticipated level of 3G spectrum and broadband wireless access auction realisations." However, the RBI stated that the

monsoon situation so far had been decidedly better than during last year holding prospects for good agriculture growth. (The Hindu)

Govt loses Rs 1,800 cr to coal mafia per yr

The Central Government suffers an annual loss of Rs 1,800 crore on account of thousands of coal mafia, which involve themselves in illegal mining across different states, a senior official said. "Thousands of coal mafia (gangs) active in coal-producing belts, including that of Coal India Ltd (CIL), plunder about six million tonnes of coal annually. Going by current prices in the domestic market, this amounts to Rs 1,800 crore a year," the official said. On an average, coal sells for nearly Rs 1,000 per tonne in the domestic market. He said that the mafia is primarily active in the main coal-producing states of Jharkhand, Orissa and Chhattisgarh -- which are also affected by Maoist violence. Meanwhile, the Centre has asked states to form high-level committees to curb illegal mining. (The Indian Express)

India commits \$6.7 mn to African bank

India has agreed to donate USD 6.7 million to the African Development Bank (AfDB) to conduct studies on the development projects in the continent. "India has committed a support of USD 6.7 million to the African Development Bank for the study of development projects in Africa," a senior finance ministry official said. The funding support will take effect from January 1, 2011 and will extend over a period of three years. The Tunis-based AfDB said the donation will enable the regional development bank to conduct studies in the transport sector, particularly in the field of railways. "There is also the field of telecommunications, higher education and private sector development," AfDB vice president Aloysius Ordu said in a statement. (The Indian Express)

Inflation likely to touch 14% this month: E&Y

Global consultant firm Ernst & Young said that it expected inflation to touch 14 per cent in July from 10.16 per cent in May, spurring the RBI to raise short-term rates in its 27 July monetary review for checking spiralling prices. "Inflation will go up due to seasonality. Besides this, the fuel prices increase will also add to inflation. I expect it to reach 14 per cent by July. It will remain at that level in August before easing in September," Ernst & Young (E&Y) financial services partner Mr Ashvin Parekh said. He further said that the RBI might further hike both repo and reverse repo rates by 25 basis points each in its 27 July policy to tame inflation. On Friday, the Reserve Bank had ~ in an unscheduled announcement ~ raised key short-term policy rates by 25 basis points to tame the double-digit inflation. At present, short-term lending (repo) and short-term borrowing (reverse repo) stands at 5.50 per cent and four per cent, respectively. The wholesale price-based inflation crossed double digits (10.16 per cent provisionally) in May, but as per final figures, the rate of price rise has been 11 per cent or more since February. Food inflation eased to 12.92 per cent in the third week of June from over 16 per cent. RBI had earlier, in April, increased the repo and reverse repo rates by 25 basis points. Mr Parekh further said that the government and the RBI should do a balancing act to address issues relating to growth as well as inflation. "The cost of stimulus should not

hurt economy. Balancing act between growth and inflation is needed,” he added. The Indian economy could achieve a growth rate of 8.5 per cent in the current fiscal, Mr Parekh said, adding that the manufacturing as well as services sectors were likely to achieve good growth. (The Statesman)

Rupee dips to 47/dollar; at 1-month low

The rupee weakened to its lowest in nearly a month on Wednesday, as local shares dipped, but traders said the performance of the dollar overseas would be watched for cues. At 9:18 a.m., the partially convertible rupee was at 47.00/01 per dollar, its weakest since June 10, and lower than Tuesday's close of 46.89/90. Asian currencies were mixed versus the dollar. The benchmark Sensex was trading down 0.26 per cent and the index of the dollar against six majors was up 0.14 per cent. The euro dipped on Wednesday but was still hovering near a recent seven-week high, with traders saying it could rise further in the near term due to doubts about a recovery in the U.S. economy and positive technical signals. The Reserve Bank of India is likely to raise interest rates again in its quarterly review on July 27, a new survey found, and rates at the end of the year are likely to be higher than forecast before Friday's unexpected 25 basis point rise. (The Indian Express)

India likely to harvest bumper crop this year: Pawar

India is likely to have bumper foodgrain production in the 2010-11 crop year on the back of a good monsoon and a rise in area under cultivation, food and agriculture minister Mr Sharad Pawar said. Foodgrain production dropped by seven per cent in the 2009-10 crop year (July-June) to 218.19 million tonne from a record 234.47 million tonnes in the previous year because of a severe drought that hit almost half of the country. “The way sowing operation is undergoing and reports of good monsoon from the states, we are likely to have a bumper crop (production) this year,” Mr Pawar said on the sidelines of a sugar conference. Earlier this week, the minister had said that area under kharif crops such as paddy, oilseeds and pulses is expected to be higher this crop year vis-a-vis the preceding two years. The likely bumper production will help contain food inflation, as well as overall inflation, which is currently ruling above 10 per cent. Mr Pawar said food inflation has started coming down substantially, giving relief to consumers. The falling trend in prices will continue in the coming weeks, he said. Asked about the impact of floods on crops in Punjab and Haryana, he said: “I have talked to the concerned states. There is a problem, but in limited areas. I will get a detailed report in a day or two. I don't think the situation is that serious.” Punjab and Haryana are the two leading foodgrain producers in the country. The sowing of kharif crops began in June with the onset of the south-west monsoon and will continue till September. Monsoon rains which is the lifeline of Indian agriculture, have already covered the entire country. About 60 per cent of the total area under cultivation is dependent on the monsoon. According to official data, paddy had been sown in 46.46 lakh hectare of area as on 1 July against 45.43 lakh hectare in the year-ago period. Meanwhile, the area under sugarcane cultivation had gone up to 47.37 lakh hectare as on 1 July, 2010, from 41.79 lakh hectare in the previous year, while the area under cotton increased to 43.68 lakh hectare from 29.17 lakh hectare. Furthermore, oilseeds had been sown in 28.86 lakh hectares of area as on 1 July against 12.96 lakh hectare in the previous year.(The Statesman)

Information Technology:

IT keeps Indian Rlys on the move

Every day a million passengers reserve their berths and seats through the Indian Railways' passenger reservation system and close to 14 million passengers buy unreserved tickets. The CRIS ~ Indian Railways' single window IT server ~ makes all these and many other challenging tasks possible through its expertise in information technology. An autonomous society under the aegis of ministry of railways, CRIS (Centre for Railway Information Systems) was set up in 1986 to take care of the railways varied needs in the IT sector. CRIS not only facilitates smooth delivery of passenger tickets but also ensures that all the 11000 trains that ply through the length and breadth of the rail network begin and conclude their journeys without any hitch everyday. The various issues related to the use of IT in railways and in the government were discussed at a symposium here today. The director PR in the railways, Mr Anil Saxena, said the freight operations information system developed by CRIS had been providing value added services to freight customers. He said today the e-payment facility within this application accounts for nearly 50 per cent of the total revenue of Rs 70,000 crore earned by the railways through the freight operations. CRIS IT facilities have ensured that all the 67 divisions of Indian railways have computerised control offices. This has been helping railways capture movements of every train across every station through the control office applications. "The crew management system is being used everyday by 30,000 crew members of the railways to sign on and sign off from their work places. The integrated coaching management system helps manage over 40,000 passenger coaching vehicles," Mr Saxena said. (The Statesman)

Foreign Relations/Geo-strategic developments:

Protest outside Israeli Consulate

A group of people from different organisations protested outside the Israeli Consulate in Mumbai on Friday over the detention of a bearded Muslim man who was standing outside the building earlier this week. Mohammad Saleem, a 42-year-old civil engineer who had come on work to the area, was checking his mobile phone when staff from the Consulate approached and interrogated him. He was then taken to the police station where it was learnt that his bearded appearance had aroused the Consulate's suspicion. Yusuf Abrahani, a protestor, said: "You can't prevent an Indian from moving in a city just because he is sporting a beard. They are targeting a community. Young Muslims would get scared to wear a beard at this rate. Also, you cannot damage someone's reputation like this. We have spoken to the Police Commissioner and he admitted that it was a mistake." Placards carried slogans such as 'Your forefathers Abraham, Moses and David, and, O, Israel, they were all bearded.' The protesters termed Israel "a terrorist state" and called for the termination of diplomatic relations with the country. "The reason for the extremely communal behaviour of the police is the increasing atmosphere of Islamophobia and the demonisation of Indian Muslims in the climate of terror and fear, systematically induced by the government machinery, especially the casteist elements within the Intelligence

Bureau and the Anti Terrorism Squad, via the corporate media. This current episode of humiliation has angered all self-respecting citizens,” read a press release of the Bharat Bachao Amdolan, an organisation that participated in the agitation. After a brief negotiation with the police, the agitators declared that if no action was taken by Thursday against those responsible for the incident, a bigger agitation would follow. (The Hindu)

Chinese rail link to Pak matter of concern: India

India on Wednesday expressed "concern" over China's plans to have a rail link with Pakistan through the Karakoram ranges, but said it was doing its own preparations to counter such a move. "It is definitely a matter of concern. But we are taking our counter measures and we are doing our own preparation," Minister of State for Defence M M Pallam Raju told reporters here. He was responding to a question on the Chinese plans to build the rail link to Pakistan and reach the Arabian Sea via Gilgit-Baltistan region in Pak-occupied Kashmir. Raju said both China and Pakistan had made it "very apparent" that they were "working closely together and cooperating closely" on defence and strategic issues. China has already built a rail line up to the Indian borders along the Tibetan plateau and now the plan is to have the rail link to Pakistan and reach the Arabian Sea. Media reports had suggested that a Memorandum of Understanding for the rail link will be signed between Beijing and Islamabad soon. (The Indian Express)

India, Iran ink air, energy pacts

Undeterred by recent sanctions against Teheran, India signed six agreements, including air services and energy pacts, with Iran and both sides also decided to cooperate closely in stabilising the violence-torn Afghanistan. The agreements were signed after external affairs minister Mr SM Krishna and Iranian finance minister Mr Seyed Shamseddin Hosseini concluded the two-day meeting of the joint commission here. The two sides also agreed to expand counter terror cooperation and signed an agreement on transfer of sentenced persons. The pacts, including an air services agreement and memorandum of understanding (MoU) in new and renewable energy, are part of efforts to boost bilateral trade from \$15 billion to \$30 billion. The two sides identified infrastructure, oil, gas, petrochemicals, mining, transport, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, textiles and agriculture as priority areas of economic cooperation. They also agreed to give an impetus to negotiations on double taxation avoidance treaty and a bilateral investment pact that could give a big boost to trade and investment between the two sides. Two more pacts on science and technology cooperation were inked. The next meeting of the joint commission will be held in Teheran. An MoU on cooperation in small scale industry was inked between National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) and Iranian Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organisation (ISIPO). Another MoU on cooperation between Central Pulp and Paper Research Institute of India (CPPRI) and Gorgan University of Agricultural Science and Natural Resources (GUASNR) was signed. The air services will increase the number of flights between the two countries and add two more cities to the schedule. Besides giving a boost to economic ties, the two sides, which backed the Northern Alliance in the run up to the ouster of the Taliban regime in 2001, decided to give a strategic cast to their relationship by agreeing to cooperate closely in helping stabilise Afghanistan. They have decided to hold "structured and

regular consultations" on the issue, said reliable sources. The Iranian side assured India of accelerating the pace of work at Chabahar port that will provide Indian goods an alternative access route to Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan, said the sources. The Iranian side aired appreciation over India taking a forthright stand on the US sanctions. Ahead of the talks, foreign secretary Mrs Nirupama Rao had said at a seminar that India has always advocated diplomacy to resolve the Iranian nuclear issue and stressed that it should be resolved within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Without naming the USA, Mrs Rao said that such "unilateral sanctions" can have "a direct and adverse impact" on India's energy security. (The Statesman)

Military:

IAF to upgrade SU-30 fighter aircraft

Modernising its fighter jet fleet, the Indian Air Force is going to upgrade its SU-30 MKI combat aircraft with the help of Russia. "As part of IAF's modernisation programme, we are going to upgrade 50 Sukhoi-30 MKI aircraft with help of original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) from Russia," defence ministry sources told PTI. "Su-30 MKIs have been inducted into the IAF in four phases. The ones to be upgraded are from the first phase and the project is likely to be completed in the next three to four years," they added. Of the 50 aircraft, around five would be sent to the Russian facilities while the remaining would undergo upgrading within India, they said. Under the modernisation programme, the aircraft will be upgraded to the latest standards and equipped with modern avionics and various other capabilities. "The airframe of these aircraft would also be strengthened to equip them with air-launched version of the 290 km range BrahMos supersonic cruise missile," the sources said. The SU-30s were inducted into the IAF in late 90s and at present six squadrons of the aircraft are in service. The first squadron was of the Su-30 was of the "K" variant but later they were also upgraded to the latest MKI version. Till now, the IAF has placed orders for around 280 of these aircraft of which over 100 have been inducted. IAF is already upgrading its two main fighter aircraft fleet of 60 MiG-29s and is about to sign an around US\$ two billion deal with France to modernise its 50 Mirage aircraft. The Jaguar, MiG-27 and MiG-21 fleets have already been upgraded by the force. (The Statesman)

Indian Occupied Kashmir:

60 injured in clashes across J&K

With no let-up in tension, authorities on Friday clamped curfew in Srinagar and other major towns of the Kashmir Valley to foil the "Eidgah march" called by the separatist Hurriyat Conference. At least 60 people were injured in clashes as people tried to defy curfew at several places. Apprehending more trouble, the authorities, for the first time in a week, imposed curfew on Srinagar and asked people to remain indoors. Additional police and CRPF personnel were deployed. Prayers in central Jamia Masjid and other major mosques could not be offered on Friday due to restrictions enforced by the government. Kashmir's head priest Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and other separatist leaders

were put under house arrest. Police sealed all roads leading to the Eidgah as Hurriyat Conference (Geelani) asked people to reach there to register their protest against alleged human rights violations.

Processions taken out

Despite curfew slogan-shouting people took out processions in several places in Srinagar, Sopore, Baramulla, Handwara and Kupwara and clashed with police. At least 60 people, including several policemen, were injured in the clashes. Two of them are stated to be critical in hospital. Abdur Rashid Paul, Additional Superintendent of Police, Kupwara, and guard of another police official of Handwara were among those injured. An attempt by a mob to attack the house of Lok Sabha MP Shariefuddin Shariq in Handwara was foiled by the police guards. A senior police officer told The Hindu that the situation was under control though tension prevailed in most parts. “Our effort is to avoid civilian casualties despite provocations”. People are facing difficulties on account of shortage of food and other essential items. “We are not able to go out. We do not have even milk for babies,” said a resident from Nowhatta in Srinagar downtown. Reports from Baramulla and Sopore also suggest that a crisis on this account was brewing. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, head of a faction of the Hurriyat Conference, expressed strong resentment over the continuing curfew and prevention of people going for Friday congregations in the major mosques of the valley. ‘Whenever Kashmiri people bring momentum in the peaceful struggle for their right to ‘self-determination,’ the Government of India blames Pakistan and tries to misguide everyone, both at the national and international level,’ the Mirwaiz said in a statement here. The Mirwaiz also condemned the imposition of curfew for the past five days and the “continuous siege of the local population.” He demanded the release of innocent teenagers, political prisoners and release of leaders from house arrest. A Hurriyat spokesman criticised a Delhi-based news channel for its “deceptive and biased reporting regarding the Amarnath Yatra. Such media outlets in India are trying to give a communal bend to the ongoing peaceful protests.” (The Hindu)

4 more killed in Srinagar firing, curfew imposed

A student and a young woman were among four persons killed in Srinagar as J-K Police and CRPF opened fire to quell protests, including those marching in a procession with the body of a 17-year-old who had been missing since the previous evening. With the situation in the city deteriorating 16 people have so far been killed in the recent wave of protests the authorities clamped curfew but failed to put a lid on the protests. The state government sought the help of the Army to restore order. Loudspeakers of mosques were being used to inform people about the killings. Separatists were urging people to take to the streets, stage a 48-hour sit-in and organise community kitchens. An angry crowd attacked the ancestral house in Magarmal Bagh of the late Mohideen Shah, a National Conference stalwart who was very close to Sheikh Abdullah — Shah’s son Irfan was NC youth wing president before he was elected from Batamaloo. The CRPF opened fire at five places in the city while scores of young men hurled stones and bricks at securitymen as they tried to enforce the curfew. Differences between the CRPF and local police took an ugly turn this morning when CRPF men allegedly manhandled two police officers,

including SP (South) Irshad Ahmad. The new round of protests began after 17-year-old Muzaffar Ahmad Bhat went missing on Tuesday evening. He was allegedly taken away by police after they chased stone-throwers who had targeted a minister's cavalcade in Tengpora. "We met Muzaffar on the banks of the stream. We were three and the police were chasing us. He gave me his wallet and asked me to run home and inform the family," said Muzamil Ahmad (10), a Class V student, who was the last to see Muzaffar alive. "Policemen in Rakshak vehicles caught him. They hit him and put him in a vehicle." People from Gungbug, Tengpora and Batamaloo joined Muzaffar's family and blocked the Srinagar-Baramulla highway. The police denied any knowledge of Muzaffar's whereabouts and this infuriated the crowd. People spread out mats and sat on the road, demanding the release of the boy. "At daybreak, the police and CRPF came in several vehicles and fired tear smoke shells to disperse the sit-in. They then made the announcement about the curfew," said Sarfaraz Ahmad, a neighbour. "They (police) told us they had found Muzaffar's body in the stream. They killed him, there were torture marks on his head and neck," he alleged. The body was taken to the police control room where doctors conducted a post-mortem. "He had blunt trauma at two places on the head. He had been hit before he died," said one of the doctors. "Our conclusion is that he fell unconscious after he was hit in the head and died later." The police handed over the body to the family early this morning. Agitated, people decided to take the body in a procession to the martyrs' grave downtown. As people crossed the foot-bridge on the stream to reach the highway, CRPF men appeared on the embankment and opened fire, killing 35-year-old Fayaz Ahmad, an employee of the Floriculture department. Another person was seriously wounded. Police took both bodies with them but word spread and people took to the streets across the city. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, chief of the Hurriyat moderates, led a protest in downtown city but this angered the crowd because he did not go to Gungbug. At 2.30 pm, police and CRPF men battled stone-throwing youths in Danderkhah locality of Batamaloo. They finally opened fire to quell the protest. A bullet hit 25-year-old Fancy Jan who was standing at a window in her house. Police said she was watching the clashes when a bullet fired in the air hit her. She was taken to hospital where she was declared dead. Clashes between the protesters and the securitymen spread. Around 4.30 pm, protesters in Maisuma were fired upon and three youths were critically injured. They were taken to SMHS hospital where 18-year-old Abrar Ahmad Khan was pronounced dead. One of the injured, Owais Ahmad, had been hit in the chest. Doctors said his condition was critical. (The Indian Express)

Army said no to request for flag march in Sopore

The Army turned down a J&K government request for a flag march through Sopore town after a 20-year-old was killed in firing by CRPF on June 28. The Omar Abdullah government, through the Deputy Commissioner, put in the request for the flag march with General Officer Commanding, Kilo Force, Major General N George. This request was made after the state government alleged that the CRPF, there to assist the local police, had gone out of control. Sources said the Kilo Force commander immediately communicated the state government request to Northern Army Commander Lt General B S Jaswal, saying the Abdullah government wanted the Army out in Sopore to control the law and order situation. The request for an Army flag march was also passed on by Srinagar to New Delhi at the highest levels. Lt Gen Jaswal asked Army Headquarters to

take a decision and told Maj Gen George to hold on. The Army Headquarters debated on the request and decided to reply in the negative — the brass made it clear that the Army was not a riot-control force and the primary duty of the Kilo Force was to neutralise militants, not fire against its own people. (The Indian Express)

'Maximum crackdown' on miscreants in Kashmir: Cabinet

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), which discussed the situation in Kashmir today, decided to use army as a "deterrent" and that security forces will ensure strict enforcement of curfew. Sources said the CCS, which was chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, took stock of the situation in the light of the Centre's decision to deploy army in the wake of deteriorating law and order situation. At the request of the state government, the Centre decided on deploying army to assist the civil authorities in restoring law and order in the wake of spiralling protests in Srinagar following the killing of three persons. The meeting decided that army would be used in "peripheral" areas and not in congested areas. It also decided that police and security forces should ensure that there should be no violation of curfew and that it should be strictly enforced. The security Cabinet also felt that "maximum crackdown" should be carried out against miscreants. Army staged a flag march in some areas of curfew-bound Srinagar this morning. Home Minister P Chidambaram, Defence Minister A K Antony, Cabinet Secretary K M Chandrashekar, NSA Shiv Shankar Menon, Home Secretary G K Pillai, and Defence Secretary Pradeep Kumar attended the meeting. There was no official word on any decision taken at the hour-long meeting. Earlier, Minister of State for Defence M M Pallam Raju had said that army would remain on the streets in Srinagar till it was necessary but the government would like it to be short.

Army stages flag march in Srinagar

Army on Wednesday staged flag marches in curfew-bound Srinagar after it was moved into the city to assist civil authorities in maintaining law and order following violent protests that had left three persons dead. The flag marches were conducted in Lal Chowk in the heart of the city and on the Srinagar Airport Road, a defence spokesman said. The state government had sought the help of the army in the wake of spiralling protests in the city. Curfew imposed yesterday after three persons were killed allegedly in firing by security forces is being strictly enforced in the city. Curfew was also in force in Anantnag, Pampore, Pulwama and Kulgam in South Kashmir and Kupwara and Bandipore in North Kashmir. Restrictions were in force at Sopore and Baramulla where Army also staged a flag march. The Cabinet Committee on Security chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met in New Delhi this morning and is understood to have discussed the situation in the Kashmir Valley. Union Home Secretary G K Pillai is scheduled to visit Srinagar today to review the law and order situation there. The army was called out on the streets of Srinagar late last night to enforce the curfew keeping in view the non-availability of adequate number of police personnel, many of whom have been deployed for Amarnath Yatra and counter-insurgency operations, official sources said. Speaking on the army deployment, Minister of State for Defence M M Pallam Raju said the army would remain deployed in Srinagar as long as necessary but government would like it to be short. Protesters had clashed with security forces in various places including Khanyar, Nowhatta, Rajouri Kadal, Barzulla, Fateh Kadal, Braripora, Tatoo

Ground, Hyderpora, Baghat, Rambagh, Jehangir Chowk, Maisuma, and Habbakadal, leaving many people injured. On the deployment of the army in Srinagar, state minister and Congress leader Taj Mohiuddin said, "We requested the army to help us in maintaining peace. Peace is our first priority. They will be the supportive force we need for keeping peace. "The district administration thinks that the army is needed to keep calm in the valley. The anger is there," he said. State Law Minister Ali Mohammad Sagar asked the people to respect the curfew restrictions. "We will strictly implement the curfew restrictions. Government will try its best to restore normalcy. We are trying our best to normalise the situation," he said. Referring to stone-pelting protestors, he said, "Some elements, some agencies were getting the youths on the roads for implementing their political agenda. So we are trying our best to control the situation. It is just the question of saving the people from this situation". The state government has advised deputy commissioners throughout the valley to enforce prohibitory orders in their respective jurisdiction. They have also been instructed to impose curfew wherever necessary, an official spokesman said. Police vans fitted with public address system announced imposition of curfew this morning and also advised people to remain indoors. Curfew passes issues to journalists were cancelled. Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah had appealed to the people to maintain calm and not to violate curfew restrictions. (The Indian Express)

Curbs on media in Kashmir Valley

After seeking the Army's help to restore law and order, the Jammu and Kashmir government on Wednesday virtually banned the media in the Valley by imposing severe restrictions on journalists. Authorities cancelled curfew passes issued to journalists and instructed the police and the CRPF not to allow any mediaperson to move around. Consequently, a number of journalists working for local, national and international organisations were not allowed to reach their offices. PTI bureau chief in Srinagar A.M. Sofi was stopped by the CRPF in the Natipora area and asked to return home. "They told me that they had instructions from the top not to allow any journalist," he said. This reporter was not allowed to cross the Hyderpora bypass. The police also clamped restrictions on the Press Enclave at Pratap Park, where most of the newspaper offices are located, asking the employees to stay indoors. The cameras of some TV channels were seized. Cameras of NDTV and ANI were confiscated by the police on M.A. Road and newsmen of other channels were asked not to move out of their offices. "It is like marshal law," one journalist said. This is the first time that such restrictions have been put on the media. District Magistrate of Srinagar Meraj Kakroo confirmed that all the curfew passes of journalists stood cancelled. "The Army is out so no curfew pass will be entertained," he said.

No papers on Thursday

Newspaper owners have decided not to publish the papers on Thursday in view of the restrictions. "How can we publish the paper when not a single person is allowed to move around," Bashir Manzar, editor of English daily Kashmir Images, told. He said such curbs were unheard of, that too in a democratically-elected set-up. (The Hindu)

Social front:

Panel to probe 'honour' killings

The government proposes to constitute a committee of women experts to go into the recent spurt in 'honour' killings in several parts of the country and suggest remedial measures. The announcement was made by Minister of State for Women and Child Development Krishna Tirath after a discussion with Home Minister P. Chidambaram on the issue of killings of couples who married within the same sub-caste or against the wishes of their parents. "The issue is why honour killings take place. It is a social evil and I am in favour of a study on it," Ms. Tirath said. (The Hindu)

192 trains disrupted, 73 cancelled due to daylong shutdown

Rail operations in India, especially in the east, were severely affected today as 73 trains were cancelled and 192 disrupted on account of the day-long shutdown called by the Opposition to protest the hike in fuel prices and high inflation. Among the trains cancelled, 59 were mails and express services, while 14 were passenger carriages. In addition, 174 other trains could not complete their journeys in time, 12 were terminated ahead of final destination and five were diverted or rescheduled. Giving the statistics, a spokesperson for Indian Railways said operations were mainly affected in north-east, east, south-east and north-frontier parts of the country. "The operations in other parts of the country were by and large smooth," he said. Some of the important trains cancelled included Ranchi-Shatabdi Express, Black Diamond Express, Poorva Express, Shantiniketan Express, Asansol Inter-City Express, Toofan Express, Bhagirathi Express, Howrah-Malda Express and Varanasi Express. "We had issued a prior alert asking our employees to report to their stations either early in the morning or previous evening itself. Every possible step is being taken to restore normalcy at the earliest," the spokesperson said. The Indian Railways ~ the second largest railroad network under a single management ~ runs as many as 10,000 passenger trains daily, covering a distance of 64,219 km, to ferry 1.8 million passengers. "The ministry has also appealed to the protesters to spare Indian Railways, since it is the lifeline of the country, providing essential services to the underprivileged people and those needing its services during emergencies," the official said. Incidentally, among those who had called for the daylong shutdown was the Socialist Unity Centre for India, a prominent alliance partner of railway minister Ms Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress. (The Statesman)

First official estimate: An NGO for every 400 people in India

India has possibly the largest number of active non-government, not-for-profit organizations in the world. A recent study commissioned by the government put the number of such entities, accounted for till 2009, at 3.3 million. That is one NGO for less than 400 Indians, and many times the number of primary schools and primary health centres in India. Even this staggering number may be less than the actual number of NGOs active in the country. This is because the study, commissioned in 2008, took into consideration only those entities which were registered under the Societies Registration

Act, 1860 or the Mumbai Public Trust Act and its variants in other states. Such organisations can be registered under a plethora of Acts such as the Societies' Act, 1860, Indian Trust Act, 1882, Public Trust Act, 1950, Indian Companies Act, 1956 (Section 25), Religious Endowment Act, 1863, The Charitable and Religious Trust Act, 1920, the Mussalman Wakf Act, 1923, the Wakf Act, 1954, and Public Wakfs (Extension of Limitation Act) Act, 1959, etc. According to the government study, the largest number of NGOs are registered in Maharashtra (4.8 lakh), followed by Andhra Pradesh (4.6 lakh), UP (4.3 lakh), Kerala (3.3 lakh), Karnataka (1.9 lakh), Gujarat (1.7 lakh), West Bengal (1.7 lakh), Tamil Nadu (1.4 lakh), Orissa (1.3 lakh) and Rajasthan (1 lakh). More than 80 per cent of registrations come from these 10 states. While the government will begin studying the finances of the sector in the second phase of the survey, estimates from within the sector suggest that NGOs, or NPIs, raise anywhere between Rs 40,000 crore and Rs 80,000 crore in funding annually. The government has been the biggest donor Rs 18,000 crore was set aside for the social sector in the XI Plan followed by foreign contributors (according to the latest figures available, around Rs 9,700 crore was raised in 2007-08). Around Rs 1,600-2,000 crore was donated to established religious bodies such as the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams. Individual donors are emerging as the biggest and most lucrative source of funds. According to an internal study by a leading foreign NGO headquartered in the UK, donations by individuals are expected to have grown from around Rs 2,200 crore in 2005 to Rs 8,100 crore by a conservative estimate, and to around Rs 21,000 crore by more liberal estimates. The increase in the number of donors has coincided with a sharp increase in the number of new NGOs in the past decade. According to the government study, there were only 1.44 lakh registered societies till 1970. In the following three decades, the number rose to 1.79 lakh, 5.52 lakh, and 11.22 lakh. The maximum increase in the number of registrations happened after 2000. Private sector companies, one of the biggest donors in the developed world, are, however, yet to wake up to the phenomenon of charity and philanthropy in India. Indian companies spend less than one per cent of their annual profits on such activities, against 1.5 per cent to over 2 per cent spent by their UK and the US-based counterparts, says the study by the international NGO. "The government study included, these are all broad estimates. Nobody really knows the ground reality because this sector has grown very fast in the past many years. Besides, there have been no efforts to maintain an official database or even to encourage such entities to be transparent about their activities as well as fundings," said Soumitro Ghosh, founder CEO, CSO Partners, a Chennai-based organization set up to encourage transparency in the functioning of the sector. (The Indian Express)

Honour killing: Rod inserted in 19-yr-old's eyes

The postmortem conducted on a 19-year-old suspected to have been the victim of an honour killing in Fatehabad district has confirmed that he was murdered by inserting a steel rod in his eyes, rupturing the nerves leading to the brain. The viscera of the girl killed with him has been sent for forensic tests. The bodies of Reena (16) and Sham Mohammad had been recovered from the playground of Government Senior Secondary School, Somian village, in Fatehabad on Sunday. They reportedly fell in love while studying in the same school two years ago, and the village elders and panchayat members

Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh during the next two days. Thereafter, the rains over the region would decrease, with the rain belt moving eastwards, resulting in increased rainfall over the remaining parts of Uttar Pradesh, as also Bihar, sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim and the north-eastern States.

Relief for policy-makers

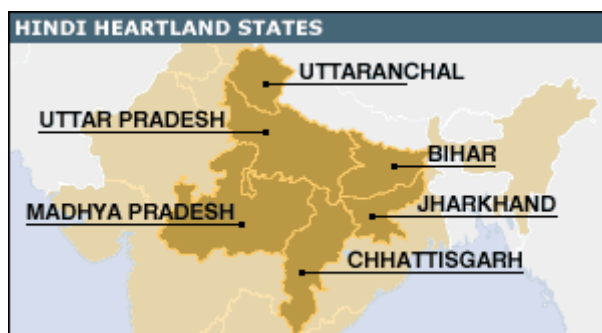
The arrival of the monsoon over north India should come as a relief for policy-makers and other stakeholders, who were worried as the system remained almost stationary for nearly two weeks from June 18 after reaching up to the middle of the country.

Northwards movement

A break came around July 2, with the formation of a low pressure area over coastal Orissa and adjoining north-west Bay of Bengal. As the system moved westwards, the northern limit of the system also began to move northwards albeit slowly. The clincher came on Sunday night when the system moved over to Rajasthan and interacted with a western disturbance that prevailing over Jammu and Kashmir and its neighbourhood. This brought rainfall to Delhi and other parts of the north India and pushed up the northern limit of the system to cover almost the entire country, barring a pocket in the western-most part of Rajasthan. (The Hindu)

Regional Report

Central India (Hindi Heartland)



Politics:

Be positive to development in UP: Maya tells Manmohan

Chief Minister Mayawati has appealed to the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to adopt positive approach towards various development schemes for the state pending at the level of the Central government. The CM, in a press release, has welcomed the PM's assurance on the development issue of Kanpur and requested him to revive the closed industrial units that were set up by the Centre in the past. Reacting to the Singh's reference to

power problem in UP during his speech at a conference at Merchant Chambers of Uttar Pradesh in Kanpur on Saturday, the CM said the state has got the power problem in its legacy. She said her government has already issued a white paper in this regard on July 18, 2009. She said it was wrong to blame the state government for delay in approval of the two proposed power plants in the state. She also justified her demand for 90 per cent share of the power from the two proposed plants. She said the state government is supposed to make arrangement for resources like land and water for the two power projects. The CM said her government is making best efforts for the development of Kanpur Nagar with its limited resources. Earlier in the day, Mayawati went to receive Manmohan Singh on his arrival to the industrial town on a day-long visit. "She greeted Manmohan Singh on his arrival, offered him a bouquet and exchanged pleasantries," said sources. However, Mayawati left immediately after receiving Singh. (The Indian Express)

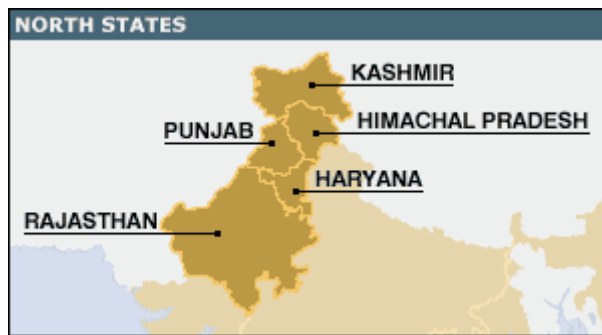
'Nitish fooling minorities like Lalu Prasad'

Nationalist Congress party (NCP) General Secretary Tariq Anwar said Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's love for the Muslims was nothing but a 'damage control' move after his pictures came up in local dailies holding the hands of Gujrat Chief Minister Narendra Modi. Kumar had charged the Centre with being anti-muslim in his bid to cover the lost ground among the minority voters after the advertisements which showed him holding the hands of his Gujrat counterpart were published, Anwar told reporters. He said Kumar was following the footsteps of Lalu Prasad who befooled the minorities for 15 years and did precious little for the welfare of the Muslims. With the assembly elections round the corner, Kumar has begun talking about the welfare of the minorities that form around 16 per cent votes, Kumar said. Referring to Kumar's promise to improve the lot of 'Pasmanda' Muslim community, Anwar said if Kumar was so serious about their welfare, he should not hesitate in announcing reservation for this section of the Muslims on the lines for the backward sections in southern states and West Bengal. (The Indian Express)

Social front:

Economic Front:

The North

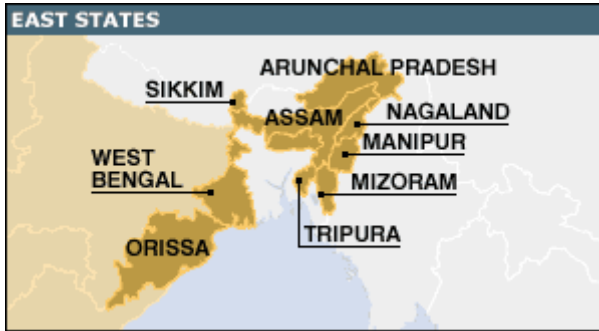


Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

The East



Politics:

Bengal shuts down

Normal life was disrupted in West Bengal Monday as road and rail services were affected and government offices were closed following a 12-hour shutdown called by non-Congress parties in the country. Supporters of the state's ruling Left held rallies from early morning in several parts here, put road blocks and forcibly prevented people from going to work. No public buses were plying and roads wore a deserted look. Government offices remained closed as the shutdown turned out to be a government-sponsored strike. "No untoward incidents were reported across the state. The strike is peaceful. We have deployed policemen to handle any kind of untoward situation and maintain law and order across the state," inspector-general (law and order) Mr Surajit Kar Purkayastha said. Several long distance trains were cancelled and others stranded at different places as political supporters squatted on railway tracks at different sections. Passengers of the Sealdah and Howrah railway stations as well as the NSC Bose airport were worst sufferers. They will have to wait without food and water till train services resume in the state. "Train services were badly hit. Bandh (shutdown) supporters squatted on railway tracks, obstructing train movements on different sections. Several trains were stranded and some cancelled," an Eastern Railway spokesperson said. Services of the city's lifeline ~ Metro Rail ~ were also disrupted, despite assurances that metro services would run smoothly. Left supporters with flags and banners crowded in front of different metro stations and forced metro employees to shut station gates. On Sunday, Metro authorities had assured that measures would be taken to run the services smoothly. Also, all Metro employees were asked to come on time the next day. Shutdown supporters did not spare city's information technology hub also. Hundreds of Left activists organised rallies and prevented IT professionals from going to offices. "The bandh will be a successful one as people of West Bengal are supporting the it wholeheartedly. No untoward incidents were reported. The bandh has been peaceful by and large till now," Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) state secretariat member Mr Shyamal Chakraborty said. (The

Statesman)

Politics leave poor by wayside

In Marxist-ruled Bengal, about seven lakh people living below poverty line are being deprived of the benefits of several pension schemes only because they aren't ~ or are assumed not to be ~ supporters of the political parties running the local bodies of the area where they live. The above figure is an official, if rough, estimate made by the state panchayats and rural development department. After finding that such a large number of poor are being deprived of the benefits of the pension schemes for political reasons, the panchayats and rural development department has started an initiative to bring all these people under these schemes, for which special camps are being organised across the state. The state panchayat and rural development minister, Mr Anisur Rahman has approached the chief minister, Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and the state finance minister, Mr Asim Dasgupta in this connection, informing them that the department would require additional financial assistance to provide pension to all these eligible poor. The department officials were surprised when nearly 7,000 people in Domkal block in Murshidabad alleged they were being denied pension as the parties running the local bodies consider them to be supporters of other parties. A special camp was held last week to look into these complaints. Surprisingly, more than 6,000 complaints were found to be true. "We immediately enlisted more than 3,000 people in the list of pension beneficiaries. Another 3,000 people would be included in the list soon, after certain technical problems are resolved. There are various reasons behind their exclusion from the list of beneficiaries but the majority of the poor were being deprived only because of petty politics," said Mr Anisur Rahman. The minister also said he has asked all the district magistrates to organise such special camps in all the blocks within the next two months where all the poor who have been deprived of benefits can let the authorities know about their grievances. "It appears that about six to seven lakh poor are being deprived of several pensions schemes across the state these days. We will try to bring all these people in the list of pension beneficiaries within the next two months. I have taken up the issue with the chief minister and the finance minister and urged them to sanction the money required. It is sad to see that eligible poor are being deprived of their rights only because of their political colour," added Mr Rahman. There are three pension schemes available for the people living below the poverty line. Beneficiaries of widow pension, disabled pension and old-age pension get Rs 400 every month, of which the Centre provides Rs 200 and the state contributes Rs 200. Officials, however, said all parties could be blamed for the situation as 50 per cent of gram panchayats in the state are being run by the Opposition parties after the 2008 panchayat polls. (The Statesman)

Mamata sees understanding between CPI(M) and BJP

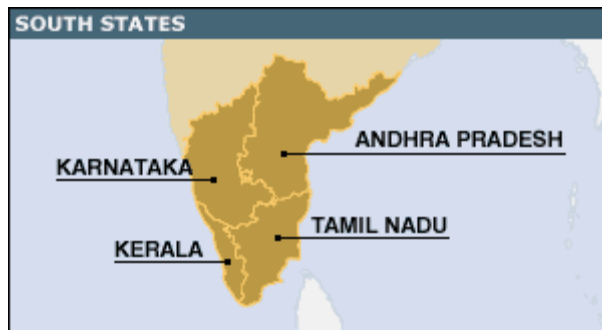
Leaders of both the Trinamool Congress and the Congress said on Monday that though the 12-hour strike was called separately by the Left along with six other non-Congress parties and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in protest against the rise in prices of petroleum products it was indicative of a covert understanding "between the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the BJP". "The CPI(M) and the BJP are two flowers of the

same stem”, said Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee. “We are very happy that the secret relationship between the two parties has been revealed”, Manas Bhunia, president of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee remarked. Criticising the bandh, Ms. Banerjee said that though she was against the rise in prices of fuel and cooking gas her party, a partner in the United Progressive Alliance, “will continue to support the government.” “We had given a commitment to the people before the (Lok Sabha) elections that we would support the (UPA) government for five years. Our protests (against the hike) will be expressed through democratic ways...I do not believe in calling a bandh every month”, she added. Alleging that the CPI(M) was not for development and progress, Mamata said if the Left party was so concerned about the impact of the hike on the common people, it should have withdrawn cess on the petroleum products. “We have not raised railway fares despite the rise in prices of fuel. This should be appreciated. Why do you (the Left Front Government) not live up to your responsibility?” she asked. Claiming that the bandh in the State was far from being spontaneous, Dr Bhunia said it comes as “a lesson to us and a reminder that we should get ready to confront in the days to come the deepening friendship between the CPI(M) and the BJP ” . The two parties are driven by “blind anti-Congressism”. (The Hindu)

Social front:

Economic Front:

The South



Politics:

Jagan's yatra raises political heat in Andhra

By-elections to 12 Assembly seats in Telangana region on July 27 and the obvious power game in the ruling Congress party in Andhra Pradesh have risen the political temperature in the State. Fuelling the atmosphere is a rebellious young MP from Kadapa, Y S Jaganmohan Reddy, who has virtually thrown a challenge at the Congress high command over the continuation of his "Odarpu Yatra" (tour to console people) from July 8. Jagan's yatra has come to occupy the centrestage of the State's political theatre even as the by-elections promise a different drama. Whether or not Jagan's act will culminate in an anti-climax is a much-talked about and curiously observed subject as the late Chief Minister Y

S Rajasekhara Reddy's son is bracing for a face-off with the Congress leadership. Any negative outcome of this showdown (for the Jagan camp) is certain to cast a spell on the Congress government in the State, currently headed by Chief Minister K Rosaiah. And, just days ahead of the by-elections in Telangana, any further trouble in the party could be ominous for the Congress, political analysts point out. After announcing the resumption of his 'Odarpu Yatra' with much bravado, Jagan has reached a spot from where he can't obviously go back. Neither can he march ahead with his plans by jumping the "danger" signal flashed on by the party high command. "If Jagan indeed jumps the 'red signal', he may face the Congress high command's music. This could lead to many MLAs, most of them elected for the first time, walking out of the party in solidarity with the first-time MP. This may only be an extreme situation," a senior Congress leader said. Given the fragile strength it has in the State Assembly, a split in the party could spell doom for the Congress. The principal opposition Telugu Desam Party will be eager to cash-in on such situation as it hopes to re-emerge as a formidable force in the State. The by-elections in Telangana could be the stage for the TDP to showcase its might, given the strong base it enjoys in the region. Majority of the ten Assembly constituencies, which were held by the Telangana Rashtra Samiti in 2009, were in fact strongholds of the TDP. But the TDP conceded them to the TRS as part of the Grand Alliance, thereby losing its strength. Now, the TDP is keen on winning them back. For the Congress winning even one seat in the by-elections will be a "bonus". However, there is a lot at stake for the Congress as it has fielded some heavyweights in half-a-dozen segments. Beginning with Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee president D Srinivas - who is openly claiming that he will become the Deputy Chief Minister or even a rank higher if elected from Nizamabad Urban constituency - former ministers like Md Ali Shabbir, J Ratnakar Rao, G Vinod and former MP Indrakaran Reddy are in the by-election fray. The separatist TRS, however, is confident of a "cake walk" in all the 11 Assembly segments it is contesting in. It is supporting BJP in Nizamabad Urban as the latter's Y Lakshminarayana too resigned from the MLA's post along with the TRS legislators over the separate statehood issue in February this year. The TRS is banking solely on the "Telangana sentiment" which, it feels, will make "Congress and TDP bite the dust for betraying the people of the region." There is talk in political circles here that a section of pro-Telangana Congress leaders may extend tacit support to the TRS to enable it win the by-polls only to project that the Telangana sentiment remains strong. It will be a big blow to the TRS as well as the other separatist elements if the former loses even a couple of seats out of the ten it previously held. The pro-Telangana forces would want to ensure that there will not be a repeat of 2008 when the TRS was reduced from 26 to just seven after having forced by-elections on the statehood issue. (The Indian Express)

Social front:

Economic Front:

West India



Politics:

BJP to Modi: come to Bihar, hold party flag high

BJP national general secretary Ananth Kumar on Friday “invited” Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi to campaign for the party in Bihar in the coming Assembly elections. Mr. Kumar, in-charge of party affairs in Bihar, who specially attended the first meeting of the reconstituted Gujarat BJP executive committee here, said he had come at the instance of national president Nitin Gandkari, to “invite” Mr. Modi to campaign in Bihar. “Mr. Modi is our national leader and we want him to campaign in Bihar and in other States,” he said amidst thunderous cheers. Mr. Kumar said the party was eyeing to capture power at the Centre in the 2014 parliamentary elections and before that it was keen on reaching out in different States. He indicated that the party held Mr. Modi a trump card to win elections in various States. “I feel from the bottom of my heart, whether it is Bangalore, Banaras or Ballia or Bihar, we invite him to come to campaign. Modiji, please come to Bihar and campaign for the party and hold the BJP flag in Bihar high,” Mr Ananth Kumar said. His assertions indicate that the BJP would go it alone in Bihar if the Janata Dal(United) and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar continued to insist on keeping Mr. Modi out of the campaign in the State. The recent spat over Mr. Modi's visit to Bihar, the issuance of an advertisement showing Mr. Modi with his Bihar counterpart and Mr. Nitish Kumar returning the Rs. 5-crore assistance given by Gujarat for the flood-affected in 2008 caused a dent in the relations between the alliance partners. The meeting was attended by Mr. Modi, national vice-president Purshottam Rupala and another senior leader M. Satish.

“CBI being misused”

Mr. Ananth Kumar reiterated the State BJP's allegation that the Congress-led UPA government at the Centre was misusing the CBI in Gujarat and other non-Congress States. It “is not the Central Bureau of Investigation but the Congress Bureau of Investigation.” Referring to the July 5 Bharat bandh on the fuel price issue, State BJP spokesman I. K. Jadeja said that in Gujarat the protest would be observed also against CBI harassment and price rise in general. Mr. Modi congratulated party workers on enrolling more than 25 lakh members in the State. (The Hindu)

Social front:

1,700 women stare at livelihood loss

About 1,700 women engaged in the civic body's mid-day meal scheme are facing a likely loss of livelihood. As many as 170 women self-help groups (SHGs) had been encouraged by the civic body over the past three years to become an integral part of the scheme, but in April, the state government decided to execute the scheme through the tendering process. With the SHGs unlikely to bag the tender, they would be left without a job. The PMC has taken note of this only now, after schools reopened for the new academic year. The mid-day meal for students of class I to VIII in 250 civic schools was being implemented by the 170 SHGs, 10 members in each group for three years, after the PMC decided to use the scheme to empower women. "The PMC recently made us sign a document saying the work will now be only for two months. We invested quite a bit to buy utensils for cooking food; this was our sole income for managing our households. Our future appears bleak once the two months are up," said Nisha Patole of Mother Teresa Women's SHG that supplies food to 733 students. "There is a new government directive on implementation of mid-day meal scheme; this would be executed from this academic year. Accordingly, the work will not be given directly to women SHGs. It will be given after inviting tenders," said M S Devnikar, Additional Municipal Commissioner, PMC. Though in theory, anyone can apply, Devnikar said it was unlikely the women SHGs would be able to compete with private agencies, lack of funds and infrastructure being limiting factors." The PMC had distributed the mid-day meal scheme in civic schools to women SHGs in the respective localities instead of allowing a group to supply food in all the civic schools," he said. Now, all this would be replaced with a single agency once tendering is done. Devnikar said roping in women SHGs had an advantage: as they were allowed to supply food in schools in their respective localities, they did the job sincerely, keeping interest of children known to them in mind. PMC education officer Ramchandra Jadhav said the process of inviting expression of interest has been started but the women SHGs have been asked to continue for two months on a temporary basis. "A new agency will take over after two months. The women SHGs have been intimidated," he said. Concerns are being raised by women SHGs but the civic body cannot do anything as everything is being done as per state government guidelines, he said. "The objective of the mid-day meal scheme to ensure minimum dropout from schools had been achieved during the time the women SHGs supplied food. There was a good response and students were regular in schools." Jadhav said the women SHGs can be allowed to continue only if there is a fresh directive from the state government. Three years back, the PMC urban community development department was in the forefront of bringing in women SHGs for the job. "We encouraged many women to take up the work and many SHGs invested for the purpose from their savings. Now, the women SHGs are asking to us what to do with the utensils and materials they purchased," said Vilas Kanade, in-charge of PMC urban community department. (The Indian Express)

Economic Front: