The Hindu, 1 February 2005

**Saldanha backs Parrikar, setback to Congress move** (Anil Sastry)

PANAJI, JAN. 31. Political developments in Goa took a curious turn today with the Tourism Minister and United Goans Democratic Party (UGDP) MLA, Matanhy Saldanha, backing the Manohar Parrikar Government on his arrival from Spain, giving a jolt to the Congress and its allies move to form a government. The Governor, S.C. Jamir, had been maintaining a steady silence though the Congress had been exerting pressure to dismiss the Parrikar regime and invite the Congress-led coalition to form a government. Mr. Parrikar convened an emergency Cabinet meeting in the morning and it was resolved to go for a trial of strength on the floor of the Assembly on February 3.

The Hindu, 1 February 2005

**Sonia promises to improve law and order situation in Bihar** (K. Balchand)

ARRAH, JAN. 31. The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, today launched her party’s campaign in Bihar by promising the people that the next government would be run on the basis of an agreed agenda and would address the pressing issues of the State. Campaigning closes tomorrow for the first phase of polling. The Bharatiya Janata Party chief, L.K. Advani, and the National Democratic Alliance convener, George Fernandes, also campaigned in the State today. Ms. Gandhi did not speak in favour or against the Rashtriya Janata Dal chief and Railway Minister, Lalu Prasad, and the Lok Janshakti Party chief and Union Steel Minister, Ram Vilas Paswan. She only sought votes for her candidates.

The Hindu, 1 February 2005

**Nanavati panel seeks more time** (UNI)

NEW DELHI, JAN. 31. The Nanavati Commission investigating the 1984 anti-Sikh riots has requested the Centre to extend today’s deadline for submission of its report till the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, returns to the capital.

The Hindu, 1 February 2005

**Bihar situation not conducive for free, fair poll: BJP**

NEW DELHI, JAN. 31. The Bharatiya Janata Party has started complaining about the “situation in Bihar”, which the former party president, Venkaiah Naidu, today described as “not conducive for a free and fair poll.” He added that “if free and fair elections were held the ruling Rashtriya Janata Dal was sure to be voted out.” BJP leaders claimed that day by day the position of the Opposition alliance between the BJP and the Janata Dal (United) was gaining ground even as the “cracking up” of the United Progressive Alliance was there for all to see. Basically, the BJP is hoping that the RJD’s Muslim support base would be dented; whatever support the party may have enjoyed among Dalits and the upper castes would simply vanish; and that at some point the Yadavs may also begin deserting the RJD although there were as yet no signs of that happening.

The Hindu, 1 February 2005

**Fact-finding panel blames the police for Bollepally encounter**

WARANGAL: The fact-finding committee, comprising rights activists, put the blame for the Bollepally encounter squarely on the shoulders of the police, accusing them of slaying the Naxalites in cold-blood. The panel, which investigated the circumstances that led to the alleged encounter, issued a statement to this effect here on Monday. The committee members, Dr Burra Ramulu, K Punnamchander, Ambati Srinivas, VV Narayana, Suresh and others said the police acted on reliable information that the Prathighatana group Naxalites had been camping 40 km away from Bollepally mandal headquarters.

“They surrounded the area and fired at the Naxalites from all directions without giving the Naxals a chance to surrender,” they alleged.

New Indian Express, 1 February 2005

**SC judge was "approached" on behalf of Ketan Parekh**

MUMBAI: THE Ketan Parekh bail application case took a curious turn last week when the main accused in the stock scam of 2000 moved the Supreme Court last Friday to have a non-bailable warrant issued against him in the Madhavpura Mercantile Cooperative Bank (MMCB) case quashed. The application came up in the apex court on Friday, January 28, before a bench that included Justice S.N. Variava. Sources say that the judge stunned the courtroom by saying that he would not hear the case because somebody had approached him on behalf of the scam-accused Ketan Parekh. It was Justice Variava who had headed the Special Court set up under an Act of Parliament to try litigation related to the securities scam of 1992 also.

The Lanka Academic, 1 February 2005

**Hundreds protest in eastern Sri Lanka accusing government of failing to deliver tsunami aid**

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) - In a rare show of solidarity, ethnic Sinhalese and Tamils left homeless after last month's tsunami came together Monday in a protest to accuse the government of failing to deliver aid, residents and officials said. More than 300 people from a refugee camp in eastern Trincomalee, 230 kilometers (140 miles) northeast of Colombo, took part in the
demonstration, claiming they were not being given food and had not received help to rebuild their lives, said Upali Hewage, police chief of the area. The protesters left the area only after a local government administrator promised to address their grievances, Hewage said. The Dec. 26 tsunami dealt equal devastation to Sri Lanka's 14 million Sinhalese majority and 3.2 million Tamil minority.

Kantipur Online, 1 February 2005

**Bhutan is dilly-dallying with refugee repatriation: Experts**

KATHMANDU, Jan 31 - Foreign experts say that Bhutanese government is deliberately dilly-dallying with the process of repatriation of the Bhutanese refugees languishing in various camps of eastern Nepal. Speaking during a program in the capital Monday various speakers strongly objected to the recent remarks of Bhutanese King Jigme Singye Wanchuck about the Bhutanese refugees. On Saturday King Wanchuck told reporters in the Indian capital New Delhi said that most of the Bhutanese refugees sheltered in Nepal were not Bhutanese. Former Foreign Minister Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat said, "Bhutan is not willing to resolve the refugee issue due to its ill intentions."

The Hindu, 2 February 2005

**Nanavati report on February 3**

NEW DELHI, FEB.1. Justice S.T. Nanavati, who probed the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, will submit his report to the Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, on February 3, official sources said tonight.

The Hindu, 2 February 2005

**Bail extended for Lalu**

PATNA, FEB.1. The Patna High Court today extended by another three months the provisional bail of the RJD supremo and Railway Minister, Lalu Prasad, in a disproportionate assets case. Justice S.K. Singh fixed April 29 as the next date for hearing. ? PTI

The Hindu, 2 February 2005

**Supreme Court begins hearing on admission norms**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 1. A seven-member Bench of the Supreme Court began hearing from today on all issues relating to fixation of quotas by the State Governments for admission to private professional institutions, rights of minorities and holding of a national level common entrance test for admission to such institutions. The Bench made it clear that it would consider the confusion that arose from the judgment of the five-member Bench but would not go beyond the T.M.A. Pai judgment. The present endeavour was to put in place a proper mechanism of admission and to redefine the rights of minorities.

The Hindu, 2 February 2005

**EC files cases**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 1. The Election Commission has registered cases against Miljaanib Anjuman and Guddu Arts Press, Patna, in connection with the appearance of posters highlighting the Godhra riots in the Muslim-dominated Bhagalpur and Nathnagar constituencies in Bihar witnessing the first phase of elections on February 3. A first information report has been registered under the provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Representation of the People Act. The Superintendent of Police, Bhagalpur, has been directed to investigate and submit his report immediately, sources in the Commission have said.

Daily Excelsior, 2 February 2005

**Need to reach out to people in J&K: Army Chief**

NEW DELHI, Feb 1: Army has been directed to carry out anti-militancy operations with a more "humane" touch, new Chief of Army Staff General J J Singh today said emphasising that there was a need to "reach out to the people in Jammu and Kashmir and North East to spur the movement towards normalcy." "Counter-terrorism operations can be optimally effective while being polite," was the message of new Army Chief to his troops after taking over as the 22nd Chief of the Army Staff after a ceremonial Guard of Honour. "Army units have been directed to use minimum force while carrying out anti-militancy operations to avoid innocents being hit and to avert collateral damage," he said.

The Assam Tribune, 2 February 2005

**Centre adopting multi-pronged strategy to develop North-east**

AGARTALA, Feb 1 ? The Centre feels the law and order situation in the North-east has improved a lot despite sporadic violence and is adopting a multi-pronged strategy to develop the region, highly-placed government sources said here today. ? The law and order situation has improved a lot in the north-east. Two-three sporadic incidents do not indicate the overall situation,? the sources said. The Government has been initiating peace negotiations with several insurgent groups in the region apart from the NSCN-IM, they said, refusing to name other outfits with whom the Centre was involved in dialogue.

The Hindu, 3 February 2005

**Goa Government dismissed**

(Panaji) FEB. 2. The Goa Governor, S.C. Jamir, this evening dismissed the 32-month-old Manohar Parrikar-led Bharatiya Janata Party coalition government, even as the Government won a vote of confidence, albeit controversial, on the floor of the House. The session was adjourned abruptly by the Speaker, Vishwas Satarkar, at 5.40 p.m. after the vote. Mr. Parrikar said he received the order dismissing him at 6.10 p.m. The House had earlier passed the confidence motion with 18 votes in favour
and six against. Terming the dismissal a gross violation of the Constitution, Mr. Parrikar said he was examining the various legal options. Mr. Parrikar said the action was pre-meditated as none of the Congress members was prepared to attend the session and went to the Governor in the afternoon.

The Hindu, 3 February 2005

National Integration Council reconstituted
NEW DELHI, FEB. 2. The UPA Government today announced reconstitution of the National Integration Council (NIC) under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. The 103-member NIC has been constituted after a gap of 12 years having held its last meeting in 1992. Besides Union Ministers, Chief Ministers and political leaders, the NIC will have representation from various categories such as national commissions, media persons, business, eminent public figures and women. The NIC will function as a forum for effective initiative and interaction on issues of national concern, review issues relating to national integration and make recommendations, according to an official release here.

The Hindu, 3 February 2005

Bank staff plan strike against mega mergers, FDI
NEW DELHI, FEB. 2. The All-India Bank Employees' Association (AIBEA) today called for a nationwide strike by bank employees in the third week of March to protest against the proposed move to merge public sector banks, open them to private capital and allow foreign banks take over Indian private banks. The association, backed by the Communist Party of India, has also decided to march to Parliament on March 11 and threatened to launch a sustained agitation should the Government proceed with its professed intent.

The Hindu, 3 February 2005

CBI cracks down on 'corrupt' public servants
NEW DELHI, FEB. 2. In a nationwide crackdown on 'corrupt' public servants, the Central Bureau of Investigation today raided 249 places, registered 68 cases, recovered cash to the tune of Rs. 1.11 crores and detected movable and immovable assets worth about Rs. 10 crores. Addressing a press conference here, the CBI Director, Uma Shankar Mishra, said that 126 public servants and 68 private individuals had been brought into the CBI net. It had registered cases against 25 public servants for amassing assets beyond their known sources of their legitimate income.

The Hindu, 3 February 2005

LJP, BJP behind abductions, alleges Lalu
PATNA, FEB. 2. The Rashtriya Janata Dal chief and Railway Minister, Lalu Prasad, today accused the leaders of the Lok Janshakti Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party of engineering the kidnapping of schoolchildren to damage his image and make capital of it in the Assembly elections, the first phase of which will be held tomorrow. Two of the abducted children, Kislay Kaushik and Deepak Kumar, were rescued today. Mr. Prasad said that gangster Chunnu Thakur, who is alleged to have kidnapped Kislay, had applied for the LJP ticket for his wife and charged that the LJP had become a haven for criminals.

The Hindu, 4 February 2005

Violence marks elections in Bihar, Jharkhand (J. Venkatesan)
NEW DELHI, FEB. 3. Thirteen persons were killed in incidents of sporadic violence in the first phase of Assembly elections in Bihar, Haryana and Jharkhand today. While six persons, including two women, were killed in Bihar, six policemen were killed in a landmine blast in Jharkhand. The Deputy Election Commissioner, A.N. Jha, told reporters here that polling was held for all the 90 Assembly seats in Haryana, 64 of the 243 seats in Bihar and 24 of the 81 seats in Jharkhand. While Haryana recorded a turnout of 65 per cent, it was between 52 and 55 per cent in Bihar and around 45 per cent in Jharkhand. Two Home Guards and a voter were killed in an attack by naxalites in Shankarpur village under the Banke Bazar police station of Imamganj constituency in Gaya district. Police arrested about 100 people during the day on various counts and even seized arms from them.

The Hindu, 4 February 2005

Trust vote was a sham, says Jamir
PANAJI, FEB. 3. The Goa Governor, S.C. Jamir, today termed the action of the Speaker, Vishwas Satarkar, in conducting Wednesday's vote of confidence in the Assembly "a complete sham" and "a mockery of parliamentary democracy." Mr. Jamir, in a written communication signed by his Officer on Special Duty, Sebastian Zumvu, said that such actions were blatant violations of all accepted democratic norms and direct assaults on the sanctity of the office of Speaker. Any person who occupies the Speaker's chair should remain neutral and act in an impartial manner and, for all practical purposes, he should cease to be a member of any political party. It is the Speaker's responsibility to protect the sanctity of the chair he occupies.

New Indian Express, 4 February 2005

Left to fire warning 'note' across UPA's bow
NEW DELHI: With Finance Minister P. Chidambaram "not paying heed" to the Left's proposals, Left leaders will now send a note to UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, listing all their grievances, especially their complaint regarding deviation from the course charted in the Common Minimum Programme. It appears that the UPA Government's carrot-and-stick policy of increasing FDI upper limits to 74 per cent in telecom in the afternoon, and raising EPF by a significant one per cent in the evening, has not gone down well with the Left. The Left leaders emphatically said that Wednesday's two announcements should not be linked at all, and there was no trade-off or deal as had been suggested by some quarters.
Goa: BJP plans legal action
NEW DELHI, FEB. 4. The Bharatiya Janata Party has decided to fight the Goa case both legally and politically for it believes that the Governor's action in dismissing the Manohar Parrikar Government was "illegal and unconstitutional." At a meeting this morning, chaired by the BJP president, L.K. Advani, it was decided that while the dismissed Chief Minister, Manohar Parrikar, would explore the legal avenues through a petition in the Bombay High Court, the party cadre would be galvanised to hold demonstrations throughout the country on February 8, to be observed as "Save Democracy, Sack Governor Jamir" day.

Many facing criminal charges in fray
K. Balchand
PATNA, FEB. 4. A dozen persons facing criminal charges have joined the electoral fray in Bihar. And, where they are not contesting themselves, they have fielded their wives, mostly on the symbols of parties such as the Rashtriya Janata Dal, the Lok Janshakti Party and the Janata Dal (United). The Election Commission had issued a directive that all non-bailable arrest warrants be executed before the commencement of the election process. There are more than 20,000 non-bailable arrest warrants pending execution in the State. The Patna High Court had directed that the police arrest all candidates evading the law.

'Detention' triggers protest in Patna
PATNA, FEB. 4. Muslims today blocked traffic at the Bailey Road in protest against the "detention" of a muezzin, Md. Allimuddin, for disturbing the court proceedings in violation of an undertaking. The Kotwali police brought him to the station following a directive from the Patna High Court. Taking exception to the use of loudspeaker at a mosque adjacent to the court during Friday prayers, Justice R.S. Garg issued notices to the District Magistrate, Senior Police Superintendent and SP (Traffic) in this regard.

Maintenance to Muslim woman ordered
ALLAHABAD, FEB. 4. The Allahabad High Court has directed a Muslim to pay Rs. 1,000 as maintenance to his estranged wife, saying Muslim women cannot be discriminated against. Justice S.N. Srivastava said the Constitution mandated that there could not be any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed or religion. The Hindu law provided for maintenance in such cases and Muslim women were also, therefore, entitled to it under the Constitution, the judge said, directing the man, Islam, to pay Rs. 1,000 a month as maintenance to his estranged wife, Fatima.

Legal position on convicts contesting elections
NEW DELHI, FEB. 4. If a member of Parliament or Legislative Assembly is convicted by a court during his tenure, he or she cannot contest the next elections on the expiry of the term, taking advantage of the "exception" clause in the election law, the Supreme Court has held. Under Section 8 (4) of the Representation of the People Act, sitting MLAs and MPs, if convicted and sentenced to more than two years imprisonment during their tenure, can continue if their appeal against the order of conviction is pending with a higher court and if the sentence has been stayed. The Supreme Court on January 12 held that the object of the saving clause was to protect the strength of the House and that of the party concerned.

Petition against curtailing CBI's powers referred to five-judge Bench
J. Venkatesan
NEW DELHI, FEB. 4. The Supreme Court today referred to a five-Judge Constitution Bench a petition seeking to quash the "single directive" in the Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003. Under the Act, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was required to take prior approval of the Central Government for embarking on any enquiry or investigation against senior bureaucrats. A three-Judge Bench comprising Justice Y.K. Sabharwal, Justice D.M. Dharmadhikari and Justice Tarun Chatterji referred the matter to a larger Bench in view of the conflicting decisions on the applicability of Article 14 (equality before law) by three-judge benches earlier and since several important constitutional issues were involved in it.

Bardhan: bad days ahead if our reservations are ignored
NALGONDA (ANDHRA PRADESH), FEB. 6. The United Progressive Alliance Government will not last for five years if it does not go by the Common Minimum Programme, the national secretary of the Communist Party of India, A. B. Bardhan, has said. Criticising the Central Government's economic policies, he told the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, to take note of the Left parties' reservations and advise the Government "to mend its ways." "If you ignore our reservations, bad days are ahead for the Government. He also said that the Left was supporting the Government "out of political necessity."

Security for next phase to be reviewed
NEW DELHI, FEB. 6. The Election Commission "will have a re-look at the security arrangements for the second and third phases of polling on February 15 and 23 as it has learnt a few lessons from the February 3 voting," sources said today. Seventeen persons were killed and several others injured in poll-related violence during the first phase. Additional security personnel will be posted wherever necessary following the review, the sources said and added that videography would be
undertaken in the sensitive and hypersensitive areas. Poll observers had been asked to remain vigil and watch the movements of anti-social elements in these constituencies.

The Hindu, 7 February 2005

**Mulayam sees conspiracy**

DHANBAD (JHARKHAND), FEB. 6. The Samajwadi Party chief and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, today alleged that a conspiracy had been hatched to destabilise his Government. The party was being defamed and MPs and MLAs were being implicated in false cases, Mr. Yadav said, adding that these were part of the conspiracy. Mr. Yadav, who came here to address an election meeting, said his party MP, Atiq Ahmed, was politically implicated as his brother, Mohammad Ashraf, was arrested in connection with the killing of the Bahujan Samaj Party MLA, Raju Pal. Mr. Yadav earlier said personal enmity was behind the killing of Pal and there was no politics.

The Hindu, 7 February 2005

**Forest lands can be used for development projects** (Aarti Dhar)

NEW DELHI, FEB. 6. The Environment and Forests Ministry has allowed diversion of forest land to Government departments for developmental projects and providing public utility facilities. The legal status of the forest land will remain unchanged and it will have to be less than one hectare in area. The clearance of such developmental projects will, however, be subject to the condition that the same is need-based, a Ministry notification has said. This general approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, is being granted initially for two years ending December 31, 2006, and will be subject to review subsequently.

The Hindu, 7 February 2005

**BSP plans aggressive stir over temple issue**

UNA, FEB. 6. The Bahujan Samajwadi Party will launch an "aggressive campaign" in Himachal Pradesh against the alleged atrocities committed on the Dalits at Santoshgarh during last month's demolition of Guru Ravi Das Temple here. Terming the alleged police excesses on the protesting Dalits as "government-sponsored terrorism", he said the BSP would fight for upholding the sentiments of the Dalits towards Guru Ravi Das and appealed to the Government to construct a new temple at the same place from where the old one was demolished, if it wanted peace in the State. Mr Manehra said a massive organisational overhaul was underway in the country and that the BSP was the party of not only the Dalits, but even of the people from other sections of the society.

The Hindu, 8 February 2005

**It was murder of democracy: Jamir**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 7. The Goa Governor, S.C. Jamir, today charged the Assembly Speaker, Vishwas Satarkar, with committing "open murder of democracy." He was referring to Mr. Satarkar's role in the Manohar Parrikar Government winning the vote of confidence in the House on February 2. "I cannot see democracy being murdered on the floor of the House by using the powers of the Speaker. Therefore, in order to safeguard the Constitution ..., I had to take the decision [the dismissal of the Government]," he told NDTV in an interview. "My conscience is clear. I have done what I believe was the right thing to do. Why should I resign or be dismissed?"

The Hindu, 9 February 2005

**Efforts on to ensure subsidies reach poor: Chidambaram**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 8. The country's rural poor can look forward to deriving greater benefits from the subsidies intended for them from the new fiscal as the UPA Government is striving to devise ways to target them better by making such sops transparent, according to the Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram. Mr. Chidambaram said the best way to ensure that the benefits of well-designed subsidies reached the intended beneficiaries was to pay out the subsidy at the retail point. Addressing the parliamentary consultative committee attached to his Ministry, he made it clear that there was no question of cutting down the subsidies intended for the poor.

The Hindu, 9 February 2005

**Govindacharya blames BJP leaders for masjid demolition**

VARANASI, FEB. 8. K.N. Govindacharya, Bharatiya Janata Party ideologue, today accused the party leadership of being responsible for the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya and said the saffron leaders on that day "failed" to read the mind of the kar sevaks assembled there. "The BJL leaders had failed to read the mind of the over one lakh kar sevaks who were emotionally charged with the intention to demolish the structure on the fateful day of December 6, 1992," Mr. Govindacharya told reporters here without naming the leaders. "The BJP leaders also failed to control the situation near the disputed site at Ayodhya by making an appeal to the mob to disperse from there and not demolish the structure," he said.

The Hindu, 10 February 2005

**Nanavati Commission report on 1984 anti-Sikh riots submitted**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 9. Justice G.T. Nanavati, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, who headed the Commission that probed the 1984 anti-Sikh riots that broke out in the wake of the assassination of the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, today submitted its report to the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil. The Commission was to submit its report to the Home Minister on January 31 when its term had expired but it could not as Mr. Patil was visiting the North-Eastern States. Justice Nanavati submitted the two-volume report, running into about 200-pages and several annexures, in sealed covers to Mr. Patil.
Court asks CBI why it closed case against Mayawati
NEW DELHI, FEB. 14. The Supreme Court today directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to file the evidence on the basis of which it had decided to close the criminal case against the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mayawati, in the Rs. 175-crore Taj Heritage Corridor project scam. When a three-Judge Bench, comprising Justice Ruma Pal, Justice S.B. Sinha and Justice S.H. Kapadia, asked the Solicitor-General, G.E. Vahanvati, how the CBI could order the closure of the case without the leave of the court, he submitted that the closure report had not yet been filed before the trial court.

Court orders transfer of Pappu Yadav to Tihar jail
NEW DELHI, FEB. 14. The Supreme Court today ordered that the Rashtriya Janata Dal member of Parliament, Pappu Yadav, who is an accused in the Ajit Sarkar murder case, be shifted from Beur prison in Patna to Tihar jail in Delhi to "prevent him from tampering with evidence and threatening the witnesses." A Bench of Justice N. Santosh Hegde and Justice S.B. Sinha, passed the order on petitions filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation and Kalyan Chandra Sarkar, brother of Ajit Sarkar, expressing apprehension about the activities of Pappu Yadav inside and outside the jail and seeking a direction for his transfer to a jail outside Bihar.

Parrikar moves Supreme Court
NEW DELHI, FEB. 14. The former Goa Chief Minister, Manohar Parikkar, today moved the Supreme Court challenging the dismissal of the Bharatiya Janata Party Government by the Governor, S.C. Jamir, on February 2 and the installation of a Congress-led Government. In his petition, Mr. Parikkar challenged the legality of the Governor's decision describing it as a partisan action in the wake of the BJP Government winning the trust vote on the floor of the House. Giving the sequence of events witnessed in the Assembly on February 2, he questioned the basis on which the Governor took the decision to dismiss his Government when the proceedings had not reached the Raj Bhavan.

UP legislators upset over death of colleagues
LUCKNOW, FEB. 14. Members of the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly today mooted a "united effort" to fight off attacks on people's representatives. The members were today paying obituary to the three sitting members who had died in the span of last one month. One of them was BSP MLA from Allahabad (West) Raju Pal who was shot dead along with two of his aides on January 25. BSP Legislature Party leader Swami Prasad Maurya urged Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav to order a CBI probe into the murder of Raju Pal. The Chief Minister assured that the guilty involved in the crime would not be spared. Making obituary references, Mr Yadav said the death of three sitting MLAs, one each of the Samajwadi Party, BSP and BJP, had created a vacuum in the political field.

Court ruling on property
NEW DELHI, FEB. 15. Desertion of a woman by her husband would not deprive her of the legal right to defend his ownership or tenancy rights over a property, the Supreme Court has ruled.

Left against amendment to banking Act
NEW DELHI, FEB. 15. The Left parties today conveyed to the Government that they did not favour any amendment to the Banking Regulation Act, enabling a hike in the foreign direct investment (FDI) cap. The Left parties said that removal of the cap on voting rights would require an amendment to Section 12 (2) of the Act. In a nine-page note, they detailed the reasons as to why they were against moves to further deregulate the banking sector. While recounting the developments since bank deregulation began, the parties said that a tendency was observed among some promoters or boards of banks to divert a substantial share of deposits into speculative activities or into investments that were risky but promised quick returns.

Geelani seeks CBI probe
NEW DELHI, FEB. 15. The Delhi Police today informed the Supreme Court that a status report would be filed next week on the investigation into the assault on S.A.R. Geelani, Delhi University lecturer, acquitted by the Delhi High Court in the Parliament attack case. On February 9, a Bench of Justice P. Venkatarama Reddi and Justice P.P. Naolekar had asked the
police to file a report in one week. Today, during the hearing of the special leave petitions in the Parliament attack case, counsel Kamini Jaiswal told the Bench that Mr. Geelani had filed an application for a CBI probe into the attack. Senior counsel for the police, Gopal Subramanium, said Mr. Geelani's statement was recorded only yesterday and that the police would take a week to submit the report.

The Hindu, 17 Feb. 05

**Court notice to Centre, CBI**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 16. The Delhi High Court today issued notices to the Union Government, Justice (Retd.) M.C. Jain, Chairman of the Jain Commission of Inquiry, and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on a petition by self-styled godman Chandraswami, seeking expunging of the entire contents of serial No.3 in the Action Taken Report (ATR) on the final report of the Commission of Inquiry which probed the facts and circumstances leading to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. Justice R.C. Jain directed the respondents to file their replies by March 21.

The Hindu, 17 Feb. 05

**New commission to be set up to look into Centre-State ties: Patil**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 16. The Centre has decided to set up one more commission to take a new look at the Centre-State relations, the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, said today. Clarifying that the purpose of the commission would not be to enter into any conflict with the recommendations of the earlier Sarkaria Commission, Mr. Patil said the country could not remain stagnant in the face of new developments in science and technology, greater autonomy, participation of non-government organisations and new concepts of administration.

The Hindu, 17 February 2005

**Andaman tribals want mainlanders to leave** (Aarti Dhar)

CAMPBELL BAY (NICOBAR ISLANDS), FEB. 16. Apart from the destruction caused by the tsunami, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are witnessing another problem - a divide between the local tribal population and the mainland settlers. The tribals want the mainlanders to leave. The tribal heads have given a written petition to the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. The issue also came up during the three-day trip of the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, to the archipelago over the weekend. Mr. Patil, however, dismissed it as temporary fear of exploitation by the non-tribals.

The Hindu, 18 February 2005

**EC a 'tool of Congress': Chautala**

CHANDIGARH, FEB. 17. Launching a scathing attack on the Election Commission, the Haryana Chief Minister, Om Prakash Chautala, today said it had become a "tool of the Congress made of retired bureaucrats rewarded for their loyalty to the party." He said Haryana had been targeted by the Commission, and that its observers, none of whom had "dared" to visit Bihar and Jharkhand, visited the State. He claimed that the Commission had ordered a repoll in six polling booths of the State without any recommendation by the observers.

The Hindu, 18 February 2005

**Repoll today in 262 Bihar booths**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 17. The Election Commission today ordered repoll in 290 booths in Bihar and Jharkhand where voting took place on February 15. Repoll will be held tomorrow in 262 places in Bihar and 28 in Jharkhand along with three Assembly constituencies in Bihar — Bahera, Jale and Ghanshyampur, where polling was postponed owing to inadequate security. The registers and the rolls were verified and it was found that bogus-voting had taken place.

The Hindu, 18 February 2005

**Maharashtra's strategy to remove slums**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 17. The Maharashtra Government has decided to adopt a twin-pronged strategy to remove slums that have sprung up after 2000 while preparing an action programme for the affected people. The Maharashtra Chief Minister, Vilasrao Deshmukh, who met the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, here today, told presspersons that the State Government would work out the programme for those affected in keeping with the commitments made in the party manifesto and the Common Minimum Programme of the United Progressive Alliance Government. He said around 90,000 hutments were removed in the first phase.

The Hindu, 18 February 2005

**Congress MLAs "gatecrash" into Gujarat Assembly complex**

GANDHINAGAR, FEB. 17. The budget session of the Gujarat Assembly began here today on a stormy note with members of the opposition Congress taking out a tractor rally and "gate-crashing" into the Secretariat complex. Protest against the State Government's "apathy" to solve the problems of the farmers and the youths, the Congress MLAs came to the Secretariat complex, which houses Assembly building, on 11 tractors. As the main gate was locked, they demanded to be allowed to enter the complex on their tractors but the police refused. They crashed into the gate, broke it down and drove on to the Assembly porch.

The Hindu, 18 February 2005

**CBI raids suspended Haryana IAS officer's premises**
NEW DELHI, FEB. 17. The CBI today conducted raids at the residential and official premises of suspended Haryana cadre IAS officer Sanjeev Kumar, who had blown the lid off the Junior Basic Trained (JBT) teachers’ appointment scam in Haryana in 2000. The CBI spokesman said the agency staff raided 16 places in Delhi, Chandigarh, Kamal, Gurgaon and his native village in Jharkhand to unearth incriminating documents. The house of his businessman friend in Vasant Kunj and a chartered accountant at South Extension, who acted as conduits, had also been raided.

The Hindu, 19 February 2005

Petition seeking removal of Lalu, 3 Ministers rejected (J. Venkatesan)

NEW DELHI, FEB. 18. The Supreme Court today dismissed a petition seeking removal of four charge-sheeted Ministers from the Union Cabinet after it was informed that Parliament would discuss the issue of inclusion of charge-sheeted persons and the court was not the proper forum to deal with the matter. The charge-sheeted Ministers are: Railway Minister, Lalu Prasad, Jaiprakash Narain Yadav, Minister of State for Water Resources, M.A. Fatmi, Minister of State, Human Resource Development, and Mohd. Taslimuddin, Minister of State, Heavy Industries. The Solicitor-General, G. E. Vahanvati, submitted before a Bench that the issue was clearly within the domain of Parliament to discuss and debate and not for courts to decide.

The Hindu, 19 February 2005

Election Commission’s directive to Haryana CEO

NEW DELHI, FEB. 18. The Election Commission today directed the Chief Electoral Officer of Haryana to ask all Returning Officers not to declare the results without its permission in those constituencies where the margin of votes between the winning candidate and his nearest rival was less than the total number of postal ballots. The Commission gave this direction consequent to its decision to advance the counting of votes in the State to 4 p.m. on February 23, instead of February 27. The Commission further clarified that the postal ballot papers received back from the electors by 4 p.m. on February 23 should be counted by the Returning Officer for computing the result.

The Hindu, 19 February 2005

Shahbuddin gets bail

PATNA, FEB. 18. Even as the Patna High Court today granted bail to the Rashtriya Janata Dal MP, Md. Shahbuddin, the Siwan District Magistrate, C.K. Anil, ordered his externment from the district for one year. The bench of Justice Rajendra Prasad granted bail to Mr. Shahbuddin in connection with the kidnapping and murder of the CPI(ML) worker, Munna Chaudhary, about four years ago. Mr. Shahbuddin is likely to be released on Monday as he had received bail in the other cases filed against him. Mr. Shahbuddin had been shifted to the Patna Central Jail from the Siwan Jail at the orders of the Election Commission.

The Hindu, 19 February 2005

BJP seeks President's intervention in Goa

PANAJI, FEB. 18. The Goa unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) today sought the intervention of the President to check "police high-handedness" against its MLAs and urged the President to dismiss the Pratapsinh Rane Government immediately. It also demanded Central protection to all its MLAs. Speaking to reporters at the party headquarters here this evening, the State BJP chief, Rajendra Arlekar, said a strong posse of police were present in the Assembly complex when the BJP MLA, Sadanand She Tanvade, was supposed to depose before the Speaker with regard to the disqualification petition he had filed against the Independent MLA and Deputy Chief Minister, Filipe Neri Rodrigues.

The Hindu, 19 February 2005

Goa BJP legislators in Jaipur

JAIPUR, FEB. 18. The Bharatiya Janata Party has flown most of its MLAs in Goa to the Pink City to keep its flock together till the Congress-led Government proves its majority in the State Assembly. Fourteen BJP legislators and the UGDP MLA, Mathany Saldanha, arrived here from Mumbai by a private airline last night, party sources said today. The Goa BJP president, Rajendra Arlekar; the former Chief Minister, Manohar Parrikar, and two other MLAs have stayed back in Panaji, they said. Fourteen others and Mr. Saldanha are staying in a resort on the outskirts here.

The Hindu, 19 February 2005

Chidambaram may raise tax exemption level (Ashok Dasgupta)

NEW DELHI, FEB. 20. Come Monday next, and all eyes will be hooked to the Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, unveiling what may well be a "dream" Union Budget package for the new fiscal. The aspirations of India Inc. and the nation at large are high. For the present, Mr. Chidambaram may raise the tax exemption level some more — by about Rs. 20,000-Rs. 25,000 — so that salaried employees with a taxable income of up to Rs. 1.25 lakh annually — instead of Rs. 1 lakh now — will not have to pay any taxes, though they will have to file returns as now. However, the two per cent cess on education is likely to remain while a similar one may be added to help mop up funds for one of the social objectives outlined in the NCMP.

The Hindu, 21 February 2005

3 killed as religious procession turns violent (PTI)

LUCKNOW, FEB. 20. Three persons were killed and seven injured, including a policeman, in a clash in the old city area during a Tazia procession on the 10th day of Muharram today. Curfew was imposed in the trouble-torn areas even as Muharram gatherings were cancelled. Besides the deployment of PAC and RAF personnel, security personnel had been alerted to keep a vigil to prevent any reaction to the clashes, especially in the areas inhabited by both sects, the Principal Secretary (Home),
Alok Sinha, told reporters here.

The Hindu, 21 February 2005
**Bible course participants return after RSS protest**
JAIPUR, FEB. 20. The 275 people from Andhra Pradesh who arrived at the Kota railway station in southern Rajasthan to attend a Bible course of the Emmanuel Mission were sent back on Saturday night without being allowed to attend the ceremony after violent protests by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Bajrang Dal activists. The Sangh Parivar workers alleged that they had been brought for religious conversion. The State Social Welfare Minister, Madan Dilwar, has ordered an inquiry into the allegation that the Emmanuel Mission was involved in conversion activities. Eight persons were injured on Saturday when the activists allegedly prevented them from proceeding to their destination in the town.

The Hindu, 21 February 2005
**Victims of Armed Forces Act dub it a 'black law'**
NEW DELHI, FEB. 20. Several persons, appearing before the "People's Tribunal" have expressed grave concern over misuse of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in the North-East, describing it as a "black law." People from Manipur who deposed before the "People's Tribunal", organised by the Human Rights Law Network, here on Saturday narrated their tales of suffering at the hands of security forces and police. Justice Rajinder Sachar, former Delhi High Court Chief Justice, lauded the courage of the people in speaking out about "their suffering." He said if the Centre had agreed to withdraw the AFSPA, the situation would have improved in Manipur.

The Hindu, 21 February 2005
**Ayodhya case: move to include Vajpayee as accused (PTI)**
LUCKNOW, FEB. 20. The Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC) was contemplating moving the court to have the former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, included as an accused in the Ayodhya case in the wake of his purported statement on a video CD a day before the demolition of the disputed structure. "The CD purportedly showing Mr. Vajpayee exhorting the people to demolish the Babri Masjid proves that he too was involved in the conspiracy," the BMAC convener, Zafaryab Jilani, told PTI here today. "We shall explore the possibilities of including Mr. Vajpayee's name as one of the accused along with others."

The Hindu, 21 February 2005
**Amnesty criticises Gujarat Government**
NEW DELHI, FEB. 20. Amnesty International has criticised the Gujarat Government for failing to protect women from violence, with specific reference to the 2002 communal riots. In a report released recently, the rights body said the Central and State Governments had failed to prevent grave abuses of the rights of Muslim women and ensure legal provisions, law enforcement, judicial structures and rehabilitation measures for the victims. Led by the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Gujarat Government had for years failed to curb hate propaganda against Muslims and maintain a non-discriminatory attitude towards minorities.

The Hindu, 22 February 2005
**Traders threaten indefinite strike against VAT regime**
NEW DELHI, FEB. 21. The all-India traders' bandh today, called by the Confederation of All-India Traders (CAIT) to protest against the Value Added Tax (VAT) regime, disrupted business and commercial activity in various parts of the country while evoking a mixed response in some others. Traders have threatened to go on an indefinite strike unless the VAT regime, proposed to be implemented from April 1, is rendered more "trader-friendly," and certain essential commodities are taken out of its purview. Interestingly, however, the issue appears to be donning a political colour. While most States are ready to implement it in spite of the agitation, others have started voicing concern.

The Hindu, 22 February 2005
**52 per cent dropout in schools**
NEW DELHI, FEB. 21. Four years after the Government of India adopted the "mission mode" to universalise elementary education through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), only 47 of the 100 children enrolled in Class I reach Class VIII. This puts the dropout rate at 52.79 per cent which, according to the Prime Minister, Mammoohan Singh, "is unacceptably high." Chairing the first meeting of the Governing Council of the National Mission for SSA, Dr. Singh attributed the high dropout rate to a "lack of adequate facilities, large-scale absenteeism of teachers and inadequate supervision by local authorities." Later, briefing the media, the Human Resource Development Minister, Arjun Singh, said the dropout rate at the elementary level (Class I to VIII) was 52.79 per cent with that at the primary level (Class I to V) being 34 per cent.

The Hindu, 22 February 2005
**Court notice to Rane (J. Venkatesan)**
NEW DELHI, FEB. 21. The Supreme Court today issued notice to the Goa Chief Minister, Pratap Sinh Rane, on a writ of quo warranto filed by his predecessor, Manohar Parrikar, questioning under what authority he was functioning in office. A three-Judge Bench, comprising the Chief Justice R.C. Lahoti, Justice D.M. Dharmadhikari and Justice B.N. Sikri, also issued notice to Mr. Rane on the interim prayer to restrain him from functioning as Chief Minister, after hearing senior counsel, Soli Sorabjee, who pleaded for immediate interim relief. Notice was also issued to the Goa Chief Secretary.
The Hindu, 22 February 2005

**RJD MP's detention ordered**

PATNA, FEB. 21. The Siwan District Magistrate, C.K. Anil, today invoked the provisions of the Bihar Crime Control Act (CCA), 1981, to order the detention of the Rashtriya Janata Dal MP, Md. Shahbuddin at the Patna Central Jail. The Patna High Court on Friday granted bail to Mr. Shahbuddin in the case relating to the murder of the CPI (ML) worker, Munna Chaudhary. The Magistrate ordered that Mr. Shahbuddin be detained till February 28, a day after the completion of the counting process scheduled for February 27.

Daily Excelsior, 22 February 2005

**Focus on scam: SC to CBI**

NEW DELHI, Feb 21: Chastising the CBI to focus on the teachers appointment scam in Haryana, the Supreme Court today restrained the agency from either arresting or launching prosecution against IAS officer Sanjeev Kumar, who had blown the lid off the scam. The CBI had recently carried out a raid on the premises of Kumar and claimed to have recovered assets worth more than Rs two crore disproportionate to his known sources of income. As Kumar cried foul of the agency's motive in not probing Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala, whom he alleged to be the brain behind the scam, a three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice R C Lahoti asked the CBI not to arrest or launch any prosecution against him in connection with the raids.

The Hindu, 23 February 2005

**File status report on fodder scam cases, CBI told**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 22. The Supreme Court today directed the Central Bureau of Investigation to file a status report on the investigation into the Rs. 950-crore fodder scam cases in which the Railway Minister, Lalu Prasad, is an accused, and produce the records on the change of public prosecutor in the case. A three-judge Bench, comprising Justice S.N. Variava, Justice A.R. Lakshmanan and Justice S.H. Kapadia, passed the order on a petition by Sushil Modi, Bharatiya Janata Party MP, and Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Janata Dal (United) MP, seeking cancellation of the bail granted to Mr. Prasad and his wife, Rabri Devi, in the cases.

The Hindu, 23 February 2005

**Bilkis identifies 12 accused**

MUMBAI, FEB. 22. Bilkis Yakub Rasul, prime witness in the gangrape-cum-murder case, today identified in the trial court 12 accused, who assaulted her and members of her family at Dahod in Gujarat on March 3, 2002. She deposed in-camera yesterday in the court of the Additional Sessions Judge, U.D. Salvi, at Mazgaon and named 12 of the 20 accused. Those identified by Bilkis are charged with rape and murder while eight others are charged with shielding the guilty.

The Hindu, 23 February 2005

**Supreme Court orders closure of 218 industrial, mining units**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 22. The Supreme Court has ordered the closure of 218 industrial and mining units across the country for not taking the mandatory clearance under the Environment Protection Act. A Bench, comprising Justice Y. K. Sabharwal and Justice P. P. Naolekar, passed the order on Monday on a petition filed by the Goa Foundation alleging that hundreds of industrial units were operating in the country without environmental clearance. The petitioner said the 218 units — 70 in the industry sector and 148 in the mining sector — were spread across Rajasthan, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Karnataka, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Goa and Himachal Pradesh.

The Hindu, 24 February 2005

**14 candidates externed in Bihar**

PATNA, FEB. 22. Three more MPs, including the Union Minister of State for Agriculture, Akhilesh Prasad Singh, have been externed from their respective districts on the eve of the third phase of polling in 93 constituencies in Bihar tomorrow. The East Champaran district authorities directed Mr. Singh not to be present in the district during the polling process tomorrow. Similarly, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MP, Raghubanath Jha, has been asked to keep away from West Champaran and the Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) MP, Suraj Bhan Singh, from Patna district. Two candidates from the Kateya constituency in Gopalganj have also been ordered out of the district, one of whom has been detained under the Crime Control Act.

The Hindu, 24 February 2005

**Zahira fails to turn up before Nanavati Commission**

AHMEDABAD, FEB. 23. The prime witness in the Best Bakery case, Zahira Sheikh, today failed to turn up before the G.T. Nanavati and K.G. Shah judicial inquiry commission here and was given time to appear on March 21. As per the commission's earlier directive, Ms. Sheikh sent a letter through her lawyer seeking more time in view of the Supreme Court's order to furnish details of the sources of her income and that of her family members within four weeks. A key witness in the Godhra train burning case, ‘sadhvi’ Minaxi Devi, who voluntarily appeared before the commission yesterday and was to be cross-examined today, also failed to turn up.

The Hindu, 24 February 2005

**Rajasthan to pass anti-conversion law**

JAIPUR, FEB. 23. Rajasthan will soon have a law against religious conversions. A bill to this effect will be introduced in the Assembly, according to the Home Minister, Gulab Chand Kataria. Mr. Kataria said the people who were sent back from the Kota railway station last weekend were tribals brought for the purpose of conversion. He said that 100 foreigners, of whom 95
were from the United States, reached Kota to attend the programme. Police resorted to lathicharge at Raipura area of Kota town to disperse about 600 people who gathered in front of the Emmanuel Mission Society campus to protest against the Bible graduation programme which started here today.

The Hindu, 24 February 2005

Judiciary intimidated: police

KANCHEEPURAM, FEB. 23. Investigators in the Kanchi Sankararaman murder case and advocates seem to be at loggerheads with the district police today posing whether it is correct on the part of advocates to "intimidate the judiciary and judges." In a press release here, the police said that it was for the public to decide whether the court boycott launched with a view to "saving the accused in a particular case somehow, and with the bad intention of tarnishing the investigation" should be accepted. The police said that in the Sankararaman murder case, some advocates had even tried to get hold of "secret documents" submitted to the court.

The Hindu 24 February 2005

Clashes mar Ajnala by-election (PTI)

CHANDIGARH, FEB. 23. Polling for the by-election to the lone Assembly constituency of Ajnala was marked by numerous incidents in which workers and supporters of rival Congress and Akali Dal clashed with each other. According to initial reports about 70 per cent voters exercised their right, while elaborate security arrangements were in place. Meanwhile the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president, Parkash Singh Badal, has charged that the polling was marked by "unprecedented magnitude of rigging, fake voting and booth capturing indulged by Congress goons."

The Hindu, 25 February 2005

100 per cent FDI in construction industry through automatic route (Sushma Ramachandran)

NEW DELHI, FEB. 24. The Government today allowed 100 per cent foreign direct investment in the construction industry through the automatic route. Conditions restricting FDI to a minimum area of 100 acres and 2,000 dwelling units are relaxed to 25 acres and 50,000 square metres for construction development projects. Announcing this here after a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), the Commerce and Industry Minister, Kamal Nath, said that to avoid speculation in real estate by foreign investors, the sale of undeveloped land had been prohibited.

The Hindu, 25 February 2005

Godhra panel's term extended

NEW DELHI, FEB.24. The Union Cabinet today decided to further extend by three months the tenure of the high-level panel set up to inquire into the Godhra train fire incident in which 58 persons died. This is the second time the tenure of the panel, headed by former Supreme Court Judge, U.C. Banerjee, was being extended. Speaking to reporters, the Railways Minister, Lalu Prasad, said the tenure was being extended as the committee has to complete its complex investigations and finalise its report. The panel has already submitted an interim report and it would submit its final report before the extended date, he added.

The Hindu, 25 February 2005

Photo electoral rolls before next polls

NEW DELHI, FEB. 24. The Election Commission has decided to introduce photo electoral rolls to prevent bogus voting and rigging. These will be used for the next general elections. The move to prepare photo rolls would address several problems, including improvement in the quality of rolls. The Election Commissioner, B.B. Tandon, explained that the Commission planned to complete the preparation of photo rolls before the next general elections to be held in 2009. He said the recently concluded Assembly polls in Bihar, Jharkhand and Haryana had been "the most difficult but at the same [time] a challenging experience." The Commission had been providing manpower and material support to conduct elections in other countries.

The Hindu, 25 February 2005

Charges framed against Soren

RANCHI, FEB. 24. Charges were framed against the Union Coal Minister and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha chief, Shibu Soren, in connection with the Chirudih massacre of 1975. Mr. Soren was present in the court when charges were framed. Later talking to reporters, defence counsel B.N. Manjhi said the Additional District Judge, U.N. Mishra, ordered the framing of the charges and the court complied forthwith. The copy of the order was served to Mr. Soren subsequently.

The Hindu, 25 February 2005

UPA yet to decide on women's quota

NEW DELHI, FEB. 24. The Government and the Congress appear to have distanced themselves from the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil's proposal to raise the number of seats in the Lok Sabha for women as a measure to take forward the stalled Women's Reservation Bill, providing one-third reservation in Parliament and Legislatures. Mr. Patil had in his letter to political parties suggested that the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha could be increased by one-third by adding 181 seats to the present strength of 545. However, it appears that the proposal does not have any formal sanction within the Government and the party.
Rane justifies Governor's action (J. Venkatesan)
NEW DELHI, FEB. 25. The Goa Chief Minister, Pratapsinh Rane, has justified in the Supreme Court the action of the Governor, S.C. Jamir, in dismissing the BJP Government led by Manohar Parrikar on February 2, as Mr. Parrikar did not have a majority. In response to the notice issued by the apex court on February 21 on a petition from Mr. Parrikar challenging the dismissal, Mr. Rane and his Government submitted that the legality of the Governor's decision, taken within his discretionary jurisdiction, could not be questioned. The petition comes up for further hearing on February 28.

The Hindu, 26 February 2005

Higher defence outlay likely (Sandeep Dikshit)
NEW DELHI, FEB. 25. The die for an increase in the outlay for defence was cast a day after the United Progressive Alliance Government presented its first vote-on-account in July last year. Despite a Rs. 12,000-crore increase for purchasing military equipment, the Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, complained of a shortfall. Most of the allocation for capital purchases would be spent to honour the contracts signed by the previous regime. There would be nothing left for the new Government to spend on, he said. Though the UPA Government might claim it was the first government to completely spend the capital outlay for the defence sector for the first time since the Kargil War, it knows that the claim is flawed.

The Hindu, 26 February 2005

India should be more open to global capital flows: Manmohan (Amit Baruah)
NEW DELHI, FEB. 25. "Countries that imposed sanctions on us when we declared ourselves a nuclear weapons’ power have come to live with the reality of our nuclear capability because they wish to build bridges of mutual economic benefit,” the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, said tonight. Providing a broad policy sweep, Dr. Singh said at the India Today conclave that the objective of India's foreign policy was shaped by the yearning to recover its lost space in the global economy. “It is [also] shaped by our firm and sincere commitment to a future of shared peace, freedom and development in our neighbourhood.”

The Hindu, 26 February 2005

Colour TV, helpers for Pappu in Tihar
NEW DELHI, FEB. 25. Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav, the Member of Parliament from Mahdepura who was recently shifted from Beur Jail in Patna to Tihar Central Jail here following orders from the Supreme Court, has been provided with a colour television set and two helpers in his ward. For their part, the prison authorities said there was nothing unusual about it. The Court had earlier directed that he should not be accorded any special treatment in prison. Lodged in the high-security Jail No. 3, the MP, charged with the murder of CPI (M) leader Ajit Sarkar, had demanded a colour television, home-made food and helpers. The prison authorities have allowed him a colour television set and two helpers but have denied permission for home-made food.

The Hindu, 27 February 2005

3 killed in Bihar during repoll (K. Balchand)
PATNA, FEB. 26. Three persons were killed during repolling in Bihar today when the election process concluded setting the stage for counting of votes in all the 243 constituencies tomorrow. Paramilitary forces shot dead a booth grabber in Belaganj constituency and two naxalites in Barachhati constituency in one of the booths. The Central forces also recovered two self-loading rifles from the spot from where the naxalites fled. Meanwhile, repolling in Suryaghara constituency passed off peacefully. The Commission has deployed heavy forces at all the counting centres across the State.

The Hindu, 27 February 2005

Tussle likely over seating in Goa Assembly (Anil Sastry)
PANAJI, FEB. 26. A tussle between the Speaker and the Pratapsinh Rane Government appears imminent on Monday when Mr. Rane seeks a vote of confidence in the Assembly as the Congress today claimed that the Speaker has not made separate seating arrangements despite Mr. Rane's written request. Speaking to reporters at the State Congress headquarters after meeting the Governor, S.C. Jamir, here this evening, Mr. Rane said when he was sworn in as Chief Minister by the Governor — the appointing authority — the Speaker had a very limited role.

The Hindu, 27 February 2005

Centre slow to respond on electoral reforms: CEC
COIMBATORE, FEB. 26. It was “quite some time ago” that the Election Commission sent 22 proposals to the Centre for electoral reforms. He was responding to queries from presspersons on the criminalisation of politics and a number of candidates in the recent elections in Bihar and Jharkhand having criminal backgrounds. At the same time, he expressed happiness over the conduct of the elections in Bihar.

The Hindu, 27 February 2005

Report tabled (UNI)
NEW DELHI, FEB. 26. The interim report of the Justice U.C. Banerjee Committee, inquiring into the 2001 Godhra train carnage, was presented in Parliament today by the Railway Minister, Lalu Prasad.

The Hindu, 28 February 2005

All eyes on Speaker as Rane seeks trust vote
PANAJI, FEB. 27. With the Congress-led Pratapsinh Rane Government seeking the crucial vote of confidence tomorrow, all eyes are on the Speaker, Vishwas Satarkar, whether he would recognise Mr. Rane as the Leader of the House or accept the ousted Chief Minister, Manohar Parrikar's claim that he still enjoys the confidence of the House. The Governor, S.C. Jamir, has written to Mr. Satarkar to make seating arrangements for Mr. Rane and his Cabinet members during the session tomorrow. The letter follows a representation by the Goa Pradesh Congress Committee delegation led by Mr. Rane and the GPCC president, Luizinho Faleiro, that proper seating arrangements had not been notified till late Saturday. The letter sought necessary directions to the Speaker.

The Hindu, 28 February 2005

Blackout (PTI)

MUMBAI, FEB. 27. Most parts of Vidarbha and three districts in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra plunged into darkness, following a fire at a sub-station of Koradi Thermal Power plant tonight.

The Hindu, 28 February 2005

Orissa Opposition to raise forest land issue

BHUBANESWAR, FEB. 27. The Naveen Patnaik Government is likely to face an angry Opposition when the Budget session of the Assembly begins here tomorrow. One of the main issues the Opposition will raise pertains to the alleged irregularities in the utilisation of forestland by a private company, which is setting up an alumina plant in Kalahandi district. The issue relating to the setting up of industries has been the focus in the recent past with the Opposition insisting on formulation of a comprehensive mineral policy.

The Hindu, 28 February 2005

CBI seizes fake ration cards for kerosene

NEW DELHI, FEB. 27. The Food and Supplies Department of the Delhi Government is turning out to be can of worms. After last month’s raids on a number of officials including the head of the enforcement wing of the Department, another series of ‘joint inspections’ by the Central Bureau of Investigation has "uncovered" a well planned modus operandi to not only hoodwink the system but also divert and sell kerosene meant for the poor and under-privileged in the open market in black. These developments should wake the Delhi Government up from its slumber as it had claimed that everything was working smoothly and efficiently.

Daily Excelsior, 28 February 2005

DCM held in fake ticket scam (PTI)

VADODARA, Feb 27: Railways Divisional Commercial Manager R D Meena was today arrested for his alleged role in the bogus ticket refund scam, Railway police said here. With this, seven persons have been arrested in connection with the case, it said. According to police, some people used to print bogus railway tickets so as to get refund after the departure of train. The scam was unearthed some months ago when six persons were arrested in this connection.