

Business and Politics in Muslim World

India
Sadia Khanum
10 to 16 July 2010

Presentation Date: 21 July 2010

Report # 128

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National Summary:

Taking note of latest revelations about the involvement of some senior RSS leaders in a number of blasts, Congress spokesperson Mohan Prakash asked BJP to snap all ties with such elements. Criticizing the BJP for its "soft corner" for such outfits and their functionaries, he said any delay in distancing itself from such violent activity could prove costly for that party.

The BJP criticized that home secretary G K Pillai was not "defended" by external affairs minister S M Krishna when he was "openly castigated" by Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi for his remarks that the ISI had coordinated Mumbai terror attacks. Qureshi's said this in answer to Krishna's demand that Hafiz Saeed should not be allowed to speak against India and Pakistan should bane his pro jihad speeches against India.

SP supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav regretted taking support of those responsible for the Babri mosque demolition in the last election and sought pardon of the Indian Muslim community.

Twenty-six years after 1984 anti-Sikh riots, five Sikh high priests have declared it as genocide carried out to eliminate Sikhs from the country.

Figures released by Home Minister P Chidambaram show that, casualties because of Naxals strikes are more in number than terrorist activities in India. He said between 2004 and 2008, the Naxalites had killed about 500 civilians every year. This number rose to 591 in 2009. In just the first six months of this year, 325 civilians have been killed in Naxal violence, a figure that senior Home Ministry officials concede is a conservative calculation. But this alone is more than the combined death toll of all major terrorist strikes in India in 2008, one of the bloodiest years in recent times that culminated in the ghastly attacks in Mumbai on November 26.

Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee reiterated the need for a second green revolution to ensure food security. An allocation of Rs. 400-crore was made "to extend the green revolution to the eastern region that comprises Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, eastern Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Orissa.

Garment exports from India dropped 2.64 per cent to \$ 10.64 billion in 2009-10 compared to \$10.93 billion in the previous financial year, according to the latest data released by the Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC). Bangladesh, which has overtaken India, is extending the lead and Vietnam is all set to overtake India in garment exports, once monopolised by India.

India's Industrial output rose by 11.5 per cent in May, growing in double digits for the eighth straight month, on good showing by manufacturing, particularly capital and consumer goods. In comparison, industry grew by 2.1 per cent in May last year.

According to Deloitte's 2010 Global Venture Capital Survey, with the improving domestic entrepreneurial environment and favourable investment scenario, the venture capital industry in India is expected to expand in the next five years. The majority of venture capitalists in China, India and Brazil expect the number of venture firms to increase between now and 2015, while 62 per cent of respondents globally expect the number of venture firms to decrease during the same timeframe. The report said that 85 per cent of respondents in India expect the number of venture capital firms to increase in their country in the period under review.

The Indian rupee will soon have a distinct identity. With a blend of the Devanagari 'Ra' and Roman 'R' as its unique symbol, the Indian currency will be joining the elite club of the US dollar, the European euro, the British pound sterling and the Japanese yen to mark its presence in the global arena.

China again urged India to abide by its commitments to restrict political activities of exiled Tibetans in India.

France reiterated its support for India's bid for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. The French ambassador in India Jerome Bonnafont said India, Brazil, Germany and Japan should be included as permanent members.

The foreign ministers' meetings between India and Pakistan ended without any result. Accusation and blaming each other for disturbance and terrorist activities deteriorated the atmosphere from very beginning. Joint press conference of both FM's further caused tensions as in the presence of the media both foreign ministers accused each other's countries for disturbing peace situation through infiltration.

Situation in Indian held Kashmir is still tense and state government has imposed restrictions on media channels and newspapers. Curfew is re imposed in some part of the valley.

The FBI has said that 26/11 was the result of the crippling flaw in the Mumbai police's defence against the initial assault was that its officers didn't even carry weapons. FBI said absence of weapons with the Mumbai police had led to dozens of people being mowed down at five-star hotels, a train station and a Jewish centre before the specialised Indian forces killed all but one of the terrorists.

Amidst acute poverty across South Asia, the five states of Delhi, Kerala, Goa, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh have the least number of poor people in India, according to a new measure of global poverty, called the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) developed at the University of Oxford for the UNDP. The new measure has been developed and applied by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI). In Delhi and Kerala 14 per cent and 16 per cent of the population are MPI poor, respectively, whereas in Jharkhand 77 per cent of the population are MPI poor and in Bihar, 81 per cent". Other 'top ten' states with the least number of poor in India are Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Haryana and Gujarat. The analysis by MPI creators reveals that there are

more 'MPI poor' people in eight Indian states (421 million in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal) than in the 26 poorest African countries combined (410 million).

India doesn't just have a poor quality of life, as reflected in its poor human development index (HDI), it also has a particularly poor 'quality of death'. A new index developed by the Economist Intelligence Unit to measure end-of-life care services in 40 countries. India finishes at the bottom of the list, which includes 30 OECD nations and 10 developing countries for which data was available.

Regional Summary:

After the flood claimed 33 lives in Punjab and Haryana and caused an estimated loss of nearly Rs 1,400 crore, a blame game has started between the two agrarian states over the floods.

Every day, 144 criminal cases are registered in Punjab. Every eight hours, a case of cruelty by in-laws is registered; every 10 hours, a murder is committed; every 17 hours, a women is raped; and every two hours, a theft is reported in the state. These facts are mentioned in a book, Crime In Punjab 2009, released by Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal.

Four swine flu cases have been reported in Kolkata since Thursday and a child is among the victims.

The BJP is struggling to deal with the political crisis in Karnataka where a determined Opposition did not let the assembly function for more than 30 minutes, it was concerned about the vice-like grip that the Reddy brothers Janardhan and Karunakar have established over the party. The Reddy brothers, whose controversial mining activities have given the Opposition a powerful handle to beat the BJP government with, have secured the allegiance of 30-40 MLAs.

According to data provided by Chief Minister B S Yeddyurappa in the Karnataka Assembly, the 2009-10 financial year has been a bumper one for illegal exports of iron ore from Karnataka. Last year the total amount of ore illegally exported out of Karnataka was 71,27,937 metric tons.

The Central government's stance in the Supreme Court on the Maharashtra-Karnataka border dispute has pushed the issue on the centre stage of Maharashtra politics. The Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti, an all-party organisation fighting for merger of Marathi-speaking areas in Karnataka with Maharashtra, holds demonstrations in Kolhapur. Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan sought more sympathy for the State in its long-standing border dispute with Karnataka. Replying to discussions in the Legislature, he demanded that the disputed areas in Karnataka be made Union Territory until the Supreme Court decided on the case filed by the State.

National Report

Politics:

NCP trying to form secular front, says Congress not giving any space

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) on Friday said it would be a part of the Left Democratic Front in Kerala and contest the next Assembly elections in the State against the Congress. NCP national spokesman D.P. Tripathi said the party was trying to mobilise other secular democratic parties to form a secular democratic front. However, it would remain part of the ruling United Progressive Alliance (UPA) at the Centre. But the party would have no truck with the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). In Maharashtra, where the NCP is ruling together with the Congress, the alliance would continue. "In Maharashtra, this alliance will be led by the Congress," he said. "Our first choice for alliance in different regions would be the Congress, but that party does not give us any space. So we are trying to create a space for us." The move is seen by observers as a counter to the pressure the Congress is trying to put on NCP president and Union Agriculture and Food Minister Sharad Pawar over the issue of price rise. Earlier this week, Mr. Pawar requested Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to relieve him of his ministerial burden, ostensibly to devote time to party work. Asked whether Mr. Pawar wanted to pave the way for his daughter Supriya Sule to join the UPA government, Mr. Tripathi said: "It is for the Prime Minister to decide. We want our share to remain as it is." The NCP would try to forge an alliance with the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh, the Biju Janata Dal in Orissa, the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Lok Jan Shakti Party in Bihar, and with smaller parties in Assam. It could also explore options in Andhra Pradesh where Congress MP Jagan Mohan Reddy is going ahead with his 'Odarpu Yatra' despite objections from the party leadership.

Congress reaction

The Congress sought to dismiss Mr. Tripathi's comments, saying there was no change in the situation. "We are in alliance with the NCP at the national level as well as in Maharashtra. But the NCP put up candidates against us in Bihar. It is normal," its spokesman Shakeel Ahmed said. (The Hindu)

Cong cautions RSS, BJP over ties with terror elements

With the terror trail leading to the top echelons of RSS, Congress has cautioned the Hindutva brigade of the consequences of pursuing the 'dangerous' course. Taking note of latest revelations about the involvement of some senior RSS leaders in a number of blasts, Congress spokesman Mohan Prakash on Thursday said it was high time they snapped all ties with such elements. Criticising the BJP for its "soft corner" for such outfits and their functionaries, he said any delay in distancing itself from such violent activity could prove costly for that party. He recalled BJP veteran L K Advani's appeal to PM Manmohan Singh for intervention after the arrest of Hindutva activist Pragya Singh Thakur. "He did not make the demand again after then NSA M K Narayanan personally

met him to explain the whole import of the case," Prakash said. He said the BJP had accused senior Maharashtra police officer Hemant Karkare of being 'anti-national' for exposing the hand of such organisations in the blasts in Nanded and Malegaon. "They should think of the implications of taking such a perilous road," he said. (Times of India)

Qureshi's jibe at Pillai: BJP regrets Krishna's silence

The BJP on Friday regretted that home secretary G K Pillai was not "defended" by external affairs minister S M Krishna when he was "openly castigated" by Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi for his remarks that the ISI had coordinated Mumbai terror attacks. The Congress on its part described as ridiculous any attempt by Pakistan to equate Pillai's remarks with Jamaat-ud-Dawah(JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed's anti-India hate speeches. "The foreign minister of Pakistan chose to attack India's home secretary. I regret he was not defended there by India's foreign minister," BJP spokesman Ravi Shankar Prasad said, a day after Qureshi's unexpected attack on Pillai at a joint news conference with Krishna after their talks in Islamabad. Congress spokesman Abhishek Singhvi said, "The home secretary was simply making a statement of fact about what India's stand has been, It is only India's stand. I don't think there is any basis for comparison of statements by Hafiz Saeed or Salahuddin with the home secretary. That would be ridiculous." Singhvi also noted that Krishna has not confirmed Qureshi's remarks that both the ministers were of the opinion that Pillai's comments on ISI's role in 26/11 were "uncalled" for. Prasad while offering his preliminary comments on the outcome of the Indo-Pak talks said Qureshi was making an issue out of Pillai's statement which was nothing but a statement of LeT operative and Pakistani-American David Headley about the role of ISI in Mumbai attack. Headley has confessed to his involvement in 26/11 and is currently in FBI custody in Chicago in the US. "They have no reply or content but they are comparing it (Pillai's remarks) with Hafiz Saeed without taking any action," Prasad said. Qureshi when asked at the joint press conference last night at the end of the talks why Saeed was not being reined in by Pakistan from making anti-India speeches shot back: "I agree that both sides need to create an enabling environment and not let the climate of engagement be vitiated by negative propaganda. But, I want to know to what extend did the Indian home secretary's statement on the eve of this dialogue help? We both(ministers) are of the opinion that it (Pillai's remarks) was uncalled for." Qureshi's criticism was noteworthy as it was in response to a question on the anti-Indian rhetoric of Saeed and he cited Pillai's comments as a counter. Krishna's silence when Pillai was attacked by the Pakistani minister has raised eyebrows. Pillai had early this week blamed Pakistan's powerful Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) agency for "controlling and coordinating" the Mumbai terror attacks in 2008 "from the beginning to the end". (Times of India)

Minorities' Issues:

Khursheed tells Muslims not to fight phantoms

Minister of State for Minority Affairs Salman Khursheed on Tuesday dismissed the suggestion that the Right to Education Act posed a threat to madrasas. He was reacting to

news reports that Muslim religious bodies were apprehensive of the future of madrasas following the enactment of the Act. The Act makes “recognition” by the government mandatory for all schools offering elementary education. “Why are they [Muslim religious leaders] fighting phantoms? The Act does not at all intend to undermine madrasa education,” Mr. Khursheed told. He said the only agency that could possibly misinterpret or misapply the Act [against the madrasas] was the Ministry of Human Resource Development, which “it certainly is not going to do.” He described as absurd the notion that the HRD Ministry would deliberately harm the community. “There is a communication gap here which can easily be addressed.” Meanwhile, in a statement, the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind announced its plan to discuss the RTE Act at a month-end conclave to be attended by legal and educational experts as well as Muslim organisations and educational institutions. JUIH secretary Niaz Ahmed Farooqui said while his organisation welcomed the Act as a positive step towards universalisation of education, it had apprehension over the negative provisions. Mr. Farooqui said the JUIH had already held an internal meeting where the conclusion was that the Act was like “sweet poison.” While it “would play a critical role in universalising education and some of its provisions are most welcome for our weaker and backward sections, there are negative elements in it, [which,] if not removed, could become an instrument in the hands of State to monopolise education and as such it would not be wrong to brand it as sweet poison.” (The Hindu)

Mulayam says sorry to Muslims

In an attempt to mend fences with Muslims after having aligned with Kalyan Singh during Lok Sabha polls, SP supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav on Thursday regretted taking support of those "responsible" for the Babri mosque demolition and sought pardon of the community. "In the last Lok Sabha polls, I had to take support of some 'galat tatva' (wrong elements) to keep communal forces at bay from forming government at the Centre. This confused the secular forces especially my Muslim brothers and their feelings were hurt. I accept my mistake and seek pardon of the Muslim community for my act", he said in a statement. He said, "I have already made public statement that I will never take support of those responsible for the Babri mosque demolition in the future. "I want to assure my Muslim brothers that whatever I have done will not be repeated and I will continue to raise voice in favour of the Muslim community", Yadav, whose Muslim vote bank eroded in the last election, said. Yadav said that his life was an open book of struggle against communal forces. "I always took initiatives to defeat communal forces and did my duty", he said, adding that in 1990 as a Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, he took all the measures to save Babri mosque in Ayodhya. However, on December 6, 1992, the mosque was demolished during the leadership of the then Chief Minister, who also was held responsible for the act, Yadav said, in an obvious reference to Kalyan Singh, who had quit BJP last year. The SP, which had won only 23 out of the 80 Lok Sabha seats in UP, had accepted that its core Muslim voters had drifted to other parties. (The Indian Express)

Sikh clergy: 1984 riots 'genocide'

Twenty six years after 1984 anti-Sikh riots, five Sikh high priests have declared it as "genocide carried out to eliminate Sikhs from the country". Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Gurbachan Singh said the five met on Wednesday and declared that the riots would be now referred as "Sikh genocide". "The decision was taken after New York-based NGO — Sikhs for Justice — presented a report of the Sikh Genocide Commission. The NGO had constituted the commission and the then Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti had approved it," he said. (Times of India)

Hindu Fundamentalism:

Sena won't allow sale of Laine's book on Shivaji :Uddhav

Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday said the party will not allow the sale of American author James Laine's controversial biography of Maratha King Chhatrapati Shivaji and threatened to burn the copies. "How should we bear an insult of a personality which is so revered and anything written about him," Thackeray said, while addressing a gathering of mountaineering enthusiasts. The book, 'Shivaji, Hindu King in Muslim India', allegedly having derogatory comments on the Maratha king, has been at the centre of a controversy. He said Shiv Sena would intervene if anyone sold or purchased the book. The Supreme Court on Friday upheld the decision of the Bombay High Court to lift the ban on the book by Laine, which, according to the State government, contained material promoting social enmity. (The Indian Express)

Insurgency Movements:

Naxals kill more than terrorists each year

Though its only in the last few months that the brutality of Naxal violence has become evident in a big way, the fact is that more people have been dying to the bullets of Maoists every year in India than terrorists ever killed in any single year. Addressing the chief ministers of Naxal-affected states, Home Minister P Chidambaram reeled off figures to underscore the gravity of the challenge posed by Naxalite groups. He said between 2004 and 2008, the Naxalites had killed about 500 civilians every year. This number rose to 591 in 2009. In just the first six months of this year, 325 civilians have been killed in Naxal violence, a figure that senior Home Ministry officials concede is a conservative calculation. But this alone is more than the combined death toll of all major terrorist strikes in India in 2008, one of the bloodiest years in recent times that culminated in the ghastly attacks in Mumbai on November 26. And this is not counting the casualties amongst the security forces, which are in the range of 150 to 200 every year for the past few years. This year has been particularly bad, with 209 security personnel losing their lives to Naxal violence, a large number of them in the high-profile attacks at Dantewada in Chhattisgarh or Silda in West Bengal. And despite the government's best efforts, the Naxalite groups only seem to be gaining in strength and spreading out to new areas. According to a confidential note on the internal security situation circulated to Union

ministers, the government has admitted that in the first six months of this year, Naxalite activity was noticed in as many as 158 districts of the country, a sharp increase from the 133 districts where Naxalites were seen to be active in the previous year. Incidents of Naxal violence this year have been reported from 85 districts. In 2009, violent incidents were limited to only 67 districts. In fact, four districts and 17 police stations witnessed incidents of Naxal violence for the first time in their history. The note also observes that while Chhattisgarh and Orissa continue to be Naxal strongholds, there had been a “perceptible increase” in Naxal activity in poll-bound Bihar in the last few months. It says that new groups sympathetic to the Maoist cause had been springing up in many areas of the country, some even in Mumbai which had remained untouched from till now. Since the joint forces of central and state police moved into some areas of West Bengal some time back, there has been a sharp increase in Naxal activity and violence in those areas as well, the government note says. And contrary to what Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee has been trying to tell the world about the collusion between CPM and the Naxalites, the note observes that the Naxals have directed their ire primarily at CPM cadres. (The Indian Express)

Economic Front:

Pranab sees need for second green revolution

Union Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee reiterated the need for a second green revolution to ensure food security. If agricultural productivity in the eastern States could be doubled it would go a long way in meeting the nation's requirements. “The first green revolution was confined to three or four States – Punjab Haryana and the Godavari-Kaveri belt. The endeavour now will be to extend the green revolution to wider areas,” said Mr. Mukherjee.

400-crore allocation

An allocation of Rs. 400-crore was made “to extend the green revolution to the eastern region that comprises Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, eastern Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Orissa.” “Merely 1,000 to 1,200 kg of food grains is produced a hectare in West Bengal, whereas nearly 4,000 kg is produced in Punjab,” Mr. Mukherjee said. For food security it will have to be ensured that fertile land was not utilised for non-agricultural purposes. Mr. Mukherjee was speaking at a function where a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed for beautification of the riverfront in the city by officials of the Kolkata Port Trust, the Railway Ministry and the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. All the three signatories to the MoU are headed by leaders belonging to the Trinamool Congress. (The Hindu)

UK may cut foreign aid to 'rich' India

Britain may scale down the 250 million-pound aid given to India annually, saying wealthy local people could do more to help their poor countrymen. Andrew Mitchell, the International Development Secretary, signalled that the "250 million pounds of public money spent annually in nuclear armed India could be scaled back." He said the rich NRI

population of Britain could do more to help their countrymen. Besides, the 40 million pounds spent by the Department for International Development (DFID) in Vietnam, now regarded as an Asian "tiger" economy, will be axed. It follows the disclosure that development funding to China and Russia would be withdrawn. Mitchell told The Sunday Times: "India is more complex and more difficult than China. But this is a (aid) programme I am looking at in detail. (The Indian Express)

Govt pushes China model for 'Eastern Green Revolution'

The government has come forward with a proposal to replicate the Chinese Green Revolution model in the eastern states and promote hybrid rice on a mission mode in the region. Taking a leaf from success stories in China, the Ministry has also proposed a task force on promotion of hybrid rice and envisioned pushing for private sector participation. Although a section of environmental activists in Kolkata have already raised their voice against the plans for an Eastern India Green Revolution, CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has welcomed the initiative. In a workshop which discussed the possibilities of the agricultural 'revolution', Bhattacharjee along with his Agriculture minister Naren De appreciated the initiative taken by Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar. Speaking at the workshop, Union finance minister Pranab Mukherjee said a strong delivery mechanism should be created for the initiative. Pawar said that while productivity of rice is 3.3 tonne per hectare in India, China's production is almost double of that. The Ministry, he said, had also noted that while almost 63 per cent of the land under rice cultivation in China produces the hybrid variety, the figure for India was a meagre 3 per cent. "A task force on promotion of hybrid rice should be created at the national level for more aggressive promotion," Pawar said. The task force, to be headed by an additional secretary, will hold periodic meetings with the eastern region states and work out a blue print for increasing area under hybrid rice. It will also devise strategies to create clusters of villages adopting hybrid rice so that procurement centers are opened to provide marketing support to farmers. Meanwhile, the Ministry is also looking at possible public-private-partnerships in the areas like development of hybrid seeds. "There are almost 3,000 seed companies in China. A lot of seed companies have also come into India. We will only have to ensure that the quality of the seed is maintained. We are trying to encourage private sectors to venture through public-private-partnership model," he said. (The Indian Express)

Indian garment exports down 2.64%

Gone are the days when big department stores such as Wal-Mart, Sears and JC Penny used to stock Indian and Chinese garments. This is slowly changing. While the Chinese invasion is continuing, Bangladesh which has overtaken India is extending the lead and Vietnam is all set to overtake India in garment exports, once monopolised by India. Garment exports from India dropped 2.64 per cent to \$ 10.64 billion in 2009-10 compared to \$10.93 billion in the previous financial year, according to the latest data released by the Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC). "The first two months of the current financial year have shown 5.23 per cent decrease in rupee terms, as compared to the previous year. Exports of apparel are highly price sensitive... Indian garments are overpriced due to high input costs and duty and they are being priced out by countries

like Bangladesh and Vietnam,” said Premal Udani, Chairman, AEPC. “Bangladesh, which is only half the size of Maharashtra, today exports almost \$13 billion apparel. This is roughly 20 per cent more than Indian garment exports. The unprecedented rise in price of raw materials (cotton & yarn) over the past few months and also general increase in all other costs due to hike in duty of petroleum products has made Indian garments uncompetitive in the world market. “While our exports are falling, exports from low-cost countries such as Bangladesh, Vietnam and Cambodia continue to rise. The slowdown in the global economy has hit our garment exports. Exports to Europe which was facing a debt crisis have fallen. The US market is still fragile,” Udani told The Indian Express. “What’s needed now is the government’s support to compete with other countries. The government should support the sector in terms of higher duty draw back rates to offset cost disadvantages.” Udani also urged the government for a faster implementation of the Indo-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA). “FTA has the potential to boost India’s textiles and clothing exports to the European Union by over \$3 billion. It will also create an additional 2.5 million jobs in our economy. Currently, the apparel sector employs 6 million people directly and 3 million indirectly. And 50 per cent of the work force is women. With right policies, this sector can absorb another 5 million workers directly within the next 3 years,” he said. (The Indian Express)

Industry grows by 11.5%

Industrial output rose by 11.5 per cent in May, growing in double digits for the eighth straight month, on good showing by manufacturing, particularly capital and consumer goods. In comparison, industry grew by 2.1 per cent in May last year. The government said the manufacturing sector is unlikely to grow at an abnormally high rate as there are capacity constraints. “Nobody should expect that the industrial manufacturing sector will continue to grow at abnormally high number for a long time to come. There are capacity constraints” finance secretary Mr Ashok Chawla told reporters. Reacting to a slower than expected May industrial output growth at 11.5 per cent, Mr Chawla said the manufacturing sector would continue to see average growth trend now and should grow in double digits in the current fiscal. This is the eighth straight month of the industrial output clocking a double digit growth. The manufacturing output, which constitutes around 80 per cent of the index of industrial production (IIP), grew 12.3 per cent in May against 1.8 per cent in same month last year, official data released today said. Within manufacturing, capital goods production rose by 34.3 per cent in May against a negative growth rate of 3.6 per cent a year ago. Consumer durables output rose by 23.7 per cent during the month under review against 13.2 per cent in the same period last year. The other two sectors, mining and electricity, expanded by 8.7 per cent and 6.4 per cent in May, respectively against a growth rate of 3.4 per cent and 3 per cent in the same period last year. According to the data, of the 17 industries, as many as 15 showed positive growth in May. The industrial output for April was revised downwards to 16.52 per cent from provisional figures of 17.6 per cent earlier. (The Statesman)

VC Industry to grow in India: Deloitte

With the improving domestic entrepreneurial environment and favourable investment

scenario, the venture capital industry in India and other emerging markets is expected to expand in the next five years, while it may shrink in developed nations, says a survey. According to Deloitte's 2010 Global Venture Capital Survey, the majority of venture capitalists in China, India and Brazil expect the number of venture firms to increase between now and 2015, while 62 per cent of respondents globally expect the number of venture firms to decrease during the same timeframe. The report said that 99 per cent of respondents in China expect the number of venture capital firms to increase in their country in the period under review, followed by Brazil (97 per cent) and India (85 per cent). On the other hand, 92 per cent of venture capitalists in the US anticipate the number of venture capital firms to decline, followed by France (83 per cent), Israel (80 per cent) and the UK (70 per cent), on account of the unfavourable investment climate and tax policies, difficulty in achieving successful exits and unstable regulatory environment. "The stage has now been set for emerging markets like China, India and Brazil to rise as drivers of innovation, as they are increasingly becoming more competitive with the traditional markets," said Deloitte USA Managing Partner for National Venture Capital Services Mark Jensen. But Jensen maintained that traditionally strong markets like the US and Europe will continue to be important hubs, despite consolidation in the number of venture firms. In India, respondents felt the improving entrepreneurial environment and growing market created a favourable climate for venture capital in the country. Also, the quantity and quality of deal flows will improve significantly, with most expecting an improved or stable environment for valuations. "The current venture capital market reflects strength and confidence, despite recent challenges. There is renewed optimism, especially for sectors which are driven by strong consumer demand, with India's growth expectancy and growing domestic consumer class being key drivers," Deloitte India Senior Director Rajiv Sundar said. The survey, which measured the opinions of more than 500 venture capitalists worldwide, found that the majority of respondents feel investment levels in clean-tech, healthcare services, biopharmaceuticals, medical devices and equipment and consumer business will increase. However, there were mixed reactions on telecom, software, electronics and new media. Despite concerns over growth contraction in the US and Europe, 57 per cent of all respondents believe the quantity of deal flows will increase over the next five years and 56 per cent expect the quality to improve as well. This forecast is particularly strong in respondents from China, Brazil and India. (The Indian Express)

China, India will spur oil demand: IEA

The world oil demand next year will be fueled by economic growth in fast growing countries like China and India, despite a drop in rich countries' appetite for oil, International Energy Agency has said. The Paris-based agency in its monthly report on the oil markets estimated the global oil demand in 2011 to rise by a daily 1.3 million barrels or 1.6 per cent, to average 87.8 million a day. "Non-OECD Asia, the Middle East and Latin America will continue to command the lion's share of oil demand growth in 2011," it said in the report. The forecast for world oil consumption this year was unchanged, at 86.5 million barrels a day, a 2.1 percent increase from 2009. The energy arm of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a grouping of the world's richest nations, said the rich countries were seeking fuel

efficiency and their oil demand next year, irrespective of the growth in the global economy, will decline by 0.5 percent against the levels this year. The agency also said the development of Iran's oil and gas industry will be hit in the longer term by tighter sanctions from the United Nations, United States and EU. It also anticipated delays in new oil projects, following the Gulf of Mexico oil spill that has dented a loss of 30,000 barrels per day in the 2010 and 2011 US crude production. Further cuts could come if wide-reaching drilling restrictions arise from the disaster inquiry, the agency said. Last Monday BP robots attached a new, tighter-fitting cap on the top of the Gulf of Mexico oil leak, raising hopes of effectively staunching the oil flow for the first time in nearly three months. The Obama administration has issued a revised moratorium on deep-water offshore drilling to replace the one that was struck down by the courts. (The Indian Express)

Indian air traffic continues to rise

Air traffic in India continued to show a marked improvement since the financial downturn in the past two years, with total passengers carried recording about 135 lakh in the second quarter, compared with over 118 lakh in the first. Jet Airways and its subsidiary JetLite together garnered the largest chunk of passengers flying 35.28 lakh, followed by Kingfisher at 28.42 lakh and Air India (Domestic) 23.69 lakh, official figures released today said. Closely following them was no-frill carrier IndiGo at 21.48 lakh and SpiceJet with 17.57 lakh. While GoAir flew 7.88 lakh, Paramount carried 45,000 only, primarily due to lack of aircraft in their fleet. In June, the total domestic passengers carried by the scheduled Indian airlines was 45.04 lakh, the figures showed. Here again, Jet and JetLite combine flew about 12 lakh people. In terms of percentage share of the carriers in the second quarter this year, Jet-JetLite bagged 26.2 per cent, Kingfisher 21.1, Air India (Domestic) 17.6, IndiGo 15.9, SpiceJet 13, Paramount 0.3 and Go Air 5.8. On the issue of how many seats were filled on an average by the aircraft of these airlines, both no-frill airlines, IndiGo and SpiceJet, topped the list registering 90.7 and 88.5 per cent respectively. They were followed by Paramount with 86.8 per cent, Kingfisher with 85.1, GoAir 84, JetLite 83.6, Jet 80.5 and Air India 72.3, the figures showed. In the data relating to the maximum number of complaints lodged by passengers against these airlines showed Jet Airways and JetLite topping the list with the maximum number of complaints at 9.2 and 4 per 10,000 passenger in June. The lowest number of complaints were received by Air India at one against every 10,000 passengers. In all, eight domestic airlines together received 1,617 complaints from passengers against their services in June with an industry average of 3.7 complaints per 10,000 passengers. (The Indian Express)

Rupee joins elite club



An image of the rupee symbol released on Thursday.

Even though not fully convertible, the Indian rupee will soon have a distinct identity. With a blend of the Devanagari 'Ra' and Roman 'R' as its unique symbol, the Indian currency will be joining the elite club of the US dollar, the European euro, the British pound sterling and the Japanese yen to mark its presence in the global arena. Designed by Bombay IIT post-graduate D. Udaya Kumar, the symbol was approved by the Union Cabinet on Thursday to distinguish the currency of the over \$ 1-trillion economy from the rest, such as the rupee or the rupiah of Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Information and Broadcasting Minister Ambika Soni said: "It's a big statement on the Indian currency. The symbol would lend a distinctive character and identity to the currency and further highlight the strength and global face of the Indian economy." Unlike the pound sterling among the four currencies with distinct identities, the Indian currency symbol will not be printed or embossed on paper notes or coins. It would be included in the 'Unicode Standard' and major scripts of the world so as to ensure that it is easily displayed and printed in the electronic and print media. Ms. Soni pointed out that the symbol would be adopted within a span of six months in the country and in about 18-24 months globally. Mr. Kumar's winning entry was chosen from 3,000 designs received for the currency symbol competition. He will get an award of Rs. 2.5 lakh from the Finance Ministry. The jury, headed by an RBI Deputy Governor, had sent five short-listed entries for the Cabinet's approval. (The Hindu)

Foreign Relations/Geo-strategic developments:

China hopes India will keep its word on Tibet-related issues

China on Tuesday urged India to "abide by its commitments" to restrict political activities of exiled Tibetans in India, two days after Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao met with the Dalai Lama. "China has expressed its position clearly to the Indian side over this issue," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Qin Gang said when asked about Ms. Rao's meeting with the exiled Tibetan religious leader in Dharamsala. "The Indian government has expressed on many occasions to China that it recognises Tibet Autonomous Region as part of the People's Republic of China, and it would not allow exiled Tibetans in India to conduct anti-China political activities," he said. "We hope India could abide by its commitments on Tibet-related issues, and properly handle all relevant issues." China's measured response on Tuesday marked a striking contrast from the government's displeasure at the Indian government November last, when the Dalai Lama travelled to

the Tawang monastery in Arunachal Pradesh. China has voiced claims on parts of the State, including Tawang, and exerted pressure on the Indian government to prevent the visit. The Chinese government then blamed the Dalai Lama for trying to “sabotage” and “wreck” China's relations with India, though Indian officials said the Tibetan religious leader's visit to the State was purely for religious reasons. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told his Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabao in talks October last that the Dalai Lama was an “honoured guest” of India and free to travel anywhere within the country. India has, however, assured China that it would clamp down on any “anti-China” activities by Tibetan separatists on Indian soil. (The Hindu)

India, Brazil, Germany, Japan must get permanent U.N. seats: France

France reiterated its support on Tuesday for India's bid for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. The French ambassador in India Jerome Bonnafont said India, Brazil, Germany and Japan should be included as permanent members. “How can such a body pretend to solve problems when India, Brazil, Germany and Japan are not sitting at the table,” Mr. Bonnafont asked at a meeting at the University of Madras. Speaking on the eve of Bastille Day or La Fete Nationale (July 14) commemorating the start of the French Revolution, Mr. Bonnafont said India and France shared the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity and an unconditional desire for peace. The two also believed in the United Nations as a parliament of nations and in finding solutions to the world's problems through mutual dialogue. It was natural then that France supported India's bid for a permanent seat in the Security Council, he said. Addressing students, Mr. Bonnafont said the next generation would face the problems of ensuring sustainable economic development and maintaining global peace. “The biggest challenge you have to confront is the ecological challenge,” he said. “How do you allow each person to pursue what he wants without damaging the ecology? This requires expertise from politics, economics, biology and other fields. Clearly the recipes of the West are not sufficient and we need to combine the knowledge of Europe with ideas from Asia, Africa and other regions.” While “nothing justifies terrorism,” Mr. Bonnafont said there was still the need to address concerns that were being used as pretexts by terrorists. Among these were the bringing of peace to troubled parts of the world such as Afghanistan and bringing economic development to backward regions. Science and technology could be used for good or for bad and it was up to universities to provide a moral education along with the imparting of knowledge to create a peaceful society, he said. The ambassador praised the recently concluded World Classical Tamil meet, saying that it was important for nations to hold firm to their cultural identities in the era of globalisation. On the controversy about the wearing of the veil by communities in France, Mr. Bonnafont said the idea of secularism demanded that such beliefs were not brought to the public sphere. He called India a “metaphor for globalisation” on how people with different languages, religions and political ideas could live together peacefully. President Nicolas Sarkozy's scheduled visit in December would further strengthen the ties between the two countries, he said. Vice-chancellor G. Thiruvassagam presented a set of twelve volumes of the English translation of Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi's works. He talked about the close association of the University with France and called for further development of ties. Mr. Bonnafont also presented the Officier des Palmes Academiques to Hema Parthasarathy, head, Translation

and Interpretation Cell, Alliance Francaise, Chennai, and the Chevalier des Palmes Academiques to Chitra Krishnan, head of the French and Foreign Languages department, University of Madras. (The Hindu)

Spat erupts at Indo-Pak peace talks briefing

The foreign ministers' meetings between India and Pakistan all but collapsed in a welter of accusations on Thursday. Pakistan steadfastly refused to engage in any substantial manner with the critical areas of Mumbai attacks, cross-border terrorism and infiltration, choosing to argue that Islamabad could not speed "judicial" processes. The joint press conference, which started around 9pm, instead of the scheduled 2.15 pm, saw foreign minister S M Krishna and his Pakistani counterpart Shah Mahmood Qureshi take on each other in what turned out to be a bruising spat beamed live. The divergence came out starkly on Balochistan and infiltration in Jammu and Kashmir as the interaction with the media almost degenerated into a joust. Asked about India's "role" in Balochistan, Krishna responded, "Forget about credible evidence, we have not received a shred of evidence". On the issue of anti-India jihad speeches of Lashkar-e-Taiba chief Hafiz Saeed, Qureshi actually offered home secretary G K Pillai's comments on Lashkar man David Headley's implication of ISI as a "counter-point". The equation of the mild-mannered Pillai as an equivalent to the Lashkar amir left the Indian delegation gaping. Qureshi further said Pillai's statement had come up in discussions and "both of us felt it was unwarranted". Krishna did not respond to this sally. But Qureshi's reference to Pillai as a Hafiz Saeed "clone" more or less symbolized the near futility of the engagement that was to take forward home minister P Chidambaram's discussions just last month.

'Infiltration India's problem'

When Krishna responded to increasingly hostile questioning from the gathered Pakistani media by pointing out that there had been a 40% spike in infiltration in 2008-09 and this was "designed to create instability in that part of India", Qureshi blithely said it was up to India to deal "firmly" with anyone caught doing so. Without batting an eyelid, he said infiltration was not the policy of the government of Pakistan or any of its agencies. On Krishna's remarks that the "complete unravelling of the Mumbai conspiracy" would be the "biggest confidence-building measure" and that Pakistan had agreed to take into account the fresh evidence presented by home minister P Chidambaram, the Pakistani foreign minister indicated that there was little that could be done to speeden up things. He put emphasis on "both India and Pakistan" having independent judiciaries, stressing that governments could not dictate to the courts. The dramatic non-result seemed on the cards from late evening. After meeting at 11am and then over lunch till 3pm, the two sides met again at the foreign office at around 7pm while the media waited in the crowded briefing room. What was surprising was that MEA had actually put out word, reflected in TV scrolls, that the talks were "going well". Just how well they were going was revealed soon enough. Once Qureshi's long-winded and largely banal professions of both sides sharing a "complex relationship" and the merits of remaining engaged were over, the gloves came off. Krishna responded to a question of India's "role" in Balochistan by saying "forget about credible evidence, we have not received a shred of evidence" on this.

There was no let-up thereafter. On questions regarding alleged human rights violations in J&K, Krishna pointed out that the elected government had a role to play and there were several institutional mechanisms to take up abuse charges. (Times of India)

Military

Indian Occupied Kashmir:

“Democracy under severe strain in Kashmir”

Civil society groups have demanded an immediate end to alleged violence perpetrated by the security forces in the Kashmir Valley and setting up of an independent time-bound commission of inquiry to probe the killings and rights violations. At a dharna held on Friday, the civil society groups said it was a matter of grave concern and anguish that no sensitive measures were taken by the Centre in response to the ongoing deaths, injuries and killings of civilians in the Valley. To make the matters worse, the Army, along with para-military forces, was issued orders to shoot-at-sight to uphold the almost relentless curfew – basically to block protests against the “continuing spiral of non-stop and indiscriminate killings” of innocent civilians. “The presence of the Army and security forces dominates the Valley and reinforces the deep-rooted angst of people. The reality is that democracy is under severe strain and is almost absent in many parts in the State, despite an elected government backed by the Centre holding the reigns of power in Srinagar,” a statement issued by Act Now for Harmony and Democracy (ANHAD) and endorsed by civil society groups, intellectuals and individuals said. The statement said the Centre and the State should come out clean and explain if this was indeed a democratic and constitutional method of handling a manifold and multiplying crisis in a highly sensitive region. People cannot be won over or suppressed at gunpoint. Certainly, the people of Jammu and Kashmir deserved a more rationale, humane, visionary and sensitive response from the Indian state, the statement said. (The Hindu)

Media bodies in Kashmir denounce government claim

Five representative bodies of newspaper owners, editors, working journalists, photo journalists and video journalists in Jammu and Kashmir denounced the State government's claim that restrictions on media had been lifted. They decided to suspend the publication of newspapers for Saturday in view of insufficient number of curfew passes and continued attacks on media. For the last two days, no newspaper has hit the stands in Srinagar as the government withdrew curfew passes and banned the movement of journalists. President of the Kashmir Press Association Ghulam Hassan Kaloo, president of the Press Guild of Kashmir Bashir Ahmad Bashir, president of the Kashmir Journalists Corps Ishfaul Hassan, president of the Kashmir Press Photographers Association Farooq Javed and president of the Kashmir Video Journalists Association S. Tariq, in a joint statement, termed the government announcement “mere eyewash to counter the condemnation from journalist bodies at national and international levels.” The statement said the members of these organisations decided to hold a joint meeting but could not do so owing to restrictions. They then had deliberations on the telephone and

the issue of continued restrictions was discussed threadbare. The government's discriminatory attitude towards Kashmir-based journalists by denying access to information and events and the special treatment given to mediapersons from Delhi by providing them all facilities were also discussed. "Curfew passes were cancelled, mediapersons beaten up and forced to remain in-doors and the government has the cheek to say that there were no restrictions," the statement said, adding, "even when the members of five organisations were discussing the situation, senior journalist Riyaz Masroor was beaten up and left with a fractured arm," the statement said. Though the government claimed that curfew passes were issued to editors of newspapers and few accredited journalists, the statement said that it was only to deceive those national and international bodies who extended solidarity to hundreds of Kashmiri journalists, "who continued to be under siege." (The Hindu)

Pak channels banned in north Kashmir

The J-K government has banned the beaming of Pakistani channels in the trouble-torn areas of North Kashmir which continue to be on edge. Cable operators in Baramulla and Sopore have been directed by the authorities to block five Pakistani based news channels and a religious channel with immediate effect. "We were asked by the Baramulla district Magistrate on Friday evening to stop beaming of PTV, Geo TV, ARY, Dawn News and Express 24X7 news. They also directed us to block the Pakistani religious channel, Noor TV," said Bobby Singh who runs the cable operation in north Kashmir. Singh said that all these channels were free to air and were being beamed by the local cable operators to thousands of their subscribers. "The authorities have given no reason for banning the Pakistani channels," Singh said. Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Bashir Ahmed Bhat confirmed the imposition of the ban on the Pakistani channels. "As per the orders we have directed the cable operators to block all the Pakistan-based channels in Baramulla and Sopore," Bhat told The Sunday Express. The official sources, however, said that airing of channels was banned following directives from the state government in consultation with the Information Broadcasting Ministry. Pakistani news channels, for their part, have nearly blacked out the recent events in Kashmir. (The Indian Express)

Colonel, Major chargesheeted in Machil encounter case

Jammu and Kashmir Police has filed a chargesheet against an Army colonel, a major and seven others in a case of alleged fake encounter in which three youths were killed in the frontier district of Kupwara in April this year. Official sources said the chargesheet has named Col D K Pathania, Maj Upinder and four others of a unit besides a Territorial Army jawan and two others for allegedly conspiring and kidnapping three youths from Sopore on the pretext of giving them jobs and later killing them in the higher reaches of Kupwara claiming they were terrorists. The chargesheet was filed in the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate in Sopore on Thursday. The Army was sent three reminders by the police for handing over the custody of the army officials for their custodial interrogation as they claimed there was enough evidence to suggest their involvement in the killing of Muhammad Shafi, Shehzad Ahmed and Riyaz Ahmed who were gunned down on the night of April 29. The colonel was relieved of the command and the major suspended ahead of Prime minister Manmohan Singh's visit to the Valley on June seven. Army officials had attempted to invoke the Armed Forces Special Powers Act under which no

official is to be handed over to the civilian administration. However, the state government argued in its chargesheet that the action was conducted allegedly with criminal intent. The police have recorded the statements of various people, including the driver of the vehicle in which the three youths were taken from their native village of Nadihal in Baramulla district before being allegedly gunned down. The state police arrested three persons Abbas Shah --the territorial army jawan, Basharat Lone and Abdul Hamid Bhat -- for allegedly luring the three youths to the border and staging a fake encounter in Machil sector of north Kashmir. The state government ordered a magisterial inquiry into the case and also took up the matter with the Defence Ministry. The bodies were exhumed and a post-mortem was done by the state government. The police had registered a missing report on April 27 in this regard, which was later converted into a kidnapping case. Chief minister Omar Abdullah had asked the Commander of 15 Corps Lt Gen N C Marwah to cooperate in the probe being carried out by the police. (Times of India)

Social front:

Unarmed Bombay police officers led to 26/11 mayhem: FBI

Labelling the 26/11 terror attacks as “deceptively simple and highly coordinated with little money expended”, the FBI has said the crippling flaw in the Mumbai police's defence against the initial assault was that its officers didn't even carry weapons. The premier US investigative agency has also pointed out that the Indian forces did not have the sophisticated gadgets and systems to intercept the communication between the attackers and their handlers in Pakistan. FBI said absence of weapons with the Mumbai police had led to dozens of people being mowed down at five-star hotels, a train station and a Jewish centre before the specialised Indian forces killed all but one of the terrorists. “Half of these guys weren't armed” during the initial assault in Mumbai, said Sergeant Alan Matas. “That's half the battle. "If something like this happened here, we would respond with a more organised attack," Detective Ivan Cabrera was quoted as saying by "The Miami Herald" newspaper. FBI's supervisory special agent Mr Anthony Tindall told members of the agency's Joint Terrorism Task Force and others gathered at the Sunrise Civic Centre over the weekend that “in the USA, we would bring guns and bullets much quicker than the Indians could have.” Mr Tindall, now based in Hawaii as the FBI's liaison to the US Pacific Command, said India sought the FBI's help during the 26-28 November attack and the bureau deployed eight agents from Los Angeles as well as technicians from Quantico, Virginia. He said FBI gained the trust of Indian investigators almost immediately because its agents and technicians were able to glean significant information from GPS, cellphones, satellite phones, Internet data, financial records, witnesses and boats used by the terrorists. “One of the things we learned from this operation is that we needed to bring them something they couldn't do themselves,” Mr Tindall told the audience, while showing TV news accounts of the massacre. “A lot of the information led back to Pakistan,” he was quoted as saying by the newspaper. Another major turning point in the investigation was the early arrest of Pakistani national Muhammad Ajmal Kasab, the lone survivor. He was a poor, uneducated young man recruited, trained and selected for the mission directed by Lashkar-e-Taibyyaba. Mr Tindall called Ajmal, who joined another terrorist in the deadly Mumbai railway

station attack, “an incredible source of information.” Ajmal was found guilty in May of 86 counts of murder, conspiracy and waging war against India and received the death penalty from the Indian court. Mr Tindall also said that a Mumbai-style attack in the USA would not likely cause as much death and destruction because local, state and federal law enforcement would be better coordinated. (The Statesman)

A book can't be banned for stray sentences: Supreme Court

The State cannot extract stray sentences and come to a finding that a book as a whole ought to be banned or forfeited, the Supreme Court has held. A Bench of Justices D.K. Jain and H.L. Dattu while rejecting the Maharashtra government's stand justifying the notification for forfeiture of Shivaji-Hindu King in Islamic India written by James W. Laine said: “The intention of the author has to be gathered from the language, contents and import of the offending material.” Writing the judgment, Justice Jain said: “The effect of the words used in the offending material must be judged from the standards of reasonable, strong minded, firm and courageous men, and not those of weak and vacillating minds, nor of those who scent danger in every hostile point of view. The class of readers for whom the book is primarily meant would also be relevant for judging the probable consequences of the writing.” The Bench pointed out that the intention to cause disorder or incite people to violence was the sine qua non of the offence under Section 153-A of the IPC, and the prosecution had to prove prima facie the existence of mens rea on the part of the accused. “The intention of the publication has to be judged primarily by the language of the book, the circumstances in which it was written and published; the matter complained of must be read as a whole and one cannot rely on strongly worded and isolated passages for proving the charge, nor indeed can one take a sentence here and a sentence there and connect them by a meticulous process of inferential reasoning.” The Maharashtra government — by a January 15, 2004 notification, under Section 95(1) of the Criminal Procedure Code — ordered that every copy of Laine's book be seized as its circulation was likely to result in a breach of peace and tranquillity and maintenance of harmony. The notification was subsequently withdrawn and another was issued in December 2006 for the same purpose.

“Notification invalid”

On a writ petition by Sangharaj Damodar Rupawate and others, the Bombay High Court quashed this notification. Dismissing the State's appeal against this judgment, the Supreme Court said: “It is manifest that the notification does not identify the communities between which the book caused or is likely to cause enmity. Therefore, it cannot be found out from the notification as to which communities got outraged by the publication of the book or if it had caused hatred and animosity between particular communities or groups.” (The Hindu)

Delhi, Kerala, Goa have least number of poor: UNDP

Amidst acute poverty across South Asia, the five states of Delhi, Kerala, Goa, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh have the least number of poor people in India, according to a new

measure of global poverty developed at the University of Oxford for the UNDP. The new measure, called the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), has been developed and applied by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI). It will be featured in the forthcoming 20th anniversary edition of the UN Development Programme Human Development Report. A detailed analysis using the MPI reveals that South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa have comparable intensities of poverty, according to an OPHI working paper titled 'Acute Multidimensional Poverty: A New Index for Developing Countries'. In terms of human lives, South Asia has the world's highest levels of poverty. Fifty-one per cent of the population of Pakistan is MPI poor, 58 per cent in Bangladesh, 55 per cent in India, and 65 per cent in Nepal. The analysis states: "We find that Delhi has an MPI equivalent to Iraq (which ranks 45), whereas Bihar's MPI is similar to Guinea's (the 8th poorest country in the ranking). "In terms of headcount, in Delhi and Kerala 14 per cent and 16 per cent of the population are MPI poor, respectively, whereas in Jharkhand 77 per cent of the population are MPI poor and in Bihar, 81 per cent". Other 'top ten' states with the least number of poor in India are Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Haryana and Gujarat. The analysis by MPI creators reveals that there are more 'MPI poor' people in eight Indian states (421 million in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal) than in the 26 poorest African countries combined (410 million). "Just to provide a sense of perspective, the population of the poorest Indian state Bihar, with 95 million people, exceeds the sum of nine of the ten poorest African countries," according to the authors Sabina Alkire and Maria Emma Santos. Further analysis shows that in India, the Scheduled Tribes have the highest MPI (0.482), almost the same as Mozambique, and a headcount of 81 per cent. The Scheduled Castes have a headcount of 66 per cent and their MPI is a bit better than Nigeria. Fifty-eight per cent of other Backward Castes are MPI poor. About one in three of the remaining Indian households are multi-dimensionally poor, and their MPI is just below that of Honduras, the paper says. As many as 39 per cent in India live in a poor household where at least one child or woman is undernourished. The paper adds that 25 per cent in India, and 15 per cent in Nepal live in a household where one or more children are not attending school. Half of the world's poor as measured by the MPI live in South Asia (51 per cent or 844 million people) and one quarter in Africa (28 per cent or 458 million). Niger has the greatest intensity and incidence of poverty in any country, with 93 per cent of the population classified as poor in MPI terms. The MPI reveals the nature and extent of poverty at different levels: from household up to regional, national and international level. This new multidimensional approach to assessing poverty has been adapted for national use in Mexico, and is now being considered by Chile and Colombia. "The MPI is like a high resolution lens which reveals a vivid spectrum of challenges facing the poorest households," said OPHI Director Sabina Alkire. (The Indian Express)

Proposed law on kids will cover ragging

The government is mulling introducing the Prevention of Offences against Child Bill 2009 to ensure that be it home or school, the young are spared the rod. Ragging is also covered under the proposed legislation. The bill is expected to be an umbrella legislation that will bring all forms of exploitation of the child — social, physical, sexual or economic — under the law. It lays down clear penalties for children employed as beggars

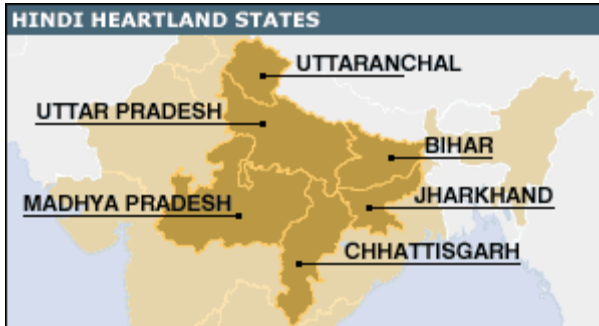
and prohibits all forms of child labour. Trafficking and sexual exploitation of children could lead to life imprisonment. Economic exploitation including forcing a minor into labour or to beg, giving children intoxicants or drugs, or exposing them to pornography have also been specifically defined in the bill. (Times of India)

'India worst in end-of-life care'

India doesn't just have a poor quality of life, as reflected in its poor human development index (HDI), it also has a particularly poor 'quality of death'. That's the depressing message from a new index developed by the Economist Intelligence Unit to measure end-of-life care services in 40 countries. India finishes at the bottom of the list, which includes 30 OECD nations and 10 developing countries for which data was available. While finishing below the developed world may come as no surprise, what's revealing is that even Uganda is a notch above India. The UK was found to have the best end-of-life care (despite a far from perfect healthcare system), followed by Australia and New Zealand. The countries that fared the worst in the Quality of Death Index released on Thursday included countries such as India, Uganda, Brazil and China in that order from the bottom. The report noted that these countries fared badly as progress on providing end-of-life care was slow despite notable exceptions of excellence such as the state of Kerala in India and the services delivered through Hospice Africa in Uganda. In Asia, Taiwan (14), Singapore (18) and Hong Kong (20) were ranked much higher than Japan (23), where over a fifth of the population is over 60 years. The study noted that many rich nations lagged in the overall score, including Denmark (22), Italy (24) and South Korea (32). The US and Canada were ranked at 9th place in the list, while many countries known to have excellent health systems scored poorly including France (12), Norway (13), Sweden (16), Switzerland (19) and Iceland (25). According to the Worldwide Palliative Care Alliance, while more than 100 million patients and family care-givers worldwide needed palliative care annually, less than 8% of them actually received it. Experts on end-of-life care identified access to drugs, especially the availability of opioids to manage pain, and availability of carers as the most important practical issues. They also pointed out that state funded end-of-life care tended to prioritise conventional treatment over palliative care. Even well funded health systems relied mostly on charities and philanthropic bodies to offer care to patients, noted the experts. "In many nations, standards of end-of-life care suffer from inadequate policy, high costs, cultural barriers and poor access to painkillers. Too many people, even in countries that have excellent healthcare systems, suffer a poor quality of death — even when death comes naturally. This is despite the fact that in many of these countries, increasing longevity and ageing populations mean demand for end-of-life care is likely to rise sharply," observed the study. (Times of India)

Regional Report

Central India (Hindi Heartland)

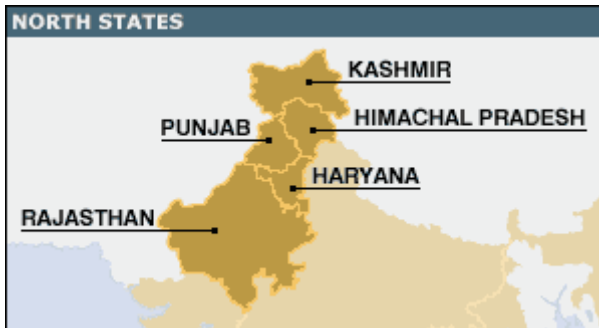


Politics:

Social front:

Economic Front:

The North



Politics:

After deluge, blame game between Punjab and Haryana

After the deluge claimed 33 lives in Punjab and Haryana and caused an estimated loss of nearly Rs 1,400 crore, a blame game has started between the two agrarian states over the floods. Ironically, the two states have been fighting over water issues in the past, with Punjab maintaining that it did not have a drop to spare and Haryana remaining determined to have its share of water from its neighbouring state. In a strange turn of events, the two states are now involved in yet another row, this time not over lack of water, but excess of it. Punjab's Deputy Chief Minister and head of the ruling Shiromani Akali Dal, Sukhbir Singh Badal has alleged that the construction of Hansi Bhutana multi-purpose canal in Haryana was causing floods in his state. "We have taken photographs (of the canal) and will be giving it to the Central Water Commission," Badal had said. Hitting back, the Haryana Government said that the "propaganda being spread by Punjab

Government by accusing Haryana for floods in Punjab territory is palpably false and grossly misleading." Principal Adviser to Haryana Chief Minister, R N Prasher has claimed that the problems faced by his state have their origin in Punjab territory because the Ghaggar water has been "diverted" to Sutlej Yamuna Link (SYL) canal in the Punjab territory. "Since the SYL canal has a limited capacity, release of large volumes of flood waters in this canal has resulted in breaches of its banks in Ambala and Kurukshetra districts of Haryana. These man-made, deliberate and uncalled for illegal actions in Punjab territory have caused immense avoidable misery to the people of Haryana," Prasher alleged. A senior Punjab irrigation official blamed Haryana for creating the "man-made havoc (floods)". 22 people died in flood-related deaths in Punjab, while 11 died in neighbouring Haryana. In a communique to the Centre, Punjab has demanded that a team of the Central Water Commission be deputed to check the "damage" caused by the Hansi Butana canal, which it claims was stopping the natural flow of water of river Ghaggar. For years, the SYL Canal has remained a bone of contention between the two states. In 2004, Punjab had unilaterally terminated the river water agreements with its neighbouring states (Termination of Water Agreements Act, 2004). Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal had recently raised the demand of royalty on its water, prompting Haryana to hit back at this demand. (The Indian Express)

Social front:

Punjab saw a murder every 8 hrs in '09: Report

Every day, 144 criminal cases are registered in Punjab. Every eight hours, a case of cruelty by in-laws is registered; every 10 hours, a murder is committed; every 17 hours, a women is raped; and every two hours, a theft is reported in the state. These facts are mentioned in a book, Crime In Punjab 2009, released by Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal here on Tuesday. The book also says 2.61 lakh complaints were received last year, an increase of 4.3 per cent over 2008. At 27,352, the highest number of complaints were from Kapurthala, followed by Ludhiana (24,973). A total of 2,631 incidents of crime against women were reported in the state last year. Of the 515 cases of rape reported, 107 victims were under the age of 15 years, 185 were teenagers, 179 were between 19 and 30 years, 43 were between 30 and 50 years and one was above 50 years. The offenders were known to victims in as many as 433 (84.7 per cent) cases. Torture cases, too, have increased by 7.8 per cent over the previous year. As many as 863 murder cases were registered in 2009 against 769 the previous year. As many as 29 per cent of the total cases registered under the Indian Penal Code were of murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, causing death by negligence, as 10,461 such crimes were reported, followed by dacoity , robbery, burglary and theft (8,339 cases). As many as 2,842 vehicles were stolen in the state last year — 397 from Ludhiana, followed by SAS Nagar (356) and Jalandhar (319). The police were successful in recovering 1,101 stolen vehicles. A total of 729 cases of crime against children were reported in 2009 as compared to 389 cases in 2008, an increase of 87.4 per cent. The overall conviction rate was 33.3 per cent, as out of 35,465 trials completed, culprits were convicted in 11,800 cases. Sukhbir said the police would have to reorient its crime prevention strategy according to the fast changing crime pattern in the society.

Crime in the state

2.61 lakh Complaints received

2,631 Cases of crime against women

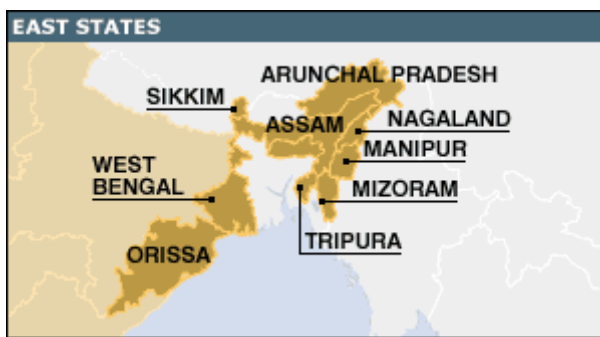
984 Cases of torture

10.9 % Increase in murder cases, compared to 2008.

(The Indian Express)

Economic Front:

The East



Politics:

Assam Opposition protests financial scam, fuel price hike

Members of the Opposition parties in Assam stormed the city streets and the State Assembly on Tuesday over the multi-crore rupee financial scam in Dima Hasao district and the fuel price hike. They broke security cordons, prompting the police to resort to baton charge and firing of tear gas shells near Dispur. The Opposition demanded the resignation of the Tarun Gogoi-led Congress coalition government for its failure to curb price hike and the siphoning off of development funds meant for the tribal people in the hill district in nexus with insurgents and corrupt government officials and contractors.

Workers injured

Several workers of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) and other Opposition parties were injured when police resorted to baton charge and firing of tear gas shells when thousands of protestors advanced towards the Dispur capital complex and tried to break security cordons. Leaders and workers of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), the Communist Party of India (CPI), the Bodoland People's Progressive Front (BPPF), the Samata Party and the Samajwadi Party also took part in the protest. The Opposition leaders led by Mr. Patowary used the rooftop of a vehicle as a dais for an impromptu public meeting to address participants of the "March to Dispur" programme on the busy Guwahati-Shillong

road. Others who addressed the rallyists included senior AGP leader and former Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, State BJP president Ranjit Dutta, AIUDF leader Aditya Langthasa and BPPF president Rabiram Narzary. (The Hindu)

CPM, Trinamool clash to control land in Bengal

Miles and miles of water as far as you can see. Some brick kilns, one or two houses, and a godown by the wayside break the monotony. A feast for the eyes, almost. This is no tourist spot, but a place even police fear to tread. Only a day ago, guns and bombs boomed here as CPM and Trinamool Congress goons fought each other, as much for political turf as the cash that this 'bheri' (fishing pond) area generates on a daily basis. Welcome to Sashan — the land of fish ponds, 50km from Kolkata and spread over seven gram panchayats. One-time paddy farmers have switched to pisciculture, channelizing water from Bidyadhari river. The ankle-deep ponds dry up in winter leaving the area looking like a muddy marshland. The law of the land means little here. It's the code of the mafia that rules supreme. This region is the biggest supplier of fish to the Kolkata market, and the 'bheris' are the workshops of multi-crore business. Wads of notes from the 'araddars' (godown owners) roll into this area every week, though you can't make it out at first glance. Most of the 'bheri' owners and henchmen look like riffraff and speak a very coarse tongue. But take a peek at their houses, you would be surprised to find every modern gadget. And if you are invited in, you'd be offered a drink straight from the refrigerator. How can crore-plus transactions take place without any surveillance? The answer is simple. 'Bheri' owners — technically run by peasant cooperatives with the backing of political leaders — raise their own militia. This is what gives the idyllic scenery an eerie edge. You feel an uneasiness creeping down your spine as you approach the 'bheris'. Groups of men, their faces masked with gamchhas, stand silently under trees, making no attempt to hide their guns. Eyes watch you as you walk past. Someone takes down the registration number of your car. A gunman picks up the mobile phone and speed-dials a number. There are about 10,000 weapons in this area, the goons boast. Rifles, revolvers, countrymade guns and pistols, swords, spears bhojalis and khukris — firepower that seven police stations can't match. Ask any gunman and the figure doesn't change. Ten thousand weapons. An hour's drive from Kolkata. The firearms are bought from the "best in the grey market" — Munger in Bihar. Why this fight-to-the-finish mood? People here don't go to police or the administration to resolve disputes. Political gangsters hold the sway because it is cheaper than paying tax. The element of violence is embedded in the local system. The 'bheri' management changes with the change in political power, so too the beneficiaries. The process is simple. Gram panchayats arrange for an informal tender of leasing out the 'bheris' on an annual basis. Till now it was CPM and its strongman Majid Master who controlled the grabbing of most of the bounty. With the winds of change in the 2008 panchayat poll, Trinamool now wants its pound of flesh. Sashan can be deadly, even worse than Singur, Nandigram or Nanoor, given the firepower and money power. Majid Master, who was beaten some months ago - something unthinkable a year back -has fled the area and is trying to make a comeback. "Earlier, the clashes were between rival factions of CPM over the booty. Now Trinamool is the rising force, trying to dismantle the old business arrangement. We have no choice but to use firearms to protect our 'bheris'," said a 'bheri' owner of Parhharibari village.

Residents of Parkharibari, Kharibari, Dhokra, Bada and Langolpota fear a backlash after Wednesday's gunbattle between CPM and Trinamool members in which six people were injured. Political rivals are marking each other, looking for an opportunity to launch a fresh attack. And police are just outsiders who come to the area on the day of violence and leave as soon as they can. With new political masters emerging in the area, goons have started dumping CPM and switching loyalties. Many villagers have also changed sides."CPM goons, led by Majid Master, terrorized us for years. Our mothers and sisters were assaulted and beaten. Now the time has come to oust them," said Kangal Patra, a fisherman of Bada village. The signals are clear."We don't want CPM to rule here any longer," said Manju Pramanik, another villager. (Times of India)

Social front:

Swine flu returns: four cases in Kolkata

Four swine flu cases have been reported in the city since Thursday and a child is among the victims. State Health Minister Suryakanta Mishra said that all those affected by swine flu have been admitted to state-run Infectious Diseases Hospital in Kolkata after their swabs tested positive for the virus. "The victims have been quarantined and kept under observation," the minister said. Asked about the steps taken by the authorities to prevent the spread of swine flu, Mishra said, "We are taking measures as per the international protocol." "All hospitals in the city and districts have been asked to adopt preventive measures and open quarantine ward for admission of swine flu patients," said officials. Kolkata Mayor Shovan Chatterjee said a nine-year-old was admitted with swine flu from Tiljala area. "We have received information that the child is doing well," he added. (The Indian Express)

Grand spectacle in Puri

About eight lakh devotees thronged the coastal town of Puri on Tuesday morning to witness the annual sojourn of three deities, Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra, on three majestic chariots from the 12th-century Sri Mandir to the Sri Gundicha Temple. Hundreds of security personnel were deployed and vehicular movements were controlled from all directions to ensure that the event passed off peacefully. From the morning, lakhs of devotees started arriving in the town. A few hundred priests performed a series of intricate rituals to prepare the deities for the yatra. The three chariots reached Sri Gundicha Temple covering 3 km on Grand Road. Orissa Governor Murlidhar Chandrakant Bhandare and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik witnessed the grand spectacle at Puri. The Rath Yatra festival was also organised in several prominent towns of the State during the day. A woman died in a stampede and seven other devotees were injured during the Rath Yatra in Puri. (The Hindu)

Economic Front:

The South



Politics:

BJP fears Reddy duo may split party, bring down govt

As the BJP struggles to deal with the political crisis in Karnataka where a determined Opposition did not let the assembly function for more than 30 minutes, it was concerned about the vice-like grip that the Reddy brothers Janardhan and Karunakar have established over the party. The Reddy brothers, whose controversial mining activities have given the Opposition a powerful handle to beat the BJP government with, have secured the allegiance of 30-40 MLAs who are determined to stick with them till the bitter end, and would not shirk from toppling the government if it came to that. In fact, BJP's resistance to the Opposition's agitation against "illegal mining" is primarily driven by the fear of the revenge that the mining tycoons from Bellary would exact from the party if it tried to ditch them. For the Reddy duo, who came into prominence just over a decade ago, it is a remarkable achievement. Their clout has seen BJP's politics getting fused with the commercial interests of the mining lobby, and has turned their main opponent in the BJP, chief minister B S Yeddyurappa, into a supporter, although a grudging one. Karnataka governor H R Bhardwaj, who is involved in a political slugfest with the BJP, seized upon Yeddyurappa's dilemma to twist the knife. "The chief minister had his own problems from these people (Reddy brothers). You check with him. They abducted his MLAs and then dictated terms. I was here on that very day also. They brought the chief minister to his knees," the governor told Times Now with obvious relish. Bhardwaj was combative in response to BJP's charge that he was acting like a political agent of Congress. He said he had pushed for action against corruption only because his office enjoined him to do so and not because he was engaged in organisational work. The governor refrained from repeating the "jungle raj" description he had used earlier for the situation in Karnataka, but insisted that action against some ministers was called for. (Times of India)

Social front:

SC asks Tamil Nadu, K'taka to revisit quota laws

The Supreme Court today asked the governments of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to revisit

the laws providing quota in excess of 50 per cent to reserved categories in government jobs and educational institutions. The SC, however, allowed the continuation of its interim orders for one more year concerning the two states by which it had made operational the 69 per cent quota in Tamil Nadu and restricting Karnataka from exceeding the 50 per cent ceiling as laid down in the Mandal Commission case. A Bench comprising Chief Justice Mr SH Kapadia and Mr Justice KS Radhakrishnan and Mr Justice Swatanter Kumar pronounced separate orders by disposing of two batch of petitions and made it clear that it was not expressing any opinion on the validity of the laws. The first batch of petitions had challenged the Tamil Nadu Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of seats in Educational institutions and of appointment or posts in the services under the state) Act, 1993, which provided 69 per cent reservations. The second batch of petitions had challenged the Karnataka Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions and Appointments or Posts in the Service under the State) Act, 1994, which provided 73 per cent reservations. While dealing with the petitions on Tamil Nadu quota law, the Bench said government will place all quantifiable data available with it before the State Backward Class Commission which will revisit the issue of reservation. Meanwhile, the Bench said the interim orders passed by it protecting 69 per cent quota in jobs and appointments will continue for a year. The court noted that certain parameters laid down by the SC in Mandal Commission judgement will have to be taken into account by the Tamil Nadu Backward Class Commission if the government wanted to exceed the 50 per cent ceiling. In the case of Karnataka, which through an interim order, was restrained from exceeding the 50 per cent quota, the state was also asked to re-examine its law based on the fresh data if it wanted to provide reservations beyond the ceiling. While disposing of the petitions, the Bench noted that since the matter was brought before the apex court, there had been two amendments in the Constitution pertaining to Articles 15 and 16 providing reservations for OBCs in higher educational institutions and quota for backward classes in promotion respectively. (The Statesman)

Economic Front:

2009-10 bumper year for illegal mining: Yeddyurappa

According to data provided by Chief Minister B S Yeddyurappa in the Karnataka Assembly, the 2009-10 financial year has been a bumper one for illegal exports of iron ore from Karnataka. Yeddyurappa presented the data in the course of a debate on illegal mining primarily in the Bellary region. While illegal exports have been continuing since 2003-04 when the iron ore boom began following increased demand from China, the year 2009-10 saw a substantial increase in the operations of the mining mafia, according to Yeddyurappa's statement. Last year the total amount of ore illegally exported out of Karnataka was 71,27,937 metric tons, the Chief Minister has stated. The figure puts to shade the previous high of 57,61,048 metric tons of illegal exports recorded in the year 2007-08. According to Yeddyurappa's statement, 3.04 crore tons of iron ore has been shipped out of Karnataka without valid permits or licenses in the last seven years. The value of the illegally exported ore over the last seven years is being put in the range of Rs 50,000 crore. The ore has been shipped out of the Bellikeri, Karwar, Mangalore, Chennai,

Margao, Krishnapatnam, Kakinada and Vishakhapatnam ports since 2003-04 according to the statement. Yeddyurappa argued that successive governments allowed the mining scenario to deteriorate by granting mining leases to their own leaders or relatives. Yeddyurappa said his two year old government had initiated measure to control illegal mining following a December 2009 Lokayukta report on the prevalent illegal practices. Several opposition leaders have however questioned the BJP government's efforts if over 105 lakh metric tons of iron ore was exported illegally during the BJP's tenure despite measures initiated to control illegal mining. The Opposition has blamed the the politicians from the Bellary district in the BJP government with vested interests in the mining business as being responsible for the spurt in illegal exports. The CM also reported improved tax collection from the mining business in recent times. He said collection of transport taxes on mining trucks had jumped from Rs 70 crore to Rs 320 crore in the past year while forest development taxes was at Rs 306 crore when compared to the previous year's figure of Rs 196 crore. (The Indian express)

West India



Politics:

Maha-Karnataka border row picks steam

The Central government's stance in the Supreme Court on the Maharashtra-Karnataka border dispute has pushed the vexed issue on the centre stage of Maharashtra politics, ahead of the monsoon session of state legislature. The development has led to a flurry of protests in borders areas of the state. The Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti, an all-party organisation fighting for merger of Marathi-speaking areas in Karnataka with Maharashtra, is holding demonstrations in Kolhapur on Monday. Sena chief Bal Thackeray has said the Centre meted out injustice to Maharashtrians. In a bid to calm rising tempers over the border issue, Maharashtra CM Ashok Chavan plans to lead an all-party delegation to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to convey the strong feelings of Maharashtrians on the issue. A letter will be written to the Prime Minister and Union Home Minister P Chidambaram apprising them of the people's sentiments over the border issue after the Centre's affidavit was filed. The letter will reflect the state's disappointment and displeasure over the affidavit. The Centre, in reply to Maharashtra's claim over Karnataka's Marathi-speaking districts like Gulbarga and Belgaum, told the Supreme Court last week that just because many people in the border districts talk

Marathi, it is not ground enough for the areas to be appended to Maharashtra. Tempers are high in Kolhapur region over the Centre's stance, senior journalist Raja Mane said. "There is anger over the way the border dispute has been handled," he said. "There is a widespread perception that at the time of re-organisation of states, leaders from Maharashtra did not do as much for their own brethren as their counterparts in other states did," Mane, editor (south Maharashtra and Konkan) of leading Marathi daily Lokmat, said. Samiti leader N D Patil said there is nothing new in the 'anti-Maharashtra policy' of Central government. "When Shivraj Patil was the Union Home minister, it was agreed that the Centre would remain neutral on the border row," he said. "Why does the Centre need over two and a half years to submit a 'four-line affidavit'", Patil asked. The Centre is behaving in an adamant manner, he added. Deputy Chief Minister Chhagan Bhujbal said Chief Minister and Congress leaders should take a firm stand and pressurise Central Government to remain neutral on the border row. "Hundreds have sacrificed their lives in the fight for merger of Marathi-speaking areas with Maharashtra but justice has not been done," he said. Maharashtra BJP spokesperson Madhav Bhandari described the Centre's stance in Supreme Court as "Congress-NCP's gift to people of Maharashtra in the golden jubilee year of the state." "The Congress-led governments at the Centre have always been anti-Maharashtra," Bhandari said. The Centre's reply was to Maharashtra's 2004 affidavit and its application in 2009 claiming jurisdiction over 814 villages in Belgaum, Karwar, Bidar and Gulbarga districts in Karnataka that it said had majority Marathi-speaking people. "The transfer of certain areas to then Mysore (now Karnataka) was neither arbitrary nor wrong as claimed by Maharashtra. The language of the people has been one of the criteria, but not the sole criterion for inclusion of any area in a state," it said. The state of erstwhile Mysore was joined with parts of Bombay, Hyderabad, Madras and Coorg to form Karnataka five decades ago under the States Reorganisation Act, 1956. During this process, certain Marathi-speaking areas were also merged into it, which later became a cause of dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka. Maharashtra claimed its jurisdiction over 814 villages of the border districts. Maharashtra felt the merger "was done by the Union Government despite strong protests and agitations by the people of the Marathi-speaking regions, which were earlier with states of Bombay and Hyderabad." The state again filed an application in February 2009, blaming the Centre for the "unconstitutional steps", which led to the merger of the areas into Karnataka. (The Indian Express)

Eye on civic polls, BJP kickstarts Chintan meet in Junagadh

State Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) kickstarted its three-day Chintan Baithak near Talala in Junagadh district on Saturday to discuss its strategy for the upcoming local body elections and other issues. State president R C Faldu presided over the meeting, where national vice-president Parshottam Rupala and joint general secretary (organisation) V Satish were also present. State general secretary Vijay Rupani said the party strategy involving its future programmes was discussed. He said the participants would get guidance from senior leaders about how to reach out to the masses with development programmes taken up by the state government and link them with private public partnership initiatives. Rupani said leaders also discussed their plans to hold protest against the price rise and food inflation. Rupani, who is also Rajya Sabha MP, said the session is being organised to highlight various welfare schemes launched by the Narendra

Modi government in the state and to make sure that maximum people can draw benefit from the schemes. (The Indian Express)

Make disputed areas Union Territory: Chavan

Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan on Tuesday turned the heat on the Union government and sought more sympathy for the State in its long-standing border dispute with Karnataka. Replying to discussions in the Legislature, he demanded that the disputed areas in Karnataka be made Union Territory until the Supreme Court decided on the case filed by the State. Mr. Chavan slammed the government of India's recent affidavit. He said language was an important criterion for being included in a particular State. The Legislature witnessed protests on the plight of Marathi-speaking people in Karnataka and a resolution was passed in the Assembly, reflecting the State's unhappiness with the Centre's affidavit and the law and order situation in the border areas. Expressing solidarity with the affected people, the resolution asked the Centre to reconsider its affidavit. On Wednesday, the Chief Minister will lead an all-party delegation, including MPs and legislators, to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to apprise him of the State's sentiments. The demand for making the disputed areas Union Territory will be placed before him. In the Assembly, Mr. Chavan urged the Centre to maintain status quo and ensure that human rights were not trampled upon in the disputed areas. He criticised Karnataka for not maintaining law and order and going in for a change in the name of Belgaum and holding Assembly sessions there to inflame passions. Meanwhile, the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation has stopped its services to Karnataka for two days as four of its buses suffered damage in violence.(The Hindu)

Social front:

Economic Front: