

Business and Politics in Muslim World

India
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19 to 25 June 2010

Presentation Date: 30 June 2010

Report # 125

Summary (Page # 4-6)

National Report

Politics:

- Congress gets highest number of seats in Rajya Sabha polls; BSP, DMK, TDP are real gainers (Page # 7)
- Cong must apologise: BJP on Bhopal (Page # 7)
- Rs 1,500-cr package for Bhopal gas victims (Page # 8)
- BJP to review ties with JD(U) (Page # 9)
- NDA, a 'naturally dissolving alliance': Cong (Page # 9)
- Jaswant rejoins BJP, thanks Advani for return (Page # 9)

Minorities' Issues:

- Marriage with stepmom is rape: Deoband (Page # 10)

Hindu Fundamentalism:

Insurgency Movements:

- No easy solution to Maoist challenge: Buddhadeb (Page # 11)
- Youths fall for promises made by Maoists (Page # 11)
- 'Maoist menace axes India coal output' (Page # 12)
- Govt says no to 'greater Nagaland' (Page # 12)

Economic Front:

- Investment hurdles will go: Pranab (Page # 13)
- Rich getting richer: 120k Indians hold a third of national income (Page # 14)

Foreign Relations/Geo-strategic developments:

- 'Pakistan Army a threat to India, not its people or government' (Page # 15)

Indian Occupied Kashmir:

- Kashmir shuts down to protest killings (Page # 16)
- Drug abuse on the rise in Kashmir (Page # 16)

Social front:

- Bombs in Mecca Masjid blast were assembled in Hyderabad: CBI (Page # 17)
- Honour killings: notice issued to governments (Page # 18)
- Australia closes college with over 450 Indian students (Page # 18)
- India likely to halve poverty rate by 2015: U.N. report (Page # 19)
- Countdown to Games: Queen's baton arrives in India (Page # 19)
- Only 27% parents control online activities of their children: Survey (**Cyber Report**) (Page # 20)

Regional Report

Central India (Hindi Heartland)

Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

The North

Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

The East

Politics:

- CPM, LF govt responsible for election setback: Karat (Page # 23)

Social front:

Economic Front:

The South

Politics:

- Assembly bypoll in 10 seats in Telangana region on 27 July (Page # 24)

Social front:

Economic Front:

West India

Politics:

- Modi's lust for publicity humiliates Gujarat: Cong (Page # 25)

Social front:

Economic Front:

National Summary:

The Congress secured the highest number of 16 seats in the just-concluded biennial election of 55 Rajya Sabha seats from 13 States and the by-election to one seat from Rajasthan. But there is nothing much to celebrate for the Congress as in effect it lost two seats as many as 18 of its members are retiring in the next two weeks. The Bharatiya Janata Party equalised its figure with 11 members getting elected. The major loser is the Samajwadi Party as it could get only two of its members elected though seven of its MPs are retiring. The BSP secured seven seats (only three are retiring) and the DMK got three (with none retiring).

The BJP reiterated its demand for an apology from the Congress as former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Arjun Singh said he had no role to let Warren Anderson leave the country after the 1984 Bhopal Gas Tragedy.

Jaswant Singh rejoins the BJP. Singh was expelled over his controversial take on Mohammad Ali Jinnah in his book on Pakistan's founding father.

West Bengal chief minister Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said there was no easy solution to the Maoist challenge and the issue has become "very complicated" due to support to the rebels by the main Opposition Trinamool Congress and others.

With the tribal mass-movement spilling into the whole tribal hinterlands of West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia, Maoists are using this to induct teenage youths in their fold with promises of food and better life in camps. Amidst conversations with different youths and senior tribals of Lalgarh, Binpur, Belpahari, Jhargram and Salboni over the past four days, it was revealed that Maoists leaders who are leading the Lalgarh and Salboni squads have already prepared a Child Liberation Army (CLA). This child army squad, comprising teenagers aged between 12 and 18 years, has been trained by the Maoists who have already started the induction process.

The threat of Maoist attacks is hampering coal mining in several states, keeping production lower than the demand from growing industries, Coal Minister Sriprakash Jaiswal said. With the Maoist rebels controlling vast swathes of mineral-rich areas, the government has often struggled to transport coal to power and steel firms. Jaiswal said the central and the eastern Indian states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and West Bengal were some of the coal-rich states that needed to beef up the security for mines.

India assured US Inc. that its concerns on infrastructure, investment restrictions and other impediments would be addressed expeditiously, and a road map prepared for discussions ahead of President Barack Obama's visit in November. Seeking the support of U.S. investors for bridging an estimated \$250-300 billion gap in the infrastructure investment needs of India in the next five years. India's hope of double-digit economic growth by 2012, up from an estimated over 8.5 per cent in the current fiscal.

India's high net worth individuals (HNWIs) prospered just over 120,000 in number, or

0.01% of the population, their combined worth is close to one-third of India's Gross National Income (GNI). HNWI, in this context, are defined as those having investable assets of \$1 million or more, excluding primary residence, collectibles, consumables, and consumer durables. According to the firms' 2010 World Wealth Report, India now has 126,700 HNWIs, an increase of more than 50% over the 2008 number. It seems safe to assume that as a class not only have India's super-rich recouped their 2008 losses, they have even made gains over their pre-crisis (2007) positions. Meanwhile, in 2009 alone, an estimated 13.6 million more people in India became poor or remained in poverty than would have been the case had the 2008 growth rates continued, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Also, an estimated 33.6 million more people in India became poor or remained in poverty over 2008 and 2009 than would have been poor had the pre-crisis (2004-7) growth rates been maintained over these two years.

The Kashmir Valley on Monday observed a strike to protest against the killing of two youths. In another development, a militant attack in north Kashmir's Sopore town left 12 people injured, including four policemen.

The youth in Kashmir have fallen into the net of drugs, with such cases increasing by 35-40 per cent in the last few years. Mostly youth in the 18-35 age group have fallen in the trap. Deaths are reported in young men because of drug use,"

The Supreme Court issued notice to the Centre and eight States for a direction to explain the steps taken to prevent honour killings at the national level and in the respective States. A vacation Bench comprising Justice R.M. Lodha and Justice A.K. Patnaik, after hearing counsel Ravi Kant, issued notice to Haryana, Punjab, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh asking them to respond to the plea of the petitioner, Shakti Vahini, to submit a National/State Plan of Action to combat honour crimes. It alleged that the State governments had failed to take action to curb such feudal tendencies of killing couples and individuals for the sake of honour. The petition said that in the last one year, Shakti Vahini, an NGO, had been studying the cases on honour killings. It said the number of cases had been on the rise in recent times, and when the State governments concerned remained a mute spectator, there was a lot of fear among couples who were married and those intending to get married that they might face the wrath of feudal forces. The petition noted that the pressure was often so intense that some couples resorted to suicide.

India is expected to reduce its poverty rate from 51 per cent in 1990 to 24 per cent in 2015, slashing the number of extremely poor by 188 million, according to a United Nations report on the Millennium Development Goals for 2010.

About 77% Indian kids face negative situations online and only 27% parents control the cyber activities of their kids, says a global family survey on children's online lives and safety issues released on Wednesday. But a very interesting finding is that children have their own rules and regulation for surfing internet. Only 50% Indian parents thought their kids had faced an unpleasant experience online. Only 1% of the 500 adults

considered, admitted not knowing what their children got up to online. But 23% of the 200 kids who took the poll felt their parents were clueless. And here's the clincher: 76% — 30% "strongly" — felt they are more careful online than their parents or guardians.

Regional Summary

CPM general secretary Prakash Karat has finally held both his party — the CPM, and the Left Front government responsible for the recent electoral setbacks in West Bengal.

By-elections to 10 assembly seats in Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh will be held on 27 July, the Election Commission announced. Bypolls will be held in Sirpur, Chennur (SC), Mancherial, Yellareddy, Nizamabad (Urban), Koratla, Dharmapuri (SC), Huzurabad, Siddipet and Warangal west Assembly constituencies, the EC said.

Reacting to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar returning the aid money the Gujarat government had given to that state as flood relief, the Congress said that it was “CM's lust for publicity that has given an opportunity to the Bihar CM to insult Gujarat”.

National Report

Politics:

Congress gets highest number of seats in Rajya Sabha polls; BSP, DMK, TDP are real gainers

The Congress bagged the highest number of 16 seats in the just-concluded biennial election to 55 Rajya Sabha seats from 13 States and the by-election to one seat from Rajasthan. But there is nothing much to celebrate for the Congress as in effect it lost two seats — as many as 18 of its members are retiring in the next two weeks. The Bharatiya Janata Party equalised its figure with 11 members getting elected — 10 are retiring in this round and one vacancy was caused in Rajasthan due to the death of MP Krishan Lal Balmiki. The major loser is the Samajwadi Party as it could get only two of its members elected though seven of its MPs are retiring. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati's BSP and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi's DMK are the real gainers in the poll. The BSP secured seven seats (only three are retiring) and the DMK got three (with none retiring). The Biju Janata Dal too got three seats though only one is retiring. The AIADMK got only two seats out of four retiring this time. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP), led by N. Chandrababu Naidu, too is a significant gainer as it secured two seats with none of its members retiring. The other parties which got seats are: Janata Dal (United) and NCP – 2 each, the RJD, the LJP, the Shiv Sena, the JMM, Shiromani Akali Dal and Independent (Vijay Mallya) – one each. Some other parties whose members are retiring this time are: the Janata Dal (United) – 2, the PMK, the CPI (M), the Janata Dal (Secular), the Shiv sena, the NCP, the Swatantra Bharat Paksha, the Shiromani Akali Dal, the RJD, the JMM and an independent (Rahul Bajaj) – one each. The Election Commission has announced that based on the report of the Returning Officer and the Observer it had decided to declare the vote cast by an MLA in Orissa as invalid as he had “violated the prescribed voting procedure” during the poll. The NCP MLA from Dhenkanal, Nabin Nanda, while exercising his franchise, showed his marked ballot paper to all present at the polling booth before dropping it into the box. The other parties charged that it was a violation as the Rajya Sabha election guidelines clearly mentioned that a voter was allowed to show his/her marked ballot paper only to the party's authorised polling agent. (The Hindu)

Cong must apologise: BJP on Bhopal

With former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Arjun Singh washing his hands off the decision to let Warren Anderson leave the country after the 1984 Bhopal Gas Tragedy, Opposition BJP said on Saturday that the role of the then Rajiv Gandhi government at the Centre in giving a safe passage to the Union Carbide chief has now become clear. The BJP reiterated its demand for an apology from the Congress in the light of Singh's statement. BJP spokesperson Ravi Shankar Prasad said there was “ample evidence” to prove that an agreement had been reached by the then government at the Centre and the US that Anderson would be provided a safe passage out of the country. “The nation wants an answer from Congress why it has deliberately misled the nation. It is now clear that a safe passage was given to Anderson by the Congress government,” Prasad said.

(The Indian Express)

Rs 1,500-cr package for Bhopal gas victims

A group of ministers (GoM) looking into the Bhopal gas tragedy recommended a Rs 1,500 crore package for enhancing the compensation for the next of kin of those who died and were debilitated in the 3 December, 1984 industrial disaster. The GoM, headed by home minister Mr P Chidambaram, that considered relief and rehabilitation of the victims, among other things, is believed to have recommended payment of Rs 10 lakh to the next of kin of each of the deceased. Those permanently disabled or suffering from critical ailments arising out of the deadly methyl isocyanate gas leak are likely to get Rs 5 lakh each while those partially debilitated may get Rs 3 lakh each. The report containing the recommendations of the GoM to Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh will be considered by the Union Cabinet at a special meeting on Friday. Mr Chidambaram told reporters after the final meeting of the GoM that the ministers had made “significant recommendations” and their immediate focus was “to bring relief to those people who had suffered as a result of the ghastly tragedy”. Sources said the GoM also recommended that a fresh attempt be made for extradition of former CEO of Union Carbide Warren Anderson and a curative petition filed in the Supreme Court against dilution of charges against the accused in the case. In 1996, the SC had reduced the charge from Section 304-Part II (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) to Section 304 A (criminal negligence) of IPC. While Section 304 II provides a maximum imprisonment of 10 years, Section 304 A provides a maximum jail term of two years. The group is also believed to have cleared a proposal to clean up the toxic site at the plant in Bhopal for burying the poisonous materials there itself. The job will be done by the Madhya Pradesh government with financial and technical assistance from the Central government. A sum of Rs 300 crore will be set aside for the clean-up job, the sources said. The GoM is also believed to have favoured the takeover of Bhopal Memorial Trust hospital, set up in the aftermath of the tragedy, for whose upgradation Rs 230 crore may be spent. Altogether 5,295 people lost their lives immediately after the gas disaster while 10,047 others succumbed to various complications in the following months. Of the 5,60,000 affected people, nearly 37,000 were permanently disabled while the rest received minor injuries. The fresh reparation decided in the new package will be released after deducting the compensation already paid out. The GoM, which was reconstituted in the wake of nationwide outrage over the light punishment given to the accused, concluded its four-day deliberations. The GoM is also believed to have recommended to the government that it pursue the civil liability of Dow Chemicals, the successor of UCC worldwide, by following up on a case in the Jabalpur seat of Madhya Pradesh High Court. The GoM discussed various issues relating to criminal and civil liability, relief and rehabilitation and remediation in the wake of the Bhopal court verdict in the case two weeks ago. “We have dealt with all issues ~ compensation, legal and pursuing the extradition of Warren Anderson, the legal options available to the government of India and most importantly the remediation issues and health-related matters,” Mr Chidambaram said. The home minister said thousands of people continued to suffer owing to the tragedy and the Central government was “extremely sympathetic” to their plight. “We think we have made significant recommendations. The GoM is not over. It

will continue to address any issue that will come up before it,” he said. Mr Chidambaram said the GoM had also identified several residuary issues which would be dealt with in the future meetings of the GoM. (The Statesman)

BJP to review ties with JD(U)

The Bharatiya Janata Party is to review its ties with the Janata Dal (United) at the highest level, although for the moment it continues to say it wants to carry on the good development work done by the Nitish Kumar government in Bihar. On Monday, BJP president Nitin Gadkari went into a huddle with senior leader L.K. Advani. Later he met others, including Bihar party president C.P. Thakur and Bhagalpur MP Shahnawaz Husain. Earlier in the day, Mr. Thakur and Mr. Husain briefed Mr. Advani on the recent developments in the ties between the coalition partners. Mr. Husain told journalists that Mr. Gadkari would consult party leaders at all levels on the simmering tensions in the alliance. The BJP wants to retain the alliance, but not at the cost of self-respect, its leaders have been saying. The task before the leadership is to gauge whether Mr. Kumar has made up his mind to “go it alone” in the coming Assembly elections and, if so, to break off the ties with the JD (U) before it does so. The bonhomie between the coalition partners evaporated ever since the BJP's Patna conclave on June 12, when Mr. Kumar articulated his displeasure at the media blitz launched by the BJP to project Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi. He was especially annoyed that his permission had not been taken before using a photograph showing him holding hands aloft with Mr. Modi. He has since returned Rs. 5 crore given by the Modi government towards flood relief. “We want self-respect and we want development for Bihar. The BJP was leading the struggle against the government of the Rashtriya Janata Dal and we had a major role to play in its defeat. ... We have played an equal role in Bihar's development,” Mr. Husain said. (The Hindu)

NDA, a ‘naturally dissolving alliance’: Cong

Congress dubbed the BJP-JD(U) infighting ahead of Assembly polls in Bihar as a “fratricidal war”, which it said showed that the NDA was a ‘naturally dissolving alliance’. “This is a fratricidal war. We are making no comments. It shows NDA is a naturally dissolving alliance,” party spokesperson Jayanthi Natarajan told reporters at the AICC briefing here when asked whether Congress was ready to do business with JD(U). “The way BJP was reacting to provocations by Nitish Kumar suggested that BJP wants to cling to the alliance,” was the refrain of another party leader, who preferred anonymity. The reactions of the ruling party came on a day when BJP sent mixed signals to its ally JD(U). BJP made clear that conditions like keeping Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi and Varun Gandhi away from the election campaign in Bihar for continuance of the coalition were not acceptable to it and also indicated that it was keen on continuing the tie-up in mutual interest. BJP spokesperson Shahnawaz Hussain has said BJP wanted to continue with the coalition for the development of Bihar but would not compromise on self-respect. (The Indian Express)

Jaswant rejoins BJP, thanks Advani for return

Even as the party is faced with the Bihar upset, there was some rejoicing at the BJP

headquarters on Thursday. The homecoming of expelled party veteran Jaswant Singh and TV actor Smriti Irani taking charge as BJP Mahila Morcha chief saw some colour and outpouring of emotion in the party. "It's good to be back in these familiar surroundings," said an emotional Jaswant Singh, visibly enjoying the limelight after a year's oblivion, soon after BJP chief Nitin Gadkari "welcomed" him back into the party, flanked by senior leaders LK Advani, Sushma Swaraj, Ravi Shankar Prasad and SS Ahluwalia, at the crowded briefing room overflowing with party leaders and media. While Gadkari said he had wanted Singh to be back in the party soon after he took over as the party chief, Advani said, "With the happiness there is also a sense of relief as I welcome him," hinting that he was never in favour of expelling Jaswant Singh in the first place. Singh was expelled during the Shimla 'chintan baithak' of the party last year. He said he was "very happy" that Singh, whom he had met for the first time during his initial days of political work in Rajasthan, has rejoined the party. According to Singh, Advani wanted all the unpleasantness that had happened in between to be considered a closed chapter. Singh claimed that he was also touched when Gadkari came over to his house after taking over as party chief and asked for his blessings. Conceding that he has always abided by BJP's ideology from the time he joined the party, Singh said he will "continue to do so". Singh was expelled over his controversial take on Mohammad Ali Jinnah in his book on Pakistan's founding father. Recalling his expulsion from the party at Shimla in August 2009, the MP from Darjeeling said, "I was hurt, humiliated by what I had encountered." Earlier in the day, Irani took over reins of the BJP's women wing, with the party hoping that it would boost its popularity among the fair sex. While inducting the 34-year-old actor, Gadkari hoped that under her leadership, the Mahila Morcha will help increase the party's vote bank by 10%. Irani said, "Our party president had said 2,000 women party workers from across the country should be trained about the party's ideology. I assure him it will be done." (Times of India)

Minorities' Issues:

Marriage with stepmom is rape: Deoband

With an eight-year older step-mother, Husna Beghum, as his love interest, things had never been smooth for Ronak Ali, 25, an unskilled labourer. Eldest among five, Ronak stunned his family and the little hamlet of Gunnor in Baghpat last Tuesday when he surfaced with Beghum — both had been missing since June 13 — by his side, this time, as his one-day-old bride. Hounded by family, friends and relatives, the couple has gone into hiding again after the Islamic seminary of Darul Uloom, Deoband, has denounced the union as null and void. The terse edict delivered by the fatwa department on Wednesday, maintains that relationship with a mother, even if she is a step-mother, is sacrosanct. Therefore, the union will be deemed to be rape and the violators of the sharia will evoke the stringent punishment as per the tenets of Islam. Confirming the fatwa, deputy vice-chancellor of the seminary, Maulana Abdul Khalique Madrasi said: "The episode was extremely unfortunate and shows perversion of the worst order. Such a 'nikah' can never be permissible under the sharia." (Times of India)

Hindu Fundamentalism:

Insurgency Movements:

No easy solution to Maoist challenge: Buddhadeb

West Bengal chief minister Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said there was no easy solution to the Maoist challenge and the issue has become "very complicated" due to support to the rebels by the main Opposition Trinamool Congress and others. Admitting that the killings and terror unleashed by the Leftwing extremists in parts of the state posed a big problem, Mr Bhattacharjee said the government was meeting the challenge through political and administrative actions. "But the main Opposition party, some organisations and individuals are providing direct and indirect encouragement to the guerrillas. This has made the problem more complicated," the chief minister said in an interview to the Communist Party of India-Marxist's (CPI-M) mouthpiece "Ganashakti". However, he stressed that the Maoist issue was basically a political problem and has to be dealt with politically. Mr Bhattacharjee said the problem has to be viewed in the all-India context as the rebels were active in seven to eight states. "Since they have chosen areas which are remote and populated by the poorest sections of the society, we have to take socio-economic programmes to isolate them. On the other hand, we have to activate the police and the administration and fight them politically also," he told the Bengali morning paper on the occasion of the 33rd anniversary of the Left Front government's uninterrupted rule in the state. Mr Bhattacharjee said his government was working on all flanks to combat the ultras. "But it is a long-drawn battle. There is no easy solution". (The Statesman)

Youths fall for promises made by Maoists

With the tribal mass-movement spilling into the whole tribal hinterlands of West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia, Maoists are using this to induct teenage youths in their fold with promises of food and better life in camps. This was admitted by several senior security force officers who had often led operations at various places in the Junglemahal to flush out the rebels in the past one year. "We have seen that Maoists have inducted teenage boys and girls in their squads. They have several squads in West Midnapore where many such teenagers are working with the rebels", said Mr Manoj Verma, superintendent of police, West Midnapore. Amidst conversations with different youths and senior tribals of Lalgarh, Binpur, Belpahari, Jhargram and Salboni over the past four days, it was revealed that Maoists leaders who are leading the Lalgarh and Salboni squads have already prepared a Child Liberation Army (CLA). This child army squad, comprising teenagers aged between 12 and 18 years, has been trained by the Maoists who have already started the induction process. A visit to Choto Pelia, Ghoraghat, Bhuladanga, Sarasbedi, Sinjua, Bhardanga and Guriapara in Lalgarh and Gaighata, Kendasole, Baromeshya and Duli reveals that many teenagers who are sympathised on the Maoists are determined to strike hard against the police repression and the state oppression. According to them, the Maoists have plans to use children to wage propaganda war against the state government. "It is human nature to pay attention to what children have to say. Though, the method and nature of propaganda war have not

been chalked out yet by the Maoists, but if they succeed to form such children squads, it will be a difficult task to combat the flow of cadres into Maoist camps,” a senior police officer said. Concerned about the Maoist’s planning, an Intelligence officer said, “The Maoists in Jharkhand have already formed such children army squads there. Since children are vulnerable as they can be brainwashed easily, Maoists have taken up this plan here to recruit children.” Mr Verma said, “To resist the teenagers from being trapped by the Maoists, we have already announced rehabilitation and surrender package. The state government has also announced several development packages for the residents of junglemahal and I think, they should be abstaining from going into the rebel fronts”. While talking with Kartick Mahato, a member of Peoples Committee against Police Atrocities (PCPA) at Baromeshya, it was revealed that the Maoists are the ones who work throughout the year with the poor villagers and tribals. And because of this, the movement in Lalgarh has easily spread to other tribal-dominated areas. “Barring this, the villagers residing in the forest lands are very much disappointed about the police repression,” he claimed. (The Statesman)

'Maoist menace axes India coal output'

Maoists' destructive capabilities extend wider than of mere terror and includes some very vital to the economy sectors. The threat of Maoist attacks is hampering coal mining in several states, keeping production lower than the demand from growing industries, Coal Minister Sriprakash Jaiswal said on Wednesday. If law and order situation is improved, coal production can rise by at least 25 percent, Jaiswal told reporters. India produced 531 million tonnes of coal in 2009/10, which fell short of demand by 70 million tonnes, and is looking at ways to boost production to help its growing power, steel and cement sectors. Unfortunately, the states that have coal, have bad law and order situation... no doubt our problem is very big due to which we can't raise our production, Jaiswal said. With the Maoist rebels controlling vast swathes of mineral-rich areas, the government has often struggled to transport coal to power and steel firms. Jaiswal said the central and the eastern Indian states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and West Bengal were some of the coal-rich states that needed to beef up the security for mines. Maoists, who say they are fighting for the rights of the poor and landless and want to overthrow the government, have attacked railway lines and factories, aiming to cripple economic activity. The coal ministry is also taking advice from consultants to help get environmental clearances for coal mining, Jaiswal said. We are taking advice from consultants on what the way out is... what system we should evolve for getting forest and environmental clearances, he said. Indian mines are facing difficulties in getting clearances from the Ministry of Environment and Forests which is keen to expand forests and has even earmarked no-go areas where vast tracts of mineral-rich zones lie. (The Indian Express)

Govt says no to 'greater Nagaland'

Indicating the Centre's position on the Naga insurgent outfit NSCN (IM) demand for 'Nagalim' (greater Nagaland), Union minister for development of northeastern region (DoNER) B K Handique on Thursday said it would not be possible to change the boundaries of the northeastern states. Integration of all Naga-inhabited areas of Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland has been a key demand of the Naga militant

group, engaged in peace talks with the Centre for over a decade. "It will be difficult to change the borders of the northeastern states. If somebody wants a bigger state, then land will have to be taken from other states. There will be stiff resistance to such a move," Handique, who hails from Assam, said when asked about the progress on the Naga peace talks. Earlier this month, another round of peace talks was held between the Centre and NSCN (IM) where the contentious issue of integration of Naga-inhabited areas figured. On ULFA, Handique said the peace initiatives with the outfit have started in the "right direction" as some very senior leaders of the outfit have backed negotiation to end the decades-old insurgency problem in Assam. "It (the peace initiative) has started in the right direction. We are hopeful of a positive outcome," he said adding that he had also discussed the issue with PM Manmohan Singh. On whether the Centre will consider giving amnesty to top ULFA leaders currently lodged in various jails in Assam, Handique was quoted as saying by a news agency that the issue may be considered during the talks. (Times of India)

Economic Front:

Investment hurdles will go: Pranab

India on Wednesday assured US Inc. that its concerns on infrastructure, investment restrictions and other impediments would be addressed expeditiously, and a road map prepared for discussions ahead of President Barack Obama's visit in November. The U.S. corporate world wanted India to address issues relating to foreign investment in the infrastructure and insurance sectors, hoping that legislative action would be expedited, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee told PTI in an interview. Meanwhile, Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma, who also participated in the India-U.S. CEOs summit, promised calibrated FDI liberalisation in sectors such as defence and retail in the face of the U.S. demand for opening up different segments for foreign investors. Seeking the support of U.S. investors for bridging an estimated \$250-300 billion gap in the infrastructure investment needs of India in the next five years, Mr. Mukherjee assured American CEOs that a high-level panel would identify areas of concern and prepare a road map for discussions before Mr. Obama's visit. India's efforts to attract investments from the U.S. were aimed at realising, as Mr. Mukherjee said, India's hope of double-digit economic growth by 2012, up from an estimated over 8.5 per cent in the current fiscal. Mr. Mukherjee said China allowing its currency yuan to appreciate against the dollar would not have much impact on India and was a welcome step in the long-run. On the issues raised by American CEOs regarding creating a favourable investment scenario in India, Mr. Mukherjee said: "Certain issues that are pending, naturally they emphasised it. For instance the opening up of the insurance sector, 26 per cent to 49 per cent, where legislation is pending." He was asked whether the U.S. CEOs sought more opening up on issues like taxation and liberalisation. "Similarly to have the replicable model in respect of what we have done in the mega power project to replicate it in the sectors of road and others... There is also the land acquisition Act, which is pending and rehabilitation of the displaced persons, these legislation are pending. So they expect that we shall have to expedite these legislative actions," Mr. Mukherjee said. "I am happy that the way things are moving, and the chief executive officers representing the important corporate sector,

they also expressed their happiness that they are having exchange of views with the Indian government,” he added. Terming his meetings here very successful, Mr. Mukherjee said: “My bilateral discussions with Secretary of the State [Hillary Clinton] and Secretary of Treasury [Timothy Geithner] clearly indicated that they are interested in widening and deepening the relationship between India and the U.S... this was a good visit and all the meetings were successful.” Mr. Mukherjee said that after returning to India he would “set up a committee, a small group, under the Deputy Chairman Planning Commission [Montek Singh Ahluwalia], who will co-ordinate with the Ministries concerned on the issues which have been identified...” He said India-U.S. relations were “moving in the right direction” and the countries would make a breakthrough in major areas. (The Hindu)

Rich getting richer: 120k Indians hold a third of national income

Last year may have been a cruel year for much of the country with slow growth and double-digit food inflation, but India's high net worth individuals (HNWIs) prospered just over 120,000 in number, or 0.01% of the population, their combined worth is close to one-third of India's Gross National Income (GNI). HNWIs, in this context, are defined as those having investable assets of \$1 million or more, excluding primary residence, collectibles, consumables, and consumer durables. According to the 2009 Asia-Pacific Wealth Report, brought out by financial services firms Capgemini and Merrill Lynch Wealth Management, at the peak of the recession in 2008, India had 84,000 HNWIs with a combined net worth of \$310 billion. To put that figure in perspective, it was just under a third of India's market capitalization, that is, the total value of all companies listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange — as of end-March 2008. The average worth of each HNWI was Rs 16.6 crore. To get a fix on just how rarefied a level it puts them in, we did some simple calculations that threw up stunning numbers. It would take an average urban Indian 2,238 year, based on the monthly per capita expenditure estimates in the 2007-8 National Sample Survey, to achieve a net worth equal to that of the average HNWI. And that's assuming that this average urban Indian just accumulates all his income without consuming anything. A similar calculation shows that an average rural Indian would have to wait a fair bit longer — 3,814 years! According to the firms' 2010 World Wealth Report, India now has 126,700 HNWIs, an increase of more than 50% over the 2008 number. While the figure for combined net worth is not available, it seems safe to assume that as a class not only have India's super-rich recouped their 2008 losses, they have even made gains over their pre-crisis (2007) positions. In 2007, 123,000 HNWIs were worth a combined \$437 million. Meanwhile, in 2009 alone, an estimated 13.6 million more people in India became poor or remained in poverty than would have been the case had the 2008 growth rates continued, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). Also, an estimated 33.6 million more people in India became poor or remained in poverty over 2008 and 2009 than would have been poor had the pre-crisis (2004-7) growth rates been maintained over these two years. The 2009 Asia-Pacific Wealth Report notes that the HNWI population in India is also expected to be more than three times its 2008 size by the year 2018, with emergent wealth playing a key role. Like China, relatively few among the current HNWI population (13%, compared to 22% in Japan) have inherited their wealth and even fewer (9%) are over the age of 66. (Times of India)

Foreign Relations/Geo-strategic developments:

'Pakistan Army a threat to India, not its people or government'

The former Chief of the Army Staff, General (retired) V.P. Malik, on Wednesday said the Pakistan Army, not its people or government, was a threat to India, and that India was fighting a proxy war in Afghanistan, a country vital to India's interests. Gen. Malik was speaking at a seminar "Rising India: Challenges of a Troubled Neighbourhood" at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre, organised by the Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee Research Foundation here to commemorate the death anniversary of Syama Prasad Mookherjee. "The people and the government of Pakistan are not a threat to India, but the Pakistan Army continues to be the threat for India," Gen. Malik said. "The Pakistan Army is a threat and we need to be conscious about it. Also, when the democratic political leadership of Pakistan has total control over the ISI [Inter-Services Intelligence], chances of peace with India will increase." Maintaining that Afghanistan is vital to India's interests, he said: "We need to have an open policy with the country. India is fighting a proxy war with Pakistan not only within the country but also in Afghanistan." He cautioned New Delhi on ties with China, saying: "India has to be cautious of China being more assertive and exploiting our appeasement, the more it grows and achieves strength. Although all political initiatives are a welcome step, we have to see that there are many pending disputes with China. We are also in a dilemma about China's benchmark of thinking when they talk about their country as a geographical unit." On the Naxal problem and internal security issues, he said: "The Maoist problem, the demand for Telangana, Maharashtra for Maharashtrians — we cannot concede to all this. We cannot empower the citizens of India by diminishing the country." Noted journalist M.J. Akbar criticised the notion of 'Rising India.' "Is it India rising at 8 per cent or 8 per cent of India rising at 8 per cent?" he said. The concept of majority and minority, Mr. Akbar said, depended on empowerment. "Brahmins, I think, are just 2 per cent in India, but they never consider themselves a minority. The Muslims, after the political depression in the 19th century, are still struggling in India, and the uplift of the Muslim community depends on Muslim women in India, who have been made slaves by religious preachers," he said. "The Muslims of India never voted for development. They always voted for fear," Mr. Akbar added. Former diplomat T.C.A. Rangachari said China needed to be understood on a preferential basis. "People should learn the Chinese language to understand China. The Kashmir University should have the facility of teaching Chinese. China is growing at a fast pace, but they don't want the world to feel their growth," he said. Kashmir University Vice-Chancellor Riyaz Punjabi emphasised need to strengthen the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Tarun Vijay, director of the Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee Research Foundation, said: "We have come to say hello to the youth of Kashmir and we also visited the Kashmir University to meet the youth." (The Hindu)

Indian Occupied Kashmir:

Kashmir shuts down to protest killings

Amid severe restrictions imposed in most parts of Srinagar, the Kashmir Valley on Monday observed a strike to protest against the killing of two youths. In another development, a militant attack in north Kashmir's Sopore town left 12 people injured, including four policemen. The strike call, given by separatist organisations, brought life in Srinagar and other parts of the valley to a grinding halt. Most offices, shops, banks and educational institutions remained closed, and vehicles stayed off the road. People stayed indoors. From early morning, police and paramilitary forces patrolled the streets to prevent flare-up of violence. Sporadic incidents of stone-throwing were reported in some areas. The people were protesting against the death of Javid Ahmad Malla in firing by security forces on Sunday. The 25-year-old was part of a demonstration taken out to protest the death of another youth, Rafiq Bangroo. Rafiq, who was injured recently in police firing, died on Saturday evening. The Hurriyat Conference, led by Syed Ali Geelani, has extended the strike call for Tuesday to register the protests. Another faction led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq called an all-party meeting of separatist parties on June 24 to discuss a strategy to prevent the death of innocent people in action by security forces. In Sopore, militants launched underbarrel grenades at the State Bank of India complex in the main chowk. Two Indian Reserve Police constables were injured. The militants fired another grenade at the Sopore telecom exchange injuring five BSNL employees and two civilians. They later attacked the 22 Rashtriya Rifles camp injuring a soldier. The area was cordoned off by police and the Rashtriya Rifles and gunfight was going on till late into Monday night. Two more police personnel were injured in the encounter, of whom one was airlifted to Srinagar for treatment. "The encounter is on and two militants are inside a house," Sopore Superintendent of Police Altaf Khan told The Hindu, adding that it took the police a long time to clear the house of civilians to avoid collateral damage. (The Hindu)

Drug abuse on the rise in Kashmir

They smoke it, sniff it, eat it, inject it and temporarily escape into a deceptive world. Be it a way to fight personal crisis, means to wipe the mental scars or just a sign of being cool, the youth in Kashmir have fallen into the net of drugs, with such cases increasing by 35-40 per cent in the last few years. Dr Arshad Hussain, a psychiatrist at the Government Psychiatric Diseases Hospital (GPDH), Kashmir, says the menace of drug addiction has gripped the city, with mostly youngsters falling into the trap. "There is no doubt that drug abuse has increased in Kashmir. Historically, a low drug addiction zone, Kashmir has lost its innocence. The statistics now are alarming. Mostly youth in the 18-35 age group have fallen in the trap. Deaths are reported in young men because of opioid use," Hussain said. When Rasheed Ahmad (name changed) remembers how he lost his brother, he cannot help but blame himself for his death. 25-year-old Rasheed worked as a trader in Goa when he succumbed to peer pressure and became an addict. "I was earning a lot but I thought my life was without any fun. So I started going to parties and night clubs in Goa. There I started having cocaine and LSD," he shivers, recalling the days. With his

condition deteriorating and addiction increasing, Rasheed's parents brought him back to Kashmir. "My younger brother was forced to quit studies and started working as I became incapable of doing anything. It was just after a few months, that he met with an accident and died," he said breaking into tears. "I am responsible for his death". Among the drugs consumed in the valley are medicinal opiates, such as Corex and Codeine. Benzodiazepines like Diazepam, Alprazolam, Alprax and cannabis derivatives like hashish and marijuana. Besides alcohol intake seems to be picking up, Yasir Arafat Zahgeer, a social worker said. According to a report published by a local daily, a majority of Class IX students of a famous school in the valley are hooked on to nicotine and inhalants. 17-year-old Mubashir (name withheld), who is being treated at a de-addiction centre here, has a grim look but smiles when he remembers how good he was with girls at school. "I did a mistake once and then it became a compulsion," Mubashir said. He was 14 when he first started taking drugs. "I started with fluid eraser, petrol and fevicol. I was very good at studies. Everyone says I am intelligent but there is no use of it now. I wanted to become a cricketer but I wouldn't be able to do that now, I know," Mubashir said. (Times of India)

Social front:

Bombs in Mecca Masjid blast were assembled in Hyderabad: CBI

The bombs that were used in triggering blast at the historic Mecca Masjid in 2007 were assembled in the city itself, according to CBI. Also, the accused, allegedly having links with RSS, procured material for assembling the bombs possibly from Madhya Pradesh, a CBI official said after filing a document in a local court in connection with the case. A cell phone-triggered pipe bomb placed at the Mecca Masjid during Friday prayers on 18 May, 2007 had claimed nine lives, whereas five people were killed in subsequent police firing on protesters near the mosque. The CBI, which is probing the Mecca Masjid blast, had registered a case on 9 June, 2007 under various sections of IPC and Unlawful Activities Prevention Act against unknown persons and also took up investigations in connection with the recovery of an unexplosive bomb inside the mosque premises. During the investigation, roles of Sandeep Dange, Ramchandar K, Devendra Gupta and Lokesh Sharma all having alleged links with the RSS, emerged, the CBI has already claimed in its petition before a local court. The agency filed one more memo seeking inclusion of a RSS Pracharak Sunil Joshi's name as an accused in the FIR. Joshi was shot dead by three gunmen on 29 December, 2007 near his house at Dewas in Madhya Pradesh. The first two accused are absconding, while Devender Gupta and Lokesh Sharma, presently under judicial remand at Chanchalguda jail here, were brought by CBI from Ajmer last week as part of further investigation into the case. The duo was earlier arrested by Rajasthan Police in connection with the 2007 Ajmer blasts. The bomb blast at Mecca Masjid was carried out after a well planned reeve by Lokesh Sharma, who camped in the city two months prior to the incident at a lodge in Secunderabad, a senior CBI official involved with the investigation said, adding the agency had gathered enough evidence to establish the accused complicity in the crime. Sharma passed on the information. After this, Sunil Joshi, Sandeep Dange and Ramchandar Kalsangrah came to Secunderabad at least two-three days prior to the blast, and on 18 May went inside the

Mecca Masjid premises as visitors and placed the bombs and just walked out, the official said. “The bombs were assembled in Hyderabad itself. They made four bombs that resembled like grenades and the material like iron pipes were procured from Madhya Pradesh. Two of the pipe bombs were placed at Mecca Masjid, though only one exploded, while the remaining two were used in the Ajmer blasts,” the CBI official said. (The Statesman)

Honour killings: notice issued to governments

The Supreme Court on Monday issued notice to the Centre and eight States for a direction to explain the steps taken to prevent honour killings at the national level and in the respective States. A vacation Bench comprising Justice R.M. Lodha and Justice A.K. Patnaik, after hearing counsel Ravi Kant, issued notice to Haryana, Punjab, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh asking them to respond to the plea of the petitioner, Shakti Vahini, to submit a National/State Plan of Action to combat honour crimes. The petition also sought a direction to the State governments to launch active prosecutions in each case of honour killings and to investigate the role of the law enforcement agencies. It alleged that the State governments had failed to take action to curb such feudal tendencies of killing couples and individuals for the sake of honour. The petition said that in the last one year, Shakti Vahini, an NGO, had been studying the cases on honour killings. It said the number of cases had been on the rise in recent times, and when the State governments concerned remained a mute spectator, there was a lot of fear among couples who were married and those intending to get married that they might face the wrath of feudal forces. The petition noted that the pressure was often so intense that some couples resorted to suicide. Cases had come to light where couples were being killed, publicly humiliated, and being declared as brothers and sisters, with some having to face social ostracisation. “The law enforcement agencies are caught in the midst of a lack of political will to act against such feudal forces as these forces also represent vote banks,” the petition said, adding that the Union of India, “as a member to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has an obligation to protect the lives, rights and liberty of individuals and protect them from such heinous crimes found a family.” “With some politicians supporting the Khap demands, the fear of the Khaps has increased more among the general population,” it said. The petition pointed out that the Supreme Court, in the absence of laws on sexual harassment in work places, laid down guidelines to combat this menace. The present situation of terror of honour killings had resulted in a situation that the Court laid down similar guidelines for law enforcement agencies to combat such crimes. (The Hindu)

Australia closes college with over 450 Indian students

Careers of over 450 Indian students in Australia have been jeopardised following closure of an Adelaide-based college, after it failed audits of the government on standards of education it was offering. The South Australian Government cancelled the registration of the Adelaide Pacific International College (APIC), which failed audits this year. State Education Minister Jack Snelling told the Parliament that the APIC in Currie Street is no longer registered to operate. Its registration will be cancelled from June 28, when it will

be removed from the National Training Information Service. The college has 28 days to appeal against the decision. The APIC breached 12 out of 14 national standards, Mr. Snelling told the Parliament, the Sydney Morning Herald reported. He said every effort would be made to place its students in alternative colleges or in TAFE courses. "I have repeatedly stated that students' welfare is a paramount concern and all available steps will be taken." Mr. Snelling said he had spoken with Indian Consul-General Amit Dasgupta and president of the local Indian association Major-General Vikram Madan. The students would be provided with written advice on their rights and obligations through the South Australian Training Advocate, the Minister said. (The Hindu)

India likely to halve poverty rate by 2015: U.N. report

India is expected to reduce its poverty rate from 51 per cent in 1990 to 24 per cent in 2015, slashing the number of extremely poor by 188 million. But progress in the rest of South Asia is not sufficient to halve the level of poverty by that target date, according to a United Nations report on the Millennium Development Goals for 2010. The sharpest reductions worldwide continue to be recorded in East and South-East Asia, where the MDG target to halve extreme poverty has already been met, while most of South Asia is in danger of missing it. The percentage of people living on less than \$1.25 a day in East Asia dropped from 60 in 1990 to just 16 in 2005, and from 39 to 19 in South-East Asia. The rate of poverty in China is expected to fall to around five per cent by 2015. The report suggests that while the economic crisis took a heavy toll of jobs and incomes around the world, its impact do not threaten to derail the MDG target of cutting extreme poverty by 50 per cent. But it also indicates that progress against hunger has been impacted more severely by economic troubles. The ability of the poor to feed their families was hit by skyrocketing prices in 2008, and falling incomes in 2009. In East Asia, after a striking drop in the prevalence of hunger in the 1990s, the rate of malnourishment stalled at 10 per cent between 2000 and 2007. South-East Asia, already close to the target of cutting the hunger rate by half against the 1990 levels, made additional progress but it was not as rapid as its rate of poverty reduction. In South Asia, the prevalence of hunger actually increased from 20 to 21 per cent between 2000-2002 and 2005-2007. Releasing the report, Brinda Karat, MP, expressed the hope that the Centre would look at the report with the seriousness it deserved. "Though the report is optimistic of meeting the MDGs, it cannot be achieved unless accompanied by a reversal of the current policies." Food security was crucial for achieving the goals, she said calling for urgently putting into effect legislation on food security. Official statistics on the number of the poor in the country seemed incorrect, as all other indicators were showing a negative trend, she said. (The Hindu)

Countdown to Games: Queen's baton arrives in India

Marking the first big event on Indian soil for the 2010 Commonwealth Games (CWG) to be held in New Delhi in October, the Queen's baton for the event arrived on Friday at the historic Wagah border between India and Pakistan. Indian Olympic Association (IOA) president Suresh Kalmadi, other dignitaries and leading sports personalities, including host city New Delhi's Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit, were in attendance at the border outpost as the baton was handed over by Pakistan's Olympic Association officials led by

Lt. Gen Arif Hassan. "It's a great day for sports in India. The baton has gone 170,000 kms all around the Commonwealth. We have received it in a very big manner," Kalmadi said after passing the baton to a host of dignitaries including CGF CEO Mike Hooper and Olympic bronze medallist boxer Vijender Singh. "It's a big day for India and Pakistan. It is because of Pakistan's efforts that India got the Games and it shows that our relationship with Pakistan will improve if we concentrate on the sporting angle," he added. Among those to whom the baton was passed on being received at around 0930 hrs at the border, were four-time world champion woman boxer M C Mary Kom. Kalmadi once again allayed fears about the delay in infrastructure construction that have marred the build-up to the Games. "I am grateful to Mr Fennell and Mr Hooper, who have been supporting us. This also happens to be 100 days before the Games. Let me tell you that everything is in place, including the infrastructure. Everything is on track," he said. POA chief Hassan said the Games would help in getting rid of the hostilities between India and Pakistan. "It's a historic moment for us. It would get rid of the hostilities of the past," he said. The Attari border checkpoint, about 30 km from Amritsar in Punjab, wore a colourful and festive look despite tight security arrangements for the baton arrival event. Hundreds of people, officials and mediapersons gathered for the arrival of the baton. The Baton Relay, which was launched by Queen Elizabeth II at the Buckingham Palace in London on October 29 last year in the presence of the Indian President Pratibha Patil, will now start a 100-day national tour which would culminate in New Delhi for the Games from October 3 to 14. The baton will be taken to the Sikh holy city of Amritsar and remain there till Friday night. The baton will then travel through most states in India, covering 20,000 km, before reaching New Delhi for the 2010 CWG to be held from Oct 3-14. The baton travelled nearly 170,000 km through nearly 70 Commonwealth countries before arriving in the host country for the 2010 Games. The 2010-CWG is the biggest sporting event being hosted by India after the 1982 Asian Games held in New Delhi. (Times of India)

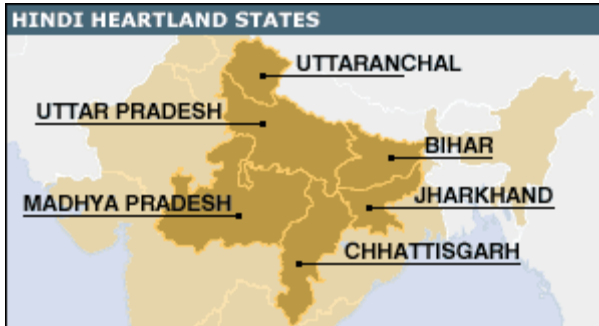
Only 27% parents control online activities of their children: Survey

About 77% Indian kids face negative situations online and only 27% parents control the cyber activities of their kids, says a global family survey on children's online lives and safety issues released on Wednesday. The good news, though, is that in the absence of adequate supervision, kids are making their own rules to control the chaos and to stay safe. A negative situation, according to the survey, can be any unpleasant experience, from downloading malware inadvertently to being bullied online or being exposed to violent or pornographic images. The survey also exposes the huge gap between the actual experience of Indian kids online and their parents' understanding of it. Only 50% Indian parents thought their kids had faced an unpleasant experience online. Only 1% of the 500 adults considered, admitted not knowing what their children got up to online. But 23% of the 200 kids who took the poll felt their parents were clueless. And here's the clincher: 76% — 30% "strongly" — felt they are more careful online than their parents or guardians. The Norton Online Family Report 2010 considered the responses of 2,800 children aged between eight and 17 and 7,066 adults (1,669 of them parents) across 14 countries including Brazil, China, India, Japan, UK and USA. To be fair to Indian parents, their counterparts in other countries didn't max the test either. Globally, 62% children have faced negative situations whereas only 45% of the adults were aware of

their kids' experiences. As per the survey, the Indian parent is far less likely to control their children's activities on the net. "Only 27% parents dictate rules. Most of them set general guidelines on when you can be online and for how long but can't set up rules or are unaware of the tools available to control," says Effendy Ibrahim of Norton. But kids could use the supervision. On an average, an Indian child has 46.17 online friends; only 46% kids can claim to have met all their online friends; 14% have met few. "Parents have abdicated their responsibility," feels Vidhya Reddy of Tular, a Chennai-based NGO for prevention and healing of child sexual abuse. She has been holding workshops with XIth-graders, impressing upon them the principles of safe net-use. "While handling a case of a young child raped by a family friend, we had found that the guy spent a lot of time online. We read up and discovered that there's a very high correlation between viewing child sexual abuse images and contact abusing a child. A 15 year-old girl had shared a topless photo of herself with someone she was chatting with, others have been blackmailed for things they've posted," she says. But things are looking up. For one, parents either know or are imposing rules restricting the amount of time their children can spend online. And even left to their own devices, Indian kids are learning to avert danger. They are developing their own rules to stay safe and follow an unwritten code, a netiquette. They are careful about sharing personal details and are generally averse to bullying, stalking or passing on information on others. Nonetheless, parents would do well to get up to speed with their children's online activities. (Times of India)

Regional Report

Central India (Hindi Heartland)

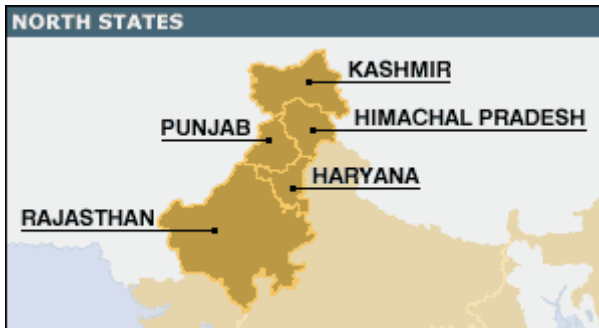


Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

The North

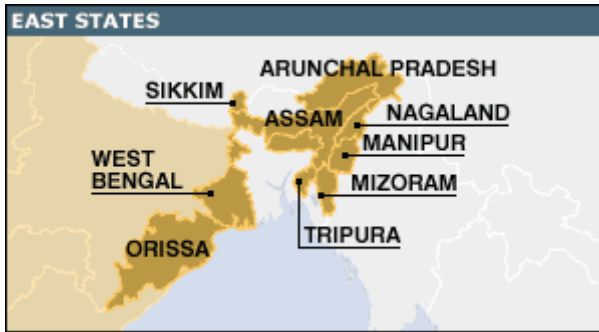


Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

The East



Politics:

CPM, LF govt responsible for election setback: Karat

CPM general secretary Prakash Karat has finally held both his party — the CPM, and the Left Front government responsible for the recent electoral setbacks in West Bengal. In an article to be published in the Peoples' Democracy, the weekly mouth piece of the party, Karat has written that the recent electoral outcome in Bengal showed that some sections of people have been alienated from the party, and he does not want to hold the government alone responsible for it. "The causes of such alienation lie in the political sphere and also in the organisational shortcomings and weaknesses of the party. The steps that are being taken to overcome the shortcomings and reforge the links with the people are, therefore, to be taken up in the three spheres — governmental, political and organisational, which are interlinked," Karat wrote. According to sources, controversies exist regarding the reasons behind the setback for the Left regime in Bengal. A section of the party's leaders in Bengal, including Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, have been insisting that withdrawal of support from the UPA government in 2008 was the principal cause behind the current disaster. "Despite its enormous achievements, the LF government also engendered some negative features. It is a part of the basic understanding of the party that running the state government is not the exercise of state power. The bureaucracy, the police and other institutions of the state have not been touched by any basic changes. Working in such a system, in government, has its effects on the party and its organisation," Karat wrote. (The Indian Express)

Social front:

Economic Front:

The South



Politics:

Assembly bypoll in 10 seats in Telangana region on 27 July

By-elections to 10 assembly seats in Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh will be held on 27 July, the Election Commission announced. Bypolls will be held in Sirpur, Chennur (SC), Mancherial, Yellareddy, Nizamabad (Urban), Koratla, Dharmapuri (SC), Huzurabad, Siddipet and Warangal west Assembly constituencies, the EC said. Though there are 12 vacancies, election petitions are pending with regard to two Assembly seats Vemulawada and Sircilla, as the petitioners have sought to be declared elected, the EC said. The by-election to the 10 seats has been necessitated as the sitting MLAs all belonging to TRS quit in support of the demand for a separate Telangana. According to the poll schedule, notification would be issued on 2 July. Last date for filing nominations would be on 9 July and the scrutiny would follow the next day. Last date for withdrawal of nominations is July 12. Counting of votes would take place on 30 July, EC said adding polling would be held through Electronic Voting Machines and the model code comes into force with immediate effect in the districts in which the constituencies fall. (The Statesman)

Social front:

Economic Front:

West India



Politics:

Modi's lust for publicity humiliates Gujarat: Cong

Reacting to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar returning the aid money the Gujarat government had given to that state as flood relief, the Congress said that it was “CM's lust for publicity that has given an opportunity to the Bihar CM to insult Gujarat”. Severely criticising Chief Minister Narendra Modi, Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly Shaktisinh Gohil said that the “culture of Gujarat is full of humility, and something given with one hand is not known even to the other hand”. “But publicity-hungry Modi behaved in a manner that hurt the pride and self respect of Gujarat and gave a chance to the Bihar CM to play politics on the issue and insult the state,” said Gohil. The Congress leader said that even the family of Mumbai terror attack martyr, Hemant Kirgire, had returned the money from Modi just because of the publicity strings attached. He sought an apology from the CM for this. Gohil said that while the CM is bragging about himself around the country, widows and family members of martyrs of the Akshardham temple attack are not getting adequate compensation. The Congress leader said that as Nitish Kumar was ruling the government in Bihar with the support of BJP; it is the duty of BJP to teach a lesson to those who had insulted Gujarat. “The BJP leadership should take action against its party leader who has created such a situation,” Gohil said. State Congress president Siddharth Patel said that the aid given to Bihar was not from the personal account of Modi but from the state exchequer earned through hard labour of the people of the state. (The Indian Express)

Social front:

Economic Front: