

Business and Politics in Muslim World

India
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1 to 6 August 2010

Presentation Date: 11 August 2010

Report # 131

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National Summary:

Differences appear to be persisting in both the leading parties, Congress and BJP over the issue of inclusion of caste in census. The Congress party is confused over the process of inclusion of cast based data in census. In the BJP, differences are also on the modalities of inclusion of caste in census with a section of the party supporting the idea of having a dedicated column to register the data while some leaders feel it should be listed under the OBC, SC or ST category. Some senior leaders like Murli Manohar Joshi are still openly opposed to the inclusion of caste in census.

The government shows its willingness to ask the CBI to look into charges of irregularities by state agencies involved in Commonwealth Games projects. Government is under severe criticism of opposition for corruption and delays in management of Commonwealth Games.

RSS ideologue M G alias Baburao Vaidya expressed worries about the usage of newly coined term “Hindu terror”, appealing Hindu leaders to remove the blot. He said the term “Hindu terror” was being used to woo Muslim votes in the country and defame Hindus.

The Orissa government has constituted a state-level Unified Command to deal with Left Wing extremism. The eight-member command would be headed by the chief secretary with representatives from security organisations and civil service. With Central para-military force men engaged in anti-Maoist operations in various states, it was proposed to utilise the service of a retired Major-General in each Maoist-hit state. The selected Major-General would then be included as a member of the UC.

The Union home minister, Mr P Chidambaram, denied reports of Maoists getting foreign funds. He said an integrated development plan is being worked out by the Planning Commission for the Left-wing insurgency-affected areas. “The Naxals get bulk of their money from extortion, but no foreign funds are coming,” Mr Chidambaram said. He, however, said arms were being smuggled cross-border from Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Chhatisgarh has witnessed 1,948 attacks by the Leftists ultras in past three years, police said. The state has witnessed 1,948 attacks by Maoists between July 2007 to July 2010 in which 418 civilians and 435 policemen including 75 Special Police Officers (SPOs) were killed. The official said that about 95 per cent of the attacks and casualties were reported from Bastar, a sprawling 40,000 sq km mineral rich area based in south of the state that is made up of five districts ~ Bijapur, Dantewada, Bastar, Narayanpur and Kanker.

The Indian economy would grow to USD 1.72 trillion in 2011-12, moving closer towards the USD 2 trillion mark, according to an assessment by the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC). The country's gross domestic product (GDP) at the market and current prices was measured at USD 1.31 trillion in 2009-10 and is

estimated to be USD 1.52 trillion in the current fiscal. If the nine per cent growth trend is maintained, India would become USD two trillion economy in 2013-14 fiscal. While Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee said, India's high economic growth is leading to inflationary pressures, as Asia's third largest economy is seen expanding 8.5 per cent in the year to end-March 2011.

According to official sources Foreign direct investment in the country declined by about 45 per cent to \$1.41 billion in June this year. The FDI inflows in June 2009 were \$2.58 billion. The sectors which attracted foreign investment, include services, telecommunication, construction activities and computer software and hardware, the official added.

India and the U.S. on Friday signed the much-debated agreement on modalities for reprocessing spent nuclear fuel, under the civilian nuclear deal between the two countries. It will enable reprocessing by India of United States-obligated nuclear material under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

India is willing to discuss everything with Pakistan in a "step-by-step" approach to resolve differences with the neighbouring country, external affairs minister Mr SM Krishna said.

New Delhi is finally agreed to send more troops in Kashmir valley on request of Omar Abdullah. While seven civilians died in continuing violence in the Kashmir Valley on Monday as thousands of people defied curfew at several places. At least 50 people were injured. Mobs set on fire several government buildings. 15 companies of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) comprising 1,500 personnel have arrived in Srinagar to assist the existing security grid.

At least 80 people were killed and 300 injured after heavy downpour triggered flash floods devastating Leh in the Ladakh region.

Union Minister for Human Resource Development Kapil Sibal said that the government aimed to send 30 per cent of the school going population to colleges by 2020. At present, a mere 12.4 per cent of India's 220 million school going population could get higher education. While there is a shortage of 1.2 million teachers in India.

About 45 per cent of the country's population will be residing in urban cities and towns by 2050, up from 30 per cent now, nullifying the 'India lives in villages' concept, says a study by thinktank NCAER. This means that 379 million people may be added to the urban space over the next 40 years," the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) said in its report 'How India Earns Spends and Saves'. "It is often said that India lives in villages. With nearly 70 per cent of the country's population residing in over 6.20 lakh villages. India's top 20 cities account for just 10 per cent of the country's population, but earn 31 per cent of its income, spend 21 per cent and are responsible for 60 per cent of the surplus income.

Regional Summary:

Every year, nearly 67 per cent of girls below 18 years of age get married in Bihar, making the state a hotspot of child marriages, state Minister for Social Welfare Damodar Rawat said.

Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi criticized the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government for the Central Bureau of Investigation's move to shift the trial of the Sohrabuddin fake encounter case outside Gujarat. "It is an attack on the judiciary in Gujarat," he said, and added that the Centre was "diverting its anger against him" to the judicial system in the State.

In the first instance of its kind in the country, Gujarat Government has banned use of mobile phones in schools and colleges, saying it was affecting educational activities in the institutes.

National Report

Politics:

BJP for broad categories in Census, not specific caste details

Caught between opposition from RSS and compulsions of OBC votebank politics, BJP on Monday indicated that it favours inclusion of caste in Census but the data should not have specific details and stick only to the broad category of General, OBC, SC or ST. "We have not changed the position we took in Parliament that caste should be included in the Census. But the party feels the data should not include specific caste details like Yadav, Kurmi, Lodh, and so on. Only the broad category of General, OBC, SC or ST should be mentioned," a senior BJP leader said. While this stand would satisfy the RSS, the Sangh fountainhead, to some extent, it would also serve the BJP's purpose of wooing the OBC voters, party sources said. BJP and other political parties have to send their final view on inclusion of caste in Census to the government by August 7. The senior leader maintained that BJP was in agreement with RSS that caste was a divisive factor and thus went against the basic ethos of Sangh's nationalist ideology which looks at all Indians as one. However, the compulsions of votebank politics, especially that of Other Backward Classes (OBC) who are not enumerated in the Census but get the benefit of reservation, has forced BJP to favour inclusion of caste in census. BJP does not want to be seen as going against OBCs and had even fielded its backward class leader Gopinath Munde to speak on the issue during a debate in the Budget session of Parliament. Party general secretary Ananth Kumar had seconded Munde's views in the debate. "There are several politicians who have become big leaders not because of their talents and abilities but because they belong to a certain caste and have become its representatives," the senior BJP leader said. Sources said the BJP has conveyed its political compulsions in supporting inclusion of caste in Census to the RSS and tried to convince it that there was no other way out. (The Indian Express)

Focus on J&K development: Sonia

Congress president Sonia Gandhi, sending out an unambiguous message, has said that "elements with ulterior motives" are instigating violence in the Kashmir valley, and that they "must be identified and brought to book." She also added that the Jammu and Kashmir government should push the development agenda as that was the only way to create "jobs and livelihood opportunities," one of the "key instruments against terrorism and violence." Ms. Gandhi's letter to her fellow Congress workers, which appeared in the July issue of the party mouthpiece Sandesh, was significantly released on a day when the Central and State governments were grappling with the spurt in violence in the valley. "Pained by the upsurge in violence in J&K," she sent her "deepest condolence to those innocent men and women who were killed in this mindless violence."

"Show maturity"

An unsigned editorial in the same issue of Sandesh made a veiled attack against the People's Democratic Party (PDP), saying it was time that certain political leaders should "show the required maturity in dealing with the situation caused by the unrest in Jammu and Kashmir" and that politics was "not a vehicle to be used for fulfilling personal ambitions." "The need of the hour is restoration of trust and special efforts to bring back credibility to the institution of dialogue. This is not the time when certain political groups add further to the strife with their cacophony." The Congress, the editorial continued, had always followed "a policy of zero tolerance towards human rights violations." The Congress president also sent out a stern warning to Pakistan, saying that while India would "strive for peace," "we cannot and will not be soft on terrorism." Ms. Gandhi also said: "We have reiterated that effective action by Pakistan against terrorism is central to restoring good relations between our countries. We must continue to insist that Pakistan takes the investigation into the Mumbai terrorist attack seriously and bring all the perpetrators of that terrible crime to justice." It was against this backdrop that Congress spokesperson Jayanthi Natarajan urged the people of Jammu and Kashmir not to "fall prey to the machinations from across the border," even as she dodged all questions on whether Chief Minister Omar Abdullah should be replaced in view of the situation. "This is a sensitive situation," she said, adding, "Right now, the Centre and the State should act in concert." (The Hindu)

TDP, Shiv Sena members spar over Babhli

The Lok Sabha was on Wednesday briefly adjourned as TDP and Shiv Sena members stormed the Well over the construction of Babhli barrage in Marathwada region of Maharashtra. As soon as Speaker Meira Kumar completed her remarks congratulating Sachin Tendulkar for maximum Test cricket appearances, TDP members led by Nama Nageshwara Rao trooped to the Well demanding Centre's intervention in the Babhli project. They raised slogans "Stop Babhli project" and "We want Prime Minister's involvement" as they rushed to the Well. Taking cue from TDP members, their Shiv Sena counterparts led by Deputy Leader Anandrao Adsul, also came to the Well shouting slogans 'Babhli wahi banayenge'. Shiv Sena members including Chandrakant Khaire and Subhash Wankhede, and BJP member Hansraj Ahir were seen in the Well. As the Speaker's repeated attempts to restore order in the House went in vain, she adjourned the proceeding till 11:30 AM. (The Indian Express)

Divisions remain in Cong, BJP over caste in census

Divisions appear to be persisting in both Congress and BJP over the issue of inclusion of caste in census with the deadline approaching fast for all parties to finalise their stand ahead of the meeting of a key committee this week. The top brass of both the parties are expected to meet in the next few days to take a call on the issue. A draft position paper is under preparation in Congress with many a senior leader including lawyers and academics involved in the exercise amid no sign of a consensus in the party over the ticklish issue. Similar is the story in BJP, which too is grappling with how best to approach the issue -- given the reservations of the RSS as also a section of the party -- without antagonising its leaders from backward classes. In the BJP, differences are also on the modalities of inclusion of caste in census with a section of the party supporting the idea of having a dedicated column to register the data while some leaders feel it should be

listed under the OBC, SC or ST category. Some senior leaders like Murli Manohar Joshi are still openly opposed to the inclusion of caste in census. According to a Congress leader, the issues that are being discussed in his party is whether such an exercise is at all required, if it is to be done whether only OBCs should be enumerated or all castes, whether it should be a one time affair or it should be institutionalised and whether inclusion of caste in the census is possible in its current form. The party leader said that once the draft paper is prepared, it can be taken to the Core Committee and then to the Congress Working Committee to arrive at a final view. He said that though a section of the party leaders is totally against inclusion of caste in census, political fallout of opposing the exercise will be taken into account. The dilemma of the party on the issue is understandable as it comes at a time when the party is trying to revive itself in the Hindi belt -- Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where it remained out of power for last over 20 years after the Mandal politics. A meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) headed by Pranab Mukherjee is expected on August six to finalise its report. All political parties have been asked by Mukherjee to give their views on the matter by that day and it is still unclear as to how many parties have so far responded. Lalu Prasad's RJD has already given its view in writing, while JD-U wanted the government to go ahead with the inclusion of caste in census without any "delaying tactics". (The Indian Express)

Government ready for CBI probe into graft charges related to CWG

Government on Friday said it was willing to ask the CBI to look into charges of irregularities by state agencies involved in Commonwealth Games projects and accused the opposition of projecting incorrect figures on the expenditure incurred for the mega event. "Rs 11,500 crore is the actual expenditure...The figures of Rs 50,000 crore and Rs one lakh crore are totally incorrect," Union Minister for Urban Development S Jaipal Reddy told reporters outside Parliament. On allegations of corruption in the projects related to the Games, Reddy said, "Government agencies may have committed some irregularities. Each of the allegations will be looked into. We can even ask the CBI to look into them." The issue of alleged large-scale corruption in CWG projects today rocked Lok Sabha with the entire opposition attacking the government, accusing it of allowing "loot" of public money. The Left demanded a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to probe the charges. Reddy, who heads the Group of Ministers on the Games, was not allowed to respond to the charges by the opposition, which wanted the reply only after a full-fledged debate. Reddy said that he was not concerned with the Games directly as the Sports Ministry was looking into it. "However, I wanted to respond to it as the Chairman of the Group of Ministers. I have been an MLA or an MP for 42 years. Never before has a minister not been allowed to speak when he wanted to," the Minister said. Reddy said the CWG Organising Committee, which has been facing allegations of corruption, should not be confused with government agencies. "The Organizing Committee is a totally independent organisation like the BCCI...If there have been problems and allegations about the Organising Committee, the government can initiate enquiry. All investigating agencies - CVC, CAG, Enforcement Directorate, FEMA will act," he said. Asked about the delay in completion of the projects related to the Games, the minister said, "I would not completely deny it." Reddy blamed shortage of labour in Delhi as one of the reasons for the delay. He said the success of MGNREGA -- Centre's flagship employment guarantee programme -- was a reason why few workers were

available for the projects as they now had work in their villages. On the opposition questioning the holding of Games in Delhi, the Union Minister said that the decision was taken by the then Atal Bihari Vajpayee government in 2003. "When the UPA came to power, it was out moral and political responsibility to discharge our duty," he said. (Times of India)

Minorities' Issues:

Muslim bodies join hands against extremism

Various Muslim organisations got together at Kottakkal, on Saturday and decided to boycott bodies with fundamentalist ideologies and extremist links. The meeting, initiated by the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), decided to intensify anti-terror campaigns conducted by the respective organisations. "We will launch a joint campaign against extremism, if needed," said P.K. Kunhalikutty, State general secretary of the IUML, explaining the deliberations. The Muslim organisations decided to work together against extremism despite their political differences. "Extremism cannot be allowed at any cost. Only a small minority in the Muslim community supports fundamentalism. And we are hopeful that we can successfully parry this tendency," Mr. Kunhalikutty said. Leaders of organisations such as the South Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama, the Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama, the Sunni Yuvajana Sangham, two groups of the Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen and the Muslim Educational Society attended the conclave. Leaders of the Jamaat-e-Islami, the People's Democratic Party and the Popular Front of India were not invited to the meeting. Mr. Kunhalikutty said the Indian National League representatives were unable to make it convenient to participate. IUML State president Syed Hyder Ali Shihab Thangal presided over the meeting. The meeting observed that the community would not support those organisations promoting extremist ideologies. The community would also boycott those trying to justify the actions of extremist groups. The meeting pointed out that some organisations were attracting the youth by staging a campaign against fascism at the national level and against globalisation at the international level. The meeting decided to expose such organisations. The meeting registered its displeasure at Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan's statement against the Muslim community. The leaders said that it was improper to blame an entire community for the deeds of a small minority. E.T. Mohammed Basheer, MP, Abdussamad Samadani, P.V. Abdul Wahab, and Abdurahman Randathani represented the IUML. Kadakkal Abdul Azeez Moulavi and Thodiyoor Mohammed Kunhi Moulavi represented the South Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama. K. Mammad Faizi and Pinangode Aboobacker represented the Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama. K.M.A. Rahim and P.K.M. Saqafi represented the Sunni Yuvajana Sangham. E.K. Ahamed Kutty, C.P. Umer Sullami, P.T. Beeran Kutty Sullami, A.P. Abdul Khader Moulavi and T.P. Abdulla Koya Madani of the Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen factions participated. Fazal Gafoor and P.T. Sakeer Husain represented the Muslim Educational Society. (The Hindu)

Hindu Fundamentalism:

Use of term ‘Hindu terror’ worrisome, says RSS ideologue

RSS ideologue M G alias Baburao Vaidya on Sunday expressed worries about the usage of newly coined term “Hindu terror”, appealing Hindu leaders to remove the blot. “The word Hindu terror has earned its place in the media and no one knows who invented it. Though somebody gives credit to NCP president Sharad Pawar, others say it was Congress general secretary Digvijay Singh who has coined the concept,” Vaidya wrote in his weekly column in a local Marathi daily here. He admitted that the government had accused right wing Hindu organisations Abhinav Bharat and Sanatan Sanstha were involved in violence and some arrests had been made but none of the accused had been convicted by the courts till date. He said the term “Hindu terror” was being used to woo Muslim votes in the country and defame Hindus. (The Indian Express)

Insurgency Movements:

Orissa constitutes Unified Command to fight Maoists

In a bid to execute anti- Maoist strategies in a planned manner, the Orissa government has constituted a state-level Unified Command to deal with Left Wing extremism, officials said. The decision to set up the Unified Command was taken at a recent meeting in Delhi. The eight-member command would be headed by the chief secretary with representatives from security organisations and civil service. The constitution of the Unified Command (UC) was notified by the state home department here yesterday. While development commissioner (DC) was taken as a member of the UC, home department secretary would function as member convenor. The director-general of police (DGP), inspector-general (IG) of police (operation), inspector-general CRPF (operation), representatives of the Intelligence Bureau and state Intelligence would also work as members of the UC. While security and intelligence officials would plan security operations, civil service officers would execute socio-economic activities in Maoist-hit regions, sources said. “With UC in place, the menace of Left Wing extremism could be dealt in two fronts like anti-Maoist operations and developmental activities,” said a senior home department official. With Central para-military force men engaged in anti-Maoist operations in various states, it was proposed to utilise the service of a retired Major-General in each Maoist-hit state. The selected Major-General would then be included as a member of the UC. (The Statesman)

‘Maoists not getting foreign funds’

The Union home minister, Mr P Chidambaram, denied reports of Maoists getting foreign funds. Speaking during Question Hour in the Rajya Sabha, the minister said an integrated development plan is being worked out by the Planning Commission for the Left-wing insurgency-affected areas. “The Naxals get bulk of their money from extortion, but no foreign funds are coming,” Mr Chidambaram said. He, however, said arms were being smuggled cross-border from Myanmar and Bangladesh. Giving the details of the strategy

being adopted by the government to deal with the Maoist menace, the home minister said development was the first concern of the two-pronged strategy being adopted. “The Planning Commission is working on an integrated development plan for the affected districts. It will be final in a few more days. Once it is approved we will have more funds for the Naxal-affected areas,” he said. Mr Chidambaram said that so far nearly 66 per cent of the funds allotted to the states for affected districts have been spent. A two-pronged strategy of accelerated development and calibrated police action has been prepared to curb Maoist insurgency. Planning Commission will be ready with the final draft of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for development of Naxalism-hit districts in the next few days, home minister Mr P Chidambaram said. The Plan panel has been asked to enlarge the scope of the IAP to cover maximum number of the 83 Naxalism-affected districts in seven states, he informed the Rajya Sabha during Question Hour. Planning Commission deputy chairman Mr Montek Singh Ahluwalia had last month indicated that IAP may include a Rs 13,742 crore financial package for the 35 worst-hit districts. Mr Chidambaram said development was the first part of the two-pronged strategy for dealing with the problem of Naxalism and added that IAP will apply to districts beyond the 35 affected ones. The home minister said unified command will be set up in Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Orissa to deal with the Naxal problem. Chhattisgarh already has such a command. The unified command will be headed by chief secretary and comprise DGP, development commissioner, IG Operations from CRPF, IG Naxal Operations, a retired Army Major General and representatives of Intelligence agencies. “This has been agreed to by the four chief ministers,” he said. CRPF battalions before being deployed in Naxal operations are trained in jungle warfare. “CRPF is a well trained force. ...it is not correct to say Maoists have weapons that are superior (to those used by CRPF),” he said. “A two-pronged strategy - development and police action - has been agreed upon and in meetings (with chief ministers of Naxalism-affected states), fine tuning of the strategy has been done in accordance with state specific requirements,” he said. (The Statesman)

Haunting ground for the Red brigade

In a clear sign of how Chhattisgarh has been turning out to be a haunting ground for Maoists, the state has witnessed 1,948 attacks by the Leftists ultras in past three years, police said. The state has witnessed 1,948 attacks by Maoists between July 2007 to July 2010 in which 418 civilians and 435 policemen including 75 Special Police Officers (SPOs) were killed, a senior official here at police headquarters told The Statesman. The official said that about 95 per cent of the attacks and casualties were reported from Bastar, a sprawling 40,000 sq km mineral rich area based in south of the state that is made up of five districts ~ Bijapur, Dantewada, Bastar, Narayanpur and Kanker. The home department officials said that the state’s 13 out of the total 18 districts are hit by Left wing extremism since late 1980s and the death toll in Maoist violence in the state has exceeded to 2,000 since the state came into existence in November 2000 with nearly 50 per cent casualties suffered by the security forces. The state government (BJP), last month, submitted a proposal to the Planning Commission for a whopping sum of Rs 4,553 crore special assistance through an Integrated Action Plan for the development of the all five districts of Bastar region and Rajnagaon district. (The Statesman)

Economic Front:

Indian eco moving towards \$2 tn mark

The Indian economy would grow to USD 1.72 trillion in 2011-12, moving closer towards the USD 2 trillion mark, according to an assessment by the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC). The country's gross domestic product (GDP) at the market and current prices was measured at USD 1.31 trillion in 2009-10 and is estimated to be USD 1.52 trillion in the current fiscal, the PMEAC said in its latest economic outlook. Pegging the GDP growth at nine per cent, the economy would reach a level of USD 1.72 trillion in 2011-12, it said. If the nine per cent growth trend is maintained, India would become USD two trillion economy in 2013-14 fiscal. In the assessment, the PMEAC, headed by noted economist C Rangarajan, said that it is imperative for India "to preserve conditions that will enable it to return to the 9 per cent growth trajectory". After slowing down to 6.7 per cent in 2008-09 and 7.4 per cent in 2009-10, the Indian economy is projected to expand at 8.5 per cent this fiscal and by nine per cent in 2011-12. According to experts, services and manufacturing sectors will remain the key drivers pushing the coveted growth to USD 2 trillion mark. "Services sectors particularly transportation and telecom sectors will lead the growth. Rising income levels and aspirations of people will further the industrial output," CRISIL's chief economist D K Joshi said. In the first two months of current fiscal, the industrial production recorded an annual growth of 14 per cent. "The lead indicators of service sector also suggest increased economic activity," Reserve Bank Governor D Subbarao said in the first quarter credit policy review. If the tax reforms are implemented as planned from next fiscal, the economy would get further push. "The gain from GST will propel the country from one-trillion dollar economy to two trillion-dollar economy in a short span of time," Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee recently said. Before the global economic slowdown since 2008, the Indian economy grew by over nine per cent for three years in a row from 2005-06 to 2007-08 and expansion was maintained by industry and services sectors. (The Indian Express)

High growth leading to price pressures: FM

India's high economic growth is leading to inflationary pressures, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee said in parliament on Wednesday. Asia's third largest economy is seen expanding 8.5 per cent in the year to end-March 2011. Wholesale price inflation in June stood at 10.55 per cent and Chief Statistician of India T.C.A. Anant said last month that July headline inflation could be around 11 per cent. The RBI raised interest rates more forcefully than expected last week, signalling its urgency to stamp on inflation. Mukherjee was replying to a parliamentary debate on price rise, a political hot potato that has given the opposition a handy tool to attack the government with and block proceedings in the house since its opening last week. (The Indian Express)

'Minnesota global village will boost Indo-US trade'

Notwithstanding the reservations expressed by US President Barack Obama on outsourcing jobs to India, trade between the United States and India shall continue to grow, said Seann Nelipinath, president and director of India Chamber of Commerce, an association of Indian business in Minneapolis. Nelipinath, who is visiting the country for

a series of TiE (The Indus Entrepreneurs) functions, said outsourcing from India to United States would become more research and high-skill based. "The US economy will do well if their companies and organisations do well. And companies will do well if their profits are high. Profits will be high if costs are low. To keep costs low, without compromising on the quality of work, they have to outsource work to India. It is as simple as that," he explained. The United States is the second largest trade partner of India, with China occupying the top slot. Interestingly, though India has a negative trade balance with China (meaning that we import more from China than we export), the balance of trade with the US is positive. The total trade between the two nations is nearly Rs 160,000 crore. While the services sector (including IT and ITES) continue to remain the main contributor to India's export to the USA, the bulk imports of India include civilian aircrafts (with Seattle-based Boeing supplying aircraft to most Indian airlines), gems and diamonds (which interestingly first come to Surat for polishing and cutting), telecommunication equipment, industrial machinery, fertilisers and organic chemicals. Nelipinath said many companies based in the United States are actually keen to do business with India. "As per our studies, representatives of US companies have to make on an average around 10 trips to India before a deal actually materialises. This happens because of the lack of awareness about Indian culture and way of life," he said. To reduce such delays, the Indian Chamber of Commerce is now setting up a Global Village in Minnesota, which would be an economic processing zone. This centre will provide special designated zones for corporations and organisations from India to display their goods and services to prospective clients in the US. Nelipinath added the project should be operational in five years. (The Indian Express)

Food inflation declines marginally to 9.53%

Annual food inflation fell marginally to 9.53 per cent for the week ending July 24 as prices of vegetables, especially potato and onion, declined. The food inflation, which was 9.67 per cent for the week ending 17 July, remained in single digit for the second consecutive week. On an yearly basis, potato became cheaper by 41.14 per cent, while vegetables overall saw a decline of 17.32 per cent. Onion price also slid by 4.06 per cent. Cereals, however, registered a rise of 6.87 per cent driven mainly by higher prices of pulses, rice and wheat over the same period last year. While pulses became dearer by 20.49 per cent, prices of rice and wheat rose by 7.28 per cent and 6.79 per cent, respectively, during the week under review over the same period last year. Among other food items, milk prices went up by 19.03 per cent during the week compared to same period of last year. The food inflation, which was over 20 per cent in December 2009, slipped to single digit figure in the third week of July. The overall inflation, which includes change in prices of manufactured goods, was 10.55 per cent during June. (The Statesman)

Obama vows to fight India, China for new jobs

US President Barack Obama has vowed to give tough competition to India and China for millions of potential jobs in the American clean energy industry, once again raising the bugaboo of outsourcing. "For generations, manufacturing was the ticket to a better life for

the American worker," he said at a meeting of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, America's union movement. "But as the world became smaller, outsourcing, an easier way to increase profits, a lot of those jobs shifted to low-wage nations." Millions of Americans were swept up in the disaster wrought by the Wall Street bubble burst, Mr Obama said. "But I'm here to tell you, we are not giving up and we are not giving in. We are going to keep fighting for an economy that works for everybody, not just for a privileged few." As part of the economic plan put in place by his administration to battle recession, the president said, "We're jumpstarting a new American clean energy industry - an industry with the potential to generate perhaps millions of jobs building wind turbines and solar panels, and manufacturing the batteries for the cars of the future, building nuclear plants, developing clean coal technology." "There are other countries that are fighting for those jobs, in China and India and in Germany and other parts of Europe," Mr Obama said. "But the United States doesn't play for second place. "As long as I'm President, I'm going to keep fighting night and day to make sure that we win those jobs, that those are jobs that are created right here in the United States of America. "So the message I want to deliver to our competitors-and to those in Washington who've tried to block our progress at every step of the way-is that we are going to rebuild this economy stronger than before, and at the heart of it are going to be three powerful words: Made in America. Made in America," he said amid applause. That's why the USA was finally enforcing its trade laws, he said. "That's why we're fighting for tax breaks for companies that invest here in the United States as opposed to companies that are investing overseas or that keep their profits offshore." (The Statesman)

FDI plunges by 45% in June

Foreign direct investment in the country declined by about 45 per cent to \$1.41 billion in June this year, an official said. The FDI inflows in June 2009 were \$2.58 billion. The sectors which attracted foreign investment, include services, telecommunication, construction activities and computer software and hardware, the official added. Crisil chief economist, Mr DK Joshi said that there was no specific reason for this decline as the foreign inflows fluctuates every month. Foreign investment in May 2010 was at \$2.2 billion. "In the coming months, the inflows are likely to be in a healthy state...there could be some volatility given the global scenario, particularly the European events," Mr Joshi said. Meanwhile, Parliament was today informed that FDI during the first quarter of 2010-11 was at \$5.80 billion. During April-June 2009-10, FDI inflows were \$7.01 billion. The government has been taking measures to streamline the procedures for foreign investors. "The government is making sustained efforts to make the FDI policy regime increasingly attractive and investor friendly, with a view to attract investments from all major investing countries," minister of state for commerce and industry, Mr Jyotiraditya Scindia said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha. The FDI for 2009-10 at \$25.88 billion was lower by five per cent from \$27.33 billion in the previous fiscal. (The Statesman)

Cyber News

Desktops losing market?

Are desktops passé? Forget the 'tablet' revolution in gadgets, the sale of laptops, notebooks and netbooks, too, has been on the rise globally. In India too, computer-users are trading their desktops for 'on-the-move' mobile computing devices that allow them to carry their work and data and digital belongings wherever they go. Here's the proof. Sales figures for mobile computing devices, mainly laptops, have grown by 65 per cent during 2009-2010, beating the staid old desktop which registered five per cent growth. A survey by India's hardware companies' consortium, Manufacturers' Association for Information Technology (MAIT), reveals that 80.3 lakh computers were sold. About 55 lakh units out of the total 80.3 lakh computers sold were desktops. Twenty-five lakh notebook/netbook units were sold. The survey also reveals that the notebook growth is primarily driven by the household segment which accounts for 56 per cent of the total sales. Even establishments and businesses showed a preference (perhaps driven by cost-cutting) for mobile PCs. (The Hindu)

Foreign Relations/Geo-strategic developments:

Reprocessing accord signed

India and the U.S. on Friday evening signed the much-debated agreement on modalities for reprocessing spent nuclear fuel, under the civilian nuclear deal between the two countries. The agreement on arrangements and procedures for reprocessing was signed at a State Department ceremony by Indian ambassador Meera Shankar and U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns. Pursuant to Article 6(iii) of the bilateral '123 Agreement' on civilian nuclear cooperation, the agreement was hailed by the Indian embassy here as "a significant step which highlights the strong relationship and growing cooperation between India and the U.S." Upon entry into force, it will enable reprocessing by India of United States-obligated nuclear material under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. The State Department in a statement said that as per the agreement reprocessing would be undertaken at a new, safeguarded national facility to be established by India, and that it would be dedicated solely to this. Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Shankar congratulated negotiators on both sides on bringing the agreement to completion well ahead of the stipulated period of one year. "This early completion in some sense reflects how our two countries are increasingly getting into the habit of working together," she said. She reiterated that the government of India had an ambitious programme for development of civil nuclear energy to meet the country's growing energy needs, noting that the target was "to increase our installed capacity more than seven fold to 35,000 MWe by the year 2022, and to 60,000 MWe by 2032." In this context, the government had already designated two sites for nuclear power plants to be established in cooperation with the U.S. and the companies of the two countries were now engaged in discussions, Ms. Shankar noted. The State Department corroborated this commitment on the U.S. side, noting that the reprocessing arrangement, negotiated and concluded under President Obama, reflected the administration's "strong

commitment to building successfully on the landmark U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative.” It was also a prerequisite for U.S. nuclear fuel suppliers to conduct business with India, a spokesperson noted. Officials also sought to underscore the rarity of such agreements between the U.S. and other nations, emphasising that on previous occasions, the U.S. had extended reprocessing consent only to the European Union and Japan. Hinting at some of the key factors driving this agreement on the U.S. side, the State Department spokesman said that the Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative had facilitated “significant new commercial opportunities across India's multi-billion dollar nuclear energy market, including the designation of two nuclear reactor park sites for U.S. technology in the States of Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.” (The Hindu)

'India will take time to adopt its role as global player'

India, which has now emerged as a global player will take some time to adjust to its new role, a US official has said. "India has broken out from being a regional country to be a global country. And it's going to take them time to adjust to that new role," Stephen Headley, Co-Chair of the Quadrennial Defense Review Independent panel said at a Congressional hearing. Headley was responding to a question from Florida Senator George Lemieux who at the hearing of Senate Armed Services Committee wanted to know about the roles of BRIC countries - Brazil, Russia, India and China. "It seems that these nations want to have all the benefits of first-tier powers, but don't necessarily want to shoulder the responsibilities," Lemieux said. "We don't see Brazil taking a strong role in dealing with Venezuela, for example. We don't see China taking a strong role in dealing with North Korea. It falls upon the United States to have the burden to shoulder in issues such as terrorism and dealing with rogue countries," he said. Senator asked Headley: "How do you think that relationship can change? What can we do so that we are not the only nation in the world that's responsible for fighting terrorism around the world, for shouldering this immense burden that we shoulder now? And how can we get those countries more engaged?" Headley, in response, said the four countries were different. "Particularly with respect to China and India. We have to recognise that China is going through a period of enormously rapid change, and their government is struggling to deal with probably the fastest rate of change in the world's most populous country - fastest rate of change we've ever seen. So the role that China is playing and being asked to play is new," he said. He observed that it was both a challenge and an opportunity and said "I think it's some sense true for India." "We need to be both engaging them, try to work with them to understand their responsibilities and to work with us to solve global problems; at the same time, we make it clear that there are a set of international rules, and that all countries, including India and China, would be better if they played within those rules. We have to have the capabilities to enforce those rules, if necessary," Headley said. "It is not all black or white. It is a challenge and an opportunity. We need to be engaging those two countries. We need to be present and active in Asia, not just in terms of militarily, but economically in terms of business, in terms of diplomacy. "There are free-trade agreements being signed all the time in Asia, and we're on the sidelines. I think that the number-one point we would make is Asia is where the action is going forward, and we need to be a player, not on the sidelines," Headley said. William Perry, another Co-Chair of the Quadrennial Defense Review Independent panel said the last administration called

on China to be a responsible stakeholder. "I think that's a pretty good term, and I think pushing that concept, not only with China but with the other three countries, is a very good idea," he said. "The best approach I can describe to dealing with that is to continue to call these countries to be responsible stakeholders. We need their assistance in dealing with global problems," Perry said. (The Indian Express)

India ready to discuss all issues with Pak: Krishna

India is willing to discuss everything with Pakistan in a "step-by-step" approach to resolve differences with the neighbouring country, external affairs minister Mr SM Krishna said. "We have nothing to be afraid of Let the nation understand India is willing to discuss everything," he said in the Rajya Sabha during Question Hour. He said that India favoured a graduated and step-by-step approach in resolving differences with Pakistan, but cross-border hostilities will have to cease. Referring to the controversial statement of home secretary Mr GK Pillai, around the time of Mr Krishna's recent visit to Islamabad, the external affairs minister said it was a "reflection" of what LeT operative David Headley had revealed to the FBI. Ahead of the recent foreign ministers' talks in Islamabad, Mr Pillai had said Pakistan's ISI had a hand in the Mumbai blasts. (The Statesman)

Military

Indian Occupied Kashmir:

Centre to send more forces to Kashmir

With the Centre moving to deploy additional paramilitary forces to cope with a vicious cycle of protests, violence and firing that has left scores in Jammu and Kashmir dead and injured over the past month, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said on Monday that restoration of normality was the pre-requisite for any political or administrative initiative to be taken in the Valley. Addressing a press conference here after a lengthy meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Home Minister P. Chidambaram and other members of the Cabinet Committee on Security, Mr. Abdullah reiterated his appeal to the people to "break this cycle of violence" and help the return of normality. "People should stop taking the law into their hands and attacking police stations and government buildings. Consequences of such action are often serious and tragic. I have been appealing to people to stop this lawlessness," he said. Government sources said three options — Governor's rule, change of Chief Minister and sending in additional forces — were considered at the meeting but it was decided that the best course of action was the third one. Though the Centre accepted that there was anger against Mr. Abdullah in the Valley, it recognised the elected government was the best buffer, the sources said. The government also took note of the fact that the ongoing Amarnath Yatra remained peaceful, thanks in part to the presence of security forces. Mr. Abdullah told reporters that the ongoing protests in different parts of the Valley were not engineered or planned by any one individual or group. "There are a number of elements fishing in troubled waters. It is largely leaderless. As Chief Minister, it is not possible for me to suggest as to who is directing these

protests,” he said. It was the responsibility of the government to restore law and order, he said, adding that the moment people stopped taking law into their hands, the cycle of violence would end. He stressed that curfew would have to be strictly implemented and that there was no other way around it. Mr. Abdullah said Central paramilitary forces in the State were already overstretched. “Clearly, there is a need to augment forces’ presence. I have also requested [for the] Rapid Action Force as it is a specialised force in dealing with protests. The Home Minister has assured me that he will look into these requirements,” he said. Recognising the need for a political solution, he said certain initiatives lay in the pipeline “and are possible if both the Centre and the State are able to restore normality.” To a question, Mr. Abdullah admitted there was “anger and alienation” among the people and said the State required a “political package.” Elaborating, he said he would be looking at issues such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, footprint of security forces, rehabilitation of Kashmiri youth who had strayed across the LoC, relief to victims of the current trouble, future engagement of youth with the State and the problem of unemployment. (The Hindu)

Thousands defy curfew; 7 more civilians killed

Seven civilians died in continuing violence in the Kashmir Valley on Monday as thousands of people defied curfew at several places. At least 50 people were injured. Mobs set on fire several government buildings. A youth, injured in police action a few days ago in Bijbehara, died on Monday. Seven civilians were killed as police and CRPF personnel opened fire to quell demonstrations at several places. People broke security cordons and defied curfew. Throughout the night mobs were protesting on the streets and using loudspeakers in mosques to give vent to their anger. Eight-year-old Farooq Ahmad of Dawood Colony Batamaloo in Srinagar was killed in a clash between protesters and the CRPF late on Monday evening. Residents who spoke to The Hindu alleged that he was beaten to death by CRPF personnel. However, a police spokesman said the boy was killed in a stampede when the CRPF chased a mob. His death triggered further protests in the area. Reports said 16-year-old Bashir Ahmad Reshi died after the police and the CRPF opened fire on protesters at Sangam near Khanabal on the Srinagar-Anantnag highway. Arshad Ahmad Bhat also died, but police said he was caught in a stampede. Locals refuted this. Six others, critically injured in the incident, have been admitted to hospitals in Srinagar. In Kulgam, security forces opened fire killing 16-year-old Rameez Ahmad. A 9th class student, Ashiq Hussain Bhat, died of his injuries in the district hospital. Sources said seven people, including Ashiq, were injured in the firing on protesters at Chawalgaam village. Kakpora area of Pulwama district witnessed massive protests. Muhammad Yaqoob Bhat, 16, of Zadoora died in police firing. After the incident, the protesters went on the rampage attacking the police and the CRPF, forcing them to flee. In Kralpora area of Kupwara district in north Kashmir, the police and the CRPF opened fire on stone-throwing youth, injuring six people critically. Sources said 20-year-old Khurshid Ahmad War died of his injuries. A police spokesman said rampaging mobs broke curfew restrictions at Kakapora, Pulwama, Budgam, Anantnag, Kulgam and Kupwara, destroying police and public property. (The Hindu)

1,500 CRPF men arrive in the Valley

The Jammu and Kashmir government is mulling over tough measures to enforce curfew to put brakes on the unending cycle of violence and people taking “law into their own hands.” Chief Minister Omar Abdullah reviewed the situation at a meeting of the Unified Headquarters to evolve a fresh strategy. He also renewed his appeal to people to cooperate in restoring normality in the State. Top official sources said tough measures are being taken to enforce the curfew in Srinagar and other affected areas of the Valley to thwart attempts of mobsters to vitiate the atmosphere. In Srinagar, the authorities are focusing on hardline separatist leader Syed Ali Geelani's appeal for “ Eidgah Chalo” on Tuesday. “All steps will be taken to stop that,” a senior official said, adding that “curfew restrictions will be implemented in letter and spirit.” Sources told The Hindu that curfew passes issued on Saturday may also be cancelled if need arises. They said that 15 companies of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) comprising 1,500 personnel have arrived in Srinagar to assist the existing security grid. A few hundred policemen have also been rushed from Jammu. More reinforcements will be rushed from Delhi and other places in coming days to strengthen the control mechanism. The sources said that police personnel from traffic and other wings are being de-inducted and asked to report for the “law and order” services. In order to reinforce the writ of the government, Mr. Abdullah, soon after returning from Delhi, convened a meeting of the Unified Headquarters. The meeting, attended by top officials of Army, the para-military force and the police, discussed the prevailing situation and various options to deal with it. Sources said the option of calling the Army has been ruled out and that additional CRPF reinforcements would be requisitioned to the Central government. The Chief Minister asked various agencies to work in synergy to achieve better results. Meanwhile, Mr. Abdullah in his appeal said: “I can understand the anger the youth has, but this is not the right approach and we assure them that we will address their grievances.” He also appealed to all political parties and religious leaders to come together in restoring peace. Mr. Abdullah acknowledged that Kashmir needed a political solution, but “any move to address that can be possible only after we come out of this situation.” There are people, he said, “who are playing politics over the dead bodies of youth.” (The Hindu)

Flash floods in Leh leave 80 dead, 300 injured

At least 80 people were killed and 300 injured after heavy downpour triggered flash floods devastating Leh in the Ladakh region. J&K Director General of Police Kuldeep Khoda said a massive rescue operation was underway involving the state police, paramilitary forces and the army in Leh town. Among the dead were three jawans of the Army Service Corps. 50 CRPF jawans were rescued from the flooded areas, Khoda said. The BSNL network was completely damaged, besides the runway of the Leh airport, cutting off the town from the rest of the country. The district hospital and two buildings housing offices of the union home ministry were also affected. Five villages have been hit in the sudden downpour and flash floods. These included Choglumsar and Shapoo. Old Leh city was among the worst affected. The main bus stand was flattened. Leh is located at a height of 11,500 feet above sea level, 424 kilometres from Srinagar. The worst hit was Choglumsar area, 13 km from here, where 14 bodies were recovered, officials said. Khoda said the toll may go up. "The actual damage will be known only

after the water receded," another senior official said. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, while expressing grief over the tragedy, has directed the civil and police administration to undertake relief and rescue work on a war footing. All flights from Delhi to Leh have been cancelled. (Times of India)

Social front:

Sibal: 60 million students will go to colleges by 2020

Union Minister for Human Resource Development Kapil Sibal said on Saturday that the government aimed to send 30 per cent of the school going population to colleges by 2020. At present, a mere 12.4 per cent of India's 220 million school going population could get higher education. Inaugurating a two-day India-U.S. Summit on Higher Education organised by the Indo-American Society, he said that in the U.S. 30 per cent of the school going population reached college. Mr. Sibal said that to accommodate 60 million students in colleges by 2020, the country would need 800 more universities and 35,000 more colleges. He also invited the American Universities to establish educational institutes and places of excellence in India, instead of focussing on taking Indian students to the U.S. He said that the current number of students going to the U.S. for higher education was like a drop in the ocean. "It is a bad economic model which will not work in the long term," he said. He suggested that instead, the American universities should invest, where there was human resource. "The output for dollar will be much more here," he said. He also invited American students to learn courses in liberal arts and humanities in India. He said that India had the knowledge acquired through experience, which allowed communities to understand and live peacefully with each other. "The world has this lesson to learn from a civilisation like ours," he said. He also lamented the government control in higher education and said that the need of the hour was to give freedom to the academic community. "We should set benchmarks and goals, but let the universities decide the syllabi and the creative modes of teaching." The university-level unions must be transformed into constructive forces. "We should keep politics away from higher education," he said. The delegates included 16 Vice-Chancellors and 30 Deans. He appealed to the academia to think differently and implement more creative, sustainable and inclusive models of education. "We need to think of different economic models because all wealth of nations is built through investment in human minds." He said that the agenda of the government was to focus on the three foundation pillars of education — expansion, inclusion and quality. The participants included Rajesh Tope, Minister of Higher and Technical Education, Government of Maharashtra, Vijay Khole, Chairperson of Summit Task Force, V. Rangaraj, president of the Indo-American Society, Indu Shahani, Sheriff of Mumbai and Paul Folmsbee, U.S. Consul General. (The Hindu)

'45% Indians will live in cities by 2050'

About 45 per cent of the country's population will be residing in urban cities and towns by 2050, up from 30 per cent now, nullifying the 'India lives in villages' concept, says a study by thinktank NCAER. "On a conservative estimate, 45 per cent of Indians would

be living in towns and cities by 2050. This means that 379 million people may be added to the urban space over the next 40 years," the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) said in its report 'How India Earns Spends and Saves'. "It is often said that India lives in villages. With nearly 70 per cent of the country's population residing in over 6.20 lakh villages, rural India continues to wield a huge influence over the country's policy makers," it added. The study estimates reveal that the size of rural India is shrinking and 379 million people will be added over the next 40 years, indicating a rapid shift from rural to urban living. Urban areas include all places with a municipality or a corporation, besides having a minimum population of 5,000 and about 75 per cent of the male working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits. "India simply cannot afford urban development to languish... India needs to place urban development – particularly infrastructure -- squarely alongside rural priorities, recognising in part that both are interdependent," the NCAER report said. India's top 20 cities account for just 10 per cent of the country's population, but earn 31 per cent of its income, spend 21 per cent and are responsible for 60 per cent of the surplus income, it said. The study said that there has been an increase in the concentration of population in cities during the last century. While nearly 25 per cent of urban population lived in cities with a population of one lakh in 1901, the number increased to 45 per cent in 1951 and 69 per cent in 2001. The NCAER noted that the country's savings would grow only with further urbanisation. While the urban population accounts for 67 per cent of the country's surplus income, rural India accounts for only a third. "India's savings can grow only as the country's urbanisation progresses... the promise of creating more urban centres would be a more effective way to progress rural India," it said. (The Indian Express)

Bill to make divorce easier

A Bill seeking to make divorce easier in case of “irretrievable breakdown of marriage” was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 4 August. The Marriage Laws (Amendment) Bill, moved by Law Minister M Veerappa Moily, aims at mitigating hardships by allowing divorce in cases of complete failure of marriages. At present, the petition for a divorce on the ground of mutual consent could be presented by the spouses together before the court under the Hindu Marriage Act 1955 and the Special Marriage Act 1954. While both parties have to move a motion jointly before the court between six and 18 months of the original petition, it has been observed in several cases that one of them does not turn up. This leads parties desirous of obtaining decree of divorce hapless and remediless. In order to mitigate such hardships and to allow divorce in cases of complete failure of such marriages, the bill seeks to amend the Hindu Marriage Act and the Special Marriage Act. (The Statesman)

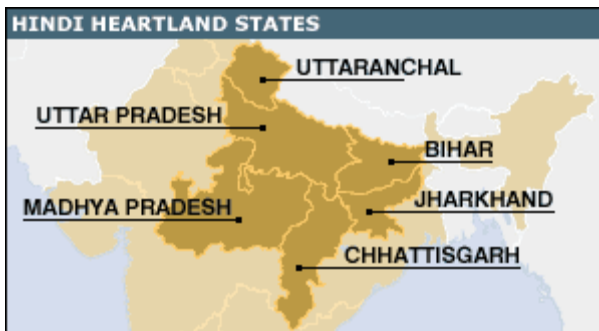
Shortage of 1.2 million teachers in India: Kapil Sibal

There is a shortage of 1.2 million teachers in India and states must speed up the recruitment process to bridge the gap, human resource development minister Kapil Sibal said on Friday. "We have a shortage of 1.2 million teachers. In some states there is an enormous backlog from last several years. In Bihar about 100,696 posts are vacant," Sibal told the Rajya Sabha during question hour. Sibal said there was a need to speed up

the recruitment process. "In some states, we have found that all deployment (of teachers) is done in one school while there are no teachers in others. We need to redeploy teachers so that there is equal distribution of teachers," he said. He voiced concern over the lack of enough quality institutions to train teachers. "The problem is that not enough students are going for Bachelor of Education (BEd) course, and we also lack quality training institutions, which is adding to the problem," he said. Sibal said there was a need to make the profession of teaching attractive by giving incentives like insurance, housing and healthcare facilities. "Across the world, the best minds opt for teaching profession but this is not happening in India. So we need to give them more incentives," he added. (Times of India)

Regional Report

Central India (Hindi Heartland)



Politics:

Social front:

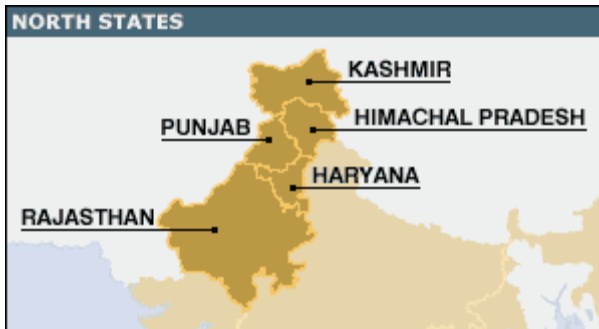
67 pct minor girls get married in Bihar: Minister

Every year, nearly 67 per cent of girls below 18 years of age get married in Bihar, making the state a hotspot of child marriages, state Minister for Social Welfare Damodar Rawat said. "Child marriages are a gross injustice to children as it proves devastating for their life," he told a workshop 'Prevention of Child Marriages' jointly organised by Women Development Corporation of Bihar and UNICEF. "It is the need of the hour to prevent such marriages," he said, adding the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, was not being enforced properly. Rawat said his department had launched 'Kanya Vivah Yojana' to provide financial help to those who marry after the age of 18 years. He stressed the need for initiating a multi-sectoral dialogue on the issue, understanding the prevailing situation, mechanisms and structures available for the prevention of child marriage and to develop a plan of action based on the deliberations from the consultative process. He also laid emphasis on designing an effective mechanism for proper implementation of Bihar State Child Marriage Act and developing a coordination

mechanism within stakeholders for collaboration and partnership to prevent child marriages in Bihar. (The Indian Express)

Economic Front:

The North



Politics:

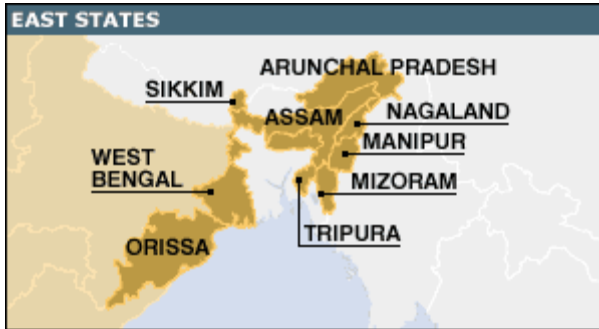
Social front:

Himachal rivers in spate, alert sounded

Rivers in Himachal Pradesh are in spate again following continuous moderate to heavy rainfall in several parts of the state, officials said on Friday. A high alert has been sounded in Kullu, Mandi, Kinnaur, Bilaspur and Shimla districts. "Continuous rainfall (since Thursday) in Kinnaur and Shimla districts has abnormally increased the water level in the Satluj river and its tributaries," Shimla Deputy Commissioner J S Rana said. "An alert has been sounded in the villages and towns along the river and people advised to move to safer places," Shimla Deputy Commissioner J S Rana said. He said the discharge in the Satluj has increased to 2,300 cubic metres per second against the normal flow of 1,850 cubic metres. Likewise, the water level of the Beas has also increased. "The water level has increased in the Beas, owing to heavy rainfall in entire Kullu district last (Thursday) night, but the river is still flowing below danger mark," Kullu Deputy Commissioner B.M. Nanta said. He said the Satluj, which also passes through Kullu district, is in spate due to heavy rainfall. The water level of the Beas has increased so much that at some places the river is touching the Chandigarh-Manali national highway. Incessant rains have also caused massive landslides on National Highways 21 and 22 in Shimla, Kinnaur, Mandi and Kullu districts, hampering vehicular traffic. Himachal Pradesh has been experiencing moderate to heavy rainfall since Thursday. According to the Met office here, Shimla has got 34.8 mm of rain since Thursday, Dharamsala 34.4 mm and Mandi 75.9 mm. The met department predicted light to moderate rain in the state on Friday. (Times of India)

Economic Front:

The East

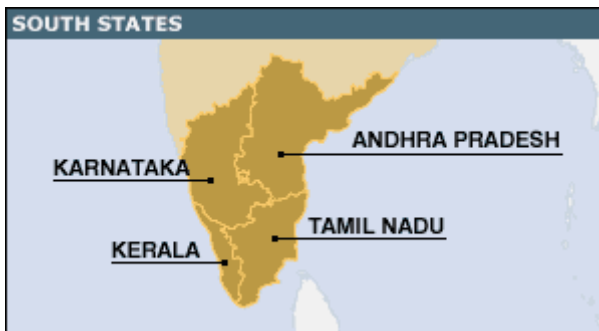


Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

The South



Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

West India



Politics:

With strongman Modi at the helm, where does the Congress go in Gujarat?

For the Congress, the fact that the former Gujarat Minister of State for Home Amit Shah is behind bars for his alleged involvement in the Sohrabuddin Sheikh case is clearly a matter of some satisfaction. It has put its principal political, the BJP, on the defensive. Simultaneously, the Congress hopes this will send out a positive message to the minorities, especially in Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh, where Assembly elections are due this year, in 2011 and 2012 respectively. If the BJP's central leaders turned down Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's invitation to lunch on the eve of the current Parliament session, accusing the UPA government of "misusing" the Central Bureau of Investigation, Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi reads the current activities of the CBI as a plot against his State: "They have been maligning me for the last eight years. Now they have started maligning the State's judicial system," he said in a no-holds barred speech at a rally in Ahmedabad on Saturday, and then asked, "Am I doing anything wrong by fighting terrorism?" The Congress sees the BJP's response to the CBI's line of action in the Sohrabuddin case as a sign that "the party is on the run," especially as it has not evinced any enthusiasm for an early discussion on the CBI in Parliament. So, what is the message that the Congress is hoping will go out from all this? Rejecting the idea that the party hopes to make political gains in Gujarat, especially as reports are coming in of the possibility of the investigating agencies closing in on Mr. Modi himself, Congress general secretary in-charge of the State, B.K. Hariprasad, told "For us, what is most important is that people should not lose faith in the legal system. Everybody in this country is entitled to a fair trial and no one, howsoever powerful, is above the law – that's the message. People cannot be eliminated in encounters." But whatever the impact the Congress hopes the current investigations will make nationally, what does it hope to achieve in Gujarat? In the State, the party, wary of giving Mr. Modi any advantage, is maintaining a very low profile, occasionally indulging in some verbal sparring, as Leader of the Opposition Shaktisinh Gohil did on July 28. "Whenever there is an atrocity on a woman, the tormentor loses power," Mr. Gohil said, citing the example of Sita and Ravana from the Ramayana, while referring to the murder of Kausarbi, Sohrabuddin's wife. "Politically, Modi is still strong, if one is to judge by the number of people showing up at his rallies," a senior Congress leader from Gujarat, analysing the situation, told The Hindu. "But there is public disapproval of the encounters, and that is reflected in the Gujarati media, which is reporting on the current events in a neutral fashion, unlike at the time of the riots in 2002." Nevertheless, the Congress morale is low in the State, with party leaders acknowledging that they don't expect to do well in the coming local body elections. They are now resting their hopes on Mr. Modi being called in for questioning by the CBI. "If the CBI has enough evidence and is able to arrest Mr. Modi," the Congress leader said, "then things could change radically. The BJP would be forced to replace him, and given the divisions in the BJP State unit, we could then get some advantage." Clearly, the Congress is a demoralised force in Gujarat: as long as Mr. Modi rules the roost in the State, it does not see much of a role for itself there. Meanwhile, it is banking on sending out a strong message to the minorities elsewhere — and praying that this issue will help to break the new found unity in the Opposition, in

evidence in Parliament. (The Hindu)

An attack on Gujarat judiciary: Modi

Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday launched a scathing attack on the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government for the Central Bureau of Investigation's move to shift the trial of the Sohrabuddin fake encounter case outside Gujarat. "It is an attack on the judiciary in Gujarat," he said, and added that the Centre was "diverting its anger against him" to the judicial system in the State. "Now it is crossing all limits. After attempts to defame the State government, the State police and even the people of the State, it is now trying to defame and insult the judiciary in Gujarat. This can never be tolerated," Mr. Modi said, at a function of the Gujarat University to launch its "van mahotsava" programme. Mr. Modi said the Centre was behaving as if Gujarat was not part of India "but an enemy nation." He said the Centre could not tolerate Gujarat's progress and development with peace and co-operation from all and was trying to vitiate the atmosphere in the State. "What does the Centre expect Gujarat to do? Should we lock up all our courts, our lawyers, our law colleges, our law university and everything connected with the judiciary?" Mr. Modi asked. Defending the State's police administration and the judicial system, he referred to the Best Bakery and Bilkis Bano 2002 communal riot-related cases which were shifted out of the State earlier. "What was the result?" he asked, and pointed out that the Best Bakery case was tried in the Mumbai court only on the basis of the investigations made by the Gujarat police. Though the CBI held a fresh investigation in the Bilkis Bano case and added a number of accused, "the Mumbai court found only those accused guilty who were arrested and charge-sheeted by the Gujarat police. Every one of those added as accused by the CBI, were acquitted by the court," he pointed out and asked "Why is the Gujarat police still being defamed and discriminated against?" He said the Centre with all its might and its investigating agencies had not been able to solve the cases of terror attacks in Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Ayodhya, Lucknow and many other places, but the Gujarat police had not only quickly solved the Ahmedabad bomb blast and Akshardham temple terror attacks, they also made important contributions in solving the blasts in Jaipur and many other parts of the country. "Have the Gujarat police committed any crime by arresting the terrorists responsible for the serial bomb blast and Akshardham attack alive," he said. He said it was the duty of the government to annihilate terrorism, Naxalism and Maoism which were trying to disrupt the peace and prosperity in the country. "But when Gujarat is trying to fulfil its duty, why are the hindrances created in its way?" he asked. He said the Congress government for the sake of its vote bank politics was trying to "harm the patriots and protect the anti-national and anti-social elements."

"Not a day of curfew in 8 years in Gujarat"

Pointing out that peace prevailed in the State for the last eight years without a single day of curfew in any part of the State, Mr. Modi said, those who were envious of the peaceful atmosphere and the good governance in the State were conspiring to destabilise the State. "If you don't like me, you are free to take any action against me but spare the people, the

police and the judiciary of Gujarat,” Mr. Modi said. He also expressed the resolve that he would continue to fight for “Gujarat's rights, its pride and its interests, come what may.” In reply, the state Congress president, Siddhartha Patel, wondered how Mr. Modi was making “such noises” when he should “feel ashamed” for the arrest of his Minister of State for Home Amit Shah and several senior police officers on such serious charges like extortion and murder. He questioned Mr. Modi for dragging in the “people of the State” and said the people had nothing to do with the “exposure” of the Home Minister and police officers. He believed that Mr. Modi was “making such empty noises” only because the people did not support the BJP's attempts to “take the fight to the streets” after Mr. Shah's arrest. (The Hindu)

Social front:

Gujarat bans use of mobile phones in schools, colleges

In the first instance of its kind in the country, Gujarat Government has banned use of mobile phones in schools and colleges, saying it was affecting educational activities in the institutes. A resolution to this effect was passed by the state education department, official sources said on Sunday. According to the resolution, students up to class 12 will not be allowed to take mobile phones inside the school premises, while college students are allowed to carry their instruments along with them but not permitted to use them. Even teachers, staff, parents and visitors will not be allowed to use cell phones in places like classroom, library and laboratory, a government release said. The state government has requested the authorities of schools and colleges to provide land-line phone facility within the campus for students and staff. (The Indian Express)

Economic Front: