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National Summary:

Government made certain amendments to strengthen the proposed legislation, which was approved by the Union Cabinet, paving the way for its consideration by Parliament. The Cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, approved almost all the key recommendations made by the Parliamentary Standing Committee that examined the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Bill, 2010. However, it rejected a recommendation for addition of a word "and" between Clause 17(A) and (B) which talks about the nuclear power plant operator's right to recourse for compensation from supplier in the event of an accident. The recommendation for addition of the word had triggered objections from BJP and Left parties which said it would dilute the operator's right to seek compensation from the supplier.

Left parties, the RJD and the SP accused the Congress of striking a deal with BJP on support for the Civil Nuclear Bill in lieu of giving a clean chit to Gujarat chief minister Mr Narendra Modi in the Sohrabuddin Sheikh encounter case. While questioning the provision of holding only the nuclear power plant operator liable in case of an accident, the Left parties suggested that the government increase the cap from the proposed Rs. 500 crore to Rs. 10,000 crore in the Civil Nuclear Liability Bill.

Sonia Gandhi is expected to be re-elected as the Congress President on September 17. The election for the party chief's post is expected to witness Gandhi's fourth term for the top office of the party. This was because no other contender is expected to be in the field. Gandhi's re-election is expected to become known on September 2 itself, which is the last date for filing nominations.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said that he wanted to resolve issues through dialogue, be it with Pakistan, Kashmiri separatists, northeast groups or Naxalites. "India's democracy has the generosity and flexibility to be able to address the concerns of any area or group in the country," he said addressing the nation from the historic Red Fort on Sunday. Touching upon a range of issues, including high inflation and slow rate of growth in the farm sector, Dr. Singh talked of a "new India" in which every citizen would have a stake.

According to Ministry of Home Affairs data Crime against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes communities has seen a surge in the recent years as close to 40,000 cases were registered during 2008, about 3,600 more than the previous year.

Two days after the President and the Prime Minister asked the Maoists to abjure violence and come to the discussion table, top Maoist leader Kishenji suggested a three-month ceasefire by both sides and talks for a peace process.

As the economy expands, India's job recruitment market is also expected to grow in line and double at Rs 2,000 crore in the next five years. "The growth in India's economy has helped bring about a tremendous growth in the manufacturing, banking and services sectors in the country.

According to a study on employability, conducted by Aspiring Minds only 9.47% technical graduates employable. While the employability with regard to BPOs is 38.23%, it is 25.88% for the Technical Support Jobs (TSJs). The employability study of technical graduates is based on the results of a computer-based test called AMCAT conducted for more than 40,000 engineering and MCA students (in the final year of graduation) across the country.

India's exports grew by 13.2 per cent in July to \$16.24 billion compared with the corresponding month of the previous fiscal. The growth has been subdued because of a fading base effect, and it is much lower compared with the first three months of this fiscal. The slowdown in the growth rate may continue for the rest of the fiscal as the developed countries may go for fiscal consolidation by partially rolling back the economic stimulus packages.

A day after getting the August 31, 2010 deadline from the Centre to resolve security-related issues attached to Black Berry smart phone, its maker Research In Motion (RIM) on Friday reportedly agreed to provide some technical solution to allow access to its encrypted services to Indian security agencies. But Home Ministry sources said it would deem the matter resolved only after a technical evaluation.

Pakistan said that Kashmiri people were resolved to get their right to self-determination and New Delhi should read the “writing on the wall”. Foreign Office spokesman Mr Abdul Basit also spoke about Indian forces “brutally” trying to deal with the agitation in the Valley.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Thursday called up his Pakistani counterpart Yusuf Raza Gilani and offered assistance over and above the initial proposal of \$5 million. Speaking to Mr. Gilani against the backdrop of the United Nations urging all countries to bury their political and ideological differences and help Pakistan in coping with floods, Dr. Singh expressed his sorrow and condoled the deaths. Later on Pakistan’s foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi announced that his country has accepted Indian aid.

The chairman of the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, has called for withdrawal of the troops and release of political prisoners as a pre-condition for talks with New Delhi. Asserting that the ongoing agitation was not to demand any economic package, the Mirwaiz rejected Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s appeal for talks to restore peace in the Kashmir Valley. The protests would continue until the Kashmir issue was resolved, he said. He reiterated his four-point demand to make the atmosphere conducive for any political engagement. “The withdrawal of Indian troops should start immediately; the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the Disturbed Area Act should be repealed; bunkers and camps should be removed from cities and towns; and all political prisoners, including the recently arrested youths, should be released... Only after these demands are met, can the three parties — India, Pakistan and the Kashmiris — move forward to resolve the Kashmir issue.

A suspended policeman hurled a shoe at Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar

Abdullah at the Independence Day function on Sunday.

Sixty-one trucks carrying the explosives were sent from Rajasthan Explosives and Chemicals Limited at Dholpur to a trading company at Sagar, Madhya Pradesh have got missing while centre seeks report from Madhya Pradesh on the issue.

Regional Summary:

Bihar Chief Minister Mr. Nitish Kumar has declared the remaining 10 districts in the State also “drought afflicted.” Earlier this month, the government so declared 28 of the 38 districts.

Ahead of the 2011 Assembly poll, the West Bengal government is gearing up to take possession the vacant land at Singur which it had acquired for Tata Motors’ Nano plant which was eventually relocated to Sanand. State land and land reforms minister Mr Abdur Rezzak Mollah asked his officials to prepare the groundwork for the possession of land just a few days after the Union railway minister promised at the recent Lalgarh rally that she would give back land to the farmers in Singur if the Trinamul Congress comes to power in the state.

The West Bengal government declared 11 districts of the state as drought-hit and allocated Rs 50 crore to tackle the situation caused by a rain deficit of 30 per cent. The 11 districts are Purulia, Bankura, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Burdwan, Hooghly, West Midnapore, South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, Nadia and Malda.

The Rosaiah Cabinet is divided on Telangana and Coastal Andhra-Rayalaseema lines after the latter called those promoting the separatist sentiment in Telangana as anti-national. The regional divide is bordering on bitterness with the Telangana leaders, cutting across party lines, asked if stalwarts like Jawaharlal Nehru were anti-national when the states were being carved on linguistic lines.

National Report

Politics:

Raise cap in nuclear liability Bill to Rs.10,000 crore: Left

While questioning the provision of holding only the nuclear power plant operator liable in case of an accident, the Left parties on Friday suggested that the government increase the cap from the proposed Rs. 500 crore to Rs. 10,000 crore in the Civil Nuclear Liability Bill. With the Bill being processed by the Standing Committee and likely to come up for consideration and passage during the current Parliament session, the government called the four Left parties, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Communist Party of India, the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the All-India Forward Bloc for discussions. CPI(M) Parliamentary party leader Sitaram Yechury said the government should fix the liability at Rs.10,000 crore after D. Raja (CPI) suggested that since these plants were to be run by public sector undertakings, liability should be unlimited. Maintaining that the second cap on the entire liability in case of a nuclear accident to be paid by the government and the operator was fixed at 300 million Special Drawing Rights, the Left leaders demanded that there should not be any ceiling at all on the entire liability. They said the government should remove the reference to India joining the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage (CSC) saying a majority of the countries, including India's neighbours, had not signed or ratified it. The government argued that it found mention in the Statement of Object in the Bill and not a provision. They argued that if India joined the CSC, the country would have to accept that foreign nuclear power equipment suppliers were not liable in case of an accident, and it would not be in national interest since only the operators would be liable. Stating that the provisions of the current Bill, "virtually exempt" the foreign suppliers, they said liability should be fixed on these parties for supplying equipment that was either defective or faulty. The government would respond to the issues raised by the Left on Monday. (The Hindu)

Manmohan: dialogue is the only option

On the 64th Independence Day, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh sent out a positive message that he wanted to resolve issues through dialogue, be it with Pakistan, Kashmiri separatists, northeast groups or Naxalites. "India's democracy has the generosity and flexibility to be able to address the concerns of any area or group in the country," he said addressing the nation from the historic Red Fort on Sunday. Touching upon a range of issues, including high inflation and slow rate of growth in the farm sector, Dr. Singh talked of a "new India" in which every citizen would have a stake. But "harsh and unpleasant words in our political discourse" were against the tradition of tolerance. "There should be capacity to reconcile opposite points of view through debate and discussion."

Peace with neighbours

The Prime Minister made it clear that India wanted peace and harmony with neighbours but emphasised that progress in dialogue with Islamabad would not go far if Pakistan continued to allow its territory to be used for acts of terrorism against India. Reiterating that Kashmir was an integral part of India, Dr. Singh said the government was ready for talks with every person or group which abjured violence. “Kashmir is an integral part of India. Within this framework, we are ready to move forward in any talks which would increase the partnership of the common man in governance and their welfare.” He regretted the recent loss of lives in violent incidents in Jammu and Kashmir and said “the years of violence should now end.”

“A serious challenge”

Describing Naxalism as a “serious challenge” to internal security, Dr. Singh appealed to Naxalites to abjure violence, come for talks with the government and join hands with it to accelerate social and economic development. Stressing the government's commitment to protect the lives of citizens and deal firmly with those who resorted to violence, he said, “We will provide all possible help to the State governments to maintain the rule of law in areas affected by Naxalism. We need to rise above our personal political interests to meet this challenge.”

Stake for tribals

Pointing out that the administrative machinery needed to be sensitive in the Naxalite-affected areas, he said the Planning Commission had been asked to formulate a comprehensive scheme to end the neglect of tribals and make them join the mainstream of development. Apart from payment of adequate compensation for land acquired from tribals, it should be ensured that they had a stake in the development projects being undertaken. Dr. Singh conveyed to all political parties and groups of the northeast that disputes in the name of a State or tribe could harm everyone. Discussion and dialogue were the only options to resolve complex issues.

Turning to the issue of high inflation, he said the government was making every possible effort to tackle it. It was forced to increase the price of petroleum products as subsidy was increasing annually and this would have affected programmes for education, health and employment of the poor. Despite last year's drought, India's economic growth rate had improved. The agricultural growth rate, however, needed to be around four per cent, and it should be achieved through technological breakthrough in dry land farming and by addressing the challenges of climate change impact, falling water table and deteriorating soil. This was required to meet the ambition of providing a food security net for people. Dr. Singh announced the setting up of the Norman Borlaug Institute of South Asia that would facilitate availability of new and improved seeds and offer new technology to farmers.

Commonwealth Games

Putting his weight behind the Commonwealth Games to be held here in October, the

Prime Minister said the event would be a proud moment for the country and another signal to the world that India was rapidly marching ahead. (The Hindu)

Sonia all set to be re-elected as Congress President

Sonia Gandhi is all set to be re-elected as the Congress President on September 17. The schedule for the party chief's election was finalised at the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting. As per the schedule, the date for notification of the polls is August 27, last date for filing nominations is September 2, scrutiny will be held on September 3, last date of withdrawal is September 10, and date of polls, if necessary, is September 17.

Counting of votes will be held on September 21.

This is also the schedule for the election of the PCC presidents in various states, AICC general secretary Janardan Dwivedi told reporters after the CWC meeting. PCC delegates, who constitute a total of 7946, are the electoral collage for the Congress President's election, which is held in Delhi as also in state headquarters. 63-year-old Gandhi has created a record of being the longest-serving party Congress President and completed over a decade since she took over the top post in April 1998. She took over in the wake of the party's dismal showing in the 1998 Lok Sabha polls that saw the exit of Sitaram Kesri from the post. She has so far been unanimously elected to the post barring once when Jitendra Prasada, a senior leader from Uttar Pradesh, had thrown his hat in the ring but failed miserably in the polls in 2000. The election for the party chief's post is expected to witness Gandhi's fourth term for the top office of the party, which is completing 125 years of its inception. This was because no other contender is expected to be in the field. Gandhi's re-election is expected to become known on September 2 itself, which is the last date for filing nominations. Out of the 28 CWC members and incharges of states and departments, 26 were present in the meeting. (The Indian Express)

Left, RJD accuse Congress of striking a deal with BJP on N Bill

Left parties, the RJD and the SP accused the Congress of striking a deal with BJP on support for the Civil Nuclear Bill in lieu of giving a clean chit to Gujarat chief minister Mr Narendra Modi in the Sohrabuddin Sheikh encounter case. "Narendra Modi got a clean chit when Congress required BJP's support for the nuclear liability Bill," CPI-M leader Brinda Karat said here. Asked whether she was indicating a "deal" between the two parties, Mrs Karat said it was up to the people to draw conclusions. Expressing similar sentiments, RJD chief Mr Lalu Prasad charged that the Congress had silenced parties like the SP and the BSP and reached an understanding with the BJP on the nuclear Bill by using the CBI as an influence-wielding device. "BJP was also asked (by Congress) not to raise the issue of price rise," he said. Mr Prasad claimed that the BJP's silence on price rise and its support to the nuclear liability Bill were a result of the understanding that the Mr Modi would be given a clean chit by the CBI in the Sohrabuddin case. He flashed a newspaper report that quoted a CBI official saying that no evidence had been found against Mr Modi in the encounter case. SP chief Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav said the BJP and the Congress "are one and they cannot be trusted". He alleged that BJP used the nuclear liability bill to bail out Mr Modi. "It is a result of an understanding between the two," he said. (The Statesman)

Govt relents, changes controversial portions in N-bill

Under Opposition attack for trying to "dilute" the provisions of the nuclear liability bill, Government made certain amendments to strengthen the proposed legislation which was approved by the Union Cabinet, paving the way for its consideration by Parliament. The Cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, approved almost all the key recommendations made by the Parliamentary Standing Committee that examined the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Bill, 2010. However, it rejected a recommendation for addition of a word "and" between Clause 17(A) and (B) which talks about the nuclear power plant operator's right to recourse for compensation from supplier in the event of an accident. The recommendation for addition of the word had triggered objections from BJP and Left parties which said it would dilute the operator's right to seek compensation from the supplier. The Committee had recommended that the Clause 17 should be read as "the operator of a nuclear installation shall have the right of recourse where -- (A) "such right is expressly provided for in a contract in writing and (B) "the nuclear incident has resulted as a consequence of latent or patent defect, supply of sub-standard material, defective equipment or services or from the gross negligence on the part of the supplier of the material, equipment or services." Instead, the government decided to preface the Clause 17 with the wording that the operator could, after compensating the victims, exercise the right of recourse against the supplier. This is aimed at addressing the concerns that the BJP and Left had over clubbing of the Clause. The BJP, which had agreed to support the bill, raised objection to the Committee's recommendation for addition of word "and", saying it was not discussed with it. The Left also attacked the government, saying it was trying to protect the suppliers by diluting the operator's right to seek compensation. The fresh concerns led to a series of consultations within the government throughout yesterday and it was decided that the Committee's particular recommendation for clubbing two sub-clauses would not be accepted. After clearance by the Cabinet, the bill is expected to be considered by Parliament in the next few days. The Bill, which was introduced in the Lok Sabha on May 7, is crucial for operationalisation of India's civil nuclear agreements with various countries, particularly the US. (Times of India)

Unhappy over only 3-fold hike in salary, MPs stall Lok Sabha

Government on Friday faced protests in the Lok Sabha, hours after it decided to raise MPs' salary to Rs 50,000 with several non-BJP opposition members storming the well demanding that it be raised to Rs 80,000. "Stop the insult of MPs" and "implement report of the parliamentary committee" were slogans chanted by SP, BSP, JD (U), RJD, Shiv Sena and Akali Dal members, forcing Speaker Meira Kumar to adjourn the House twice. During Question Hour claiming that government had "insulted Parliament" by rejecting the recommendation of its own committee to raise the basic salary to Rs 80,000 per month, a rupee higher than the highest paid government officer. This happened after news trickled in that the Union Cabinet, at a meeting earlier in the day, had approved a proposal to raise the basic salary of MPs to Rs 50,000 from present level of Rs 16,000. When the House reassembled at noon, leaders of SP and RJD, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Lalu Prasad, led their members to the well raising slogans. Members of Shiv Sena, Akali Dal and JD (U) also joined them in the well. Prasad and his party colleague Raghuvansh Prasad Singh were heard saying "the government's decision is an insult to

Parliament. The recommendations of the parliamentary committee should be implemented." In the din, the House approved amendments made by the Rajya Sabha to the Trade Marks (Amendment) bill by a voice vote. This was protested by the RJD leaders. (Times of India)

Enemy property bill: Govt placates Muslim MPs

Modifications in the controversial Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Bill, which the government will try to get passed in the ongoing Parliament session, may defeat original purpose of the Ordinance but it appears to have addressed the concerns of both the Union home ministry as well as the group of Muslim MPs — including Cabinet ministers — who have been lobbying against the proposed law. The Bill, which could not be taken up for consideration and passing on the second consecutive day on Thursday despite being listed for the purpose, will have three amendments. If it gets Parliament's nod, the government will not be able to stop "lawful heir" from claiming his or her property but it will have final say in identifying the "heir". Besides, it will also have power to weed out encroachers and land mafia from the enemy properties — worth thousands of crores of rupees — across the country. "Since one of the amendments — deals with section 18 of the Bill — provides how the claimant will have to establish that he or she is the lawful heir, the government will not return the property unless it is satisfied with the claim," said an official while referring to the proposed modifications. As a direct implication of it, though the government will not be able to stop Raja of Mahmoodabad, M A Mohammad Khan, whose case is said to have become a trigger for bringing the Ordinance in July, from taking over his father's properties back in different cities in Uttar Pradesh, it will have 'last word' in all those cases which have been pending in various courts across the country. Armed with the new law, the government will be able to stop those whose claims do not appear to be correct as in some of the cases it was suspected that the claimants had allegedly bought the 'will' or 'unregistered gift orders' from those Pakistani or Bangladeshi nationals who had left these properties in India before migrating to those countries. Some of the claimants had even allegedly managed to come out with 'adoptions certificates' so that they can claim their rights over such valuable properties. While the first amendment is a 'consequential amendment' because some sections will come into force on a different date, the second amendment will substitute new Section 18 for old Section 18. (Times of India)

Minorities' Issues:

Crime against SCs, STs on the rise: Govt

Crime against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes communities has seen a surge in the recent years as close to 40,000 cases were registered during 2008, about 3,600 more than the previous year. According to Ministry of Home Affairs data, a total of 30,031 cases were registered against different people during 2007 and 33,615 in 2008 for their alleged involvement in crime against Scheduled Castes. Similarly, the number of such cases against Scheduled Tribes rose to 5,608 in 2008 as against 5,532 in 2007, the data said. As per the information, Uttar Pradesh topped the list of States and Union territories by registering a highest of 19,137 cases during the period followed by Madhya Pradesh and Bihar with 15,355 and 8,666 cases respectively. Madhya Pradesh is one of the few

states that has shown a considerable decrease in crimes against the SCs/STs. The number of cases in the state dropped from 5,712 in 2006 to 4,036 in 2008, a decline of nearly 30 per cent, while all India figures have shown increase. A total on 98,702 cases were pending trial in various courts across the country at the end of 2008. The data by National Crime records Bureau (NCRB), a nodal agency under MHA, said that a total of 49,810 people were convicted out of 1,90,857 arrested between 2006-08 under various Sections of the Act. The Act was put in place with the aim of preventing atrocities against the members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. (The Indian Express)

Hindu Fundamentalism:

Insurgency Movements:

Naxals propose 3-month truce

Two days after the President and the Prime Minister asked the Maoists to abjure violence and come to the discussion table, top Maoist leader Kishenji suggested a three-month ceasefire by both sides and talks for a peace process. "The President and the Prime Minister, in their Independence Day speeches, have appealed to the Maoists to abjure violence. We are never for violence but the government has instigated us to take up arms," Kishenji told PTI from an undisclosed location. "When our comrade Azad was preparing ground for talks, he was treacherously killed... So, it is very clear from the activities of the government that they don't want any peace," Kishenji said. The Maoist leader claimed there were "some reports from the PMO that Mamata Banerjee has been asked to work as a mediator. If she agrees, then we have no problem". Kishenji suggested the names of some intellectuals to act as mediators, including writer Ms Arundhati Roy, singer and Trinamul Congress MP Mr Kabir Suman, Mr BD Sharma, Mr Gopal Narlekar and Mr Ramanna. "But we will not declare ceasefire unilaterally unless there are some positive steps from the government," Kishenji said. "If the Prime Minister is keen to restore peace and normalcy in the disturbed areas of the country, then he will have to take an initiative to withdraw joint forces and order a judicial inquiry into the murder of Azad," he said. He noted that the Prime Minister in his Independence Day speech had vowed to fight terrorism and corruption. "We are always against terrorism and corruption of any kind...It has been our party's mandate to fight corruption and so we are mobilising people all over the country to ensure that they raise their voice against injustice which has been meted out to them," the Maoist leader said. Referring to the drought in West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, he said: "We appeal to the government to sanction Rs 500 crore to each drought-hit district of these states." Kishenji also demanded that the Rs 8,000 crore that had been sanctioned for modernisation of police forces and Rs 60 lakh per day being spent for the anti-Naxal operation be utilised for employment and income generation schemes in underdeveloped districts of the country. (The Statesman)

Economic Front:

India's job recruitment mkt to double

As the economy expands, India's job recruitment market is also expected to grow in line and double at Rs 2,000 crore in the next five years, a top industry official said. "The growth in India's economy has helped bring about a tremendous growth in the manufacturing, banking and services sectors in the country. The job recruitment market here is set to grow at 20 per cent per annum and touch the Rs 2,000 crore mark in five years from the present Rs 1,000 crore," Esource India's Managing Director Nitin Deveshwar said. Esource India is a subsidiary of ESMS, which is a leading security company with nation-wide operations and is a full-service recruitment agency powered by an online database combining social networking and traditional recruiting. (The Indian Express)

Only 4.22% graduates fit for a job: study

Employability with regard to IT product firms is as low as 4.22 % according to a study on employability, conducted by Aspiring Minds. But with regard to IT services companies it is 17.84% (wherein an in-house training of 3-6 months is provided in the company). The report also revealed that KPOs find only 9.47% technical graduates employable. While the employability with regard to BPOs is 38.23%, it is 25.88% for the Technical Support Jobs (TSJs). The employability study of technical graduates is based on the results of a computer-based test called AMCAT conducted for more than 40,000 engineering and MCA students (in the final year of graduation) across the country. AMCAT was conducted in more than 12 states under proctored environment. "The current talent pool has very low employability with regard to IT product companies. As the IT industry in India matures, this shall become an impediment for growth due to lack of trained manpower for product based and research based projects," says Himanshu Aggarwal, co-founder and director, Aspiring Minds. "Taking a long term perspective for growth, strong intervention is needed to correct this. Objective assessments will go a long way for industry and academia to understand and bridge the gap in employability," Aggarwal adds. AMCAT claims to cover all objective parameters for adjudging employability in the IT/ITeS sector including the English communication, quantitative skills, problem-solving skills and computer science and programming skills. Employability figures are based on the real hiring benchmarks on AMCAT scores set by multiple companies in IT/ITeS related sectors. The report also disclosed the fact that the employability of MCA students is almost half of that of the engineering students in case IT services companies and KPOs. On the other hand, for IT Product companies, the employability of students is not as skewed (4.2% as compared to 5.4%). With regard to skills, MCA students are better than engineering students (in computer/ electronic/ IT related branches) in Computer Programming by 12 percentile points, whereas engineers perform better in English, Logical and Quantitative Aptitude by 10 to 20 percentile points. The test and its technology is said to have been developed by alumni from IIT, Delhi and MIT, Boston, USA works on a very high end statistical technology. The score obtained in these modules can be used by companies to compare with other students' score, so as to decide on a better hiring potential. (The Indian Express)

Visa fee increase could impact Indian firms: USA

Amid mounting concerns over the move to hike the H-1B and L1 visa fee, the USA has said it could have an adverse impact on Indian companies and efforts were underway to mitigate it. However, Washington exuded confidence that the long-term economic partnership with India would continue to deepen and strengthen. “We understand the Government of India's concerns. We realise it could impact Indian companies that invest in the US and we also understand the potential impact on Indians who work in the US as well as some American businesses,” state department deputy spokesman Mr Mark Toner said. But, he added, that the USA was confident that its long-term economic partnership with India would continue to deepen and provide benefits for both societies. The proposed increase in visa application fee by at least US\$ 2,000 for next five years would raise nearly US\$ 550 million out of US\$ 650 million that have been allocated for increasing the security of the US-Mexico border. These fee increases would apply only to companies with more than 50 employees and for whom the majority of their workforce is visa-holding foreign workers. A summary of a Senate version of the Bill named Indian firms Wipro, Tata, Infosys and Satyam, which use hundreds of these visas for their employees coming to the United States to work at their clients' locations as technicians and engineers. Nasscom estimates that Indian companies, mostly IT, apply for 50,000 visas every year, including H-1B and L1 visas, besides renewal of old visas. When asked about New Delhi's plans to take the USA to the World Trade Organisation on the visa fee hike issue, Mr Toner said: “It is within India's purview to do that.” “I think we remain cognisant of the effect that this legislation may have on India, and we're going to try to work with them to mitigate it. But beyond that, I don't have a reaction. I mean, we have got a robust economic partnership with India,” Mr Toner said. The steep increase in visa fee of certain categories of H-1B and L1 visas was part of the US\$ 600 million border security Bill signed by the US President Barack Obama to strengthen security along the US-Mexico border. “This is a grave mistake during a time of economic weakness for the nation. Congress should deregulate visas, not burden their users with more regulations and fees,” said Mr Alex Nowrasteh, a policy analyst at Washington-based Competitive Enterprise Institute, said in *The Boston Globe*. He said that protectionist aspects of the legislation were worrying. Mr Nowrasteh said: “Many foreign technology companies including Indian giants Wipro, Infosys Technologies, and Tata outsource thousands of technology workers to the USA. They will bear the brunt of these new fees, which will discourage investment in the USA and could lead to further protectionist measures worldwide”. “Highly skilled foreign workers were also a boon to public finances. Non-immigrant Indian H1B workers contribute over US\$ 1 billion a year in Social Security payments that they don't receive back in benefits,” he said. He argued that instead of raising fees and expanding regulatory costs, lawmakers should do away with workplace inspections, fees, quotas, and other restrictions. “The economic case for the free movement of labour is as compelling as that for goods and services. In a faltering economy, it is more important than ever,” he argued. (*The Statesman*)

Exports increase by 13.2% in July

India's exports grew by 13.2 per cent in July to \$16.24 billion compared with the

corresponding month of the previous fiscal. The growth has been subdued because of a fading base effect, and it is much lower compared with the first three months of this fiscal. The slowdown in the growth rate may continue for the rest of the fiscal as the developed countries may go for fiscal consolidation by partially rolling back the economic stimulus packages, commerce secretary Mr Rahul Khullar told reporters. The roll-back would contract demand in the developed markets, which are the mainstay of India's exports, he added. In any case, the growth rate has started falling as it is now being calculated on a higher base of 2009-10, after the shipments started improving on signs of the global economic recovery. “(Despite) all the hoopla about 30-35 per cent (export growth), the reality is 13.2 per cent (in July). Basically what is happening (is) that the base effect is wiped out,” Mr Khullar said. Due to the low base effect, India's exports showed robust growth rate in April (36.2 per cent), May (35.1 per cent) and June (30.4 per cent). Mr Khullar further said that in the second half of 2010-11, exports would shrink due to aggregate demand contraction overseas and roll-back of stimulus in the developed world. “There is going to be a slowdown in the world in the next six months...that would translate into contraction in aggregate demand of our exports,” he added. The secretary asked the exporters to remain prepared for slowdown in their dispatches in the coming months. However, Mr Khullar said that India would be able to meet the export target of \$200 billion this fiscal. Exports in the last fiscal totalled \$182 billion. “We are on the track. Even if we post a 14-15 per cent growth for the remaining period of the year, we will reach \$200 billion,” he added. Due to the global demand slump, the country's exports started contracting from October 2008 and entered into positive territory after 13 months in November last year. Overseas shipments in April-July this fiscal aggregated \$68.63 billion, up 30.1 per cent over the same period last year. (The Statesman)

Food inflation down at 10.35% in first week of Aug

Annual food inflation fell to 10.35 per cent for the week ending 7 August as prices of vegetables, especially potato and onion, declined. Food inflation, which was 11.40 per cent for the week ending 31 July, is in double digits for the second consecutive week, after it remained in single digit for a fortnight in mid-July. On a yearly basis, potato became cheaper by almost 50 per cent, while vegetables overall saw a decline of 22.12 per cent. Onion prices also slid by 6.91 per cent. Cereals prices, however, rose by 7.40 per cent driven mainly by higher prices of pulses, rice and wheat compared to the same period last year. While pulses became dearer by 18.32 per cent, prices of rice and wheat rose by 8.27 per cent and 7.63 per cent, respectively, during the week under review on yearly basis. Among other food items, milk prices soared by 19.03 per cent during the week compared to the same period last year, while that of fruits went up by 16.74 per cent. The overall inflation, which also include rate of change in prices of manufactured goods, fell to single digit at 9.97 per cent after a gap of five months. (The Statesman)

Cyber News:

RIM's offer on BlackBerry to be evaluated

A day after getting the August 31, 2010 deadline from the Centre to resolve security-related issues attached to Black Berry smart phone, its maker Research In Motion (RIM) on Friday reportedly agreed to provide some technical solution to allow access to its encrypted services to Indian security agencies. But Home Ministry sources said it would deem the matter resolved only after a technical evaluation. A three-member delegation of RIM, led by Vice-President Robert E. Crowe, met Union Home Secretary G.K. Pillai and discussed the issue. However, the Home Ministry made it clear to the RIM officials that a decision on the issue would be taken only after its technical wing and security experts were satisfied with the solution provided to them. And if they fail to provide a mechanism as desired by the Home Ministry, the August 31 deadline prevailing, all mobile operators providing Black Berry Services would be barred from offering BES and BMS. Though RIM has already made other Black berry services like voice, SMS and Internet services available to law enforcement agencies, the Centre also wants access to BES and BMS as it fears that it could be misused by anti-national elements. The Canada-based company, which has over 10-lakh Black Berry users in India, had said it would allow Indian security agencies only to do legal monitoring of subscriber data, although India had asked the smart phone vendor to provide access to e-mail and messenger data. (The Hindu)

Mallya's website hacked by Pak hackers

Rajya Sabha member and industrialist Vijay Mallya's personal website has been hacked allegedly by Pakistani hackers with 'dire' threats that India's cyber space was not secured being posted on it. The liquor baron's spokesperson Prakash Mirpuri said that a complaint in this regard would be lodged with the city police tomorrow. A Pakistani flag was also depicted on the website of the chief of Kingfisher Airlines. "Dr Mallya's website www.mallyainparliament.com has been hacked and the Pakistani flag has been placed with a dire message from an organisation known as the Pakistan Cyber Army," the spokesperson said. "A police complaint will be filed with the Cyber Crime as soon as the (Cyber) cell opens on Monday," he added. Mallya said he was shocked at the defacement of his website. "This morning when I went into my site, I was utterly shocked to see the Pakistani flag and the message," he said, adding "what was more shocking to me was to see that it was done by some Pakistani outfit." Mallya said he will report the incident to the Union Government. The defaced site says 'Feel the Pakistan' with danger signs and adds that 'we are sleeping, not dead'. "This is a payback from Pak Cyber Army in return to the defacements of Pakistani sites ! You are playing with fire !, This is not a game kids. We are warning you one last time, don't think that you are secure in this Cyber Space We will turn your Cyber Space into Hell," the site says. 'And make sure that you have someone to Cry Over because we gona literally throw you in the deep sea, Will revenge ! if any Pakistani site Hacked by Indian's!' the damaged site adds. A cyber expert says that ahead of Independence celebrations, cyber attacks on the websites of both India and Pakistan are usually noticed. "Some websites belonging to Pakistan get defaced while

some sites of India get hacked. The hackers leave their mark to show their strength. Moreover, they target well known websites so that the hackers get huge publicity," Cyber Expert Vijay Mukhi said. (The Indian Express)

Foreign Relations/Geo-strategic developments:

India should read writing on the wall: Pak

Needling India, Pakistan said that Kashmiri people were resolved to get their right to self-determination and New Delhi should read the "writing on the wall". "It is our firm belief that when (the Kashmiri) people are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for their cause, then nothing can stop them from reaching their destination," Foreign Office spokesman Mr Abdul Basit said in the weekly news briefing. In provocative comments, Mr Basit also spoke about Indian forces "brutally" trying to deal with the agitation in the Valley. The Kashmiri people were "resolved to get their right to self-determination no matter how brutally Indian security forces try to suppress their legitimate struggle," Mr Basit said. He was responding to a question on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's call to agitating Kashmiri youth to end violent protests as that would not benefit anyone. Pakistan, which has raised hackles in New Delhi by commenting on the internal situation in the Valley, believes "it is high time that India reads the writing on the wall", Mr Basit said. The government and people of Pakistan will "continue to stand by the people of Jammu and Kashmir through thick and thin by providing full diplomatic and moral support to their struggle", he added. India has accused Pakistan of backing the violent protests that recently erupted in Jammu and Kashmir after a youth died when he was hit by a teargas canister. Islamabad has denied the charge and said Kashmiri people are waging a struggle on their own to achieve the right to self-determination. (The Statesman)

Manmohan offers more aid to Pakistan

Even as the world community urged Islamabad to shed its reservations and accept aid from India, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Thursday called up his Pakistani counterpart Yusuf Raza Gilani and offered assistance over and above the initial proposal of \$5 million. Speaking to Mr. Gilani against the backdrop of the United Nations urging all countries to bury their political and ideological differences and help Pakistan in coping with floods, Dr. Singh expressed his sorrow and condoled the deaths. He pointed out India had made an offer of assistance and was ready to do more. Dr. Singh said that in times of natural disasters, all of South Asia should rise to the occasion and extend all possible help to the people of Pakistan. In Islamabad, asked if Pakistan had taken a decision on the Indian offer of assistance, Foreign Office spokesperson Abdul Basit said: "We appreciate the gesture. Their offer has been conveyed to the relevant authorities and the matter is under consideration." At a briefing in Washington, State Department spokesperson P.J. Crowley said: "In terms of responding to a disaster, politics should play no role. You have a country that's willing to help Pakistan, and I think we expect that Pakistan will accept." (Times of India)

Military

Indian Occupied Kashmir:

Violence again in Kashmir as 4 die in police firing

Calm that reigned in Kashmir for three days was broken on Friday, when four civilians were killed in firing by the police and the Central Reserve Police Force at three places. With this incident, the death toll in clashes since June 11 has risen to 56. As the authorities lifted curfew in Srinagar and allowed Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, head of the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference, to deliver his Friday sermon at the Jamia Masjid after six weeks, thousands of people followed him to protest the fresh round of killings. Mudasir, 16, was killed in firing at Trehgam in the border district of Kupwara in the early hours. Witnesses said that people, returning from dawn prayers, were stopped by CRPF personnel, who asked them why they had violated the undeclared curfew restrictions. This led to an altercation, and the personnel opened fire, killing Mudasir, and injuring a 60-year-old woman and a youth. In protest, the people staged a demonstration. Reinforcements were summoned. District Magistrate Mohammad Shafi Rather said curfew was imposed in the area and the CRPF deployed. "They [the CRPF] confronted a group of people and opened fire, perhaps, in self-defence. We are investigating the matter," he told The Hindu. However, the people claimed that no announcement of curfew was made. Hours later, police and CRPF personnel opened fire to break up a demonstration at Pattan on the Srinagar-Jammu Highway, injuring Ali Mohammad, 55. He was rushed to hospital where he died. The police said the protesters defied curfew and blocked the highway. At Bomai near Sopore, the CRPF opened fire to disperse another demonstration against the recent killings. Two boys, Arif Mir and Sameer Lone, died of bullet wounds, and three sustained injuries. Thousands of people took to the streets. They also tried to attack the local camp of the security forces. Reports said that in Baramulla, two protesters jumped into the Jhelum when they were chased by security forces. However, they swam to safety. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah cancelled a routine meeting of the Unified Headquarters. An official spokesman said Mr. Abdullah postponed the meeting because of senior police and paramilitary officers were busy with law and order duties. "The meeting will be held as per schedule on Saturday." (The Hindu)

Mirwaiz sets terms for talks

The chairman of the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, has called for withdrawal of the troops and release of political prisoners as a pre-condition for talks with New Delhi. The Mirwaiz, who was released from house arrest after two months, delivered a sermon at Jamia Masjid where Friday prayers were offered after six weeks. Later, he led thousands of people in protesting the recent killings in Kashmir. Asserting that the ongoing agitation was not to demand any economic package, the Mirwaiz rejected Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's appeal for talks to restore peace in the Kashmir Valley. "We know when the situation is normal. New Delhi says everything is fine in Kashmir, and we will not give it that opportunity this time," he said.

The protests would continue until the Kashmir issue was resolved, he said. The Mirwaiz reiterated his four-point demand to make the atmosphere conducive for any political engagement. “The withdrawal of Indian troops should start immediately; the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the Disturbed Area Act should be repealed; bunkers and camps should be removed from cities and towns; and all political prisoners, including the recently arrested youths, should be released... Only after these demands are met, can the three parties — India, Pakistan and the Kashmiris — move forward to resolve the Kashmir issue.” The Mirwaiz said the atrocities and the gun had forced the people to launch civil disobedience. The Centre should come to grips with the ground reality and should “not shut its eyes” as it would prove detrimental to the fragile peace in the region. He urged Syed Ali Geelani, who heads the hardline faction of the Hurriyat Conference, not to call for any strike on Fridays when people should assemble, pray and register their protest at mosques and shrines which “are the centres of our freedom struggle.” (The Hindu)

For J&K youth, Omar promises 50,000 jobs

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday announced government jobs for 50,000 youths over the next few months. “Nobody,” Omar said, “can be so stone-hearted as not to be touched by what has happened, and no eye can be without tears over the loss of lives”. As the Valley remained comparatively calm after Friday’s deaths of four people in police firing, Omar, speaking on Doordarshan and Radio Kashmir on the eve of Independence Day, stressed that “no economic or employment packages can heal the wounds, but economic development is also an essential component of the well being of the state and its people, and thus cannot be ignored”. “While the Prime Minister has constituted the C. Rangarajan Committee to address the employment problem in Jammu and Kashmir, on the occasion of the holy days of Ramzan, I announce that the state government will engage 50,000 youth in the government within the next few months to improve the public delivery system in public services,” he said. The Chief Minister welcomed the PM’s statement in the all-party meeting recently that he was willing to consider autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir within the Constitution, and welcomed the Government of India’s recognition of the fact that the accession of the state to India had taken place under unique circumstances. “This is a historic opportunity for us and we must take advantage of it,” he said, and appealed to separatist leaders to “come to the table for talks and play their role in solving the Kashmir issue”. Expressing deep sorrow over the large number of civilian deaths in firing by the police and security forces, the CM said, “My heart bleeds, and in their hour of grief, I am with the bereaved families whose dear ones have lost their lives... The victims of unfortunate events are my own brothers and sons and I am in gloom.” (The Indian Express)

Breach of security in Srinagar

A suspended policeman hurled a shoe at Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah at the Independence Day function on Sunday. It fell on the ground but the incident shook the dignitaries seated in the VIP pavilion at the Bakhshi Stadium, which had been turned into a fortress. Abdul Ahad Jan, suspended head constable of the J&K

Police, was arrested and is being interrogated. Fifteen policemen, who were put on duty in the area where the incident occurred at 10.30 a.m., have been placed under suspension for “breach of security.” An inquiry has also been ordered into the role of these policemen — two sub-inspectors, two assistant sub-inspectors, three head constables and eight constables. Jan, himself seated in the VIP pavilion, stood up and threw the shoe towards the podium where Mr Abdullah was taking the salute at a ceremonial parade after unfurling the national flag. Jan, who also shouted, “we want freedom,” was immediately whisked away by Special Security Group personnel. Mr Abdullah was dismissive of the incident and, in his speech, said he was happy that someone threw a shoe instead of stones. “I don’t mind that when I came in today, some one stood up and shouted slogans. If he had a shoe and not a stone in his hand, then it’s a better way of agitation.” Informed sources said Jan had told his interrogators that he was upset at the “killings” taking place in Kashmir. “He had no remorse for what he did,” a police officer said. A case of sedition has been registered against him at the Shergarhi police station. Late in the evening, a police spokesman said Jan revealed that he had been approached by a political party leader, whose entry pass he used to gain entry into the venue. Director-General of Police Kulim Rhoda told The Hindu that Jan was a criminal, against whom many cases were registered. “We have constituted a team, headed by Kashmir range DIG Deepak Kumar, which will investigate the incident.” Jan had been under treatment in a psychiatric hospital as well as with private doctors. He had been placed under suspension in May this year, the DGP said. In his speech, the Chief Minister said: “Today [Sunday] is the fourth day of the sacred month of Ramzan. Let’s vow [ourselves] that at least this month both sides would desist from a show of strength. Let there be no stone pelting, let there be a situation where the security forces need not fire a bullet or resort to lathicharge.” (The Hindu)

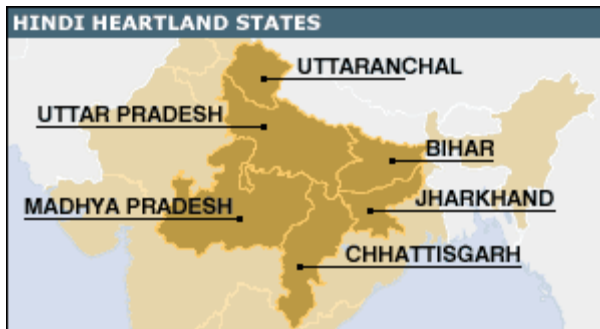
Social front:

Report sought on 600 tonnes of missing explosives

The Centre has sought a report from the Madhya Pradesh government on 600 tonnes of explosives reported missing while being transported from Rajasthan. “It is a very serious matter. We have asked the Madhya Pradesh government to send a report immediately,” a Home Ministry official said. Sixty-one trucks carrying the explosives were sent from Rajasthan Explosives and Chemicals Limited at Dholpur to a trading company at Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. The explosives were sent over four months, from April to July. Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Uma Shankar Gupta said police teams were sent to Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. (The Hindu)

Regional Report

Central India (Hindi Heartland)



Politics:

Nitish declares entire Bihar drought-hit

In the wake of an alarmingly deficient monsoon, Bihar Chief Minister Mr. Nitish Kumar has declared the remaining 10 districts in the State also “drought afflicted.” Earlier this month, the government so declared 28 of the 38 districts. In his Independence Day address on Sunday, Mr. Kumar promised the people that the government would, however, tide over the crisis and “not a single person would go hungry.” Political observers say the drought situation will be a major plank of the NDA government in the coming Assembly elections, as it will go all out to ensure effective handling of the crisis. Mr. Kumar said the government had asked the Centre to give an additional 330 MW of power to help it provide farmers uninterrupted irrigation supply for five-six hours. “In order to generate employment, I have ordered that at least two employment guarantee schemes should run efficiently in every panchayat.” The government had also requested the Centre for an additional Rs.13, 456 crore to increase the labour budget from 31 to 100 days to deal with employment problems in wake of the drought. On Saturday, the Cabinet decided to release Rs. 570 crore as diesel subsidy from the State Contingency Fund to assist paddy and maize farmers. The government is already giving farmers a diesel subsidy of Rs. 200 a hectare (at Rs. 20 a litre) for three rounds of irrigation for saving paddy. Mr. Kumar earlier met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and submitted a memorandum seeking an urgent assistance of Rs. 5,062.75 crore to ensure the safety of livestock, provide relief, and make special food and drinking water arrangements. On Friday, an eight-member Central team, which arrived in the State to review the situation, concurred with the State government's assessment. “Paddy output has been very low; even the maize crop is severely affected due to the heat,” said Pankaj Kumar, Joint Secretary in the Agriculture Ministry. (The Hindu)

UP govt offers to hike compensation for farmers

Pushed on the back foot by agitating farmers and Opposition parties, the Uttar Pradesh government offered to hike compensation for the land acquired for a township along the

Taj Expressway besides ordering release of the people arrested for spearheading the protests. Farmer leader Mr Ram Babu Kathelia was released after officials held talks with the agitating farmers. "On the directives of chief minister Mayawati, Cabinet secretary Shashank Shekhar Singh held a meeting with representatives of the farmers late last night, in which it was decided to hike compensation to Rs 570 per square metre from existing Rs 449 per square metre (over 20 per cent)," an official spokesman said in Lucknow. The additional compensation of Rs 121 per square metre will be given to the farmers of affected villages in Aligarh in form of a special financial assistance, he said. While the official spokesman gave the earlier price at which land was being acquired at Rs 449 per square metre, the farmer leader put the earlier rate at Rs 437. Mr Kathelia said he was in the process of "working out an agreement with the state authorities" and would be placing the government's written proposal before the Kisan panchayat later in the day. It is "now for the panchayat to decide and I am hopeful that by this evening an amicable solution to the present crisis will be ratified," he said. The official spokesman said that it had been decided that if any farmer does not agree to this financial assistance, then his land would not be acquired and would be given back to him, the spokesman said. "Besides directives have been issued to release the arrested farmers immediately," he said, adding proper compensation for crops, trees, boring and wells situated on the acquired land was also being given to the farmers. Mr Kathelia said: "The state government has given me a written assurance that all land which has, till date, been acquired from farmers without their full approval will be returned to them and that the compensation for all such farmland is being raised from the earlier price of Rs 437 per sq-meter to Rs 570 per sq-meter." The farmer said: "The state government has given me a written assurance that all cases against farmers in connection with the agitation will be withdrawn." "All farmers who lost their lives or were injured in the agitation will be compensated. The next of kin of the deceased will be given Rs 10 lakh each and those injured will get a compensation of Rs 2 lakh each," he said. The UP Cabinet secretary said: "We have done what we could. We went to jail, we got hurt by lathis, our farmer friends died. Our ministers and farmer brothers also helped up. Everybody has supported us." The farmers have been holding demonstrations for nearly three weeks near Aligarh demanding compensation at the rate paid to Noida and Greater Noida farmers. The protests turned violent over the past three days. Clashes between protesters and police had left four persons, including a PAC jawan, dead, in the area. Opposition leaders, including former BJP president Mr Rajnath Singh, Leader of Opposition in UP assembly Mr Shiv Pal Singh Yadav and RLD leader Mr Ajit Singh, had yesterday addressed the mahapanchayat and extended support to the agitating farmers. (The Statesman)

Social front:

Economic Front:

The North



Politics:

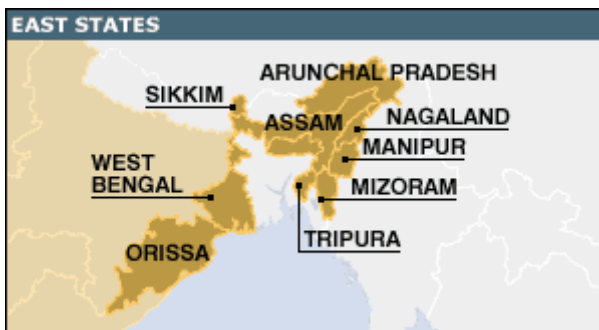
Social front:

Flood alert issued after water discharged into Yamuna

District authorities have issued fresh flood alert in over a dozen villages after excessive water was discharged from Tajewala barrage in Haryana into Yamuna river following heavy rains. Officials have alerted the flood outposts in Dund Khera, Sehpatt, Mawi, Haiderpur, Ramda, Nagla Rai, Mandawar, Baseda, Belhera, Choutra, Fatehpur, Bidoli, Manglora, Udeypur and Bhadi villages. Meanwhile, 1.25 lakh cusec of water has been released in the river Ganga following about a dozen villages, mostly in Patiali and Soron regions, in Etah district have submerged. Residents of Samarpur, Bhusavali and some other villages are moving to safer places due to the threat posed by the water. The excessive water has also damaged crops in many villages, including Nagla Hansi, Nagla Narpat, Nagla Heera, Nagla Shambhoo, Nardoli, Nagaria and Kadavgav. Though villagers allege district authorities have not been listening to their problems, Sub Divisional Magistrate Satyapal Singh maintained that appropriate arrangements are being made to protect villagers and directions in this regard have been issued to tehsildars. (Times of India)

Economic Front:

The East



Politics:

Left gets the politics of Singur, finally

Ahead of the 2011 Assembly poll, the state government is gearing up to take possession the vacant land at Singur which it had acquired for Tata Motors' Nano plant which was eventually relocated to Sanand. State land and land reforms minister Mr Abdur Rezzak Mollah asked his officials to prepare the groundwork for the possession of land just a few days after the Union railway minister promised at the recent Lalgarh rally that she would give back land to the farmers in Singur if the Trinamul Congress comes to power in the state. Tata Motors has not come up with the proposed small-car plant on the 600 acres of land it got in 2006 and the lease deed allows the state to take back the land after a period of three years. The state industries minister Mr Nirupam Sen had recently said that he has already written to Tata Motors asking them what they planned to do with the land and was awaiting its response before taking the next step. The Marxist administration's moves, after having taken repeated political blows from the Opposition, seems to be backed by a large dollop of political sense ~ ministers know that the moment they announce the state was taking possession of the land Tata Motors is likely to move court. Hence, the political calculation is that the land would most likely be caught up in a legal web and this would thwart the Trinamul chief's ability to deliver on her promise. But it's not just a negative game for the CPI-M. Mr Mollah also has a few cards up his sleeve to woo the farmers of Singur. Once possession is resumed, the land will be vested to the state. Officials who are looking into the legalities of the deal say that if the state can lease out the land at a nominal rate to Tata Motors then it can also lease out the vested land to the land-losers on a notional payment of Re one... Though the state government burnt its fingers in Singur, it is trying to make sure it's no easy ride for Miss Mamata Banerjee from now on. (The Statesman)

Social front:

Scholarship for 2 lakh students of backward areas in Assam

The Assam government will provide scholarships of Rs. 2,000 each to 2 lakh meritorious students belonging to tea-tribe communities, the Scheduled Tribes, the Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes, as well as other communities living in the border areas, chars (sand isles of the Brahmaputra river) and other economically and educationally backward areas in 27 districts this financial year. The State government will soon constitute a Minority Education Commission to advise the government on education of students belonging to minority communities. This was announced by Assam Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Bhumidhar Barman in his speech after the ceremonial hoisting of the national flag at the Lataasil grounds here on Sunday. The Minister stated in his speech that Mr. Gogoi also announced another welfare measure of enhancing the monthly pension of freedom fighters from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 8,000. Highlighting the achievements of the Congress-led coalition government in the State, Dr. Barman said the per capita income had increased from Rs. 13,962 to Rs. 29,305 over the past nine years since the Congress came back to power in 2001. In the health sector, the emergency 108-

Mrityunjay service has so far saved 17,503 lives and benefitted 3,49,460 patients. Ambulance service had been introduced in 199 tea gardens and 10 boat clinics had been opened to cover people living in the riverine and Char areas. (The Hindu)

11 Bengal districts are ‘drought-hit’

The West Bengal government declared 11 districts of the state as drought-hit and allocated Rs 50 crore to tackle the situation caused by a rain deficit of 30 per cent. The 11 districts are Purulia, Bankura, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Burdwan, Hooghly, West Midnapore, South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, Nadia and Malda. The fund would be spent on repairing defunct tube-wells, digging up new ones and purchasing seeds to be used for alternate farming. “The Chief Minister will write to Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar urging him to send a team here. The CM will also write to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh urging him to release Rs 1,400 crore due under the NREGS,” said Finance Minister Asim Dasgupta, who made the announcement after a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee. The meeting was held on Monday as August 15 is considered the last date when ideally all cultivable land comes under transplantation. According to latest figures, out of about 44 lakh hectares of cultivable land in the state, the transplantation of paddy could not be done in about 16 lakh hectares of land. Last year this figure stood at 2 lakh hectares. “I will request everybody not to panic, as we have enough food grain and there’s still some time left for the rains. Efforts are being made to go for alternative farming like sowing of mustard seeds, pulses, maize that require less water than paddy,” Dasgupta said, adding in addition to a subsidy of Re 1 the state’s farmers get on diesel they will now get another Re 1 subsidy on that fuel. (The Indian Express)

A Red model for Saffron in madrasa education

The Left Front government is providing a lesson to BJP-led Chhattisgarh in improving the madrasa system. Impressed by the state’s record, Chhattisgarh has made the West Bengal madrasa system its model and will be the next in the country — West Bengal is the first — to have English-medium madrasas. Prodded by Chief Minister Raman Singh, Chhattisgarh minister Salim Raj — who also happens to be the national treasurer of BHP Minority Morcha — came to West Bengal last week and visited various madrasas, among them a couple of those where Hindus outnumber Muslims. He also had discussions with the Madarsa Board officials and the Minister of State for Minority and Madrasa System, Abdus Sattar. “He was so happy after visiting the madrasas,” said Sattar. “I asked him if the BJP believes in good Muslims and bad Muslims. He said contrary to popular belief, the BJP was for better education for Muslims. We gave him all materials with details of what we have done, our madrasa syllabus, our syllabus for English-medium madrasas and he said he would follow them in Chhattisgarh after consulting the chief minister.” Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee is the minister-in-charge of the department and on August 3, he laid the foundation stone of the first English-medium madrasa at Krishnanagar in Nadia. From Raipur, Salim Raj, was eloquent about Bengal’s madrasa system. “Tomorrow, I am going to meet our Chief Minister and I will urge him to write to Buddhadeb-babu, congratulating him for the wonderful job he has done in madrasa education.” It is such a secular system, he said. “I am really overwhelmed with what the Marxists have done. I was especially surprised to see there are lots of Hindus studying in

those madrasas. In some of them, Hindus are a majority and you will never see this anywhere in the country.” In Chhattisgarh, there are 15 lakh Muslims among the 2.5-crore-strong population. There are 200 recognised madrasas. Raj, who is also the chairman of Chhattisgarh Haj Committee, said they were interested in starting English-medium madrasas in the state. “Tomorrow, I will urge the Chief Minister to provide instructions on how to set up such madrasas. I have brought everything from West Bengal and will be in constant touch with them,” he added. (The Indian Express)

Economic Front:

The South



Politics:

Andhra Pradesh Cabinet split on regional lines

The Rosaiah Cabinet is divided on Telangana and Coastal Andhra-Rayalaseema lines after the latter called those promoting the separatist sentiment in Telangana as anti-national. The whole issue is bound to echo in the 19 Aug Cabinet meeting. The regional divide is bordering on bitterness with the Telangana leaders, cutting across party lines, asked if stalwarts like Jawaharlal Nehru were anti-national when the states were being carved on linguistic lines. Telangana leaders after at a meeting announced that they would not allow leaders and ministers from Andhra and Rayalaseema to visit Telangana if they failed to express regret for their remarks. The non-Telangana leaders responded that they would take this up with the party high command, with some leaders beginning to seek appointments of key leaders including Mrs Sonia Gandhi. The Telangana ministers too said they would take the issue to Mrs Sonia Gandhi. The Andhra-Rayalaseema ministers’ representation to the Justice Srikrishna Committee, drafted to go into the issue of Andhra Pradesh, that separatist demand is a cognisable offence now has tension mounting in both camps. A Telangana leader on the “anti-national” controversy, dripping with sarcasm told. (The Statesman)

Social front:

Economic Front:

West India



Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front: