

CRIME & CORRUPTION – 2009

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India's problems stem more from important issues like governance and corruption (5)

I am upbeat about India. The country's fundamentals are strong. About 12% of the country's GDP is export-based and 20% is import-based. With oil prices coming down, the import percentage will drop down further. Similarly, 75% of the GDP is due to domestic consumption. Indian stock markets are behaving the way they are because of what is happening in the world. Part of the rally was because of FII's and they have withdrawn money because of conditions outside India. India's problems stem more from important issues like governance and corruption. One of the solutions is to harness the potential of IT and e-governance. If there is e-governance and people start asking questions about things relevant to them, it will bring in transparency and accountability. The operative word here is government's role. It's a question of having the political will to do so. Corruption can be fought even at a personal level. The best solution would be if people refuse to give or take bribes. For this, we have to stand up and build a movement. It cannot happen on its own. In terms of opportunities, the domestic market will witness a good growth. Make sure you take advantage of it. For companies, it's the time to pick up distress assets. They won't get this time often. Of course, you need to have the bandwidth and cash. More importantly, you need to be sure of your ability to turn them around. It's also time to look beyond traditional opportunities. It's a good time to innovate. At a personal level this is the time to invest your money in your education and developing skills. So that you are prepared and better qualified when better times come. But most people wait for enhancing their skills till the opportunity comes. By that time, it's too late. They try to catch the stick at the word end. (Financial Express 1/1/09)

Crackdown on black sheep: 1,149 policemen prosecuted(5)

New Delhi, January 02, 2009: With as many as 74 police personnel dismissed or removed from the force in 2008, Delhi Police seems desperate to get their act together. In a drive to check corruption and bring in transparency, the Delhi Police Vigilance branch took action against 1,149 corrupt personnel in 2008. "We won't take cases of corruption or any misconduct lightly and the results are in front of you," said Delhi Police Commissioner Y.S. Dadwal at the annual press conference on Friday. While services of 194 were forfeited, 84 were punished by withholding increment and 790 by censure. The highest number of those involved in criminal cases were from the constabulary. While 470 constables faced punishment in 2008, the number of head constables who faced the music was 226. A total of 102 Inspectors were punished in this regard last year, while the number for Sub-Inspectors were 166 and 175 Assistant Sub-Inspectors. Action was also taken against 102 'delinquent' police personnel, including two Deputy Commissioners of Police (DCPs). They were served with advisory memo. Departmental inquiry has been initiated against 37 police personnel, including eight Inspectors, while show-cause notice served on 18 others, which had one Assistant Commissioner of Police and six Inspectors. Explanation have been sought from nine while three others are warned for being delinquent. According to Dadwal, no one has been under the scanner for doubtful integrity. He added: "I have always made rooting out corruption within the department my first priority." The drive against delinquent officers includes surprise checks of 540 police stations and police posts and action against as many as 113 police personnel has been proposed. (Hindustan Times 2/1/09)

Crematorium scam all set for 'decent burial' (5)

The Rs 40-lakh electric furnace purchase scam in Yelahanka is all set to get a decent burial. But the residents want the case to exhumed. Huge pipes lying since 2001 at an open space at the Shanthi Dhama, the burial ground at Surabhi Layout in Yelahanka, stand evidence to the corruption in the purchase of equipment for the crematorium. Lack of space was the reason given for not installing the electric furnace at the crematorium but the question arises as to why the officials had not thought before placing the orders, though the burial ground is spread across one acre and 16 guntas as per official records. The President of Forum for Citizens' Rights, Shivakumar complained, "In 2002, tenders were called for and Varsha Engineering was allotted the project at the cost of Rs 1.15 crore, but the work on crematorium

never took off." He alleged that the case was never allowed to investigate properly to shield corrupt officials and public representatives. The placing of orders without studying the feasibility of installing pipes in the available space, shows that the purchase of furnace was a clear case of corruption, Shivakumar said. Another challenge the graveyard faces is that of encroachment. The land sharks have shrunk it further, allege the residents. In the absence of electric crematorium, people have to go to Hebbal to use the electronic crematorium. According to Yelahanka MLA Vishwanath, the other equipment have been stolen and only the gigantic pipes are left in the graveyard. "A probe conducted by the then Lokayukta Justice Venkatachala revealed the involvement of representatives and officials. All the equipment have been stolen," said the MLA. He promised that in one month the crematorium will be ready completely. (Deccan Herald 2/1/09)

Delhi crime rate in 2008 lowest since 1994 (5)

New Delhi, Jan 2: Often dubbed the crime capital of the country, Delhi last year saw a 13 percent decline in cases of rape, robbery, riot and dacoity though the number of murders went up sharply from 467 in 2007 to 518 in 2008. "Last year, both the Indian Penal Code (IPC) crime and heinous crime were at their lowest levels since 1994," Delhi Police Commissioner Y.S. Dadwal told reporters at his annual press meet Friday. IPC crimes came down 13 percent from 53,244 to 46,414 in 2008 as compared to 2007. Heinous crimes like murders and attempt to murder also registered a decline of 12.13 percent in 2008 though the number of actual murders spiralled. "An analysis of motive of murders cases reveals that 17 percent were due to sudden provocation on trivial issues, eight percent were due to old enmity, 16 percent were passion-triggered, nine percent were due to differences amongst family members and 11 percent were due to disputes over property/money matters," Dadwal added. The police commissioner said criminals were involved only in 10 percent of the cases. "We have solved 84 percent of the cases and 891 accused were arrested in 2008. Last year, 78 percent of the murder cases were solved," he said. Asked why the Sep 30 murder of television journalist Saumya Vishwanathan could not be cracked even after months, Dadwal said: "We have developed various leads in the case and are hopeful of cracking the case soon. But I cannot give you any time frame." According to Delhi Police, the national capital ranks 21 among the 35 'mega cities' in murder cases. Last year, 367 cases of attempt to murder were reported against 499 cases in 2007, the commissioner revealed. Around 95 percent of the cases were solved. Only five percent of all attempt-to-murder cases had any relation to a criminal motive. Only 21 cases of dacoity were reported last year against 33 in 2007. The cases of robbery too declined in 2008. A total of 498 robbery cases were registered against 530 in 2007. Over 1,000 people were arrested, of which 89 percent were novices. Kidnapping for ransom, too, saw a marginal decline with 21 cases in 2008 against 24 in 2007. "Our sustained efforts ensured that no organised gang of kidnapers has been able to operate in Delhi for the past may years," he added. Rape cases, too, witnessed a sharp decline of 22 percent in 2008. A total of 453 rape cases came to light in 2008 against 581 in 2007. In 2006, the figure was 599 and in 2005 it was 642. "In 98 percent of the cases, the accused were known to the victim and had been interacting with the victims in normal course of life," Dadwal said. However, cases of snatching increased last year. "A total of 1,318 cases of snatching were reported in 2008 as against 1,201 cases of the corresponding period last year. Out of the 1,208 accused arrested, 89 percent persons were first-timers," he said. (New Kerala 3/1/09)

Elimination of corruption first priority (5)

Bhopal, Jan 2: Patwari, Tehsildar and other officers of Revenue Department should forget about taking money in exchange of doing work rather they should not drink tea also in exchange of work done by them. First priority is to eradicate corruption and to get rid of corruption action will be taken to the greatest possible extent. All the pending cases of transfer of name and distribution should be disposed of in two months. These instructions were given by Minister of State independent charge Karan Singh Verma to the officers of Revenue Department. He was doing review work of the districts of Bhopal in the office of divisional commissioner on Friday. Prominent among those present in the meeting were principal secretary Revenue MM Upadhyay, divisional commissioner Dr Pukhraj Maru, IG Shailendra Shrivastava and in-charge collector of Bhopal Gyaneshwar Patil along with collectors of Vidisha, Rajgarh, Sehore and Raisen. After the meeting he addressed the media. Verma gave instructions to the officers that from today onwards they should start improving the system. Verma added that works of farmers should be done without any hindrance at fast pace. He opined that Revenue Department should set a president before the country. He further said that all the pending cases of the farmers should be disposed of as

soon as possible. For this purpose he suggested that a cell should be constituted. He reasoned that after the registry one of its copy should be made available to the Tehsildar on the next day so that there is no room of any error in the case. He maintained that Tehsildar would be held responsible if there were any inconvenience caused to the farmers. Verma averred that boards should be erected outside Tehsil offices in which names of the officers concerned with cases' disposal, fees, time duration. He instructed that equipment required by Patwari in his work should be always available with him. Computer should contain updated information. Revenue Minister of the State also gave instructions to remove encroachments from roads, schools, hospitals and graveyards in two months. He directed that names of ineligible candidates should be removed from the list of people living below poverty line and it should be ensured that eligible candidates get benefit of government schemes. Instructions given to Revenue officers are as follows: Do not make mistake of asking money in exchange of work, dispose of cases of farmers as soon as possible, remove encroachments in 60 days, Tehsildar will be held responsible for inconvenience caused to the farmers, provide information on display board. (Central Chronicle 3/1/09)

Reddy asks DDA to stop allotment of flats (5)

New Delhi: Urban Development Ministry on Monday directed the DDA to stop physical allotment of flats hours after the housing agency said the process of allotment will continue notwithstanding the controversy surrounding the draw of lots. "When there is a popular suspicion on the issue of the draw of lots in the DDA flats, it is better to clear it through inquiry. No physical allotment will be made till the inquiries are completed," said Urban Development Minister Jaipal Reddy in New Delhi. DDA has earlier maintained that there were no irregularities in the draw of the lots and the process of allotment would continue. The Lieutenant Governor, who is chairman of the DDA, has already ordered an inquiry by the economic offence wing (EOW) of Delhi Police and there will also be a high-level internal inquiry by the DDA, said Reddy. To a question on whether the ministry would prefer a CBI probe, he said, "If there is a need for the CBI we would not hesitate to go for it. But we will first examine the inquiry reports and then only we will decide on the future course of action." (Indian Express 6/1/09)

CJI issues notice to justice Nirmal Yadav (5)

CHANDIGARH: The cash-in-bag controversy revolving around Punjab and Haryana High Court judges has entered another intriguing stage with chief justice of India KG Balakrishnan reportedly issuing a notice to justice Nirmal Yadav following the submission of report by the three-member panel constituted to probe the sensational incident. Having perused details submitted a few days ago by the committee headed by Allahabad High Court chief justice Hemant Laxman Gokhale and comprising Justice KS Radhakrishnan (chief justice of Gujarat High Court) and justice Madan B Lokur (Delhi High Court), the CJI is believed to have issued the notice "through proper channel" on December 26, 2008, seeking a detailed reply from justice Yadav given the backdrop of "judicial impropriety" highlighted in the report. Justice Yadav's connection with the Solan land deal had also come under the panel's scanner. Not finding any tangible material to fix corruption charges against justices Nirmaljit Kaur and Nirmal Yadav, the committee had concluded that it could not be established that Rs 15 lakh which landed at justice Kaur's residence on August 13 evening (subsequent developments suggested the money was meant for justice Yadav) was aimed at influencing the course of justice and procure a favourable decision. This major conclusion, said to be based on CBI "status" reports as the panel lacked powers to conduct a criminal investigation, had come as a reprieve to the two beleaguered woman judges, especially justice Yadav, as it took them out of the corruption loop that could have resulted in their removal. While justice Yadav has consistently denied allegations against her, calling herself a victim of conspiracy, sources said the December notice might be a prelude to an "indictment" in context of the 16-point 'Restatement of Values of Judicial Life' code of conduct adopted by the apex court in 1997. (Times of India 6/1/09)

DDA orders probe into flats scam (5)

NEW DELHI: Delhi Development Authority Vice-Chairman Ashok Kumar Nigam has ordered a high-level inquiry by a three-member committee headed by Member (Finance) Nand Lal into alleged "discrepancies and irregularities in the allotment of flats" under the DDA Housing Scheme-2008. Noting that reports had appeared in the media alleging discrepancies and irregularities in the allotment of flats, particularly in the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes category, the official said it was necessary to look into the whole process of allotment of flats and alleged irregularities. As such, he said, a high-level committee had been constituted in which besides Mr. Lal, the Deputy Commissioner for Land Acquisition and the Director

Vigilance of DDA would be the other members. The committee will call for copies of all the complaints received with regard to the alleged scam as well as all the papers relevant to the draw of lots of flats under the housing scheme. The committee has been told to submit its report within three days. The Union Urban Development Ministry had also sought a report from Mr. Nigam on the issue. Union Minister S. Jaipal Reddy had on Monday declared that every aspect of the scheme would now be probed as part of the inquiry that is being conducted and if need be the Central Bureau of Investigation would be directed to look into "the whole matter". Mr. Nigam has also marked a copy of the letter to Commissioner (Housing) Asma Manzar -- who had on Monday claimed that "there was not even one per cent irregularity in the draw of lots for the flats" -- directing her to provide all the relevant documents to the committee. The Economic Offences Wing of the Delhi police is also seized of the matter and is conducting an independent probe. It has questioned a chartered accountant for his role and is probing how several people in Rajasthan -- who had furnished the same phone number -- got allotted when the probability of allotment was very low considering there were nearly 5.67 lakh applicants for the 5,000-odd flats on offer and despite the computerised draw having taken place in the presence of several observers. (The Hindu 7/1/09)

Satyam chief admits to fraud, quits (5)

HYDERABAD: Byrraju Ramalinga Raju resigned as chairman of Satyam Computers, India's fourth largest Information Technology company, on Wednesday after admitting to the Board of Directors that accounts were fudged to the tune of Rs. 7,106 crore over "several years." His brother, B. Rama Raju, also resigned as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Before stepping down, Mr. Ramalinga Raju recommended that Ram Mynampati, board member and president, be made interim CEO, to run the show. The 53-year-old business tycoon quit ahead of a crucial meeting of the board on January 10. The resignation climaxed a turbulent period of three weeks when the company was plunged into a crisis following an aborted attempt to acquire Maytas Infra and Maytas Properties, promoted by Mr. Raju's sons, on December 16. Markets reacted virulently to Mr. Raju's admission of hiding several facts from the board and the stakeholders. Satyam's stock nosedived on the Bombay Stock Exchange to an all-time low of Rs. 39.95, losing 77.69 per cent, though it opened at Rs. 188.70. Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) Chairman C.P. Bhave described Mr. Raju's disclosure as an event of "horrifying magnitude." In his five-page letter to the directors, Mr. Raju confessed that the company's balance sheet inflated cash and bank balances of Rs. 5,040 crore which never existed and an accrued interest of Rs. 376 crore which was also non-existent. Also, a liability of Rs. 1,230 crore was understated and the debtor position of Rs. 490 crore "overstated." The Satyam chief said: "The gap in the balance sheet has arisen purely on account of inflated profits over a period of last several years." Every attempt made to eliminate the gap failed, he said and apologised to all "Satyamites and stakeholders." Barring Chief Financial Officer Srinivas Vadlamani, Mr. Raju gave a "clean chit" to the top executives, board members and also his and his brother's families. "Neither me, nor the Managing Director took even one rupee/dollar from the company and have not benefited in financial terms on account of the inflated results," he said. Meanwhile, SEBI was in touch with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to take all necessary steps against the 21-year-old company, which employs 53,000 and has operations in 65 countries serving 185 Fortune 500 companies. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy ordered a preliminary inquiry by the CID into whether the State government could initiate any criminal action. Dr. Reddy wrote to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, urging him to constitute a management team comprising Azim Premji of Wipro, N.R. Narayana Murthy of Infosys and S. Ramadorai of TCS to manage the affairs of Satyam to restore the confidence of the global customers so that the interests of employees and other stakeholders were protected. This arrangement could be in place until a credible alternative management was put in place. (The Hindu 8/1/09)

Cases registered against Haryana IAS, IPS officers (5)

CHANDIGARH: The Haryana State Vigilance Bureau has registered cases against an IAS officer, an IPS officer, ten officers of the Haryana Police Service and the Haryana Civil Service, Director-General of the Bureau S.C. Sinha told the media here on Wednesday. He stated that the Bureau would impart training to its officials in collaboration with the CBI Academy so that they can "investigate" cases of corruption and white collar crimes. This would not only eradicate corruption but also build a clean image of the Government. Replying to a question, he admitted that corruption in government offices was highly institutionalised and people tended to shield each other. He said the conviction rate was around 30 per

cent which was very low. Many times information about "raids" was "leaked" as it was mandatory to take permission from the department head, he said. He said the Bureau conducted 184 raids in 2008 and registered 222 criminal cases and caught 39 gazetted officers, 162 non-gazetted officers and eight others red-handed while accepting bribe. A number of officers and others had also been convicted in 29 cases by various courts and 796 cases were pending for trial during the same period, he added. He said that in major raids conducted during 2008, 16 officers or officials and other persons were caught while taking bribes ranging from Rs.10,000 to 60,000. Mr. Sinha said that the highest number of 435 source reports were registered during 2008 as compared to 147 in 2007 and 138 in 2006. (The Hindu 8/1/09)

Shekhawat to Gehlot: Probe corruption during Raje regime (5)

JAIPUR: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursday said he had received a letter from former Vice-President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat seeking a probe into alleged corruption cases during the previous BJP regime in the State. Speaking informally to reporters after inaugurating India Stonemart-2009 in the Sitapura industrial area here, Mr. Gehlot said Mr. Shekhawat had expressed his concern over corruption and sought an investigation into allegations made in this respect. "We will get the letter examined," he added. The ruling Congress too had alleged during the campaign for the recent State Assembly elections that the Vasundhara Raje government had resorted to corruption involving a whopping Rs.22,000 crore. Mr. Shekhawat has apparently asked Mr. Gehlot to inquire into the charges levelled by his own party. Mr. Gehlot said the newly-installed government had initiated preliminary investigation into the cases such as land scam in Jaipur Development Authority, spying and phone tapping of Ministers of the then BJP-led government and a controversial police encounter in which a Jaipur-based trader was killed. The Chief Minister affirmed that his government would not be vindictive against anyone, but added that the truth regarding the alleged corruption during the previous regime would be unearthed and those found guilty brought to book. Mr. Gehlot said even senior BJP leaders and Ms. Raje's own Cabinet colleagues had claimed that corruption existed during the party's regime in the State. Asked about Mr. Shekhawat's willingness to contest the Lok Sabha elections, Mr. Gehlot said: "Mujhse kyon poochhktey ho?" (Why are you asking me?) Mr. Shekhawat created a flutter in political circles by announcing his decision to contest the Lok Sabha polls and alleging that tickets for the Assembly elections were sold in the BJP camp in Rajasthan. His subsequent remarks that he was not answerable to BJP president Rajnath Singh upset the party's damage control exercise. (The Hindu 9/1/09)

Raju got Rs 1,230 cr by pledging shares; now worth Rs 66 cr (5)

New Delhi: Disgraced Satyam founder B Ramalinga Raju pocketed Rs 1,230 crore, much before disclosing the accounts fudging to inflate profits, through pledging of promoters shares, which are now worth just about Rs 66 crore. As the enormity of the fraud is surfacing, with the Government, regulators and State authorities tightening their noose on Raju and the firm, information available with stock authorities reveal that all the promoter shares held through SRSR Holding were pledged for Rs 1,230 crore. As per the statutory regulatory filings, the process of pledging started way back in September 2006, when promoter entity SRSR Holding held over 2.78 crore shares, comprising 8.51 per cent of total equity. As on September-end, 2006, these shares were worth Rs 2,275 crore at a price of Rs 818 a share. However, at the current price of Rs 23.85, the equity pledged with institutions is worth just about Rs 66 crore. These shares were worth about Rs 500 crore a day before Raju made the disclosure about cooking of accounts and financial fraud, with scrip ruling low at Rs 179 a share on January 6. From the very next day, stock started plunging and touched an intra-day low of Rs 6.30 a share on Friday. In his disclosure, Raju had said that "in the last two years, a net amount of Rs 1,230 crore was arranged to Satyam (not reflected in the books of Satyam) to keep the operations going by resorting to pledging all the promoters shares..." In a separate regulatory filing, Satyam has said that all the promoters shares were pledged with institutional lenders over a period of time since September 2006. With the company hitting the downhill path after the Maytas fiasco on December 16, the lenders started selling the pledged shares, bringing down the promoters' equity to 2.34 per cent as of now. (Pioneer 12/1/09)

Land scam case against Vasundhara (5)

JAIPUR: In compliance with a court directive, the police on Monday registered a criminal case against the former Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje and five others in connection with the Deendayal Upadhyay Trust land scam. All of them have been accused of cheating, criminal conspiracy and breach of

trust. According to police sources, the first information report was registered at Gandhi Nagar police station here after receiving the orders of Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate H.S. Sisodia passed on Friday. The Special Public Prosecutor had assured the court that its directions "will be carried out in toto." The Crime Branch of the Criminal Investigation Department would probe the matter. The case pertains to allotment of 7,693 square metres of land at a prime location in the Civil Lines area here to the trust, headed by Ms. Raje, at a concessional rate of five per cent of the the market price that prevailed in July 2006 during the Bharatiya Janata Party regime. The case has been registered under Sections 420 (cheating), 409 (criminal breach of trust by a public servant or by banker, merchant or agent) and 120-B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code. The offences under Sections 420 and 409 are cognisable and non-bailable, and punishable with a maximum prison term of seven and 10 years, respectively. Besides Ms. Raje, the accused named in the FIR are the former Jaipur Mayor and BJP MLA Ashok Parnami, the former Rajasthan BJP president Lalit Kishore Chaturvedi, the former Minister Pratap Singh Singhvi, the former Rajasthan Housing Board Chairman Ajay Pal Singh and the then Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) Commissioner D.B. Gupta. The court gave the directions to police on a complaint filed by Sriganganagar-based lawyer Srikrishna Kukkar, who alleged open violation of the JDA rules and regulations by Ms. Raje and the others. He also sought seizure of the trust's bank accounts. Earlier on November 10, 2006, another magistrate directed the police to register an FIR and launch an investigation but the order was not complied with. The city police took refuge under Section 156 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which empowers police officers to investigate cognisable offences on their own without a court order. The scam came to light in late 2006 when Congress leader Sushil Sharma filed a public interest writ petition before the Jaipur Bench of the Rajasthan High Court. The JDA told the court that the issue did not exist any longer as the trust had decided to return the contentious plot of land. The land, valued at Rs. 50 crore, was allotted to the trust for Rs. 65 lakh on July 4, 2006, before it was registered on August 20, 2006. The High Court then ordered that all documents relating to the application, allocation and cancellation be made available on oath. The criminal case was registered hot on the heels of a letter written by the former Vice-President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat to Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, asking him to probe the charges levelled by the Congress during its election campaign that the Vasundhara Raje government was involved in corruption to the tune of Rs. 22,000 crore. (The Hindu 13/1/09)

DDA 'whistleblower' being made a scapegoat: Udit Raj (5)

NEW DELHI: Indian Justice Party president Udit Raj on Monday said whistleblower Deepak Kumar was being made a scapegoat by the Delhi police in the Delhi Development Authority housing scam. Addressing a press conference here, Dr. Udit Raj said many property dealers must have had knowledge about irregularities being committed in the DDA Housing Scheme-2008 but kept their lips sealed. "Only Deepak Kumar gave the inside story, but he is being treated like an accused by the police. He should have been given some sort of incentive or encouragement for being bold enough to come forward and spill the beans," he said. Dr. Raj said Deepak Kumar had informed the Paschim Vihar police station in writing on November 10 that some property dealers of Dwarka, Shalimar Bagh and West Punjabi Bagh had applied for flats in the housing scheme under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes category. "On December 2, I had informed the Joint Commissioner and DDA Housing Commissioner that a number of people had applied for flats in the Authority's latest scheme using fake certificates. I had urged them to cancel the draw, but no action was taken. Is the police not guilty of not taking any action? When it had knowledge that a crime was about to be committed why did it allow the DDA draw to be conducted on December 16?" he asked. (The Hindu 13/1/09)

Body blow to investigators (5)

BANGALORE : With the amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act, bureaucrats have a lot to cheer. But investigating agencies are reeling under its impact. The worst blow is amending section 16, where the Centre has amended Clause (e) of sub section (1) of 13. It has inserted chapter IV A, which is in connection with attachment and forfeiture of property of officials during the raids. "Till now, there was a presumption that when a government servant files assets and liability statement with the government, that would be the parameter to assess his assets. When raided, if the official is found with excess property, it was acquired by corrupt means. However, the amendment has withdrawn that clause," Justice Santhosh Hegde pointed out. "The principal Act was enacted in 1948 and amendment introduced in 1988. For many years, there was no problem and now the government finds fault with the law. Has the corruption level

come down during past 60 years? Instead, the government could have simply deleted the PC Act," Justice Hegde said. (Times of India 15/1/09)

India ranked 85 in TI's Corruption Perception Index 2008 (5)

MUMBAI: Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index ranks India at 85 of 180 countries in 2008, while a separate 'Bribe-Payers Index', by TI ranks India almost at the bottom of the list, with a score of 19 from 22 countries. The study finds that 30% of bribes paid by senior business executives in India are to public officials to 'speed things up', while 25% are to high-ranking politicians and parties. A Citigroup note maintains that while the Satyam Computer issue has brought to the fore, questions on reliability of accounting statements for companies across the country, a point to note is that a majority of Indian companies do follow high governance standards and regulations are in line with best practices. "In fact, the Asian Corporate Governance Association (ACGA) ranks India 3rd among the 11 Asian economies. However, the Satyam issue if not sorted out speedily could result in a convergence in these indices," says analyst Rohini Malkani. With business confidence already at a 5-year low, the Satyam scandal has further dented sentiment and cast a shadow on 'hidden leverage' of Indian businesses, especially those that are family-run. This has also had repercussions on investor-confidence in the economy and could affect flows in the near-term. "With a total of three IT firms now barred from World Bank projects, coupled with the resignation of a host of directors and senior officials in the corporate sector, one could see further holes in the system as the downturn worsens," says the Citi report. Citi believes that authorities have been fairly quick to react and are now calling for a deeper and harder look at corporate governance. It is of the view that the closely held structure of many Indian companies suggests a need for improved transparency and accountability for independent directors. Apart from improving disclosure standards, re-auditing norms, and greater shareholder activism, there is also a need to counter corruption. Reports of kickbacks and widespread corruption have been a major deterrent to growth and as TI points out, 'require strong oversight through parliaments, law enforcement, independent media and a vibrant civil society'. (Economic Times 19/1/09)

Doubts arise over relevance of Lokayukta (5)

MUMBAI: Questions are being raised about the relevance of the Lokayukta, the agency that probes into complaints against erring government officials and ministers. Data for five years show that the state Lokayukta has disposed of over 95% complaints without any hearing. The government agency received 13,523 complaints (till October 31 last year) while 12,999 complaints were disposed of without hearing in the last five years. What is more shocking is that the Lokayukta heard only 59 cases till October-end last year, just over one case every week. The agency registered 2,781 complaints till October-end, while 2,465 were disposed of without hearing. Citizens are appalled at the dismal performance of the quasi-judicial agency, which was set up in 1971 to look into complaints made by the public against high-ranking officials and ministers. "I filed five complaints with the Lokayukta and all of them were dismissed," said Aziz Amreliwala, a Marol resident. His complaints pertained to alleged corruption at the ward office level. "But all my complaints were disposed of summarily," he said. The Lokayukta Act states that while the agency can pass directives, it does not have the power to implement them. However, it can go to court if its orders are not acted upon by the state. "It can act as a good watchdog if there is a will," said former IPS officer Y P Singh. The Lokayukta incurs an expenditure of Rs 1 crore to the state exchequer towards salaries for its 85 employees. But activists are now questioning the relevance of such an institution in view of its failure to probe complaints. TOI spoke to a cross-section of citizens, all of whom said their complaints were disposed of without any hearing. "It is a shame that this agency has not done justice to its existence," said Dr Ashok T Wagle, who had filed an RTI query on this issue. The 76-year-old Bandra resident said it was only after the Lokayukta disposed of a complaint without looking into its merits that he decided to file an RTI plea. "The query revealed the abysmal performance of the agency and its ineffectiveness in solving the problems of the common man when they have to deal with corrupt officials in the government," said Dr Wagle. Senior officials with the Lokayukta said though they disposed of thousands of complaints without hearing, they did go through the cases in detail. "We have delegated powers to the staff who look into the complaints. If they are of a serious nature, we put them forward to the government," said the official. He said most complaints did not come under the ambit of the act and were personal in nature. "The 2005 data show that we solved around 80% of the grievances that we received," said the official. But the officials also admit that the Lokayukta needs more teeth and can be more effective if agencies take cognisance of their reports. (Times of India 22/1/09)

Scam back to haunt CPI-M (5)

Thiruvananthapuram, January 22, 2009: With hardly a few months left for the Lok Sabha elections, a 12-year-old Rs 90-crore power scam has returned to haunt the ruling CPI(M) in Kerala. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Wednesday sought the government's consent to prosecute all the accused — the CPI(M) state secretary Pinarayi Vijayan being one of them — in the SNC Lavalin corruption case. The case pertains to huge losses incurred by the state due to the alleged corruption in awarding a power project contract to a Canadian firm, SNC Lavalin, for renovation of three hydel projects — Pallivasal, Changulam and Panniar. The contract with SNC Lavalin was finalised in the mid-1990s when Vijayan was power minister. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) found lapses in the contract, as public sector BHEL had quoted a lower price. Three years ago, then United Democratic Front government, headed by Oommen Chanday, handed over the case to the CBI. Reacting to the case, BJP spokesperson Prakash Javadekar said in New Delhi, "We have always said the SNC Lavalin deal is a case of corruption and needs thorough probe. We demand that CBI be given freedom to proceed as per the need." Though the party has rallied behind Vijayan, who has been listed as the ninth accused in the scam, it is likely to intensify faction feud that has already divided the state unit into two camps led by Vijayan and Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan. (Hindustan Times 22/1/09)

State fares poor on awareness on RTI (5)

JODHPUR: The people of Rajasthan are at the rock bottom when it comes to awareness on Right to Information Act, despite the fact that the seeds of the movement were sown in the state. According to Transparency International India, (TII) an NGO, just 5.5% people of the state are aware about these rights. Moreover, the urbanites are behind their rural counterparts when it comes to awareness. In terms of corruption, the state comes under the second category, which is "very high." The first is "alarming" and third and fourth being "high" and "moderate" respectively. The categorisation was done by TII for the purpose of the study. Executive director of TII, Anupama Jha, who was in Jodhpur to sign an MoU with Jal Bhagirathi Foundation, another NGO, informed that after a series of NGOs got blacklisted for their involvement in corrupt practices, the TII has been very careful in associating with them but she ruled out complete overlooking of such NGOs owing to their penetration at grass roots level. The TII has now taken up the task of empowering the deprived or the BPL (below poverty line) section with the tools in dealing with corruption and by demanding of their rights from public representatives. There are 5.6 million people in the country who are below poverty line and 34% of these do not have the BPL cards and even those who are having cards, are very frequently denied facilities meant for them. "In our study on BPL families in 2008, it has been observed that the average bribe a BPL family has to give per year is Rs 495 and a major part of it goes to the police. Considering this, we have now decided to spread awareness at the grassroots level for the purpose of improving the standards of governance in the BPL section and provide them with what they are entitled to and for this, it is essential that they are equipped with anti-corruption tools and are able to ensure the compliance of the citizen's charter," Jha added. Jha said that the country has an Integrity score of 3.4 out of 10, which shows that corruption is very rampant in the country and the nation has scaled higher on the International Bribe Payer Index. Referring to the non-ratification of the UNCTAD by India, Jha said that Indian businessmen are quite inclined to pay bribe in foreign countries. The study of the TII says that police, politicians and judiciary are the most corrupt segments in the country. Even National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is not spared by the corruption, which has been kept in the third category. (Times of India 26/1/09)

ACB arrests DIG for 'offering' bribe (5)

HYDERABAD: Anti-Corruption Bureau officials on Tuesday arrested Samuel Johnson, DIG of Prisons, Rajahmundry, after he allegedly offered Rs. 50,000 bribe to the D.G. of Prisons, Lokender Sharma, in the latter's office at Chanchalguda. Mr. Johnson walked into the office of Mr. Sharma at Chanchalguda around 3 p.m. in uniform. He met the DG of Prisons few minutes later in his chamber. Mr. Johnson raised the topic of his promotion as Additional I.G. and sought help in securing it faster, the ACB officials said. While conversing with the D.G. of Prisons, the DIG allegedly kept a cover containing Rs. 50,000 on the table maintaining that it was a gift from his side. Mr. Sharma then called the Additional Inspector Generals, A.R. Ahmed and Narsimha Reddy, to his chamber and alleged that the DIG offered bribe to him pointing out the cover. He then called the ACB officials who registered a case of corruption and seized

Rs. 50,000. Mr. Johnson was taken to the ACB city range office at Exhibition Grounds later. He was being interrogated there when reports last came in. (The Hindu 28/1/09)

Thane judge suspended over corruption charges (5)

Mumbai, January 29, 2009: The Bombay High Court has suspended Thane's additional sessions and district judge Arun Bachav, following complaints of corruption against him. Registrar general Mrudula Bhatkar, confirmed to Hindustan Times that Bachav was placed under suspension on Tuesday. The complaint was filed by NGO SUPPORT and Datta Patil, a social activist from Kolhapur. The duo had alleged that Bachav had acquitted five government officers in corruption cases in 2005-06 by using fraudulent means and accepting bribes. In one of the cases, Bachav allegedly acquitted the officer and closed the case since the investigating officer could not attend the court. The complaint was forwarded to the Chief Justice Swatanter Kumar of the Bombay High Court, who ordered an inquiry into the matter. After the inquiry, the HC decided to place Bachav under suspension. (Hindustan Times 29/1/09)

Minister slams bribery in judiciary (5)

New Delhi: Union Law Minister H.R. Bhardwaj on Monday asserted that the in-house procedure evolved in 1997 to probe cases of judicial misconduct and corruption had failed to yield the desired results, and sought a review of the mechanism. Mr. Bhardwaj told journalists that corruption in judiciary was a serious disease, which the in-house mechanism had failed to cure. Asked to comment on Chief Justice of India K.G. Balakrishnan's nod for interrogation by the CBI of judicial officers and certain High Court judges allegedly involved in the Ghaziabad Provident Fund scam, he said, "nobody, including the CJI, has the power to get a case registered against a sitting judge for a CBI or police probe in a misconduct matter." On the CBI's move to question a sitting judge of the Punjab and Haryana High court in the cash-on-door scam, he said: "I have no hesitation to say that police is not an answer to investigate the judiciary. Unless you denude a judge of his office of judge, you cannot prosecute him. Do you want a High Court judge to appear before a magistrate? Ordering police investigation against a sitting judge was bad in law. The judiciary should do serious thinking on how to remedy its own disease. It is one of the finest pillars of the government and the state and on it depends the rule of law." Mr. Bhardwaj said: "The CBI and the police have no power to prosecute a sitting judge. The Constitution has a provision that a judge's misconduct has to be inquired into under the provisions of the Judges Inquiry Act. You must amend the Constitution, if you want to bring in a change in the system. Nobody has the power to register a case against a judge. You first impeach the judge and then prosecute him as a normal person." To a query whether the government proposed to pass the Judges Inquiry Bill, he said as the coming Parliament session would be a brief one it would not be possible to pass the Bill now. It could be passed in the next session. "The government cannot thrust anything on the judiciary as we firmly believe that the judiciary should remain independent." Asking the judiciary to ponder itself over the ills it was facing, he said: "How can the judiciary be protected from the serious disease, which is slowly eating into the vitals of the institution. It is for them to give a serious thought. Let there be a collective decision that insulates judiciary from all types of corruption. It is a new problem which needs to be examined. "I wanted to give the in-house mechanism a statutory backing by which there is a permanent administrative headquarters in the Supreme Court and the aggrieved party can lodge a complaint and the CJI and his colleagues will have to decide the complaint." On the CJI's recommendation to impeach Calcutta High Court Judge Soumitra Sen, he said: "the CJI's inquiry has no role in the impeachment of a judge. An impeachment move against a judge has to be initiated by MPs and then the Speaker or the presiding officer sets up a peers committee — comprising a sitting judge, a retired judge and a jurist — to re-investigate the charges again. I am examining the issue and will soon take a decision." (The Hindu 3/2/09)

Arms against corruption not scarce (5)

CHENNAI: From judicial reform to RTI use, traditional values education to modern technology – there is a wide range of weapons in the arsenal of those fighting corruption, according to the students who participated in the 'Mindful Leadership' contest here on Monday. The Loyola Institute of Business Administration, Chennai, and the University of Dayton, Ohio jointly organised the second edition of the contest, which asks college students to make presentations on the United Nations Global Compact's core values. This year's theme was the mission for new generation leaders to build a corruption-free nation. The winner, Vijay Bhalaki, an M.A. Economics student at Loyola College, rejected the passionate idealism of many of his peers and held that a rational systemic approach would deal with the problem

more effectively. Transparency ratings, which would bring market mechanisms into play by making corruption unprofitable and benchmarking best practices, were among his suggestions. Harshvardhan Yadav of the National Law University suggested a thorough reform of the judiciary, while Allen Baby of LIBA saw the use of technology such as smart cards as helpful. "Corruption must be treated as a serious crime. It has a wider range of victims than a murder," said MOP Vaishnav College's Neeta. The "bribe tax" is six per cent of the national income, added Cyril Frank of St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. As judges deliberated on the best presentation, students from the audience shared their own stories of saying 'no' to corruption, from refusing to pay a bribe when caught for ticketless travel or ignoring traffic signals to the prickly issue of capitation fees. "It's much easier when you have a group of people taking a stand together. It's hard to do it on your own," said K.S. Subramanian, a PGDM student at LIBA. As an undergraduate student in Mumbai, he and his classmates had fought a Supreme Court case against the management of their institution for refusing to pay capitation fees. The top two students, Vijay Bhalaki and Aneesh Ajayan, of the College of Engineering, Trivandrum, will both head to Ohio in March for an all-expenses paid trip to take part in a global student investment forum, apart from cash prizes and medals. (The Hindu 3/2/09)

Kerala CM challenges party line, says 'can't question CBI' (5)

New Delhi: Virtually challenging his party line, Kerala Chief Minister V S Achuthanandan said he cannot question CBI seeking permission to prosecute state CPM secretary Pinarayi Vijayan in the Lavalin graft case. "The CBI move (to seek permission to arraign Vijayan) is as per the directions of a division bench of the High Court. I being an elected Chief Minister of the state feel that I am not supposed to question it," Achuthandan said. "To question the move (of CBI) is like questioning the court", he added. "I am under the oath of a public office and that is the only reason why I do not and cannot challenge the court directive. Meanwhile, there could be others who oppose the move and they may have their own reasons to justify it," Achuthandan said. The Chief Minister is understood to have conveyed his view when he met CPM general secretary Prakash Karat on Tuesday. Asked if he was underplaying the gravity of the Lavalin case as any of his party colleagues could be corrupt, he said, "a Communist leader has never been and can never be corrupt". Asked if that meant that Vijayan was not a true communist, Achuthandan said, "it could be your view. I have told you what I think on this issue." Achuthandan said any further move on the case would be discussed by the state cabinet. "I am not ready to talk to you in detail on the issue. I have only conveyed to you what my stand is on the issue," he added when further pressed on the matter. (Indian Express 4/2/09)

Corruption is roots of all problems: Ramdev (5)

Indore, Feb 4: Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev said that in order to curb corruption in the country people should exercise their franchise and he would launch an agitation to inspire public for casting votes in upcoming general elections. Baba Ramdev told mediapersons here today that the problem of corruption has swelled to enormous proportions and it was sustaining in the roots of every problem. It should be ended, he opined. Talking on the efforts being made to end this vicious problem, he said that he would launch an agitation to encourage people to cast votes in maximum number during Lok Sabha polls. "Corruption is also lying in the roots of terrorism as terrorists entered the India from Pakistan and Bangladesh borders after bribing the authorities and it puts the country's security at stake," he alleged. Responding on the query of Hindu terrorism, Baba said that in this regard arrested people donning saffron robes should be interrogated why they opt terrorism. Baba also replied to the question of his mockery done in television serials that when a man became famous then people used to make fun of him without maintaining decency. (Central Chronicle 5/2/09)

Constitutional experts favour assets' declaration by judges (5)

New Delhi (PTI): After Fali S Nariman, other constitutional experts like Soli Sorabjee and P P Rao have come out in favour of judges declaring their assets, saying that Judges should not only be clean but they should also "appear clean". "We have seen what happened in Punjab, Rajasthan, Bombay and other High Courts. We cannot shut our eyes. People are more agitated about the corruption in Judiciary than corruption in other organs of state," Senior advocate P P Rao said here on Thursday at a seminar on Legality and Propriety of Disclosure of assets by Judges. He emphasised that the declaration of assets by judges would make the judiciary more credible and would increase public faith in it. "The moment you say there is scope for corruption, questions would be raised on getting justice from court," he said, adding

"Judges should not only be clean but they should also appear clean." He pointed out that it is mandatory for people contesting elections to declare their assets and the same rule should apply to judges. "Judiciary, Legislature and Executive are separate function wise. As far as declaration of assets is concerned it is not about judicial functions but about public interest. It is to contain corruption in judiciary. In my opinion it is hard to carve out any exception for the judiciary," he said. Former attorney general Soli Sorabjee also supported Rao's view and that it is important to bring transparency in the system. "Forget about constitutional obligation. It is about transparency," Sorabjee said. "Judge's assets are something people want to know," he said. (The Hindu 6/2/09)

Rajasthan worried about misuse of NREGS funds (5)

JAIPUR: The immense potential of funds made available by the Centre under the much talked about National Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) notwithstanding, the Rajasthan Government is seemingly worried about the chances of misuse and misappropriation. The State, which otherwise has an outstanding track record in implementation of NREGS after being a pioneer in the right to work movement in the past, is in a position to avail of more than Rs.5,000 crore under the scheme but the political leadership is concerned about proper utilisation of the money. "The system should be such that it leaves no scope for corruption. We want each family with a job card to take full advantage of the scheme, get a full hundred days' work, and also receive full payment," said Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot addressing the participants of a two-day workshop on effective implementation of NREGS organised by the Indira Gandhi Panchayati Raj Institute here over the weekend. "Social security aspects are the prime concern of my Government, but we have to plug the leakages and ensure that the funds reach the deserving persons," he said. In fact, the seriousness with which the newly installed Congress Government here is taking up the implementation of NREGS was evident from Mr. Gehlot devoting more than three hours at the workshop, attended by civil servants from the State and outside and social activists from various parts of Rajasthan, led by Magsaysay Award winner Aruna Roy. State Panchayati Raj Minister Bharat Singh, who has been associated with panchayats as sarpanch for more than two decades in the past, sat through both days of the workshop. "Earlier, Rajasthan used to get Rs.250 crore pa under CRF mostly utilised for drought relief. Now each of the 33 districts can get up to a maximum of Rs.250 crore." The participants, including bureaucrats such as Manju Rajpal and former Collector of Dungarpur, talked about the provisions in the NREG Act to curb corruption and bring in transparency. The mechanism includes regular social audits, transparency in work allocation, measurement and payment of wages. Greater public participation in the scheme and creation of awareness about its benefits among the rural people also were among the options cited. Promising to convene a series of meetings at the State, district and bloc levels in the near future on NREGS implementation, Mr. Gehlot offered all support to the NGOs and activist groups. (The Hindu 8/2/09)

'RTI Act an effective tool to fight corruption' (5)

GULBARGA: Judge of the Karnataka High Court D.V. Shylendra Kumar on Saturday said that the Right to Information (RTI) Act was an effective tool to fight corruption in public life. Speaking after inaugurating a workshop on the Right to Information Act, organised by the District Legal Services Authority, Gulbarga Bar Association and Siddhartha Law College, here, Mr. Kumar dwelt in detail about the Act and how effectively it could be used to ensure that welfare measures introduced by the government reached the targeted sections. The government was not in a position to ensure food security to all citizens, he said and added that other basic requirements such as shelter, education and healthcare were still a far cry for a majority of people in the country. Mr. Kumar said that successive governments had launched several welfare programmes directed to help the poor and underprivileged people. However, all these programmes could not change the lives of the poor mainly due to uncontrolled population growth and unresponsive bureaucracy which failed to properly implement these schemes. He said that students of law and advocates had a greater responsibility in ensuring that awareness was created among people about their rights. High Court judge K.N. Keshava Narayan, who presided over the inaugural function, said that the authority had been doing yeoman service to people by creating awareness about the Act. Principal District and Sessions Judge H.S. Ramanna welcomed and secretary of the Bar association Raju Kadaganchi proposed a vote of thanks. (The Hindu 8/2/09)

108 held in railway job exam scam (5)

Lucknow/Jaipur: Feb. 15: In a joint operation with Rajasthan Special Operations Group, the Bhopal Police and the UP Special Task Force, nearly 108 persons were arrested in connection with paper leak of the Railway Recruitment Board examination on Sunday. While 14 gang members and 94 aspirants were arrested from Jaipur, the rest were arrested from Bhopal, according to Mr Amitabh Yash, senior superintendent of police (SSP), STF. The STF team has recovered the original question papers and a number of solved answer sheets from the accused (Asian Age 16/2/09)

Six FCI officials convicted in cheating case (5)

CHENNAI: Eight persons, including six officials of the Food Corporation of India, were convicted in a cheating case by a special court here on Monday. According to the prosecution, S. Sukumaran Nair, M. Sankaran, P.T. Eswaran, M. Anbalagan, X. Arokianathan, B. Gunasekaran, all FCI officials, and S. Gnanamoorthy and S. Rajaram of Chennai entered into a criminal conspiracy to claim medical reimbursement using fake documents. They forged rubber stamps of Government General Hospital, Chennai, and various medical officers. They also got printed cash bills in the names of medical shops and prescription pads of doctors. As many as 187 bogus medical reimbursement claims were made, causing wrongful loss to the FCI. The Anti-Corruption Branch of the Central Bureau of Investigation registered cases under various provisions of IPC and the Prevention of Corruption Act. On conclusion of trial, K. Naganathan, Principal Special Judge for CBI Cases, Chennai, convicted all the eight accused and sentenced them to three years Rigorous Imprisonment. A total fine of Rs.3.95 lakh was imposed on the accused. (The Hindu 17/2/09)

Charges to be framed against ex-ministers (5)

NEW DELHI: A special CBI court on Monday ordered framing of charges against former Union urban development minister Sheila Kaul and her colleague P K Thungan in a 1995 scam relating to the allotment of over 40 shops and stalls in the capital. Finding prima-facie evidence against the Cabinet colleagues of former Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao, Additional Sessions Judge S P Garg said there was sufficient material on record against the ministers and 37 others to proceed with the criminal trial. The court would formally frame charges against them on April 2 under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Prevention of Corruption Act. The court, however, discharged four accused who were allotted shops in 1995 for want of prima-facie evidence. It allowed the plea of special CBI prosecutor Naveen Kumar Matta that the accused ministers abused their official position in furtherance of their common intention to gain monetary benefits. The court ordered framing of charges under the penal provisions relating to criminal conspiracy, breach of trust, and several provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act dealing with abuse of official position for monetary gains. Amongst the high-profile accused are Vivek Kaul, maternal grandson of Sheila Kaul, who is also to be charged with forgery, and senior officials N L Sharma and Shruti Lal Yadav. "There is nothing on record to show how public interest was going to be served by making allotments of shops and stalls. There was no legitimacy in the transaction," the court said in its 82-page order. (Times of India 17/2/09)

Lavalin case: CBI report nails Kerala CPM leader (5)

New Delhi, February 17, 2009: A day after the CPM declared that the allegations of corruption against its Kerala unit boss and Politburo member Pinarayi Vijayan were "politically motivated", the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe report showed his direct involvement in the deal which allegedly caused huge financial losses to the state, running into hundreds of crores of rupees. The CBI report submitted to the Kerala High Court and seen by HT comes as a major embarrassment for the CPM. It has provided specific instances of Vijayan's complete involvement, something which his party bosses have denied so far. The allegations of corruption against Vijayan in a 12 year-old deal, when he was the state power minister, pertain to awarding a contract to a Canadian company SNC Lavalin for the repair and modernisation of three hydroelectric power projects in the state. "Those who have seen the (CBI) report say there is not an iota of evidence that Vijayan has benefited monetarily. I won't go into the details unless I have studied the report," party general secretary Prakash Karat had said. The detailed CBI report showed how misplaced was Karat's claim. "Though the total contract amount for renovation and modernisation of Pallivasal, Sengulam and Panniar hydroelectric projects was Rs 243 crore, a total amount of Rs 333 crore was spent," said the CBI report. It said a committee headed by senior CPM leader E Balanandan had submitted a report to Vijayan in 1997. Balanandan's report was based on the recommendations of experts. It estimated the total cost of repair and modernisation as just Rs 100 crore.

"Without considering the recommendations of the Balandan committee, supply contracts were signed with SNC Lavalin immediately," the CBI report pointed out. "Exploiting the opportunity, Pinarayi hatched the second level of conspiracy since SNC Lavalin had promised a grant for the establishment of Malabar Cancer Centre (MCC) at Thalassery which falls within his native district," the CBI report said. Pinarayi visited Canada in 1996, shortly after taking over as the power minister and finalised the contract in the absence of then Chief Minister EK Nayanar, the agency alleged. "Even a naïve or unsophisticated person will not believe the offer of Rs 100 crore of grant-in-aid for a project initially estimated at Rs 159 crore. Obviously, Lavalin wanted to bag the contract at an exorbitant rate and accused officials along with the minister wanted the cancer centre," the report said. Party leader and Kerala Chief Minister VS Achuthanandan is in favour of allowing the CBI to prosecute Vijayan, his political rival. (Hindustan Times 18/2/09)

ADB impose sanctions on 79 entities for corruption in 2008 (5)

New Delhi: The Asian Development Bank has imposed sanctions on 79 entities, including 41 companies, for "corruption" in 2008. The multilateral lending agency has also put sanctions on 38 individuals. ADB in a statement on Monday said it has sanctioned 41 firms and 38 individuals last year as a result of its corruption investigations. The firms "that were sanctioned" following investigations are prohibited from doing business with ADB for up to seven years. In the case of individuals, the sanctions range from "one year to an indefinite period", the statement said. According to the bank's website, as on January 28, 2009, a total of 286 firms and 266 individuals have been declared ineligible to participate in activities financed by the ADB. Among them, there are two companies -- Target Engineering Corporation and BRC Constructions -- and one individual -- TKP Menon -- from India. They have been described as parties which ADB found impossible to notify after it "declared (them) ineligible to participate in ADB-financed activity". The sanctions on Target Engineering Corporation would be valid "until at least October 28, 2010" and BRC Constructions to remain "until at least June 23, 2011". (Financial Express 18/2/09)

Cash prizes for scribes exposing corruption (5)

Thiruvananthapuram, February 22, 2009: Expose corruption and win attractive rewards. The offer is open for pen-pushers, not for investigating officers. Journalists will have to play a key role in ending corruption at high places, feels the Left Democratic Front government in Kerala. So it has announced cash rewards for scribes who expose corrupt deeds in government offices. It is another story though that the state government is reeling under a massive power kickback (Lavalin scam) and the CPM state secretary Pinarayi Vijayan is using his lung power day in and day out to attack what he calls a "media syndicate". But state finance minister Thomas Issac, a known Left economist, wants the vibrant media to help him fight corruption. Presenting his populist budget on Friday, the minister announced a special fund to reward journalists who expose corruption in public places. This is perhaps a first of its kind in the country. "I want to root out corruption. I need media help. I will reward them appropriately. Rewards will start from Rs 25,000. I have constituted a special fund for this," the minister said while presenting the budget. With an eye on the Lok Sabha elections, the minister has proposed several populist measures including rice at Rs 2 per kilo for families below the poverty line. He has also announced a Rs 10,000 package to fight economic downturn in the state. (Hindustan Times 22/2/09)

Brinda against changes in Bill on corruption (5)

NEW DELHI: Communist Party of India (Marxist) Member of Parliament Brinda Karat has charged the United Progressive Alliance government with trying to dilute the war against corruption. She said it was unfortunate that the government, in its last days of power, was trying to push through controversial Bills and amendments that attempted to tamper with constitutional arrangements. Expressing strong reservations on the proposed amendments to The Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2008, sought to be moved in the Rajya Sabha, she said it was shocking that the government was trying to push through things, which were controversial and aimed at diluting the fight against corruption and provide patronage to the corrupt. I want to know which corrupt public servant or public figures were being protected through these amendments. This Act should be called the 'prevention of corruption act' and the Congress-led government at the Centre will have to answer as to what was the agenda behind moving such amendments to the law." Last week, both the CPI(M) and the BJP joined hands in the Rajya Sabha to stall the tabling of this Bill by Minister of State in PMO Prithviraj Chavan, which, they alleged, was aimed at diluting the anti-graft law. Alleging that these amendments would not stand the test of time, Ms.

Karat said that in Clause 13, sub-clause (III) pertaining to criminal misconduct by a public servant, the government was trying to dilute the entire clause, which stated that a public servant was said to commit the offence of criminal misconduct if while holding office he obtains for any person any valuable thing or pecuniary advantage without any public interest. This amendment was strongly opposed by Ms. Karat and she moved an amendment in this regard. Another amendment moved by Ms. Karat related to a provision in the Bill that deletes the last part of the definition of "known sources of income" of a public servant. "It is shocking that government wants to do away with the word 'intimation,' which requires a public servant to intimate his 'lawful income' to authorities as per the rules applicable." Similarly, the government was also seeking to amend Clause 16, which does away with imposition of any fine over and above the value of what was public. Stating that this Bill was passed in haste during the December session of Parliament along with 16 other Bills, Ms. Karat said the Bill and its implications were not discussed in the Lok Sabha. In such controversial and sensitive matters, the government should refer the Bill to the Parliamentary Standing Committee, instead of trying to push it through without any discussion. "Bringing this Bill to the Rajya Sabha through manufactured majority is not acceptable to us," she said. Ms. Karat said she had taken up the matter with some Congress leaders also who were not happy with the proposed amendments. Any attempt to push through this controversial Bill on Wednesday would not be tolerated and her party would mobilise support to wage a battle against this attempt to protect the corrupt and dilute the war on corruption, she said. (The Hindu 24/2/09)

Corruption among judges will be dealt with (5)

NEW DELHI: The Centre is planning to have statutory provisions to deal with cases of corruption and misconduct involving judges, Law Minister H.R. Bhardwaj said on Tuesday. He was replying to a debate in the Rajya Sabha, where the High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 2009 Bill was passed after a debate. It was approved by the Lok Sabha last week. The Bill proposes to increase the salary of the Chief Justice of India from Rs. 33,000 to Rs.1 lakh per month and that of other apex court judges from Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 90,000. The salaries of the Chief Justices of High Courts will be hiked from Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 90,000 and that of High Court judges from Rs. 26,000 to Rs.80,000. Mr. Bhardwaj said the services of judges should not be measured in terms of the salary they received. "This is a nominal increase considering the dignity of the office of judiciary. This is a token increase after the Sixth Pay Commission recommendations." Replying to members' demand for making the appointment of judges more fair and objective, he said there was a plea for setting up a broad-based National Judicial Commission upon which the consensus of political parties needed to be built. Pointing out that judicial activism was good for democracy, Mr. Bhardwaj said Parliament was the supreme arbiter of policy-related matters. Earlier, initiating the debate, Arun Jaitley (BJP) sought immediate changes in the appointment of judges and also a mechanism to look into allegations of misdemeanour. "The government needs to improve the quality of judges by evolving foolproof criteria for appointment. Discretion of the collegium in appointment of judges could be restricted through a legislative procedure," he said pointing to a fall in the quality and standards of judges. Demanding the immediate formation of the National Judicial Commission, Ram Jethmalani (nominated) said the integrity of judges was increasingly being questioned and it was the duty of the Bar to expose corrupt judges. "The setting up of the National Judicial Commission is an imperative requirement of our legal system," he said, adding "jurisprudence is dead" and "judgments are becoming unreadable." D. Raja (CPI) said the judiciary should be more humane towards the poor and should provide timely justice to all. "Judges should have integrity and should not suppress dissent as it is the fundamental right of the common man to protest," he said and called for judicial reforms. He also favoured judges disclosing their assets. (The Hindu 25/2/09)

Sukhram gets 3-yr jail term in disproportionate assets case (5)

New Delhi: Former Union telecom minister Sukhram was on Wednesday sentenced to three-years imprisonment in a 13-year-old disproportionate assets case by a lower court which observed that a corrupt public servant is a menace to society. The court ordered the forfeiture of Rs 4.25 crore amassed by Sukhram during his tenure as a Cabinet minister in the Narasimha Rao government and also slapped a fine of Rs 2 lakh. The 82-year old former minister, who was granted bail by special CBI Judge VK Maheshwari, said he would challenge the conviction in the Delhi High Court. In his six-page order, the judge made scathing remarks on political corruption. "A corrupt public servant is a menace to the society. Political corruption is the worst form because its consequences are far reaching. When our leaders who are the models of the society, whose every action should be above the board, are themselves corrupt,

how can we expect honesty and virtue from public at large. CBI had during a raid, conducted in August, 1996, seized Rs 2.45 crore in cash stashed in his bed at his official residence in Delhi and Rs1.16 crore from his house in Mandi in Himachal Pradesh. Sukhram escaped the maximum jail term of seven years for the offence under the Prevention of Corruption Act which was pressed by the CBI. "The need of the hour is that the cancer of corruption should be immediately checked," the judge observed while pronouncing the quantum of sentence. The judge said "If the public servants are corrupt, the whole structure of the society would get upset and the policies of the government, howsoever beneficial it may be, would be adversely affected." It said the CBI has proved that Sukhram had accumulated disproportionate assets to the tune of Rs 4.25 crore beyond his known sources of income and the former minister could not satisfactorily explain how he acquired so much wealth. Sukhram had contended that the cash with him was meant for Congress party fund but this was refuted then by senior Congress leaders. Justifying its direction for forfeiture of Rs 4.25 crore, the judge observed, "corrupt public servants should not be allowed to reap the benefit of the crop of corruption sowed by them by corrupt means". (Financial Express 26/2/09)

Bihar plans to introduce anti-corruption Bill (5)

Patna: The Bihar Government is likely to introduce an anti-corruption bill in the State Assembly within the next two days, after Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's admission that corruption has been a big hurdle in State's development, a Minister said here Monday. Minister for Law, Public Information and Public Relations Ramnath Thakur said the bill would be introduced in the State Assembly either Tuesday or Wednesday. "The bill aims to control corruption and hit those involved in corruption," he told IANS. The Bihar Special Court Bill, 2009, will be a step towards removing corruption and pursuing the corrupt officers in the special court through speedy trial. All corrupt officials including serving and retired government officials will come under its ambit after the bill is passed by the State Assembly, an official of the State Law Department said. He said the proposed bill will enable the State to confiscate assets of government officials against whom cases of possessing disproportionate assets have been filed and charge-sheets have been submitted in the court of law. Nitish Kumar during the much-hyped Vikas Yatra in rural Bihar said that corruption has been a big hurdle in the development of the State and sought people's cooperation in the fight against corruption. The State Vigilance Department has arrested about 250 government officials on bribery charges in the last three years as part of its anti-corruption drive. As part of the drive, the department had also arrested Madhepura District Magistrate Hemchandra Jha in 2007 on charges of accepting a bribe of Rs.190,000. Earlier, the residence of a senior Indian Police Service officer Narayan Mishra and an Indian Administrative Service officer was also raided. Over nine kg of gold, including a one kg gold brick, 800 gold coins, and more than one kg of silver was found in the IAS officer's bank locker, department officials had claimed. – IANS (The Hindu 3/3/09)

Andhra barrage case: ACB to decide on course of action (5)

Hyderabad: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) will on Monday take a decision on whether to file an FIR or proceed with the inquiry in the Yellampalli Barrage project case in which Chief Minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy is a respondent. The agency is in a dilemma after the Principal Special Judge for ACB cases directed the agency to investigate the allegations made against the Chief Minister and others in the Yellampalli Barrage project. Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Girish Kumar said on Monday the agency was taking legal opinion whether an FIR should be registered to investigate the matter. The court directed the agency to investigate and submit a report by March 26. With the CM's name involved, the agency is being extra cautious. "We have not filed an FIR yet. We are taking the opinion of legal experts, their legal point of view. A decision would be taken on Monday whether a case should be registered or to go ahead with the inquiry," Girish Kumar said. On February 26, the Principal Special Judge for Anti-Corruption Bureau cases at City Civil Courts, Sanyasi Rao, directed the ACB director-general to investigate allegations of irregularities in calling tenders for the Yellampalli irrigation project, and made Chief Minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy, irrigation minister P Lakshmaiah, former Irrigation secretary C V S K Sarma and four irrigation department officials as respondents, in a complaint made by a city advocate. The complainant alleged that the CM, Irrigation Minister and irrigation department officials had favoured joint venture of IVRC-Navayug Infrastructure Ltd during the tenders process and construction of Yellampalli Project in Karimnagar district. He stated that in the process public money amounting Rs 391 crores was embezzled. This case is already pending in the state Lok Ayukta for the past three years. (Indian Express 3/3/09)

Crime rate, corruption will go up: Lawyers (5)

HYDERABAD: The amendments to Sec 41 of the CrPC will only help further increase crime rate and corruption, allege advocates in the city who are vociferously opposing the move. While the relaxation in the provisions related to arrests will only embolden the criminals, the discretion given to the police in making arrests will make them more corrupt, say city lawyers who participated in a boycott responding to a nationwide call in protest against the amendment a few days ago. Says Sriranga Rao, president of Metropolitan Criminal Courts Bar Association, "With an abysmally low conviction rate in the country, criminals are more worried about arrests. Many offenders feel that they can escape conviction more easily than arrest. In a way, the crime rate is under control because of the fear of arrest and the difficulty in getting a bail. If arrest ceases to be a deterrent, then crime rate is bound to go up." "The amendment also gives the policemen a discretion to arrest when they suspect possibility of a crime being committed. This gives enough scope for the cops to indulge in corruption," he adds. "The Police are in touch with common public and also offenders. Armed with discretionary powers to arrest, they can easily resort to corruption," says another advocate Narasimha. Asked if the lawyers are worried about losing their cases due to the amendment, Sriranga Rao says bail applications fetch only a nominal fee and are mostly done by junior lawyers. A lawyer gets his actual fee only after the chargesheet is filed and trial commences. On innocents getting protection under the new law from harassment through misuse of some legal provisions, especially the SC/ST Act and Sec 498A of the IPC dealing with dowry harassment, Sriranga Rao says the Supreme Court has issued some guidelines regarding arrests in such cases to prevent their misuse. Similar guidelines can be issued wherever necessary to protect people from harassment rather than relaxing the provisions related to arrest, he adds. The lawyers association has submitted a memorandum to the Governor demanding that the amendment be kept in abeyance. Another section of lawyers, meanwhile, feels that amended Sec 41 is a beneficial legislation and shouldn't be opposed on the ground of misuse. Says criminal lawyer Padmanabha Reddy, "A beneficial legislation cannot be stopped because of the fear that it may be misused. Innocent family members sometimes are being implicated in false cases misusing IPC Sec 498A but that law hasn't been scrapped. The same should be the case with Sec 41. Further, it can't be presumed that police are dishonest." (Express Buzz 6/3/09)

Money power rampant in BJP: Shekhawat (5)

New Delhi, March 26, 2009. Adding to the woes of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that is attempting to curb in-house bickering, former Indian vice president and party veteran Bhairon Singh Shekhawat has said "money power was causing rampant indiscipline in the party". "Money power is the root cause of all problems in the BJP and this has resulted in rampant indiscipline within the party," Shekhawat told newsweekly Outlook in an interview. "Even god cannot deny that corruption has increased in the BJP," he maintained. "I have not been a member of the party for the last seven years but how can one deny the fact which is so apparent. In fact, money has led to indiscipline not only in the BJP but in all other parties," said Shekhawat, also a former chief minister of Rajasthan. Commenting on the recent tiff between BJP chief Rajnath Singh and party general secretary Arun Jaitley over the appointment of businessman Sudhanshu Mittal as in-charge of the northeastern states, Shekhawat said this was also an issue related to money power. "I had been cautioning against this. All parties, including the BJP, ignore merit while deciding candidates for elections. The only criteria is how much money one can spend to win an election." "The BJP doesn't resort to same standards while selecting candidates as it used to do earlier...when the basis of selection itself is not right, then how do you expect that honest people and those having high moral standards will get elected?" Shekhawat wondered. Shekhawat was elected vice president for a five year term in August 2002. In July 2007, he resigned from his post after losing the presidential poll to Pratibha Patil. Till 2002, he was active in politics and was considered one of the chief strategists of the BJP. (Hindustan Times 26/3/09)

CAG report exposes Goa land scams: Civil society groups (5)

Panaji, March 28, 2009 With a Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report exposing three mega land allotment scams in touristy Goa, civil society groups say now "all the skeletons have tumbled out" of the government's closet. "The state government has consistently lied to the people on every project where acquisition of land has been involved. They adopt a popular stance for public consumption but, as the CAG report shows, the government files speak a completely different story," Sabina Martins,

convenor of the Goa Bachao Abhiyaan (GBA), told IANS. The CAG report, tabled in the state assembly earlier this week, indicts the Goa government's land use policies, such as the controversial multimillion Dona Paula Information Technology park, the Quitol food park and the special economic zone (SEZ) projects, which the activists allege were riddled with corruption. In these cases, the CAG report indicates that the state government tried to clandestinely hand over huge tracts of land acquired for public purposes to private developers. "Now that the CAG has formally acknowledged this SEZ scam, we demand a full fledged criminal inquiry into land allotments by the SEZ," Goa Movement Against SEZ (GMAS) convenor Mathany Saldanah said. "The government has nowhere to hide now. All the skeletons have finally tumbled out of the closet," he said. In the Dona Paula IT park case, the state government had transferred 285,000 sq metres of prime real estate worth Rs 7.84 crore on the outskirts of Panaji, to the state-run Goa Info Tech Corporation for setting up a high-tech habitat for IT software and ITES (Information Technology Enabled Services) industries some years ago. However, the CAG's scrutiny has revealed that out of the 37 applications received for allotment of plots, only 19 were from IT firms and the remaining were from real estate developers. "Finally, allotments were made to five IT firms and nine developers," indicating that prime land intended for IT-related projects was being palmed off to real estate developers. According to the CAG report, in one instance, a real estate developer Venkatarao Infra Projects was allotted plots without even a proper application or project report, and five developers were allotted plots by relaxing the prescribed eligibility criteria. In the Quitol food park case, the CAG observed that the Goa Industries Development Corporation (GIDC) hastily acquired and allotted 416,000 sq metres of land to a private firm, Betul Hospitality Parks Private Limited (BHPPL), to set up residential resorts for upmarket tourists to cater to the industries that would come up in the proposed food park, for which land had not even been acquired. "The decision of the GIDC to acquire and allot land for residential resorts was a clear deviation from the policies followed by the corporation," the audit report observes, questioning the very logic behind an industrial corporation, facilitating the setting up of residential resorts. On the SEZ issue, the CAG has indicted the GIDC for its haste in cheaply doling out 3.84 million sq metres of land to seven SEZ operators even before formulating its SEZ policy. The report also stated that land was parcelled out at irrationally cheaper rates, causing the exchequer a loss of Rs 39.47 crore. Martins said that there was now an established pattern to the Goa government's greed for acquiring public land and doling it out to private companies. "The CAG report picks up these three instances. What about the Goa government's recent controversial ordinance to grant immunity to encroachment on public land by a five star resort, which the Supreme Court had ordered to be demolished?" Martins asked. He said the Goa government's policies and procedures on land acquisition were "consistently non-transparent and dubious." (Hindustan Times 28/3/09)

Corruption rampant under Rio: Narayanasamy (5)

KOHIMA, March 28 – Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Planning, V Narayanasamy has pulled up Chief Minister, Neiphiu Rio's Democratic Alliance of Nagaland (DAN) Government for alleged rampant corruption in all sectors. Narayanasamy, also AICC general secretary and in-charge of Nagaland was here recently to oversee the electioneering. Narayanasamy, who was here on a two day visit, said corruption in the State has reached its zenith and that if this is not checked immediately Nagas would be nowhere after some years. He claimed that economic packages sanctioned by the UPA Government has not been utilized for the welfare of the people, but has gone to the hands of few people. The Puducherry MP said apart from normal budget, dozens of Centrally-sponsored schemes (CSS) are being sanctioned for Nagaland but all these are pocketed by handful of people. "Funds are not percolating to the deserving people," Narayanasamy said. He demanded immediate investigation into the rampant embezzlement of public money by the present government. "Investigation must be set up", the Minister insisted. The Minister said Congress is prepared to expose the corruption of Rio's Government, especially Central schemes which are not being implemented at all. He, however, assured the people that if UPA is voted to power more funds would be pumped into Nagaland for all round development. He also castigated the State Government's mismanagement of funds as the deficit has reached Rs 600 crores. "The State Government is facing a financial problem," the Minister said adding despite enough funds being sent, the State Government is currently facing financial crisis. Congress in Nagaland is united, he said and ruled out any crisis. But he warned Rio for what he termed "poaching" Congress MLAs with development funds. Four Congress MLAs last month resigned from the Assembly and joined the Nagaland People's Front, the main constituent of the ruling DAN. Kejong Chang, Azheto Sumi, Aloh Konyak and Deo Nukhu, all former Congress MLAs are contesting as NPF candidates in the by-elections.

"We will teach them a lesson," the Minister said. He said Congress at the Centre and the State would not remain quiet. "We will go all out to take action against them," he added. The Union Minister also called on Governor, K Sankaranarayanan and discussed about the smooth conduct of elections. Though the Minister said it was a courtesy call Congress sources said the Minister apprised the Raj Bhavan of misuse of State machineries by the State Government for the forthcoming elections. (Assam Tribune 29/3/09)

Lavalin case back in focus, Governor writes to LDF Govt (5)

Thiruvananthapuram, March 29, 2009 Casting a shadow on the LDF's poll campaign, the SNC Lavalin corruption case, in which the CBI has sought to arraign CPI-M state secretary Pinarayi Vijayan, is back in focus with Governor R S Gavai seeking follow-up steps by Kerala Government on the agency's request. Significantly, this was confirmed by Chief Minister V S Achuthanandan at a meet-the-press in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday, saying the Governor's letter had been forwarded to the Advocate General to examine it and take necessary steps. He said the accused in the case were liable to be punished but they had every right to protect themselves till the court decides on the case. However, within an hour after his meeting with journalists, the Chief Minister's office clarified that what Achuthanandan had meant was not Lavalin case but was reiterating his general stand on corruption. Last week, leaders of Congress-led UDF had called on the Governor alleging that Left Front Government was deliberately delaying sanction to prosecute the accused due to political reasons. The UDF's representation with a covering letter to the Chief Minister was forwarded to his office by Raj Bhavan on Saturday. Confirming the development, Achuthanandan said the opposition's representation and the Governor's letter had immediately been forwarded to the Advocate General and he was informed of the matter over telephone also. (Hindustan Times 29/3/09)

CBI files third status report in UP PF scam (5)

NEW DELHI: The CBI on Wednesday filed in the Supreme Court the third status report of the Uttar Pradesh Provident Fund scam case probe in which names of judicial officers including the judges of high court and one from apex court have cropped up. The investigating agency informed the court that the probe was continuing and report of hand-writing experts from CFSL was awaited which will take around two weeks. Solicitor General G E Vahanvati informed the court that there are several accused who have no incriminating materials against them and their bail pleas have been pending for quite a long time. A Bench headed by Justice Arijit Pasayat asked the Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court to see that the bail application of some accused be considered at the earliest. The Bench said that the CBI can proceed against the main accused Ashutosh Asthana, a treasury official, under the Prevention of Corruption Act and there was no need of any order from this court. The court posted the matter for further hearing on April 30. The names of 34 members of judiciary have cropped up in the scam include an apex court judge, seven Allahabad High Court judges, six retired High Court judges and 12 judges from subordinate judiciary in Uttar Pradesh. (Times of India 1/4/09)

Criminalisation and corruption hurt electoral system, says K.K. Venugopal (5)

CHENNAI: Criminalisation of politics and corruption undermine the democratic principles of the electoral system, K.K. Venugopal, senior advocate, Supreme Court, said on Saturday. He made suggestions for neutralising these negative aspects, to redemocratised the electoral system. Delivering the Fourth Rajaji Memorial Lecture organised by the Triplicane Cultural Academy and the Kasturi Srinivasan Library here, Mr. Venugopal said that on the threshold of the elections to the 15th Lok Sabha, political parties were vying with one another, at the cost of the model code of conduct, to win votes. Talking on 'Redemocratisation of the electoral system,' Mr. Venugopal first focussed on criminalisation of politics — the tendency of parties to rely on gangsters, history sheeters and goondas and their muscle power to win elections. Internet data revealed that as many as 93 members of Parliament had criminal charges pending against them. Mr. Venugopal said Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act talked of disqualification of the contestant on conviction and sentencing for not less than two years. Also, any person who had been declared guilty under special laws by a court of law would be disqualified irrespective of the number of years of conviction. The principle behind the move to protect a candidate from disqualification was the presumption of innocence. But it would be incorrect to apply this principle in a "wooden fashion" without taking into account the damage that might be caused to the democratic process. Mr. Venugopal urged the Election Commission not to discriminate between taking action against a candidate with criminal charges pending against him or her and action against sitting MPs or MLAs

facing criminal charges. Mr. Venugopal's suggestion to prevent corruption and regulate expenditure by candidates was to get the state to fund the bulk of the election expenses. A corpus fund could be set up and corporates willing to donate could pool their money into this general fund. This could then be disbursed to relieve political parties and candidates of part of the expenses. The Supreme Court advocate also proposed that the negative vote or expression of no confidence against every one of the contestants be used forcefully. In addition to the names of the candidates, the machine should carry a button with the legend "None of the Above" for the benefit of those who wanted to cast the negative vote. If, in any constituency, the negative votes exceeded the number of votes secured by the successful candidate, then the election should be declared null and void, Mr. Venugopal explained. The former Chief Election Commissioner, T.S. Krishnamurthy, commenting on by-elections, said if a vacancy arose during the first half of the tenure of the House, the Election Commission should consider conducting a by-election. If it arose during the second half, the party must be asked to nominate a candidate to take the place or the person who secured the second place should take charge. N. Ram, Editor-in-Chief of The Hindu, who chaired the session, said the electoral system of the country was extremely complex, involving over 700 million eligible voters. There were debates on the lengthy process involved, the massive requirement of resources, including security forces, and the huge costs that made contesting polls nearly prohibitive for the aspirants, he said. G. Narayanaswamy, president, Triplicane Cultural Academy, and V. Murali, vice-president, spoke. (The Hindu 5/4/09)

Vigilance nabbed two GOs and ten NGOs in Punjab (5)

Chandigarh, April 06, 2009: Punjab Vigilance Bureau, in a drive against corruption in public life, arrested two Gazetted Officers (GOs) and ten Non-Gazetted Officers (NGOs) in eleven different cases in the last month and was able to secure the conviction of twenty accused in seventeen vigilance cases. Disclosing this in Chandigarh on Monday, Harcharan Singh Bhullar, SSP-cum-Joint Director (Administration) Vigilance Bureau Punjab, said that during the last month of March, the Vigilance had nabbed twelve "corrupt" public servants which included three revenue officials and a district manager of BANKFINCO allegedly red handed accepting bribes in different cases. During this period, the bureau had registered three criminal cases and one vigilance enquiry against the suspect officials to probe into the allegations. Giving details, he said that the special courts have sentenced three GOs, sixteen NGOs and one private person in seventeen different vigilance cases after finding them guilty for one year to six years imprisonment. (Hindustan Times 6/4/09)

Another defence deal with Israel (5)

New Delhi, April 07, 2009: Just when the chorus of protest and charges of corruption over the Rs 10,000 missile deal with Israel were dying out, the government has entered into another defence agreement, worth Rs 1,200 crore, with the same country. Overlooking the Left's protests and allegations of corruption in the purchase of medium-range surface-to-air missiles (MRSAM), the government, in the last week of March, signed an agreement with Israel Military Industries (IMI) to build five artillery munitions factories over three years in Bihar's Nalanda district. The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) had given its go-ahead to the deal in January. The Left had earlier questioned the lack of transparency in the MRSAM deal involving Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI). Signed in February, the contract included a controversial payment of Rs 600 crore towards business charges. The CCS had cleared the joint development of the MRSAM by IAI and the Defence Research and Development Organisation in July 2007. However, the deal was put on hold in the wake of the CBI's investigation into the purchase of Barak missiles from IAI and Rafael. Talking about the deal last week, Defence Minister AK Antony said the government would scrap the MRSAM contract, if the allegations of kickbacks were proved. (Hindustan Times 7/4/09)

Citizens report: how shameful will the 15th Lok Sabha be? (5)

NEW DELHI: The conduct of business in Parliament, marked by a reduced number of sittings, an insufficient apportionment of time to the main functions of deliberation and legislation, as well as frequent and prolonged disruptions due to pandemonium, was a "cause for high concern," says the Citizens Report on Governance and Development 2008-09 by the National Social Watch Coalition. The performance of the 14th Lok Sabha as it comes to an end is a telling tale on the "falling standards," according to the report, 'How Shameful will 15th Lok Sabha be' released here on Monday by an eminent panel of B.N. Yugandhar, Mohini Giri, Madhava Menon and Rajesh Tandon. "What is striking, however, is that the deterioration has intensified in areas where it had set in earlier and in the process the erosion has

moved into hitherto uncharted territories. Slogan-shouting, walkouts and boycotts have resulted in a colossal waste of time and public money." John Samuel, convener, National Social Watch Coalition said: "There is not a single session during these two years that has not lost valuable man-hours on account of unruly incidents. The year 2008 even witnessed the virtual abrogation of a whole session of Parliament." The report points to a "new high" in the corruption and criminalisation of legislators witnessed in the cash-for-vote scam. The corrupting influences are not confined to such manifest spectacles, it says, drawing attention to the sway of corporate houses on the functioning of legislators in order to evolve policies that facilitate their business. Since the 14th Lok Sabha began in June 2004, the average hours put in by the Lower and Upper Houses by the end of 2007 were 4.3 and 3.3, says the report. The average working hours seem to have declined over the years: in 2000, the average for both Houses was 5.5 and 4.4 hours respectively, which subsequently improved marginally in 2003 to 6.1 and 4.7 hours." "The unseemly behaviour of people's representatives in the 'august Houses' and their unethical misdemeanour as exemplified by the cash-for-question and cash-for-vote scams are common knowledge. With the politics of power-hungry politicians and self-styled 'Prime Ministers' and the sight of unprincipled bedfellows in its most brazen display in the election melee, the only apt question now is — how shameful will 15th Lok Sabha be?" (The Hindu 7/4/09)

India, Asia's 4th most corrupt nation (5)

Corruption has gripped countries across the world. India is no exception. Many bribery and corruption scandals have tarnished India's image over the years. Across Asia, several countries still see rampant corruption at all levels exposing the nexus between political parties and corporate houses. India, with a score* of 7.21 on the corruption index, is the fourth most corrupt nation in Asia, according to a survey by the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC). Companies have cited excessive regulation and high levels of corruption as a major constraint to doing business in India. Corruption takes the form of bribery, kickbacks from deals and tax evasion in India. It continues to be a major concern, especially in government procurement of telecommunications, power, and defence deals, the study states. (10/4/09)

Rs 30 lakh cash found in cop's bank locker (5)

VADODARA: Tainted cop JJ Sarvaiya may face more trouble as the anti-corruption bureau (ACB) sleuths have found huge amount of cash stashed in a bank's locker hired by his wife. ACB officials on Friday found cash worth Rs 30 lakh from the State Bank of India's (SBI) locker that was in the name of Sarvaiya's wife Nita. The locker was rented by Nita in Amargadh branch of SBI in Shihor taluka in Bhavnagar. "We have found Rs 30 lakh cash in the locker rented by Sarvaiya's wife. We have learnt that the locker was being operated by Sarvaiya himself," said JR Tiwari, assistant director, ACB. "Also, Rs 6.03 lakh have been deposited in the same bank in a savings account held jointly by Sarvaiya and his wife. Sarvaiya belongs to Hathisana village near Amargadh," said Tiwari, who is being assisted by police inspectors GV Barot and JT Sonara in the investigations. A local court remanded Sarvaiya to three days of police custody late on Thursday night. ACB officials, who are probing the case, have been trying to find out various bank accounts held by Sarvaiya or his relatives. The sleuths had found Rs 9 lakh from Sarvaiya's car apart from gold and silver ornaments on Thursday. The ACB sleuths have also decided to investigate the theft case worth crores of rupees that was being handled by Sarvaiya. "We are trying to ascertain whether Sarvaiya had accepted money from any of the other accused in the theft case. If bribe has been demanded by Sarvaiya from any person in connection with this case then he can approach us," Tiwari told TOI. Sarvaiya, posted as police inspector with local crime branch (LCB) was trapped three days ago allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 1.75 lakh from a person in relation with the theft of iron coils worth Rs 3.5 crore. The tainted cop had demanded bribe from Raju Sheikh to not include his name in the theft case. Sheikh's friend Bharat Tambe had approached the state ACB following which a trap was set for Sarvaiya. "The FIR against Sarvaiya already says that he had demanded Rs 7 lakh from some other accused in the same case. Hence, we are re-investigating the case," Tiwari said. (Times of India 10/4/09)

State crime graph on an upswing (5)

GUWAHATI, April 10 – The Assam Government might use every opportunity to reiterate its pledge to bring peace and development, but the stark fact is crimes in different categories are on an upward curve. Nationally recognised data reveal a disturbing situation in Assam, where both police and civil society can no longer overlook occurrence of serious crimes. Figures maintained by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) point out that Assam figures high in the list of states, with violent crime rate significantly

higher than the national average. In the year 2007, the violent crime rate was as high as 31.2, while the all India rate was 19.0. Only three other states had higher violent crime rates, with Manipur leading the list with 41.5. In the last couple of years, crime against women too has shot up across Assam. According to data maintained by the NCRB the State is among those with high incidence of offences targeting women, including young girls. In the last couple of years, trafficking of women has spread its tentacles in parts of the State. In 2007, the number of cases relating to crime against women in Assam was 6,844, constituting 3.7 per cent of the all India total. The rate of total cognizable crimes was 23.1, but its rank as per rate of total cognizable crime was four. Shockingly, the State has also been witness to a rise in rape cases in the last couple of years. In 2007, the police registered a total of 1,436 cases. This figure is only slightly lower than that of Bihar, which documented 1,555 cases the same year. According to police sources, the crimes committed against women have increased in the State for a number of factors, including better reporting of such offences compared to previous times. Another reason is that crimes like dowry, which earlier were unknown in this part of the country, are now taking place more frequently. Not just civilian deaths, police personnel of the State have also endured the weight of rising crimes. In 2007, a total of 31 policemen had lost their lives. Extremist action claimed 24 police personnel, five were killed by criminals, while two died in accidents. A senior police official admitted that crimes in the State have risen due to a number of factors, including an inadequacy of police personnel and police stations in the State; police density per 100 sq km in Assam is lower than in many other states. He also revealed that a large number of police personnel were attached with VIPs and VVIPs, which left conspicuously smaller forces to deal with regular policing in an effective manner. The gradual change in society's value-system, and (Assam Tribune 11/4/09)

Israeli missile deal major poll issue: CPI-M (5)

The Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) on Tuesday said a \$1.4 billion missile deal India has signed with Israel would be a major issue during the Lok Sabha polls, the first phase of which commences on Thursday. "It is already a major issue in Kerala. In West Bengal also, this issue will come up as part of a larger question as to how the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government has dealt with alleged cases of corruption," CPI-M general secretary Prakash Karat told reporters in Kolkata. "This Rs 10,000-crore deal was signed only two days before the elections were announced. We have been writing to the prime minister for the last one year not to sign the deal," Karat said. The CPI-M leader said, "The same government had filed an FIR against a former defence minister for alleged irregularity in a defence deal involving the same company. So we will make this a major issue." The deal, for the supply by Israel Aerospace Industries of an anti-missile air defence system, was signed in February but made public only in March. It is the biggest defence deal between the two countries. Defence Minister A K Antony has defended the deal, saying it was "clean" and contains a clause providing for its cancellation if it is proved kickbacks were involved. Karat also referred to the alleged scam related to 2G spectrum allocation by the telecom ministry. "The licenses given were undervalued. These companies are selling them at five or six times the amount. The total loss to the exchequer is Rs one lakh crore," he said. Karat said his party had asked for a probe, but the government had refused this. Asked about his party's alliance with Abdul Nasser Madani's People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Kerala, Karat said the PDP had supported the Congress in 2001 on the condition that the party secure Madani's release from jail in connection with the Coimbatore blasts. In 2006, Madani accused the Congress of betrayal and supported the CPI-M-led Left Democratic Front (LDF). "Madani has been acquitted in the blast case. We have not entered into an alliance with him. If they support us, why should we reject their support?" he asked. Karat, on the contrary, accused the Congress of trying up with an "extremist organisation" in Kerala, the National Development Front. "It's name may sound very innocuous. But intelligence reports say that it is extremist and violence prone. Such organisations should not be encouraged," Karat maintained. (Hindustan Times 15/4/09)

Co-accused gets bail in Sarvaiya bribery case (5)

VADODARA: Principal district and sessions court on Wednesday released a co-accused in the JJ Sarvaiya bribery case. Mahendra Neel, LCB constable, was released on conditional bail. "Police produced Neel before court to seek further remand. However, the court rejected the application, while granting Neel a conditional bail," an advocate said. Sarvaiya was caught taking bribe on April 8 by anti-corruption bureau (ACB) sleuths. Later, ACB officials recovered close to Rs 9 lakh worth of liquor from Sarvaiya's car at his house in Meghdhanush Society on Old Padra Road. ACB officials also searched

Neel's house behind Akashwani on Makarpura Road. Neel was also booked as co-accused in the case with Sarvaiya. However, nothing objectionable was found from Neel's house. Sarvaiya had asked for the money from scrap dealer Raju Sheikh for not including Sheikh's name in a theft case of iron coils worth crores from Manjusar GIDC two months ago. According to Sheikh, Sarvaiya was trying to falsely implicate him in the case and allegedly demanded Rs 3 lakh. (Times of India 16/4/09)

'Children have to play a great role in fighting corruption' (5)

New Delhi (PTI): Children should be inculcated with human and natural values to overcome the menace of corruption, feels the country's top vigilance officer. "Our country stands among corrupt nations of the world. It's shame for all of us... Corruption can be fought with the help of society and children have to play a great role in this fight," Central Vigilance Commissioner Pratyush Sinha said. Launching the 'Integrity Club' -- an initiative to rekindle human values among children of Kendriya Vidyalayas, Mr. Sinha said, a nation cannot keep the pace of development for long only on the basis of economic and social growth. "For a long lasting development, we have to promote natural values among children. The future of our nation is in the hands of children. If we do not promote the natural values among our children, they will go in wrong direction," he said. Hoping that the 'Integrity Club', whose programme include regular interaction between children and officials, would play an important role in the country's development, Mr. Sinha said, "Fifteen years down the line, we may proudly say our countrymen and the system are honest." The club has been set up in the schools as a 'community group consisting of students from Class VI to IX in the age group of 11-16 years. Others present on the occasion were Airport Authority of India chairman V P Agrawal and Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan Commissioner Ranglal Jamuda. (The Hindu 17/4/09)

World Bank loan programme infested with fraud: report (5)

Washington: The World Bank's independent evaluation group has warned of significant risks of fraud and corruption in the bank's lending programme, which provides loans and grants to 78 countries, including India. The report relates to the review of the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) programme carried out by the bank's Independent Evaluation Group (IEG). The IEG said a "material weakness" exists in controls over fraud and corruption (F&C) related to IDA. Further, the report pointed out that risk of F&C by stakeholders including local beneficiaries and contractors could result in diversion of IDA funds. "Evidence emerged during the review that suggested that there are significant risks of fraud and corruption (F&C) impinging on IDA's lending operations, not fully matched by appropriate controls," the report said. IDA is part of the World Bank Group that provides interest-free loans and grants to 78 poorest countries including India, which is one of the biggest borrowers from the programme. The IDA aims to boost economic growth, reduce inequalities and improve living condition of people. "Since the risk of fraud and corruption by local beneficiaries, contractors, and other stakeholders can result in diversion of funds that, in the worst case, can impair IDA's mission, IEG considers this weakness to be a material weakness," IEG asserted. According to the report, the material weakness is reinforced by "significant deficiencies found in other related controls: in risk management, project financial management and procurement". The report titled 'Review of IDA Internal Controls An Evaluation of Management's Assessment and the IAD Review' pointed out there has been progress in building the bank's global anti-F&C agenda. India was among the biggest borrowers from the IDA in financial year 2008, borrowing \$837 million and was only next to Vietnam (\$1,193 million), official data shows. Going by the IDA website, some countries like India, Indonesia and Pakistan, are International Development Association-eligible based on per capita income. International Development Association (IDA) was established in 1960 and according to the website, since its inception, IDA credits and grants have totaled \$193 billion, averaging \$10 billion a year in recent years. The IDA complements the World Bank's other lending arm—the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which serves middle-income countries with capital investment and advisory services. (Financial Express 20/4/09)

Jethmalani seeks steps to bring back black money (5)

New Delhi: The former Union Law Minister and senior advocate Ram Jethmalani and five other eminent personalities on Tuesday moved the Supreme Court for a direction to the Centre and the Reserve Bank of India to take immediate steps to bring back Rs. 70,00,000 crore illegally stashed away in Swiss banks. A three-judge Bench of Chief Justice K.G. Balakrishnan, Justices P. Sathasivam and J.M. Panchal directed the matter to be included in Wednesday's 'mentioning list' after senior counsel Anil Divan pressed for early hearing in view of the importance of the petition. The petitioners, who included Gopal

Sharman, Jalbala Vaidya, K.P.S. Gill, Prof. B.B. Dutt and Subash Kashyap, submitted that according to reports, between 2002 and 2006 an estimated Rs. 70 lakh crore had been siphoned off from India and parked in foreign bank accounts. The Indian government had not taken any steps to seize such funds and to prosecute and punish the guilty persons, they said. "This colossal failure to enforce the law and get back the stolen property of the Indian nation is due to the fact that influential politicians in most of the political parties are involved in the offences in question. The Indian people have been deprived of assets which if available would substantially contribute to developmental work in India and to the aim of removing poverty." (The Hindu 22/4/09)

RDO arrested by ACB on graft charge (5)

HYDERABAD: Revenue Divisional Officer of Nagarkurnool Jhonson was arrested by officials of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Friday evening on charges of demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs. 20,000 for permitting conversion of agricultural land for residential purpose. A press release issued by the ACB here on Saturday said the tainted amount of Rs. 20,000 was recovered from Khaja Wahiuddin, a private driver, who accepted the amount on the instructions of the RDO. This followed a complaint by one Vikram Goud stating that the official had demanded illegal gratification. The relevant file was seized from the office of the RDO and he, along with the driver, were arrested before being produced before the Additional Judge for SPE and ACB cases, here. Meanwhile, ACB officials on Saturday 'caught' Mohd. Sharif Khan, Deputy Tahsildar of Veldurthy in Medak district while he was accepting a bribe of Rs.3,000 for doing official favour of issuing agricultural assessment certificate through his typist Makalallu Ranganath. (The Hindu 26/4/09)

Regional Passport Officer arrested (5)

CHENNAI: The Central Bureau of Investigation on Saturday arrested Regional Passport Officer (RPO) of Chennai, Sumathi Ravichandran, her husband and Medical Officer in the Chennai Corporation, Ravichandran, and two travel agents on charges of corruption. They were produced before a special judge and remanded to judicial custody. According to a Superintendent of Police of the CBI, Fathima Muzaffar Ahmed, a travel agent of Ahmed World Travels, T.Nagar, allegedly demanded Rs.9,000 as bribe to be paid to the Regional Passport Officer from P.Lakshmanan of MGR Nagar, who had applied for a passport under the tatkal scheme. This was in addition to the prescribed fee and service charge of Rs.1,000. Mr.Lakshmanan lodged a complaint with the Superintendent of Police (Anti-Corruption Branch), S.Murugan, and a special team was formed to investigate it. Ms.Ahmed took the applicant to the Passport Office at Shastri Bhavan at 4 p.m. on Friday. Though Ms. Sumathi Ravichandran was not present, she had allegedly given instructions to the Deputy Passport Officer, Rukmangathan, to process the application brought by the agent. It was cleared for issue of passport under the tatkal scheme. At this stage, the team took Ms.Ahmed into custody and searched her office. A sum Rs.9,000, which was the alleged bribe, was seized. Officials later searched the residence of the RPO at Kilpauk. During the operation that commenced late on Friday night, CBI officials recovered cash and documents. The team also searched the clinic of Dr.Ravichandran on Greams Road. Investigators are checking at random the profile of applicants who were given tatkal passports in recent months. Raju, a travel agent allegedly associated with Dr.Ravichandran, has also been arrested. (The Hindu 26/4/09)

Caught taking bribe, cop swallows money (5)

NAGPUR: A police constable, who took Rs 1000 bribe, swallowed the cash after anti-corruption bureau sleuths caught him in the act on Saturday. Constable Vijay Kalaskar who swallowed two Rs 500 notes claimed that he took the bribe on behalf of sub-inspector Madhavrao Shinde. Kalaskar and Shinde of Tehsil police station had demanded bribe from Shaikh Jalil. Jalil and five of his family members were arrested for rioting and attempt to murder in December 2008. Though Jalil and others were granted conditional bail, the court directed them to visit police station twice a week till trial began. Jalil and his family members repeatedly requested the Tehsil police to expedite the process of filing chargesheet so that the trial could begin at the earliest. Avinash Karmarkar, senior inspector of state ACB, said that the trap was laid where Jalil was supposed to pay bribe to the constable. "When Kalaskar noticed that we were running towards him, he tried to flee but we nabbed him. He swallowed the currency notes. We took him to Government Medical College and Hospital for medical examination. The stomach wash, stool and urine of the constable would be sent for chemical analysis," said Karmarkar. Ironically for Shinde, an officer of 2007 batch, it was his last few days in office in the police department as he was to join the

district administration as sub-registrar at Armori, Gadchiroli. Shinde and Kalaskar have been arrested. (Times of India 26/4/09)

Delhi: Ex SI gets two years RI for seeking bribe (5)

New Delhi: A court here sentenced a former Delhi Police Sub Inspector to two years rigorous imprisonment for accepting a bribe of Rs 5,000 from a man for not registering a criminal case against him. Special CBI Judge S P Garg also imposed a fine of Rs 15,000 on Devender Singh after holding him guilty under the Prevention of Corruption Act. Singh was apprehended on January 25, 2003, by CBI's anti-corruption sleuths on a complaint of Yogender Pratap Gupta, a job consultant, while taking the bribe money of Rs 5,000. Gupta had alleged to CBI that Singh, who was then posted as police outpost incharge under Rajouri Garden police station, was demanding money for not proceeding against him on a complaint of a girl who had lodged a cheating complaint against him. The court, after perusing the evidence including the statements of prosecution witnesses, convicted Singh and awarded the prison term with the fine. (Indian Express 28/4/09)

Advani attacks Congress on Quattrocchi issue (5)

Ahmedabad, Apr 28 (ANI): Bharatiya Janata Party leader L K Advani on Tuesday attacked the Congress party for being the leading force behind the Central Bureau of Investigation's decision to remove the name of the lone surviving suspect in the Bofors payoff case Ottavio Quattrocchi from the Interpol's list of most wanted persons. Accusing the Congress for being desperate at a time when its five-year term at the Centre is almost over, Advani told a news conference here, "They are not going to come to power. Else, they would have waited for elections to get over and then take this step." He also went ahead to say that he holds both Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress President Sonia Gandhi "guilty" for the removal of Interpol Red Corner Notice (RCN) against the Italian businessman. "If this news is true, then I consider both the Prime Minister and Congress president guilty," said Advani referring to the clean chit given to Quattrocchi. Describing the decision as the "last nail in the coffin of the judicial process in respect of the Bofors scandal", Advani promised he would initiate an inquiry on the Quattrocchi issue, if the BJP is voted to power. Advani recollected that the former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who had achieved an "unprecedented majority in 1984" had lost the 1989 general elections due to his alleged involvement in the corruption scandal. The BJP leader claimed that the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government had "allowed Quattrocchi's account in a London bank to be de-frozen so that he could withdraw his money". Advani further said that Narasimha Rao government had also been easy on Quattrocchi by giving him the chance to go out of the country. "During the Rao Government Quattrocchi, who was considered close to Sonia Gandhi, was given the opportunity to go out of the country," he said. Advani maintained his views on the CBI and said that the agency, during the past five years of the UPA rule has been "misused" for the advantage of the alliance. The Bofors scandal was a major corruption scandal in India in the 1980s, when the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and several others were accused of receiving kickbacks from Bofors AB for winning a bid to supply India's 155 mm field howitzer. The scandal was worth Rs. 150 billion. (ANI) (One India 28/4/09)

Country tired of Bofors case: Bhardwaj (5)

Justifying government's decision to withdraw the Red Corner Notice against Ottavio Quattrocchi, law minister HR Bhardwaj says Bofors case is old and all the characters have died. Bhardwaj also says there is no warrant against the Italian businessman. Bofors case is back in the news? This is a 20-year-old case. Governments have come and gone. VP Singh got the case registered. Then Narasimha Rao came, Atal Bihari Vajpayee came. But nothing happened. The primary case is of corruption by a public servant. From Rajiv Gandhi to former defence secretary SK Bhatnagar were targeted. As additional solicitor general during VP Singh's time Arun Jaitley went to Switzerland. It took so much time to find anything against Rajiv Gandhi or Bhatnagar. Then the prosecution could not bring Quattrocchi. It is an old case in which all characters have died. It should come to an end. Even Vajpayee wanted to end the matter but Advani never wanted it. Is removal of Red Corner Notice linked to few days left for this government? We are coming back to power. (Laughs). Let's see the evidence in the case. In 2002, Malaysian court said Quattrocchi has committed no offence. A huge expenditure was made by CBI in that case. BJP should have known there is no case. When they were in power Hindujas challenged all the charges against them. Delhi High Court quashed all charges of corruption. It is a final order now. After quashing they said only charge under section 420 is left. Still how is the removal of Red Corner justified? Tell me how a case

against section 420 is made out against Quattrocchi. He did not negotiate the deal. It was government of India officials and middlemen like Win Chadha. BJP is groping in the dark. Government of India does not even any original papers. But why withdraw the Notice? Red Corner Notice is on a wrong assumption. In Argentina, he was released because CBI did not have warrant. Quattrocchi filed a case against government of India and CBI. He said at the age of 70 I am being harassed. Then CBI referred the matter to attorney general. A-G said there was no warrant and Red Corner Notice should be removed forthwith. Now CBI has to inform the court. You still justify the timing? You talk of timing because BJP has politicised it. Date for court hearing is not fixed by me. It is coming up coming up in court tomorrow (Thursday). BJP is attacking the A-G and government. A-G will speak the truth. You think the Notice should have been withdrawn earlier. After losing in Malayasia, CBI should have informed the Interpol court. Even after Delhi High Court order they should have informed there is no case of corruption. See the 1997 warrant against Quattrocchi was executed in Malayasia during BJP's rule in Delhi. Again Delhi HC order came during their time. Government lawyer then said there is no case of corruption and no evidence to connect accused persons. Mukul Rohtagi argued it. They could not even produce an original document. It is an old story. It is our grievance that BJP is making insinuation and is trying to embarrass us. It is said you are close to Sonia Gandhi and therefore did this? Petty people think petty. I am not CBI director. If I had my say I would have finished it after my leader Rajiv Gandhi died. HC judgment during BJP's time said the same thing. It was nobody's case. (Times of India 30/4/09)

Complaints against corrupt cops fall on deaf ears (5)

CHANDIGARH: There are hardly any corrupt cops in traffic police! Well, that's what Chandigarh traffic police claims. But an RTI query has brought forth facts that prove otherwise. According to information obtained, as many as 154 complaints were filed against traffic cops in the past six years, but the authorities found just 19 of them fit for taking action against their men and the rest were dumped as they were 'biased'. "Such complaints are filed by people who have been challaned or their vehicles impounded. I rked over this, they complain against the cop who penalized them," SP (traffic) Hardeep Singh Doon said. "It's a ridiculous excuse. Traffic officials just want to defend their corrupt men. How can they explain the huge difference in the number of complaints and the cases where action was taken" said a complainant. "It seems police officials are simply ignoring the fact that some people are challaned only when they refuse to grease the cops' palms," said Ramkumar Singla, a lawyer. Of the 154 complaints received against the traffic cops between 2004 and April 1, 2009, the authorities initiated preliminary inquiry in 119 complaints and 109 of these files were closed as these were "not found fit for the further action". Meanwhile, departmental inquiries were initiated in only 18 complaints and 15 cops were found guilty and slapped punishments. Interestingly, former SP (traffic) AS Ahalawat had himself caught two traffic cops demanding bribe from commuters near Rock Garden in 2008 and placed them under suspension. Moreover, a traffic inspector was dismissed by former IG Satish Chandra following the report of a local channel showing him accepting graft. In February this year, a head constable of traffic wing was suspended when he was caught on camera accepting a bribe of Rs 500. (Times of India 1/5/09)

Lots of money, but none for anti-corruption measures (5)

New Delhi: For a league that revels in flashing its millions in public — right from the player auctions to the spiralling costs involved in the last-minute switch to South Africa — the IPL turned down the International Cricket Council's (ICC) offer to provide anti-corruption cover for the tournament. The IPL decided against hiring the ICC's Anti-Corruption and Securities Unit (ACSU), which would have cost them a fee of \$1.2m (approx Rs 6 crore) — a sum that pales in comparison to some of the other figures that have been thrown about. The IPL, for example, renegotiated their television deal with Sony for a whopping \$1.6 billion (approx Rs 8000 crore) over nine years just before the start of the second season; Cricket South Africa was reportedly paid \$1.1m (approx Rs 5.5 crore) as a flat fee for hosting the event; the IPL gave \$1 million (Rs 5 crore) as a charity scholarship to schools in South Africa; while Mahendra Singh Dhoni alone makes more from the Chennai Super Kings per season than ICC's anti-corruption services quote. The matter was taken up in the BCCI Working Committee meeting on Wednesday, with a number of members demanding an explanation why the ICC offer had not been accepted. "We are giving away millions in charity in South Africa, and we don't have money to secure the tournament against corruption. It's very strange," one of the members said when contacted by The Indian Express. "The objections have been duly noted in the minutes of the meeting, but it's too late now." (Indian Express 2/5/09)

VS should reject AG's report: Mani (5)

KOCHI: Kerala Congress(M) leader K.M. Mani said here on Monday that the Chief Minister should reject the Advocate-General's legal opinion against giving permission for prosecution of Communist Party of India (Marxist) State secretary Pinarayi Vijayan in the SNC Lavalin case. If the Chief Minister accepts the AG's report, it would amount to encouraging corruption, he said. Moreover, the Chief Minister would be violating the pledge to uphold the Constitution of the country if he does not reject the AG's opinion, Mr. Mani told mediapersons. According to Mr. Mani, the courts have pronounced judgments stating that the Governors and Chief Ministers should act in an impartial manner and without violating the basic principles of the Constitution while considering the question of granting permission for prosecution. The AG went beyond the question on which his comments were sought in this case. He had also stated that he could not go through all the documents related to the case. How can one reach a conclusion in such an important case without going through all the documents, he asked. Mr. Mani demanded that the AG step down as he had failed to act in a manner befitting the high office. The CPI(M) secretariat, which directed the government to go by the decision of the AG in the case, should withdraw its statement. It is the government that should take decisions on all matters of governance and not the party, he said. The constituents of the Left Front should make their stand clear on the case and the views expressed by the AG. The Front partners should not support any act that would go against the Constitution, he said. (The Hindu 5/5/09)

Lavalin: BJP to launch campaign (5)

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will launch campaigns from this week to "expose" the Congress and the CPI(M) in the SNC Lavalin corruption case, party State president P.K. Krishnadas has said. Addressing the media after a meeting of party State office-bearers and leaders in charge of Parliamentary constituencies here on Tuesday, Mr. Krishnadas said the Congress was trying to blackmail the CPI(M) over the issue in order to get its support in forming a government at the Centre. The Congress was spreading the message that the Governor would decide on sanctioning prosecution against CPI(M) State secretary Pinarayi Vijayan in the case only after May 16. While Left Democratic Front (LDF) convener Vaikom Viswan almost threatened the Governor by saying that the party would fight it politically if the Governor sanctioned the prosecution, the national leadership of the CPI(M) was trying to influence the Governor. The CPI(M) had extended support to the Governor's family member, who was a candidate in the elections in Maharashtra, despite the presence of a BSP candidate in the constituency. Mr. Krishnadas said the government had advised the Governor against prosecution as the CPI(M) was afraid of the people and the courts. The party was also reluctant to disclose details of discussions on the issue at the party forums and Cabinet because it feared the people. It was clear that the State and national leadership of the party were involved in the deal. The BJP would lead a march to the Raj Bhavan and submit a memorandum seeking prosecution of Mr. Vijayan on May 14. Protest meetings would be organised in panchayat and district centres on May 18. A fortnight-long anti-graft campaign was being planned from May 18. (The Hindu 13/5/09)

Supreme Court reserves verdict on Amarinder Singh's petition (5)

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Tuesday reserved its verdict on former Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh's petition challenging his expulsion from the Vidhan Sabha for alleged corruption in the Amritsar Improvement Trust land exemption case. A five-Judge Constitution Bench comprising Chief Justice K. G. Balakrishnan, Justice R. V. Raveendran, Justice P. Sathasivam, Justice J. M. Panchal and Justice R. M. Lodha reserved the verdict after conclusion of arguments by counsel for the parties. It was the contention of Capt. Singh that the resolution expelling him from the House was unconstitutional and political vendetta. It was argued that "the proceedings are the outcome of political vendetta and mala fide. The special committee [constituted by the House] is an instrument of the ruling party and the expulsion is vitiated by mala fides". Capt. Singh was expelled from the House on September 10 last year for alleged corruption in exempting 32.10 acres of land on Amritsar-Julandhar Road for commercial development by a private promoter. The Court had already restrained the Election Commission from filling the vacancy caused by the expulsion of Capt. Singh. On behalf of the Punjab Assembly it was argued that the House was within its powers to pass a resolution to expel Capt. Singh. The Assembly always enjoyed unlimited powers for expulsion of its members and that the legislature could even take cognisance of a member's action that was committed outside the House and unrelated to his privileges. It was submitted that the

House could expel a member even for breach of trust, misappropriation, loss or criminal acts which had nothing to do with the membership of the House, counsel said. (The Hindu 13/5/09)

Former judge convicted on corruption charges (5)

CHANDIGARH: A special court of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) here on Friday convicted a former judge on corruption charges in a six-year-old case. The quantum of the sentence will be announced on Saturday. The court, that was benched by special CBI Judge Jagdeep Jain, convicted former district judicial magistrate S S Bhardwaj and acquitted Jalandhar district and sessions judge R M Gupta in the case. According to the CBI officials, Gurvinder Singh Samra filed a complaint with CBI in May 2003 that Bhardwaj was demanding Rs 1.1 million (Rs 11 lakh) to settle his cases that were pending in Gupta's court. "Bhardwaj told Samra that he can help in settling his pending cases by using his contacts and demanded Rs 11 lakh from him. Following a tip off from Samra, we laid a trap at Bhardwaj's house here May 9, 2003 and recovered Rs 700,000 cash but Bhardwaj managed to escape from there," said a CBI official in Chandigarh on Friday. He added: "Following this, Bhardwaj applied for bail but after its rejection he surrendered in the CBI court." Audio tapes with recorded conversation of Samra and Bhardwaj, in which the deal was struck between them was presented in the court as the main evidence. The court acquitted Gupta on the grounds that he was unaware of this dealing. (Times of India 15/5/09)

400 of 8,000 govt flats illegally sublet: CBI (5)

CBI started investigating the illegal subletting of government quarters after it arrested assistant estate manager M M Banerjee (centre) in February this year. The government housing scam unearthed by the CBI in February this year seems to be getting bigger and bigger. After a house-to-house check of nearly 8,000 central government quarters in Mumbai over the past two months, the CBI has found that nearly 400 have been sublet illegally. The CBI started investigations into the illegal subletting of government quarters after it arrested assistant estate manager M M Banerjee in February this year. CBI found that M M Banerjee allegedly manipulated records and allotted government flats to private persons for a premium. As a result, the waiting list of government servants seeking accommodation in Mumbai increased. Banerjee was arrested after a woman estate agent contacted the CBI and got him arrested while accepting a bribe. Banerjee, along with his assistant Raman, had, allegedly, even let out an eatery at the Antop Hill government colony which was subsequently converted into a private diagnostic centre. Following the disclosure, CBI started a house-to-house survey of central government housing units in Mumbai to find out just how serious the housing scam was. CBI took the assistance of employees of the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, Mumbai Port Trust and Mazgaon Docks Limited. "We did a survey of nearly 8,000 central government quarters of which 384 quarters at Antop Hill and 19 in Belapur were found to have been sublet," CBI Joint Director (Western Region) Rishi Raj Singh said. During the exercise, CBI found at least 1,500 quarters locked and the allottees could not be contacted. "We suspect many of these quarters have been sublet and will be sending notices to the allottees to contact us and clear the issue," CBI superintendent of police, Abhin Modak said. The survey also revealed that five top government officials of the rank of joint secretary had also sublet their government quarters. The officers have been identified by CBI as M A Hafeez (deputy controller of patents), S M Tripathi (technical officer, Naval Docks), J S Chouhan (deputy director general, shipping and light houses), Arun Singhal (deputy controller of accounts) and C M Tabhane (assistant advisor, agricultural marketing). The CBI has written to the respective departments to take action against these officials. (Mumbai Mirror 16/5/09)

Sukhram aide gets 3 years' RI for telecom scam (5)

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Friday sentenced former bureaucrat Runu Ghosh to three years rigorous imprisonment for amassing disproportionate assets worth Rs 20.94 lakhs during the tenure of former Union minister Sukhram and ordered forfeiture of the assets saying, this is the "most effective way to check corruption." Special CBI judge justified the confiscation of the disproportionate assets of Ghosh saying it was one of the effective means to prevent such convicts from taking advantage of their misdeeds. (Times of India 16/5/09)

Corruption charge against Hasina withdrawn (5)

Dhaka (PTI): A Bangladeshi court on Sunday withdrew a corruption charge against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina after the businessman who filed the case said he was pressured to do so by the earlier interim government. Judge Mozammel Hossain of the Special Judge's Court-5 withdrew the case after a petition

by Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Abdullah Abu, the Daily Star newspaper reported. The Taka 3 crore extortion case against the Awami League leader was filed by businessman Azam J Chowdhury on June 13, 2007. "The charge was brought against Hasina because a businessman said Hasina took a bribe over a deal for a power plant. He now says he was forced to lay the charge by authorities," assistant public prosecutor Kabir Hossain was quoted as saying by the AFP. On April 14, Abdullah Abu filed the petition before the court to withdraw the extortion case against Hasina. Earlier on September 16 last year, the court stayed proceedings of the case and also granted bail to Hasina following a petition filed by her, the report said. Abu earlier recommended that 11 other cases against the prime minister be withdrawn as they were filed to "tarnish the image of the Awami League chief and her previous government". The cases include those filed by the last BNP-led government for alleged graft in the purchase of MiG-29s for the air force and Frigate for the navy, and in the construction of Bangabandhu Planetarium, the daily said. (The Hindu 17/5/09)

Witness turns hostile in corruption case against Speaker (5)

Mohali: Another prosecution witness turned hostile in a criminal and corruption case against Punjab Assembly Speaker Nirmal Singh Kahlon before a special Mohali court on Monday. With former chairman of the Departmental Selection Committee Pardeep Singh Kaleke, deputy director of the Rural Development department when Kahlon was Minister for Rural Development and Panchayats, retracting from his previous statement against Kahlon, almost one-third of the total prosecution witnesses examined so far have turned hostile. However, another prosecution witness Jit Singh, who was senior assistant of the department, submitted the details of expenditure on petrol incurred by the department on the official car of Kahlon when he was minister. There are a total of 40 prosecution witnesses in the case. Additional and Special Judge S K Garg, who is conducting the trial, fixed June 3 as the next date for further proceedings in the trial of the case after public prosecutor Pradeep Mehta concluded the examination of two witnesses. (Indian Express 19/5/09)

Citizens rate BDA, tehsil offices as most corrupt (5)

BERHAMPUR: The Berhampur Development Authority (BDA), tehsil and sub-registrar offices in the city are rated to be the most corrupt institutions in the city. Anti-corruption slogans continue to be election issue yet common people of the city languish in the mud of corruption. As per a survey made in Berhampur recently, most of the citizens accepted that paying bribe had become a way of life to obtain basic public services. Eighty two per cent of the respondents of this sample survey declared that they were paying bribe to get public services in Berhampur. This Urban Corruption Survey was (UCS) was conducted by a social research and development organisation, Youth for Social Development (YSD). During the survey the respondents reported that bribing was the most prevalent process to get approvals for construction from the BDA and to obtain services related to land records and administration from local tehsil and sub-registrar offices. Around 90 per cent of the respondent families claimed to have paid bribes to get BDA services while 85 per cent claimed to have resorted to bribing for services from tehsil and sub-registrar offices. The other institutions of public service where the respondents allegedly had to pay bribe included municipal services, public distribution system, and public health care. The survey found that the persons accepting bribes were non partisan in their attitude. The acceptors of bribe never differentiated between the economic status of well to do families and the slum dwellers. The amount of bribe remained same for all. Middlemen played a major role in this collection of bribe. Prevalence of these middlemen was highest in the BDA followed by land record and administration. Drinking water services ranked third in relation to dominance of middlemen for collection of bribe. The average size of bribe packet was calculated to be 2,843 for the BDA which was the highest. It was Rs. 1,655 in case of land record and administration service. The average bribe paid in case of public distribution services was Rs. 455. It may be noted that it is the poor who mostly benefit from the public distribution services. The citizens were also not satisfied with the anti-corruption mechanism. Around 90 per cent of the families found the anti-corruption mechanism to be poor or very poor. It was found that fear of harassment and delay in services was the main reason for payment of bribe. Unavailability of procedural information and the difficult application procedure also compelled citizens to pay bribe. Most respondents felt fear of 'denial of services' was the strongest reason for corruption. (The Hindu 22/5/09)

Strengthen rural jobs scheme, says Aruna Roy (5)

JAIPUR: In the wake of the general feeling that the pro-poor decisions by the United Progressive Alliance government, including the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), helped the Congress to do well in the current Lok Sabha elections, the pioneers of the cause, Magsaysay award winner Aruna Roy and her associates in the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), met Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot here on Sunday. They sought further strengthening the job scheme and asked him to carry out certain improvements in the implementation of the Right to Information (RTI) Act. "The Chief Minister was emphatic on the significance of the NREGA for Rajasthan. He is keen on evolving a corruption free system in its implementation," Ms. Roy said talking to The Hindu thereafter. "We suggested to him to establish a social audit unit in the State which can periodically look into the functioning of the job scheme and also other departments," she said. The audits would check corruption and provide an answer to Mr. Gehlot's concern over the potential for corruption in the scheme, she noted. The MKSS team, which included Nikhil Dey and Shankar Singh, told Mr. Gehlot that Rajasthan could follow the Andhra Pradesh model in certain aspects of implementation of the NREGS. "It is interesting to note that Andhra Pradesh had picked up many aspects of Rajasthan's job scheme and the drought relief works such as the mate system. Now Rajasthan can make use of some of the successful experiments carried out by Andhra Pradesh, including the provision for return of the money involved in corruption cases," Ms. Roy pointed out. In the RTI, the activists wanted the Gehlot Government to strengthen the infrastructure by recruiting more personnel to help its smooth implementation. The Government also could take up a pro-active disclosure campaign for the departments so that people remain informed about the activities and development works even without going through the processes of formally seeking to know about them, they pointed out. "The Chief Minister's Office should have a monitoring committee for RTI. There should be also strong action on accountability," Ms. Roy said. The social activists said they were happy about the outcome of the present general elections as it would strengthen the "pro-poor" agenda. "The results have strengthened the demand for political accountability," Ms. Roy observed. (The Hindu 25/5/09)

3,350 MCD officials tainted: RTI (5)

New Delhi: While corruption in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi is old news, the magnitude can shock. An RTI query has revealed that 3,350 MCD officials are facing corruption charges and inquiries, with some cases awaiting prosecution for almost three decades. Most of the tainted officers are at middle and senior levels, and many are repeat offenders. In reply to the RTI application by Vivek Garg, an advocate and activist, the Public Information Officer of the MCD's Vigilance department said as many as 4,299 cases were pending against 3,350 officials — the civic body has around 1.5 lakh employees. Garg had sought data related to cases of corruption awaiting prosecution for 25 years. Out of the cases, 1,435 were registered by the Anti-Corruption Branch of the Delhi government, the Delhi Police and the CBI, and 2,877 were registered by the MCD's vigilance wing. (Indian Express 25/5/09)

Sub-inspector, constable arrested for taking bribe (5)

JAIPUR: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Monday caught a sub-inspector and a constable taking a bribe of Rs 5,000 for filing a challan in a court in Taranagar in Churu district. According to ACB, one Dilip Kumar, a resident of Chalkui village, lodged an FIR against two persons — Hanuman and Indraraj — under Sections 452, 341 and 323 of IPC on May 10. Next day, Hanuman and Indraraj lodged an FIR against Dilip under Sections 341 and 323 of IPC. "Dilip alleged that when he met the SI of the Taranagar police station, Bhom Singh, the latter demanded a bribe of Rs 10,000 for filing final report in the case against him and for filing challan against Hanuman and Indraraj," said an ACB official. It was settled that Dilip would give Rs 7,000. Bhom Singh told Dilip that if he was not available, Dilip should give the money to constable Mahendra Singh. ACB laid the trap and caught Bhom Singh and Mahendra Singh accepting a bribe of Rs 5,000 from the complainant. Both have been arrested. In another case, a lower divisional clerk in Alwar was arrested by ACB after he was caught red-handed accepting a bribe of Rs 2,000. The ACB officials said that one Banwari had approached the ACB complaining that LDC Mamchand had demanded Rs 10,000 from him. "Banwari had lodged an FIR against one Hariram under Section 379 of IPC in 2000. Hariram was acquitted in the case. To help Banwari file an appeal against the court's decision, Mamchand demanded the money," said an ACB officer. The ACB team caught Mamchand accepting Rs 2000, the first installment from the complainant. (Times of India 26/5/09)

Retd IAS to probe drain-cover project (5)

LUDHIANA: Acting tough against the improper utilization of funds due to the alleged nexus between the municipal corporation (MC) officials and the contractors, the state government has appointed a retired IAS officer to conduct a probe into the project of the open-drain covering. A large number of MC staff has been charge-sheeted in the project. According to information, in a letter written to MC commissioner GS Ghuman, a few days back, principal secretary of the local bodies department DS Bains had informed him that the state government had appointed (Retd) Joginder Pal, IAS, to look into the irregularities in the ambitious project that was stalled after draining more than Rs 1 crore of the public money. The starting of inquiry assumes significance as the project has been in the news ever since its inception and the open allegations of corruption in the project had come to the fore from time to time. During the previous Congress regime, the civic body had initiated a project of covering the drain that passes through the interiors of the city from Shingar Cinema locality to Gurdwara Dukh Nivaran Sahib at an estimated cost of around Rs 16 crore. However due to the technical faults, it was stalled. Department sources claimed that the Punjab Water Supply and Sewerage Board did not clear the project but the MC ignored recommendations and went ahead due to which the work was stalled. The project has been dogged by allegations of corruption. Even present deputy speaker Satpal Gosain had made it an election issue by attacking his rival for corruption and draining public money just to favour contractor and officer. Earlier, due to the faulty planning of the drainage system covering from Gurdwara Dukh Nivaran to Buddha Naala, the government had charge-sheeted five officials who were associated with the project. These officers included (retd) SE Ashok Kumar, (retd) XEN Kashmira Singh, SE Dharam Singh, SDO PK Singla and junior engineer Kuldeep Singh. (Times of India 26/5/09)

Defence ministry blacklists 7 firms on corruption charges (5)

NEW DELHI: With former Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) chairman Sudipto Ghosh being arrested by CBI recently in a major defence scandal, the defence ministry has blacklisted seven companies, including major ones from Israel, Singapore and Poland, named in the case. Keen to curb the widespread murky wheeling and dealing in arms deals, defence minister A K Antony has directed that all acquisition cases and projects in the pipeline with the seven companies "be put on hold till further orders". While the foreign firms are Israeli Military Industries (IMI), Singapore Technology, Media Architects (Singapore) and BVT Poland, the Indian ones are HYT Engineering, R K Machine Tools and T S Kishan and Company Pvt Ltd. All the seven firms were named in the CBI FIR registered on May 17 against Ghosh, M S Sawhney, a Vasant Vihar-based defence dealer, Ramesh Nambiar, an additional general manager with Air India, and three middlemen, Ashish Bose, Pradeep Rana and Kanhai Lal Das. IMI, incidentally, had inked a contract with OFB, worth around Rs 1,200 crore, to set up an ordnance complex of five plants at Nalanda in Bihar, in the run-up to the general elections in March. The plants were to manufacture 155mm Bi-Modular Charge Systems (BMCS) and other propellant charges for heavy calibre artillery ammunition for Army's Bofors howitzers and other guns. Singapore Technology, one of the biggest aerospace and land systems company in Asia, in turn, was a strong contender in tenders for 155mm artillery guns for Army. While Media Architects is said to be supplying video-editing software to Indian armed forces, BVT Poland is said to be engaged in marine engineering and naval architecture. As for the Indian companies, T S Kishan and Company apparently supplies spares and accessories for Army's T-72 and T-90S main-battle tanks, while Pune-based HYT Engineering provides some components of missiles produced within the country. Ludhiana-based R K Machine Tools, in turn, supplies spares for vehicles and machinery produced by Defence PSU Bharat Earth Movers Ltd. "While CBI is yet to file the chargesheet, there is concrete evidence about money transfers to personal accounts of the persons named in the FIR. The defence ministry has sought a detailed list of equipment and material that these blacklisted companies provided to the armed forces. It is still awaited," said an official. The blacklisting of the seven companies comes four years after the South African arms firm, Denel, was banned for allegedly paying Rs 20 crore as kickbacks in five contracts for supply of 700 anti-material rifles and ammunition as well as transfer of technology to OFB. But, interestingly enough, Israeli Aerospace Industries and Rafael, named in the kickbacks case in the original Rs 1,160-crore Barak-I anti-missile defence system deal inked in 2000, have not been blacklisted on the ground that it would be "counter-productive" due to the several crucial defence projects underway with them. The Nalanda project, on its part, has had a convoluted past. The project was first kicked off during George Fernandes' tenure as defence minister in the NDA regime, with the proposed factory complex at Rajgir in Nalanda located in his earlier Lok Sabha constituency. Later, the NDA regime identified Denel for the Nalanda project. But after Denel's blacklisting, the construction of the Nalanda complex, on which an initial Rs 306 crore was spent, had come to a grinding halt. The UPA government,

after coming to office, later constituted an "expert committee" to review the entire project. Subsequently, a global tender was floated after the green signal from the "expert committee" and the Cabinet Committee on Security had approved IMI's participation in January this year. (Times of India 6/6/09)

Governor clears prosecution of Kerala CPI(M) leader (5)

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Rejecting the State Cabinet's clear advice to the contrary, Kerala Governor R.S. Gavai on Sunday conveyed his permission to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to prosecute Communist Party of India (Marxist) State secretary Pinarayi Vijayan in the SNC-Lavalin case involving certain charges of corruption. The CBI had sought the Governor's clearance to proceed against Mr. Vijayan under the provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) which mandates such clearance in the case of persons who were or are public servants at the time an alleged crime under IPC is committed. With the Governor granting permission, the CBI is now free to file a charge sheet and initiate prosecution measures against Mr. Vijayan, who is listed as the ninth accused. The case had acquired more than legal dimensions with Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan reportedly going against the party's official position that the CBI case is politically motivated and arguing in party fora and even in the Cabinet that Mr. Vijayan should face prosecution. The Cabinet went by Advocate General C.P. Sudhakara Prasad's advice and recommended to the Governor that clearance need not be given to prosecute him. Not satisfied with the Cabinet's advice, the Governor sought further clarifications from the government on the grounds on which the Advocate General and it had given the recommendation, sought and secured further evidence from the CBI and reportedly also consulted legal experts here and in New Delhi. The Governor's decision has created a curious situation because K. Mohanachandran, who was the Power Secretary when the contract was given, and A. Francis, who was the Joint Secretary in the Power Department, who were also listed as accused now remain exempt from prosecution. The Cabinet had gone by the advice of the AG in their case too and decided not to grant permission for their being prosecuted. The CBI will now have to move the courts to secure clearance to prosecute them. The CPI(M) State secretariat said the party stood firm in its position that the CBI move was politically motivated. "The UDF and other anti-party forces have been exerting strong pressure on the Governor for the last three months for clearance for prosecution. Reports purportedly emanating from the CBI have been appearing in different media at each stage of the case. On its part, the CBI had given silent consent to this. It is perhaps for the first time that the CBI has waited at the Raj Bhavan and secured an order. It is most unfortunate that the Governor has taken a decision which is at variance with the advice it had sought and secured from the Cabinet. The attack on the CPI(M) and the party secretary will be dealt with politically and legally," the statement said. (The Hindu 8/6/09)

YSR tells ACB to be tough against corrupt (5)

HYDERABAD: The chief minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy on Sunday asked the Anti Corruption Bureau to intensify its raids against corrupt people and assured that there would be no political interference however big or influential the person might be. Speaking at a review meeting, Reddy, who was criticised for not being tough against those indulged in corruption during his tenure last time, told the department that because of the behaviour of few individuals, the image of the government and the state was getting tarnished. He said what had disturbed him was that despite the good efforts put in by the officials to implement the welfare programmes, the corrupt practices indulged in by few had tarnished the image of the government and had given a scope for the opposition to convert it into a politically-motivated campaign. He told the ACB that once he gets a final report from his sources, he would pass it on to the ACB for action. Reddy said that he had commissioned a survey by an independent agency on corruption in some key sectors and based on the report, he had asked for an in-depth inquiry and once the report comes, it would be handed over to the ACB, he said. Reddy also said that functioning of all departments should go online so that there would be greater transparency in functioning and less chances of corruption. The ACB director general R R Girish Kumar told the chief minister that the department had achieved greater conviction rate in 2004-08 compared to earlier periods. Even the cases of disproportionate assets cases in the state was highest compared to Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the ACB added. (Times of India 8/6/09)

TDR scam: Another held; Kharwadkar, 2 others get bail (5)

Ludhiana: The Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Tuesday arrested Capt Ashok Vishwanath Deshpande (67), who was the additional commissioner, Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), in 1999-2000, for alleged

involvement in the transfer of development rights (TDR) scam. An ACB team, led by inspector Sanjay Bhamre, held Deshpande in Shivajinagar on Tuesday. Deshpande, now retired, is a resident of Baner. The three arrested on Monday, PMC's additional city engineer (roads) Vivek Madhukar Kharwadkar, retired assistant engineer of PMC Arun Mahadev Joshi, and a builder staying in Shivajinagar, Shekhar Chandrakant Savkar, were granted interim bail by Additional Sessions Judge P R Bora on Tuesday. Public prosecutor Ujjwala Pawar demanded that considering the serious nature of the crime, the accused be taken in police custody. "He (Kharwadkar) could tamper with documents and evidence, as he works with the PMC," Pawar argued. Advocate Pratap Pardeshi, representing Kharwadkar and Joshi, said there was no signature of Kharwadkar on one of the TDR certificates and in the other instances, though he had given a written objection to granting of TDR, the TDR Committee had gone ahead and granted it. Besides, Kharwadkar is not the final authority to grant TDR, argued the defence lawyer, who said a search at the house of the accused had not yielded any evidence. Advocate Sudheer Shah, Savkar's defence counsel, said the case was filed in 2005. "The prosecution had ample time to collect evidence since then. The accused, if he had any intention to tamper with evidence, could have done it in the past four years." (Indian Express 17/6/09)

'Use RTI Act to weed out corruption' (5)

JAIPUR: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has sought application of the Right to Information Act for elimination of corrupt practices in the much talked about National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. "NREGS is an excellent scheme. The country as well as the State cannot afford financial bungling and anomalies in such a vital scheme," he said addressing a meeting of District Collectors here. He was candid enough to accept that the nascent scheme was already afflicted with the malady of corrupt practices. "What you have told the gathering here only confirms my notion on the existing corruption in NREGS," Mr. Gehlot said in his concluding address here after the District Collectors, the State Chief Secretary and Ministers of various departments placed their views. "When I was in the Opposition too I had been talking about corruption in the scheme. About 10 lakh persons out of the 40 lakh who got employment officially under the scheme must have been bogus," he said making a rather startling observation on the goings-on in a State which ironically is widely considered one of the better States in NREGS implementation. In his first collective interaction with the Collectors after taking over as Chief Minister for the second time six months ago, Mr. Gehlot also conceded that NREGS had a bad start in Rajasthan. During the meeting, convened to brief senior district officials on linking the ambitious new "Harit Rajasthan" scheme with NREGS, Mr. Gehlot asked the Administration to implement the provisions of the RTI to bring about better transparency. (The Hindu 20/6/09)

Corruption may eat away \$500 bn from global stimulus funds (5)

Fraudulent and corrupt practices are expected to swallow a whopping \$500 billion out of \$5 trillion stimulus fundings by governments worldwide, a global report has said. According to global risk consultancy Kroll's latest edition of Global Fraud Report, government stimulus funding worldwide aggregating \$5 trillion has introduced new opportunities for fraud and corruption worldwide. Though governments are likely to struggle to keep the losses through corruption down, it would "still provide a staggering pot of \$500 billion in corrupt gains," the report stated. Citing data from Transparency International, the global coalition against corruption, the report stated that it has put into perspective the heightened risk brought on by the financial crisis. "According to the coalition, corruption can raise procurement contract costs by at least 10 per cent in a stable economy – an equivalent of \$500 billion in corrupt gains," the Kroll report stated. Interestingly, in emergency situations these costs can rise as high as 30 per cent of the overall cost of the contract, it added. "Governments need to be aware of significant risk of corruption that coincides with stimulus funding," Kroll's Business Intelligence and Investigations practice senior managing director Blake Coppotelli said Federal and state agencies controlling distribution of these funds need to enhance their resources to oversee and enforce robust anti-corruption policies or look to independent experts to supplement their efforts, Coppotelli added. The report highlighted that government spending was often targeted by fraudsters, because the nature of the projects — large sums of investment coupled with complex procurement processes — provide both the motive and the means for opportunists to take advantage. "With equivalent to Japan's annual national output being plugged into economy in fiscal stimulus packages set by world leaders at the G20 London Summit, opportunity to fraudsters has become significantly more attractive," it added. The Kroll report addresses the rising concerns and offers guidance to governments in tackling corruption. It advised that

tendering processes should be as transparent as possible, including the distribution, receipt, and use of funds, and the procurement of contracts paid by these funds. Further, agencies and vendors should be held accountable for instituting and complying with transparent processes and rewards should be provided to officials who deliver projects successfully and appropriate salaries should be used to discourage bribery, it said. (Business Standard 22/6/09)

CBI: defence supplies under the scanner (5)

Pune: The Central Bureau of Investigation– Anti Corruption Bureau (CBI –ACB) is investigating into the instances of spurious defence supplies effected from the area of its jurisdiction, said Vidya Kulkarni, Supritendent, CBI –ACB, Pune. She was addressing the media for the first time after taking charge on Monday. Vidya Kulkarni, a former student of the University of Pune, is an IPS officer of the 1998 batch. She has come to Pune on deputation from Tamil Nadu Subash Chandra Gupta, SP, and CBI – ACB said, “We have information about supply of substandard components and materials to the various units under Ministry of Defence. Some of these components are of critical use in the army. The substandard components detected were used for operational efficiency of vehicles and other equipment.” Kulkarni said that the CBI-ACB started its operations in the city in January this year. The branch was started to check corrupt practices in various central government departments and public sector undertakings. “We have 10 districts under our jurisdiction including Pune, Kolhapur, Satara, Ahmednagar, Solapur, Sangli, Aurangabad, Beed, Usmanabad and Jalna,” she said. She said that apart from investigating fraudulent activities by the central government employees or the private parties in collusion with them, the branch may also take up issues of counterfeit currency and drug trafficking. She added that in a short span of less than six months, CBI has registered cases of trap, disproportionate assets and fraud against officials of defence ministry, nationalised banks and Hindustan Antibiotics. (Indian Express 23/6/09)

Education Department official held on graft charge (5)

CHENNAI: Officials of the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption on Monday arrested an Additional Assistant Educational Officer on the charge of taking a bribe from a schoolteacher. According to sources in the agency, J. Christina Mary (40) works as a teacher in an aided school at Sendivakkam near Melmaruvathur. She was appointed on June 2, 2008, but her salary and incentives were not being paid regularly. When she approached AAEO V. Reeta Fernando (42) at Acharapakkam, the official demanded Rs.50,000. When the teacher expressed her inability to pay, Reeta brought down the demand to Rs.30,000. Ms. Mary lodged a complaint with the DVAC and a special team led by Deputy Superintendent of Police S. Saravanan was formed to investigate the case. After changing the place of meeting several times, the accused finally asked the complainant to meet her in front of the Egmore railway station on Monday morning. The team arrested Reeta, in the presence of official witnesses, soon after she took the money. The accused has been remanded to judicial custody. (The Hindu 23/6/09)

RTI petitioner uncovers fund misuse (5)

BONGAIGAON, June 24 – Government departments and officials in Bongaigaon district are not responding properly to the Right To Information (RTI) Act, 2005 and are busy hushing up proofs of corruption adopting every possible means under political patronage. Alleged misappropriation of PMGY and SGRY fund in Srijangram, Manikpur and Boitamari development blocks in Bongaigaon is a fit instance. Ainul Haque, resident of Nayapara, Abhayapuri under North Salmara sub- division of Bongaigaon district, is a petitioner of RTI. He sought detailed information on allotted houses to BPL families under PMGY and SGRY in the year 2002- 2005 in Srijangram, Manikpur and Boitamari development blocks. Haque applied on March 4 in Manikpur, on March 10 in Srijangram and on May 5 in Boitamari block for the information. Accordingly, Project Director (PD) BC Hazarika of Bongaigaon, DRDA called Haque to his office for hearing on May 5. However, in the hearing the PD could not produce required documents on behalf of Block Development Officers (BDOs) before Haque. Following this, the PD fixed June 16 as date for second hearing. On June 16 in the PD office in presence of three BDOs— Dibendu Barman(Srijangram), Tushar Kanti Das (Boitamari) and Dhruba Das (Manikpur) – Hazarika(PD) furnished documents to Haque without satisfying other related queries. Likewise, the DRDA authority made available only names of beneficiaries and vouchers of cash paid to beneficiaries to the petitioner Ainul Haque in the second hearing. The DRDA authority in the second hearing did not produce copies of BPL cards, caste certificates, utilisation certificates and Gram Sabha approved lists of beneficiaries, alleged Haque. It is to be mentioned that before implementing the PMGY and SGRY in rural areas

complete lists of beneficiaries with their BPL card number, proper address, caste certificate copies, photographs, cash vouchers, list of housing material lists and utilisation certificate are required basically. However, not a single document of this sort is available with the BDOs of these blocks. Besides, the lists of beneficiaries supplied to the petitioner are incomplete. On the other hand, the department has given some unwanted copies of documents without going through the application mindfully. Hence, petitioner has to spend extra money against those useless papers. In these cases, BDOs and DRDA department have utterly violated guidelines of the schemes. Now the petitioner has decided to approach the Information Commissioner for final reply. Following this move, he will knock the door of court to punish the fraudulent officers of DRDA, Haque said. (Assam Tribune 24/6/09)

People's adalats to expose corruption (5)

KOCHI: Don't worry if an official at a revenue office in Ernakulam purposefully delays the issue of a certificate for not paying bribe. The Revenue Department is offering the public an opportunity to disclose the name of the official and the amount he demanded at the 'janakeeya adalats' (people's adalats) soon to be launched in the district. Senior revenue officials in Ernakulam will participate in the adalat. Public can voice their complaints at the open forum without any fear. Revenue Minister K. P. Rajendran told The Hindu that the janakeeya adalat programme will give the public an open platform to air their grievances. He said that the senior officials attending the meeting will immediately take action, if the complaint is found true. The applicants can raise a wide range of issues during the event, Mr. Rajendran said. From cases related to illegal sand-mining in Periyar River to indiscriminate land filling in ecologically sensitive areas, the public can present several issues related to the revenue offices in the district during the programme. For instance, if a village officer refuses to give the encumbrance certificate even after the stipulated period, the applicant can appear during the adalat with necessary documents to support his complaint. The adalat will ask the village officer concerned to issue the certificate immediately. From July, surprise raids will be conducted at revenue offices. District Collector and other senior officials will participate in the raids. The Minister said that the Department had received reports that certain officials were involved in removing key pages in land records to help certain vested interests. The surprise squads will keep an eye on such allegations in the coming days, he said. (The Hindu 26/6/09)

Graft in clearing poll bills alleged (5)

KOCHI: More than a month after the Lok Sabha election results were announced, allegations of rampant corruption in producing exorbitant bills towards election expenses and demanding bribe for getting claims approved have cropped up in the district. Highly placed sources in the district administration told The Hindu that inflated bills had been presented as a result of an unholy nexus between a section of revenue and election officials and private agencies and individuals whose services were utilised for the conduct of the elections. Senior district administration officials are keeping track of the activities of a clerk in the election wing at the district collectorate, who is reportedly charging 10 per cent as commission to get the bills cleared. The clerk concerned is entrusted with clearing the bills, which then come before the Deputy Collector (Elections). He later puts his signature enabling the parties concerned to get the dues from the treasury. Sources said that the unsuspecting victims of this web of corruption and bribery were honest officials who met the election expenses even out of their own pockets in the hope of getting reimbursed later. He was transferred here from his post as Additional District Magistrate in Kottayam just ahead of the election as part of the pre-election shuffling of officials to ensure free and fair elections. Though the government order reinstating him to his original position had already been issued, he is unable to move out, as the final settlement of election expenses was yet to be completed. Sources said that while the clerk in question approved the bills of pliable officials who had presented exaggerated bills of expenses and were ready to pay the bribe, bills of those who had claimed only the actual expenses incurred and therefore not ready to grease his palm remain ignored. For instance, official records suggest that bills to the tune of Rs. 35 lakh in connection with election expenses had been remaining stuck in Kannayannur taluk alone owing to the attitude of this official. Reportedly, he rarely comes to the office. Attempts to see him to get bills cleared are therefore futile. Aggrieved parties are now planning to petition the District Collector. "Though not in the office he ensures that bills 'beneficial' to him are promptly moved. Charging a commission at the rate of 10 per cent would make him rich enough not to even to be bothered about a possible loss of job," sources said. Officials in the know-how on the conduct of elections said that the absence of any institutional mechanism encourages parties concerned to indulge in corruption. "An audit

is conducted for namesake and that too after months or even a year after the elections are conducted. The corrupt officials know better than to be scared of it," sources said. (The Hindu 26/6/09)

Opp. accuses Assam govt of corruption (5)

Guwahati: July 1: If the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) earned political benefits for the Congress in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, its government in Assam was at the receiving end for alleged rampant corruption in implementing the act in the state. Regretting the alleged casual approach of the Gogoi government on corruption related issues, the entire Opposition on Tuesday staged a noisy walkout in the Assam Assembly. They demanded that the Speaker should constitute a "House committee" of MLAs to probe the irregularities in execution of NREGA here. Rural development minister Chandan Brahma tried to pacify the Opposition but they were not convinced with the clarification of the minister. He asked the Opposition to bring in specific charges. As if waiting for this moment, they started referring to specific cases of NREGA card-holders who are also government employees. (Asian Age 2/7/09)

Graft cases against former Jharkhand chief minister, 3 former ministers (5)

Ranchi, July 01, 2009: A city court on Wednesday ordered the state vigilance department to file corruption cases against former Jharkhand chief minister Madhu Koda and three former ministers for amassing wealth beyond their known sources of income. The vigilance court ordered the filing of first information reports against Koda, Bandhu Tirkey, Kamlesh Singh and Bhanu Pratap Sahi on a petition filed by Rajiv Sharma. According to official sources, the cases will be lodged after the vigilance department gets a copy of the court order. The same court had issued non-bailable arrest warrants against two former ministers, Enos Ekka and Harinarayan Rai, June 27. Corruption cases have been lodged against them by the department, the sources said. (Hindustan Times 1/7/09)

More CBI courts required to hear corruption cases: CJI (5)

Patna (PTI) Chief Justice of India K.G. Balakrishnan on Saturday stressed the need for setting up more special CBI courts across the country for speedy trial of high-profile corruption cases. Addressing the centenary celebration of Patna Law College here, Mr. Justice Balakrishnan said Prime Minister Manmohan Singh too shared his view. In a letter to the CJI recently, Mr. Singh said he had asked the Chief Ministers to take steps for early establishment of CBI courts for expeditious hearing of high profile corruption cases, Mr. Balakrishnan said. "I have sought setting up of 71 more special CBI courts across the country of which Bihar would get three to four in addition to two already functioning in the state," he said. He asked Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to initiate steps for early setting up of these courts. Expressing concern over the huge pile-up of pending cases in different courts due to shortage of judges, the CJI said, "Delhi accounts for nearly 350 murders a year and the courts dispose of 200 to 225 cases, meaning thereby that over 100 cases remain pending each year." "Unless large number of courts are established, we cannot expect speedy disposal of cases," he said. (The Hindu 11/7/09)

State's police recruitment process attracts nation-wide attention (5)

Bangalore: The Karnataka police have gone in for a near-foolproof computerised procedure in recruitment, which offers very minimal scope for malpractice and corruption. The recruitment of 400 police sub-inspectors is in progress and the process has been computerised right from the stage of filing application forms. There is hardly any scope for a human interface in the recruitment process, barring the interview stage when the candidate concerned will face the recruitment authority and here again the scope for a bias has been pegged to the minimum. It is common knowledge that the bane of the police recruitment system hitherto has been corruption and it is to root out this menace that the Karnataka police have gone in for a computerised procedure. The new system has drawn countrywide attention with the State police receiving requests for a presentation on the state-of-art recruitment process. The police top brass of Uttar Pradesh and that of several other States and Central organisations have sought to copy the Karnataka example. To ensure that the right candidate makes it to the right post, more so the all important role that the police have in the present security scenario, the marks for the viva-voce has been restricted to a mere 10 (five per cent of the total marks inclusive of the theory papers) to prevent any subjectivity which could result in a candidate adopting dubious means to secure an appointment. Incidentally, the new recruitment procedure adopted by the State police has also been given the ISO 9001 certification. As part of the recruitment process, the applicants have been given the option of

submitting their application either online or on OMR (Optical Magnetic Reader) sheets which were made available in seven ranges and police commissionerates across the State. While for those who have applied for the posts online the computerised facility will scrutinise the application, the others who have submitted their applications across the counter, the applications will be scanned (thanks to the OMR format) by the computer. Incidentally, this is the first time that filing of applications for posts in the Police Department have been made online. Additional Director-General of Police (Training and Recruitment) S.T. Ramesh told The Hindu that as on Friday, which was the last day for receipt of applications for the post of sub-inspectors (online and in person), nearly 50,000 applications were received, and of this nearly 10 percent were received online. To promote online filing of applications the fee was discounted for an online applicant to Rs. 100 for all categories and Rs. 150 for those who filed their applications across the counter. The authorities have netted revenue of over Rs 1.5 crore from this alone. Mr. Ramesh said that , after the scrutiny of applications, the eligible applicants would be called for an endurance test and a physical standard test. The written test will be thereafter, which again has been fully computerised. With the police seeking to fill 400 posts, the top 800 successful candidates (inclusive of all reserved categories) will be called for an interview in the ratio of 1:2, and the final results will be through in about six months. In the view of the Additional Director-General of Police "computerisation will ensure near-total transparency apart from enabling the completion of the recruitment process in quick time. With the success of this programme, we will bring in more changes". (The Hindu 13/7/09)

Lokayukta helps disabled get their due (5)

BANGALORE : While much focus is given on anti-corruption activities of the Lokayukta, it's silently working on helping the disabled avail government schemes. Lokayukta Justice Santhosh Hegde on Monday said anti-corruption drives were just part of their work. "We also monitor maladministration and help those who are victims of bad government practices," he said. He cited the case of an elderly man, who was bed-ridden for five years without medical treatment. The man's wife had approached Justice Hegde, seeking financial help to treat her husband. "I thought of raising a fund, but realized it was the government's job to raise it. We took the man to hospital, where he was declared 80% disabled. Today, he gets a pension of Rs 1,000 per month." This was not an isolated case. The Lokayukta has taken up cases of over 350 visually-impaired persons so that they benefit from government schemes. "They have a right to get the schemes. I've read the shocking CAG report that says over Rs 50,000 crore meant for such schemes had gone unaccounted for." Justice Hegde has written to BBMP commissioner Bharat Lal Meena over accusations by BBMP officials that Lokayukta was not repairing Vittal Mallya Road. "BBMP officials are giving an incorrect picture to public by saying that the matter was being investigated by Lokayukta," Justice Hegde explained. "The truth is, we're looking into the agreement between the erstwhile BCC and UB over the width of the road, which has nothing to do with road-repair." (Times of India 14/7/09)

Activists stage demonstration against irregularities in issuing social security cards (5)

New Delhi, July 15: Activists of Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI) held a demonstration in the national capital, on Wednesday over irregularities in the distribution of Below Poverty Line (BPL) social security cards. Scores of SUCI activists marched to Delhi state secretariat, raising slogans against the government, alleging that Delhi government is laidback in issuing BPL cards. "Today our main demand is that people of this (Delhi) region that are living Below Poverty Line (BPL) have not yet received BPL cards. Many people have applied for these cards but so many years have passed and they are yet to receive BPL cards," said Pratap Samal, State Secretary of SUCI. "People who have given cards for renewal have not received them back," Samal added. Meanwhile, a member of parliament belonging to SUCI alleged that BPL cards are being issued to people living above poverty line, which is a gross misuse of the facility. "Taking the Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards there are lots of delay dealings, there are lots of corruption and there are nepotism. Those parties who are in power either in the state or the central government they are using these BPL cards for Above Poverty Line (APL)." said a member of parliament of SUCI. "The real people are not getting the BPL facilities," the member added. BPL cardholders are entitled to get subsidised food grains from the government. (New Kerala 15/7/09)

LSP campaign for changes in anti-corruption law (5)

HYDERABAD: The Lok Satta Party will be launching a five-day campaign to persuade the government to adopt an amendment to the Prevention of Corruption Act in the Budget session of the Assembly

beginning July 24. The Bill aims at bringing all elected people, including MLAs and MLCs, under the purview of anti-corruption law and plugging all loopholes. As part of the campaign, people will be persuaded to write post cards to the Chief Minister seeking a change in the law, a press note informed. Party spokesmen Katari Srinivasa Rao and V. Laxman Balaji dismissed the allegations made by certain district leaders as baseless and added that a malicious campaign was being run against it on the eve of the GHMC elections by people who were threatened by the party's growth. (The Hindu 19/7/09)

Let CBI probe BBMP scam: Opposition (5)

BANGALORE: The Opposition parties on Monday sought a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the Rs 110-crore garbage scam in BBMP. Raising the issue in the Legislative Council, Leader of the Opposition V S Ugrappa, while referring to an enquiry report, alleged that over Rs 100 crore had been siphoned off by the contractors and officers of BBMP in garbage clearance and transportation. The scam pertains to garbage clearance in the city between March 2007 and June 2008, during which period BBMP had paid around Rs 110 crore to the contractors. Making a preliminary submission to take up the matter for discussion under the adjournment motion, Ugrappa accused the government of sitting on the enquiry report and shielding the culprits. "No action has been initiated against the guilty, even after eight months of obtaining the enquiry report. The CM being the Bangalore Development Minister, must take responsibility for this," he said. The JD(S) members also echoed the Congress' sentiments and lamented corruption had scaled disturbing heights. JD(S) member Y S V Datta said that politicians were also involved in the scam. As per the enquiry report by Bangalore Metropolitan Task Force (BMTF) IGP N R Nadamani, the BBMP officers and contractors had colluded and misappropriated money to the tune of Rs 110 crore between March 2007 and June 2008. Admitting that corruption had become all pervasive, Medical Education minister Ramachandra Gowda said a re-inquiry had been ordered into the scam in February 2009 and they had received the report in May. Chairman Veeranna Mattikatti allowed the issue for a detailed discussion on Tuesday. (Express Buzz 21/7/09)

People must report corruption charges against AICTE: CBI (5)

NEW DELHI: The CBI on Wednesday appealed to the public to come up with more information on the alleged corrupt practices by top officials of the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) in granting recognition to educational institutes. The agency had earlier arrested its member secretary K Narayan Rao and registered a case under the Prevention of Corruption Act against its chairman R I Yadav. "CBI has registered three cases regarding corruption in AICTE which grants approval to institutions offering courses in engineering, management, pharmacy. If you have any specific complaint regarding demand of money by AICTE officials or giving approval to any such college without having the required infrastructure due to corrupt practices by the expert committee members or AICTE officials, please contact the nearest CBI office," said a CBI official. Further investigation has revealed that the accused made huge investments in property, bank accounts and lockers. The search of the locker in the name of the chairman's wife at a bank in Ashok Vihar, Delhi, has led to the recovery of jewellery worth a huge amount and seizure of Rs 4.7 lakh. Nine accounts in six banks in the name of the chairman and his family members having a total balance of Rs 2,89,136 have also been frozen. The search of the locker of the advisor, AICTE, at a bank in Krishna Nagar, Delhi, has led to the recovery of jewellery worth Rs 3,74,631. Twenty seven accounts in 10 banks in the name of the advisor and his family members having a balance of Rs 24,57,906 have also been frozen. (Times of India 23/7/09)

JD (U) seeks judicial probe into mining scam (5)

BHUBANESWAR: State unit of the Janata Dal (United) here on Monday demanded that the alleged multi-thousand crore mining scam in Orissa be probed by a judicial commission in an open court. Addressing a press conference here on Monday, State JD (U) president Chittaranjan Mohanty said volume of money involved in it appeared to be a mind boggling one and people should be given adequate opportunity to submit their views and proofs to support the probe process. Since Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Crime Branch were influenced by both Union and State government respectively and mining being a concurrent subject, the two investigating agencies should be included making them counterweight against each other in the probe to nullify attempts of sabotaging, Mr. Mohanty said. Both the agencies should be assigned by Judicial Commission to do investigation, he said. Pointing out at the grave situation prevailing in Keonjhar district due to intensive mining, the JD (U) president charged that right to live was violated in the district where people were suffocated due to pollution as well as loss of forest. Moreover,

the party had taken strong exceptions to Special Economic Zone concept and its implementation in the country. "We are losing our sovereignty due to SEZ policies across the country. It was an attempt to infuse fresh life into capitalism. Conspiracy has been hatched not to allow common people enter into an area controlled by foreign companies in our own country," said Govind Yadav, national president of party's youth wing. (The Hindu 28/7/09)

Maharashtra tops in crime in the country (5)

Mumbai: Maharashtra has topped in the crime chart of the country, a query under the Right to Information Act by state BJP president Nitin Gadkari has revealed. "During 2005-08, Maharashtra registered 7,80,765 cases under the Indian Penal Code which is the highest number in the country during this period followed by Bihar, which had 4,64,363 cases," the answer to the query revealed. "In a shocking revelation, it has been brought to my notice that Maharashtra had 6,054 cases of rape and 10,765 cases of murder in the last three years," Gadkari said. "The political interference in the police administration is responsible for the deteriorating law-and-order situation in the state." Gadkari demanded that the government release a white paper on the law-and-order situation in the state. "Once the white paper is released, we will come to know the detection and conviction rate for crimes in the state," he said. Gadkari also demanded that the name of the state minister who met 26/11 terrorist Mohammad Ajmal Amir Kasab in Arthur Road Jail be revealed. "It was against the dignity of a minister to call on a terrorist in jail," he said. "The people should know the reason for the meeting."(DNA 3/8/09)

Virbhadra and wife booked in corruption case (5)

Shimla/New Delhi, Aug. 4: Union steel minister Virbhadra Singh and his wife have been booked in a two-year-old corruption case by the Himachal Pradesh vigilance bureau, triggering an angry response from the veteran Congress leader who saw it as an act of political vendetta by the BJP regime. After getting the state government's approval, an FIR was registered under various sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, on Monday night against Mr Singh and his wife, Pratibha, said D.S. Manhas, director-general of the State Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau. The sections relate to misuse of official position and criminal misconduct. "The FIR is a cheap gimmick which shall collapse under its own weight. It is another desperate move to damage me and the Congress through false and baseless accusations and unscrupulous vilification," Mr Singh said, adding it was a political vendetta. The case has been registered on the complaint of a retired IAS officer, S.M. Katwal, on the basis of an audio CD released by former Himachal Pradesh minister Vijay Singh Mankotia in 2007 claiming that it contained the voice of Mr Singh and his wife talking to a retired bureaucrat, Mohinder Lal (who has since died), about alleged corruption, a release from the state vigilance bureau said. The CD was sent for a CFSL laboratory examination which confirmed the voices of Mr Singh and his wife, sources in the state vigilance bureau said. Mr Singh ruled out stepping down. —PTI (Asian Age 5/8/09)

Three former Jharkhand CMs face graft charges (5)

Ranchi, August 12, 2009: Separate petitions for corruption have been filed against three former Jharkhand chief ministers in the state high court. The graft charges may affect their prospects in the upcoming assembly election which is likely to take place in October and November. Some of the former ministers facing corruption charges have urged the court to expedite their cases. Shibu Soren's name is the latest to be added to the list of politicians facing graft charges. An interlocutory petition was filed against him in the Jharkhand High Court on Tuesday. The PIL (public interest litigation) has been filed by Samim Ahmad, a resident of Ranchi. Ahmad in his petition has charged that by misusing his position, Soren has been able to own properties worth more than Rs 53 crore. The petition also says that he purchased 37.7 acres of land in the name of his wife Rupi Soren. The market price of the plot is Rs 66.75 lakh. Similarly, Durga Oraon has filed a PIL against former Chief Minister and Lok Sabha MP, Madhu Koda as well as five other former ministers. Another interlocutory petition was filed last month against another former chief minister and Lok Sabha MP Arjun Munda. He has been charged of amassing wealth more than his known sources of income. Moreover, an interlocutory petition has been filed against central Food Processing Minister Subodh Kant Sahay. He has been accused of floating three companies in his brother's name. The hearing of Durga Oraon's petition is underway in the Jharkhand High Court. The court has sought details of the tax filed by Madhu Koda and five other ministers from the Income Tax department. A First Information Report (FIR) has been lodged against Koda and three former ministers including Bandhu Turkey, Kamlesh Singh and Bhanu Pratap Sahi. The vigilance court has also issued

arrest warrants against two former ministers -- Enos Ekka and Harinarayan Rai. (Hindustan Times 12/8/09)

Judges to discuss all but corruption, assets (5)

New Delhi, August 14, 2009: A two-day conference of India's top judges beginning in New Delhi on Friday will discuss 21 important issues except corruption in the judiciary and judges' reluctance to declare their assets. An 88-page agenda note for the conference to be attended by Chief Justice of India KG Balakrishnan, Supreme Court judges and chief justices of all 21 high courts does not include the issues affecting the judiciary's credibility. "The conference to be held in the Supreme Court will devise ways and means to expedite disposal of cases and to streamline and improve the justice delivery system," said a release on the Supreme Court website. This meeting will be followed by a conference of chief ministers and chief justices of high courts on Sunday. The agenda for this conference also skips any reference to the two sensitive issues. The meetings come within a fortnight of the government being forced to drop a Bill proposing to keep judges' assets secret. The absence of these issues at the conference has drawn sharp criticism from top jurists. "It was an opportunity for the higher judiciary to respond to the criticism that it has been opposed to introduction of transparency measures. Issues like pendency, lack of funds etc, are being discussed since decades," said Justice PB Sawant, a former Supreme Court judge. Noted jurist VR Krishna Iyer said the conference will be a waste of time and money. "Instead of winning back the public trust severely eroded by recent scandals involving some judges, the conference seems to be headed on a beaten track," he said. The Law Ministry refused to comment on the issue. "It is for the judiciary to decide the agenda," said a ministry official, not willing to be named. The last such meet was held in April 2008. The months that followed saw some of the worst corruption scandals in the history of country's judiciary. In June last year, 36 judges, including 11 high court judges and a Supreme Court judge were named as alleged beneficiaries in the multi-crore rupee Ghaziabad provident fund scam. The CBI is still probing the scam. Two months after this, the Ghaziabad scam, in August last year, a cash-at-judge's-door scandal rocked the Punjab and Haryana high court. A lady judge informed the police that Rs 15 lakh (1.5 million) was delivered at her residence by a clerk of a Haryana government law officer. Police inquiries later revealed that the cash was meant for another lady judge of the same court, Justice Nirmal Yadav. The CBI is still probing this case too. (Hindustan Times 14/8/09)

Revenue dept tops in cases booked against corrupt officials (5)

CHENNAI: Based on the number of cases booked by the directorate of vigilance and anti-corruption (DVAC), the revenue department appears to be the most corrupt in Tamil Nadu, topping the list with 25 cases out of the 102 cases of bribery registered this year. The Tamil Nadu Electricity Board (TNEB) comes second with 14 cases. The police department closely follows with 11 cases. DVAC have booked at least one case in two days this year on an average. Houses belonging to well known bureaucrats were raided and arrests effected. DVAC officials, who even entered the city police commissioner's office to trap a superintendent working in the public relations department, recorded a number of high profile arrests. Around Rs 60 lakh were seized from 130 officials arrested this year. A compilation of DVAC cases by TOI shows that the maximum number of cases has been filed against the state revenue department, and 80% of them against village administrative officials (VAOs). Sources in DVAC told TOI that corruption in the revenue department was widespread and that, in most cases, money was collected through VAOs and then shared between officials at various levels. Usually, VAOs, who are in charge of issuing property documents, succession certificates, etc, were the ones to get caught during raids. "VAOs are the collection points and they invariably get caught. The others manage to escape," a DVAC official says. This year, several A-listed officials, including the joint commissioner of the HR&CE department, under secretary of the home department, director of ESI and an assistant conservator of forests were arrested. Other A-listed officials were caught off guard after the raids pointed to their involvement. DVAC sources told TOI that it was easier for them to get complaints from the three departments that topped the corruption chart. "It does not mean that the other departments are relatively clean. There may be other corrupt offices in the state but chances of detecting them are remote. For example, the registration department, known for corrupt practices, have only six cases registered against it this year," another official said. (Times of India 15/8/09)

President warns against corruption (5)

NEW DELHI, Aug 14 – Cautioning against corruption in flagship welfare programmes, President Pratibha Patil today favoured reform of governance for effective delivery of public services for which administrators must be responsive to the needs of the people, reports PTI. In her address to the nation on the eve of Independence Day, Patil said that the country has to be prepared to face the situation arising out of poor monsoon and asked the citizens to cooperate with the government in handling the swine flu situation. Patil said the expectations of the people were rising as they were becoming more aware of their rights and seek better opportunities. "Facilities, amenities and services meant for them whether they are living in rural or urban areas can be delivered smoothly only if there is an effective governance system that is less cumbersome but more transparent and accountable. "There is outrage when money meant for welfare schemes is pilfered out by corrupt practices," she said. (Assam Tribune 15/8/09)

Orissa Police to grill DoM in connection with mining scam (5)

Bhubaneswar: Anti-corruption wing of Orissa Police will interrogate director of mines RN Sahoo in connection with smuggling of manganese worth Rs 110 crore from Keonjhar district. "Our sleuths went to Sahoo's office yesterday but he was not available as he had gone to Cuttack for some official work but he will probably be interrogated tomorrow," Anup Kumar Patnaik, director of vigilance, said after submitting action taken report on the investigation into the scam. "Allowing a private mining firm to guard the two government manganese mines at Ruddukela and Katasahi in Keonjhar without a licence was illegal," Patnaik said. The vigilance department had on August 7 submitted a preliminary report on its investigation which confirmed large-scale irregularities in the mining activities in Keonjhar district. Criminal cases have been registered against nine persons, including seven government staff, for their alleged involvement in the scam. Manmohan Biswal, deputy director of mines, was arrested for allegedly allowing power of attorney holder Shakti Ranjan Das's Ram Bahadur Thakur Limited (RBTL) to guard the two mines on Sahoo's recommendation. Biswal was also suspended from duty. Opposition BJP and Congress have demanded a CBI probe into the scam. (DNA 15/8/09)

Judiciary to obey Parliament on disclosure of assets: CJI (5)

New Delhi, August 16, 2009: Chief Justice of India K G Balakrishnan on Sunday said that the judiciary was not against declaration of judges' assets and that it was ready to "implicitly" obey Parliament if it passes a law in this regard. "Let Parliament make any law, we will implicitly obey it," Balakrishnan told reporters after conclusion of the conference of Chief Ministers and Chief Justices of High Courts in New Delhi. The CJI made the comment when he was asked about the protests by opposition on a clause in the Judges Assets Bill which prevents making declarations made by judges public. Clause 6 of the Bill states that declaration made by a judge to the competent authority shall not be made public or disclosed and shall not be called for or put into question by any citizen, court or authority. The protests by opposition had forced the government to defer tabling the Bill in Parliament. On the agenda of the conference, the CJI ruled out the impression that corruption in the judiciary was not discussed during the deliberations. "It was not out of the agenda and the vigilance section of the High Courts has been looking into the issue of corruption in subordinate judiciary," he said adding that the word 'corruption' was not used in the agenda. Balakrishnan, however, parried questions on the issue of corruption in higher judiciary, including the Supreme Court, saying the conference was not a forum to discuss individual complaints. (Hindustan Times 17/8/09)

BJP seeks CBI probe into mining scam (5)

BHUBANESWAR: The Bharatiya Janata Party on Monday organised demonstrations in different parts of the State demanding a CBI probe into the multi-crore illegal mining scam. Holding party flags and banners in their hands, the party workers staged a demonstration in the Capital city and raised slogans against the Naveen Patnaik government for not handing over the mining scam to the CBI. The Vigilance Department of the State government is investigating the case at present and eight persons have been arrested so far. The rampant corruption in the mining department had exposed the tall claim of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik about running a transparent administration. The BJP workers also blamed the government for its 'failure' to check the prices of essential commodities and demanded that the government take immediate measures to save the common man from the problem of price rise. Similar demonstrations were held by the party at all district headquarter towns and several sub-divisional headquarter towns. The party workers also submitted a memorandum addressed to the Governor through

District Collectors and other authorities seeking a CBI probe into the mining scam and measures to curb price rise. (The Hindu 18/8/09)

Graft case claimed Ordnance chief, his No. 2 under cloud too (5)

New Delhi If chairman of the Ordnance Factory Board Sudipta Ghosh was arrested in what the CBI calls one of its biggest corruption scandals ever, his potential successor is also under a cloud. On May 28, barely 10 days after Ghosh's arrest, the Ministry of Defence served penalty orders on B S Bhatia, the seniormost member of the board, withholding his promotion and, thus, stopping him from taking over as chairman. Ironically, this came after the MoD — just as it had done in the Ghosh case — defended Bhatia in a series of exchanges with the Central Vigilance Commission which called for action against him. Bhatia has since gone to court and questioned what he calls the Ministry's "knee-jerk" response. Records show that Bhatia and three other officers faced allegations in the procurement of tools for the vehicle factory in Jabalpur and were indicted by an internal inquiry in 2005 conducted by the CVC-nominated Commissioner of Departmental Inquiry. In 2006, Bhatia was chargesheeted for alleged "misconduct" when, posted as Assistant General Manager, he was "party to the decision to split the requirement of tools into five procurement actions instead of a single procurement action." The total value of each procurement thus exceeded what was allowed. The penalty orders served on Bhatia claim that he "caused substantial loss to the exchequer as the tools procured through the tenders was at a very high value and not eventually used." Following the inquiry, the MoD wrote four letters (July 23 and November 10, 2008; January 7 and January 29, 2009) to the CVC asking it to reconsider the advice of imposition of "stiff major penalty" and instead conduct "performance counselling" for Bhatia. But the CVC reiterated its advice and on March 31, asked the Ministry to "re-examine the case and if still disagreement persists, the matter may please be referred to Department of Personnel and Training." On May 28, Bhatia was served with orders informing him of the imposition of "minor penalty of withholding of promotion till date of his superannuation." Incidentally, this penalty order has been signed by the same officer in the MoD's vigilance cell who had sent letters to the CVC arguing against the very action. Bhatia has challenged this order in the Calcutta High Court arguing that the inquiry against him is a "knee-jerk reaction." When contacted, Bhatia told The Indian Express: "Gross injustice is being done to me and I have become a victim of the indecisiveness of the Ministry. The whole vigilance system in the MoD is decayed. How can you explain a penalty order after the Ministry thrice with approval of the Raksha Mantri tried to exonerate me?" (Express India 18/8/09)

Irregularities alleged in NREGA implementation (5)

BHOPAL: Much before the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was introduced by the UPA Government, Rozgaar Yaatra (employment rallies) demanding work were being organised across the country. They all featured a folk song, "Mere liye kaam nahi...." (No work for me....). Five years down the line, with NREGS hailed as a success in several States, the sound track for the unemployed rural masses of Madhya Pradesh remains unchanged for many voluntary organisations. According to an April 2009 survey conducted in 23 districts of Madhya Pradesh covering 2,765 rural respondents belonging to 112 villages, the implementation of the NREGA has largely been a failure. This reflects in allegations of extremely low number of people applying for work under the scheme, work not being given within the stipulated 15 days, delayed payment of wages, non-payment of unemployment allowance and compensation among other things. Further, the new arrangement—since October 2008 — of wage payment through post-office savings accounts, has also been ineffective as compared to the previous, corruption-ridden payment arrangement through village Panchayats. The survey, conducted by 17 rural organisations, reveals that only 17% of the studied sample managed to get accounts opened at their nearest post-office. The state CEO for NREGA, Rashmi Arun Shami, while agreeing that not everything is right with its implementation, contends not everything is wrong either. "Look at the scale of the act, its massive. Flawless implementation will take time," says Shami. "I am not saying everything is perfect. We are looking at irregularities and addressing wherever they are discovered. Banks and post offices have started recruiting staff for managing NREGA accounts. It might take some time." Delayed payments for over 10 months have also been alleged in the Chapwaar village of Dindori district. The block CEO V.T. Shukla says, "Evaluation of the work had not been sent in time, now that it's done, the payments will be made as soon as possible." In another incident, in Rewamuhari village of Hoshangabad district, people were not given work for almost five months. "When they asked for unemployment allowance, the upper caste village Sarpanch, along with the block CEO, threatened them and took their thumb-marks on a plain

paper to later prove they did not demand work," says Param Sukh of MP Dalit Adivasi Sangh, an organisation working for the rights of the scheduled castes. "The matter has been investigated into and the district collector found that these people did not come for work even after being called repeatedly," says Ms. Shami. The State's Kapildhara scheme, merged with the NREGA, is proving to be an environmental liability for villages with low ground water levels, called "dark areas". The recharge structures, to be built alongside wells dug under the scheme, are rarely if ever built. Most villagers do not even know if there is such a provision for wells dug under the scheme. "It is a stage-based process," says Ms. Shami. "The digging of wells has been completed and in the second phase, the recharge structures will also be completed." (The Hindu 19/8/09)

NREGS scam detected in Balrampur, probe ordered (5)

Aimed at providing employment to the rural poor, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is ending up being one where corruption reigns supreme. The state Department of Rural Development has ordered a probe into the purchase made under the scheme at Balrampur in October 2008. Under it, goods worth Rs 5 crore had been purchased in violation of the guidelines of the Act or informing the department. According to the Act, every district can spend only four per cent of its NREGS budget to purchase items like information boards, registers, stationary and such material. But it does not allow any central procurement for entire districts and the purchases have to be done according to the task approved. According to official information, the Rs 5 crore procurements in Balrampur were made after the district had exhausted its limit. Tin sheets, metal almirahs, registers and other stationary items were bought with the approval from then district magistrate Sachidanand Dubey. In the procurement details sent to the Rural Development Department, the district officials could not explain why the items were bought or where they were utilised. The department has asked the district magistrate to conduct a probe into these purchases and take action against the guilty officials. It has also sent a recommendation to the state government to check the role of the former district magistrate and take suitable action against him. The District Magistrate, Balrampur, Kanchan Verma said they have already conducted a preliminary inquiry into the matter. (Indian Express 20/8/09)

CBI to question Buta Singh on Aug 24 (5)

MUMBAI: CBI will soon record the statement of Buta Singh, chairman of the All India Commission for Scheduled Castes, in connection with the corruption case against his son. "We have to question Buta Singh by August 24. His statement will be recorded as a witness and not as an accused," CBI Joint Director (West Zone) Rishiraj Singh said on Thursday. Buta's son Sarobjit Singh was arrested by the agency on July 31 for allegedly demanding a bribe of Rs three crore from Nasik-based contractor Ramrao Patil as payments "to exercise influence on public servants" so as to avoid registering a case and referring it to the probe agency. Though it was not immediately clear where Buta Singh's would be questioned, sources said it may take place in Delhi. Buta Singh had earlier said in Delhi that the "latest attack (by CBI) is an attempt to kill my whole political life and my political future." Patil had allegedly taken a loan of around Rs 10 crore from a cooperative society on behalf of over 100 persons from the Dalit community. (Times of India 20/8/09)

Dhanda, Gosain launch crusade against corruption in MC (5)

LUDHIANA: Taking up cudgel against the corruption prevailing in the municipal corporation, (MC) the chief parliamentary secretary of the local bodies department, Harish Rai Dhanda and deputy speaker of Punjab Assembly Satpal Gosain have decided to launch a crusade to trace the corrupt officers and contractors in the civic body responsible for stalling major projects in the city. These senior leaders of the ruling Akali-BJP alliance are considered as the most vocal critics of the working of the civic body and have been lambasting MC officials for their inefficient working since a long time. Recently, both had raised the issue of illegal encroachments in the city along with lack of de-silting of nullahs here, after which officers of the civic body initiated drives in both the areas. However, due to their busy schedules in the recently concluded bye-elections, both had to temporarily put a brake on their campaign. But now, both have regained their form and decided to vehemently launch an offensive against the corrupt civic body officers from August 27. The decision regarding it was taken in a meeting between both the leaders in the city on Wednesday late evening. Both have now decided to target the corrupt officers who have been responsible for creating mess in the civic body by faulty planning due to which the work on many ambitious projects like laying down of sewerage at Janakpuri, covering of the open drain (Ganda Nullah)

from the Gurudwara Dukh Niwaran to Shingaar Cinema, Lakkar Pul Railway Over Bridge (ROB) have been stalled. Confirming it, while talking to the TOI, Dhanda said that due to some of their prior engagements the drive was discontinued for few days, but now they would restart it. He said in the meeting convened on August 27, all MC officers involved in these projects along with the mayor and commissioner would be present to identify the erring officers whose negligence had led to the waste of public money. Gosain said now they would focus on finding the real culprit behind the stalling of major projects in the city, which could have proved highly beneficial for the residents. "Our emphasis would be on tracing all the erring officers, so that every penny wasted out of the public money could be recovered from them," he added. (Times of India 20/8/09)

8 courts to curb corruption (5)

Ranchi, Sept. 1: Building on the governor's "zero tolerance for corruption" mantra, the state will play host to eight more special courts to expedite hearing of anti-corruption cases pending for years. Ranchi and Dhanbad, plagued by piling cases, will get two courts each. These will exclusively try and decide cases lodged by the CBI. The remaining four — coming up at Jamshedpur, Daltonganj, Dumka and Hazaribagh — will attend to cases lodged by the state vigilance bureau. The four new CBI courts will be among the 71 sanctioned by the law ministry for speedy disposal of anti-corruption cases across the country. State law secretary P.R. Das said he had already forwarded a government notification for setting up of the special courts to Jharkhand High Court. Adviser to the governor, G. Krishnan, confirmed this. Currently, there is one CBI court in Ranchi to conduct anti-corruption trials and two more in Dhanbad. There are also seven special CBI courts in the capital to hear fodder scam cases. For vigilance trials, two courts function in Ranchi and Dhanbad. Besides, the state has already decided to set up six special courts to try power theft cases in Dhanbad, Hazaribagh, Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Dumka and Daltonganj. According to a CBI officer, at present, over 500 CBI cases are pending in Ranchi and Dhanbad alone. "We file chargesheets on time, but trials drag on," he said, adding that verdicts of corruption cases often came after 18 years. "On an average, investigation takes two years. Eight years are spent on trial and another eight passes by before the high court or the Supreme Court pronounces the verdict," he added. No wonder the 17th biennial conference of the anti-corruption bureau and CBI on August 26-27 resolved to ask the state to establish adequate number of special courts for prevention of corruption cases. Tardy pace of work has hit fodder scam cases the hardest, particularly because the number of special judges conducting trials has been reduced to four from seven. The special courts are also manned by officers of additional district judge rank. "Inadequate number of judges has slowed down trials. We hope the high court will fill up vacancies soon," said CBI lawyer Ravi Shankar. Records show that out of 53 fodder scam cases, which are under investigation and trial in Jharkhand, 33 have been disposed of. But these are the ones in which only animal husbandry officials and suppliers were involved. The pending include five that involve high-profile accused, including Lalu Prasad, Jagannath Mishra and half a dozen IAS officers. These are still at an early trial stage. (Telegraph 2/9/09)

Bihar court summons Nitish Kumar in murder case (5)

A Bihar court has summoned Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to appear before it on September 9 in connection with a petition alleging his involvement in the murder of a Congress activist at Barh in Patna district in November 1991. Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Ranjan Kumar passed the order on September 1, asking Kumar and LJP MLA Dularchand Yadav to appear before him after hearing a petition filed by Ashok Singh, a relative of Congress activist Sitaram Singh, who was killed in a firing at a polling booth at Barh during the Lok Sabha elections on November 16, 1991. In his order, the CJM said "prima facie case for the offence under sections 147 (rioting), 148 (rioting armed with deadly weapon), 149 (unlawful assembly), 302 (murder), 307 (attempt to murder) of Indian Penal Code and 17 Arms Act are made out against Kumar and Yadav for which cognizance is being taken." He said "there is allegation of committing murder of Sitaram Singh and firearm injury to four persons while they were in que for casting their votes against the accused." In the petition filed on January 20, Ashok Singh, a resident of village Dhibar, charged Nitish with firing from a gun, leading to death of Sitaram Singh. Sitaram and others had queued up before a polling booth for casting their ballots when Nitish Kumar was in fray in the 1991 bye-elections to the Lok Sabha on an undivided Janata Dal ticket when the firing had taken place, Singh alleged. RJD supremo Lalu Prasad demanded immediate resignation of the chief minister. "Kumar who is the custodian of law has lost the moral right to continue in office." (Indian Express 3/9/09)

Rooting out corruption

Category » Editorial Posted On Friday, August 28, 2009

Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh these days is holding conferences pertaining to different fields with the concerning ministers and officials. In very clear term the PM tells where he is dissatisfied and what he expects. In the same series Dr Singh has called for a war against corruption in the meeting of senior officials of Anti-corruption Bureau of the states and central government. Expressing regret the PM said that small corruption cases are taken up immediately, but those at the higher level are being much delayed and not acted upon. It is now time that the guilty of 'Corruption in High Places' are brought to book. Such areas should be focussed where high level corruption is prevailing and cases solved within 2 years. In this connection it could be said that corruption cases involving politically important persons like the PM, the Home Minister and other ministers should not be delayed. Taj Corridor case against Mayawati, disproportionate assets case against Mulayam Singh, fodder scam against Lalu Prasad Yadav and cases against Natwar Singh, Amrinder Singh, Prakash Singh Badal, Om Prakash Choutala sometimes hot up and again cool down. Nawab Pataudi was caught in a poaching case. This type of a small case lingers on because a high profile person is involved. Buta Singh against whom a graft case has been registered, is giving challenge to CBI that first the CBI should take permission from Union government. The PM should give permission immediately. Buta Singh wants to linger the matter himself. CBI director Ashwini Kumar in this connection said that a decision has been taken to complete investigation in all such matters within one year. Presently the CBI has produced chargesheet in court in 9000 matters of corruption. If the government, courts and parliament cooperate in this connection then all such matters would be solved within a year.(Central Chronicle 5/9/09)

Probe into police association 'corruption' ordered (5)

KOLKATA, 7 SEPT: The chief metropolitan magistrate has instructed the city police authorities to investigate the allegation of corruption against the general secretary of the CPI-M controlled Kolkata Police Association (KPA), Mr Arinindam Mukherjee. The order was issued on 3 September by the chief metropolitan magistrate Mr SS Anand. A former treasurer of KPA, Mr Soumendranath Das, had filed a case before the court (case number-C/38770/2009) against Mr Mukherjee accusing him of misappropriating KPA's fund worth Rs 7,90,365 since February 2007. Earlier, Mr Das had lodged a complaint with the commissioner of police, Mr Gautam Mohan Chakrabarti on 10 July this year urging him to investigate the matter. Copies of the complaint were also sent to the officer-in-charge of Hare Street police station, deputy commissioner of the detective department, vigilance commissioner and the state home secretary for investigation. But, no probe was initiated, Mr Das has claimed. Mr Das later filed a case before the chief metropolitan magistrate court. The first hearing of the case was held on 3 August. The magistrate had called for a report from the officer-in-charge of the city police's record section on whether an "FIR had been lodged or not". The magistrate had fixed 3 September as the next date of hearing. The case had come up for hearing again on Thursday. The magistrate had issued a fresh order to the officer-in-charge of Hare Street police station asking him to treat Mr Das' complaint as an FIR and appoint a "suitable officer" to investigate the allegation. The order, a copy of which is available with The Statesman, reads: "Report is received from O-C (Officer-in-charge) of Anti Fraud Section of detective department Lalbazar to the effect that no FIR has been recorded as yet". The order further states: "In view of the above, the petition of the complainant is forwarded to the O-C, Hare Street police station for treating the complaint as FIR and to get the same investigated by a suitable police officer of the police station as nominated by him." In the complaint submitted to the commissioner of police, Mr Das had brought charges of "forgery, cheating, criminal conspiracy, impersonation and criminal misappropriation of public money" against Mr Mukherjee. Mr Mukherjee said: "I have not received the copy of the court order. But I have heard that instruction has been given to record an FIR against me. I am ready to face investigation. I have no objection if the complaint is investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). I would urge the police authorities not to make any delay in conducting enquiry against me." (Statesman 7/9/09)

Whistleblower doctor forced to cool heels (5)

New Delhi, September 08, 2009 A whistle blower doctor in Sushruta Trauma Centre and Lok Nayak Hospital cotton gauge scam in November 2006 is reeling under harassment by Delhi government. The doctor has been asked to go on medical leave since July 2009. But the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) in a recent order cited that the government's decision was without the backing of jurisdiction of

power. Dr Vikas Rampal, while serving as Casualty Incharge, Sushruta Trauma Centre, Civil Lines, exposed the supply of under sized cotton gauges in government hospitals. Dr Rampal also exposed the rampant corruption in the purchase of various medical equipment including ICU beds and purchase in surgery department without any justification in Lok Nayak Hospital in Central Delhi. He had accompanied anti-corruption officials and conducted various raids in hospitals. In February 2007, the CBI had registered a case against him, accusing him of corruption in medical supplies. He was later discharged in the case. "The Delhi government did not want me to expose the corruption in city hospitals," said Dr Vikas Rampal. "The Family and Welfare department of Delhi government breached its jurisdiction and relieved me of my services, and forced me on a medical leave." M. Ramachandran, Vice Chairman (CAT), in a recent order cited that prima facie it had been possible to establish by the applicant (Dr Rampal) that the order might have been without the backing of jurisdiction of power. Ajesh Luthra, the complainant's counsel, said, "He belongs to central government cadre and the state government cannot exercise its powers in relieving him from his services." Two other doctors — Dr Sandeep Miglani and Dr Surender Singh — from central government cadre were similarly relieved from their services. In Dr. Miglani's case, the Central Administrative Tribunal has already issued contempt notice to Delhi Principal Secretary (Health). "We all fought against corruption and this how we were rewarded. I was never charge sheeted in any corruption case," said Dr Rampal. Dr Rampal is presently posted at Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital, Mangolpuri. (Hindustan Times 8/9/09)

Police inspector caught accepting Rs 25,000 bribe (5)

SURAT: Police inspector DA Kapadia of Mahidharpura police station was caught red-handed at his office by the Anti-Corruption Bureau sleuths while allegedly taking bribe from an accused in a cheating case here on Tuesday. Kapadia had been transferred to Mahidharpura police station in August from traffic police. The incident was shot for the first time using a button video camera by the ACB, the sources said. Kapadia had demanded Rs 25,000 as bribe from a person who was an accused in a cheating case for not taking any action against him. The complainant approached Kapadia in his office with the money. He was caught red-handed accepting the bribe and the incident was shot on a camera planted in the shirt button of the complainant, the sources added. (Times of India 8/9/09)

CBI raids to probe coal scam (5)

After complaints that 18 lakh tonnes of coal went missing from Rajmahal South OCP patch of Eastern Coalfields Limited in 2006-07, sleuths of CBI's anti-corruption wing simultaneously on Tuesday raided 25 locations all over the country, including Raniganj, Asansol, Durgapur, Kolkata offices of Kolkata-based coal company, Banowari Lal Agarwala Private Limited. Sleuths raided the house of former chairman-cum-managing director (CMD) of ECL Dipak Chakravartii and six other senior ECL officials, creating a stir in the coal belt. Several important documents have been seized. No arrests have been made so far. Man robbed in Howrah: A promoter was robbed of Rs 2.3 lakh outside an ATM counter at Golabari's Arabindo Road in Howrah on Wednesday afternoon. Shibpur resident Ravi Prakash Dayamar (40) had just withdrawn the amount when three youths threatened him at gun point. They escaped with the money down G T road. Two held with forged passports: Immigration officials at the Kolkata airport arrested two men with forged passports on Wednesday. Amritsar residents Amandeep Singh (32) and Gurpratap Singh (32) had gone to Bangkok via Dhaka by crossing the Petrapole border illegally. They had tampered with their visas to get work in European countries. (Times of India 10/9/09)

40% of NREGA funds siphoned off in key districts (5)

NEW DELHI: The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the UPA's flagship anti-poverty scheme, has come to be wracked by corruption which sabotaged similar measures in the past. A government investigation into the working of the scheme with an annual budget of Rs 40,000 crore has revealed the siphoning off of a whopping 40% of the allocation and woefully inadequate implementation of the scheme in districts where it is needed most. The reality check from a detailed panchayat-wise probe in Tikamgarh (MP) and Lalitpur (UP) has come as a shocker to the government which had hoped that built-in safeguards would deter corruption. Rural development minister C P Joshi is now planning to accelerate ongoing efforts to institutionalize 'social audits' and appointment of ombudsmen in districts to help the 'aam aadmi' scheme realize its potential. Tikamgarh and Lalitpur are part of the impoverished Bundelkhand region for which the job scheme was supposed to be a lifeline. The audit by monitors deputed from the Centre has revealed that a huge chunk of money meant for the unemployed poor and for

creation of rural assets was being pocketed by sarpanchs, panchayat secretaries and their accomplices. The monitors sent by minister of state for rural development Pradeep Jain found that in Tikamgarh, of the Rs 384 crore spent so far on the NREGA, Rs 120-150 crore was pilfered by panchayat functionaries. The story in Lalitpur, one of the most backward districts of UP, is more serious because functionaries, besides being corrupt, have also been revealed to be indifferent towards NREGA. The district has been able to spend Rs 157 crore — far short of what is required in the unirrigated region ravaged by drought. The most common irregularity is faking of old assets — roads and wells — as new, and spiriting away the allocation. Money is also being pocketed by inflating the scale of work -- like construction of bunds and digging -- while muster rolls have been cooked up to make fraudulent withdrawals. This was the tale across gram panchayats Patha, Bilt, Paniyara, Budera, Ram Nagar, Barethi, Sunderpur, Bhamora and Mawai. In Budera, the monitors reviewing a jatropa plantation work of Rs 4.10 lakh, found nothing on the ground for the Rs 80,000 that was claimed to have been spent. A well on the land of Achheylal Kushwaha was shown as a fresh construction though it has been in existence since 2004. In Sukwaha, the monitors found an ingenious way of misappropriation. The functionaries claimed payment for construction of three roads whereas they had constructed one. A road from Sukhwaha to Gundwara was made and widened alright measuring 1,280 metres. But it was found that the road was also broken into two — Sukhwaha to Barai Tal and Barai Tal to Gundwara — on papers and the measurement book of the original road split. The money for one road was thus paid thrice. There are serious doubts on the construction of 'kuchcha roads' made in Patha. While a road from Patha to Sagoni (Rs 3.92 lakh) and Deviji Mandir Patha to Matauli (Rs 4.90 lakh) were made, land records show that these were existing roads. Poor workers have lost in the process. In Patha, the sarpanch kept a blank document signed by him which could be used by secretaries to create fabricated records. In a check dam, with an estimated cost of Rs 4.99 lakh, money was embezzled by passing off 15cm-thick RCC slabs as 25cm. The structure was so weak that no shutters could be put for fear of water pressure triggering a collapse. The muster roll signatures appeared signed by one person, sarpanch or secretary. In Bilt, while plantation was poor, tree guards, involving material cost on cement and bricks, have been made in large number at Rs 1,200 each. The monitors found that plant survival rate was barely 10-15% while 'tree guards' had leakages upto 60%. In Lalitpur, monitors found that the spending has not just been inadequate but even unwise. The monitors found while wells here of 10m diameter cost Rs 6 lakh, neighbouring Tikamgarh had wells of 6m diameter for Rs 1.75 lakh. Curiously, the minor irrigation department of UP has directed for wells of 6m only. Thus three-times more money has been shown to be spent. With an isolated exception, old bunds after some repair were shown as new, leaving a scope for misappropriation of upto 70%..... (Times of India 2/10/09)

CBI to withdraw cases against Quattrocchi today (5)

New Delhi: CBI today moved a local court for the legal burial of the two-decade-old Bofors pay-off case by seeking withdrawal of the case against Italian businessman Octavio Quattrocchi on the ground that "continuance of his prosecution will be unjustified". The agency said it has arrived at this conclusion after its failure on two occasions to extradite the 69-year-old businessman from Malaysia and Argentina to face trial. The CBI, which also relied on various other factors including the Delhi High Court judgements quashing charges against all other co-accused to justify its decision, said that the application to withdraw the case has been filed in good faith and in public interest. "In any event, the attempts to secure the presence of Quattrocchi from Malaysia and Argentina have failed. I find that the Malaysian court has also touched upon the merits of the case," Additional Solicitor General P P Malhotra and advocate Naveen K Matta submitted before Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Kaveri Baweja. The court, however, refused to pass any order on CBI's plea after advocate Ajay Agrawal objected to the probe agency's move and submitted that it is trying to close the case despite having sufficient evidence. The court asked the CBI to file its response on Agrawal's application and posted the matter for further hearing on October 9. The CBI, however, submitted that the advocate has no locus in the case and he should not be heard by the court. The agency refuted the allegations that its decision to close the case has been taken due to extraneous consideration and said that it was done in public interest. The ASG said the court has a limited role in deciding the application and the CBI's plea can only be turned down on the ground that it has been filed under extraneous considerations and the investigating agency has not applied its mind. "The present application for withdrawal is being filed bonafide, in good faith and in public interest. I find the continuance of the prosecution against Quattrocchi will be unjustified," Malhotra said. "It is considered expedient in the interest of justice that the proceedings against him should not be continued and be withdrawn," the ASG

said, adding, "it is humbly and respectfully prayed that the court may consent to the withdrawal of the case." Quattrocchi, the sole surviving accused in the two-decade-old case after the Delhi High Court quashed the charges on May 31, 2005 against other accused, has never appeared before any court in the country. CBI had failed on two occasions in its attempt to extradite Quattrocchi -- first from Malaysia in 2003 and then from Argentina in 2007. Earlier, the CBI had asked the Interpol to take Quattrocchi's name off the Red Corner notice.(DNA 3/10/09)

Uttar Pradesh tax official faces corruption charge (5)

The Uttar Pradesh vigilance department Saturday evening raided a joint trade tax commissioner's home in Ghaziabad and found assets beyond his income, an official statement said. 'The raid has led to startling revelations about joint trade tax commissioner Gopal Krishna Goel's moveable and immovable properties that were apparently far disproportionate to his known and legitimate sources of income,' a statement issued by the chief minister's Office said. While declining to divulge the estimated value of the properties and cash recovered during the raid, a top official of Chief Minister Mayawati's secretariat told IANS: 'The raid is still on, so we would be in a position to give such estimates only tomorrow.' Goel is currently posted at Agra. Complaints about his alleged corruption were pending from the time he was holding charge as the deputy trade tax commissioner at Ghaziabad. A criminal case has also been registered against him under the Prevention of Corruption Act at the Kavi Nagar police station in Ghaziabad. His multiple bank accounts were also being seized and lockers were to be opened Monday, officials said.(India E-News 3/10/09)

CBI seeks prosecution of Indian Nursing Council president (5)

NEW DELHI: The CBI has filed a charge sheet in a Delhi court against the president of Indian Nursing Council (INC) and seven others, seeking their prosecution for alleged irregularities in permitting the enhancement of seats in six nursing schools in the country. In the charge sheet filed before Special CBI judge O P Saini, the probe agency said INC president T Dileep Kumar and its former vice-president K D Varyanai, resorted to malpractices while granting recognition and feasibility certificate to six nursing schools in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Karnataka during 2001-2004. Taking note of the charge sheet, the court fixed the matter for taking its cognisance on October 26. The CBI has sought their prosecution under various provisions of the IPC and the Prevention of Corruption Act, dealing with criminal conspiracy and abuse of official position. Elaborating modus of commission of offence, CBI said the accused permitted enhancement of seats and granted feasibility certificates to nursing schools even though they did not "fulfil the suitability" criteria as per the norms of the INC. An enquiry revealed that six such schools were granted the permission. The two accused "dishonestly" replaced adverse evaluation reports by fake ones, CBI said. Besides the officials of the INC, six persons, involved with the management of the beneficiary nursing schools, have also been named as accused. (Times of India 4/10/09)

Joginder Singh not in favour of giving legal burial to Bofors case (5)

New Delhi: A former CBI director, who had brought to India documents relating to the Bofors pay-off case, today did not favour the agency seeking its legal burial saying it is a "legally sound case" to show there was corruption. "Documents are there to show that he (Ottavio Quattrocchi) received money", said Joginder Singh during whose tenure the documents were brought to the country. Singh was CBI's director during 1996-97. "It is a legally sound case documents were brought and submitted to the government and to the courts in the country," he said when asked about CBI seeking a legal burial to the case. Singh also said a decision to withdraw the two-decade old case against Italian businessman Ottavio Quattrocchi is taken by the government and not by the CBI. "It is not the CBI but it's the government's decision because it is the government's advocate who has said this...you can put all the blame on CBI because he (the advocate) is representing a CBI case," he added. "It is the government which decides whether to go in for an appeal in a particular case from lower case to the high court and from the high court to the supreme court," he added. If the government says there is no case it means that the CBI says there is no case, he said. Singh said that "no one has gone behind that who and why the legal opinion for seeking the withdrawal of the case against Italian businessman was given?" On the flak that the premier investigating agency of the country was receiving in the two-decade-old case, Singh said, "It is not CBI's case and no one (in CBI) will talk about it for the simple reason that they are bound by the conduct rules. "After all, the CBI functions as per the law in the country and the attorney general is the highest authority to decide," he

said. The former CBI director also rued that the agency even does not have the independence of hiring an advocate on its own or pay fees to him. The CBI on Saturday sought legal burial of the 20-year-old Bofors pay-off case against Quattrocchi by moving for its withdrawal before a Delhi court which refused to pass any immediate order. CBI sought withdrawal of the case against the 69-year-old Italian businessman on the ground that "continuance of his prosecution will be unjustified". (DNA 4/10/09)

NREGS ombudsman to root out corruption (5)

Paul John, TNN 8 October 2009, 02:35am IST

AHMEDABAD: Each district in Gujarat will have a National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) Ombudsman in the coming two months. One of the main purposes of the ombudsman is to bring about transparency in the effective implementation of the NREGS for the poor at the village level and to curb corruption and misappropriation of funds. The ombudsman would be selected from a panel of members that each district collector recommends to the state rural development department. The ombudsman has powers to issue direction for conducting spot investigation and lodge FIRs against the erring parties. Besides this, the official can even initiate proceedings suo motu in the event of any circumstance that may cause grievance to a poor citizen who seeks work under NREGS. The ombudsman can engage experts for facilitating the speedy disposal of complaints to prevent pile-up of cases. "The main aim of the ombudsman is a direct redressal, disciplinary action against officers and punitive actions against the corrupt. The ombudsman has to report his findings to the chief secretary and the secretary, NREGS for the state for appropriate legal action against erring persons," says a senior officer of the department for rural development. "The ombudsman will be an independent authority and citizens can approach him by lodging complaints against erring officers, issues related to custody of job cards, demand for work or absence of NREGS issues from gram sabha meetings. The union ministry of rural development had shot off notifications two weeks ago for the appointment of ombudsman," added the officer. The officer added that the ombudsman can be members from civil society groups, retired officers, academicians people with impeccable records. (Times of India 8/10/09)

MCD tops in corruption cases, followed by Delhi govt and DDA (5)

NEW DELHI: Municipal Corporation of Delhi has topped the corruption chart with about 4,300 cases and is followed by Delhi government, Delhi Development Authority and Delhi Police. There are about 457 corruption related cases against the Delhi government employees including 137 from Delhi Jal Board (DJB). It is followed by DDA and Delhi Police where 305 and 133 officials respectively were facing corruption cases. Interestingly, 18 senior DDA officials have retired without their probe been completed. The official figures came out in response to a series of RTI queries made by social activist and Advocate Vivek Kumar Garg. Exercising his Right to Information, Garg had sought the details of corruption cases which are pending investigations alongwith the name of employees from the Public Information Officers of Delhi Government, DDA and Delhi Police. The MCD's Vigilance department said as many as 4,299 cases were pending against 3,350 officials. Out of the registered cases, 1,435 cases were by anti-corruption branch of the Delhi Government, Police and CBI whereas 2,877 such cases were registered by its own vigilance wing. Most of the tainted MCD officials, working at middle and senior levels like zonal incharge, superintendent and executive engineers, have over two to three such cases each against them, the RTI reply has said. In response to another RTI reply, the Delhi Police said that various criminal cases against 133 personnel were pending against serving officials since January 2008. The cases were pending against eight inspectors, 12 sub inspectors, 18 assistant sub inspectors, 28 head constables and 67 constables, the reply said. Whereas the DJB said a total of 137 cases involving 214 of its employees, including serving and retired senior officials, are pending since 2002. The department also said that investigations in 317 other cases, registered by CBI and ACB are underway. High ranking officials were among 300 employees of DDA who are facing corruption cases, some of which are pending for more than two decades. (Times of India 9/10/09)

We did not want to celebrate golden jubilee of Bofors case: Moily (5)

NEW DELHI: Abrupt closure of the two-decade-old Bofors case is no longer a cause of embarrassment for the UPA government, if one goes by law minister Veerappa Moily. Far from being on the backfoot over the controversial closure of the case, the minister made fun of the question at an interaction with reporters and said the government was not keen to celebrate the golden jubilee of the infamous case. "Already 20 years have passed without a single conviction. The Delhi High Court in two judgments said there was

neither any corruption nor any conspiracy. Courts in two countries threw out the case. The Supreme Court of Argentina even imposed cost on the government for appealing against the lower court decision (not to extradite Italian businessman Ottavio Quattrocchi). What more does one need to say, nothing is left in the case," he said. Moily said the CBI had relentlessly pursued the case but nothing came out of it. "What do you want, the government to celebrate its golden jubilee," he said, closing the Q&A session on the issue. (Times of India 9/10/09)

Judiciary not free from corruption: Ex-CJI (5)

Bangalore, Oct 14: Terming charges against Karnataka High Court Chief Justice P D Dinakaran as "very unfortunate", a former CJI on Wednesday said the allegations will damage the image of entire Judiciary but maintained that it was not free from corruption. Justice K N Singh said that as a member of judiciary and former Chief Justice of India, he felt sad to hear the allegations against Dinakaran. On the debate on corruption in judiciary in general, he said. "...Higher judiciary does not suffer with that kind of corruption which is so prevalent in other departments of administration". "There may be one or two incidents here and there but judiciary is not free from corruption, and one or two instances would not be sufficient to hold that judiciary is a corruption institution", said Justice Singh, who is on a private visit here. He said he did not know Justice Dinakaran in person nor did he know details of the allegations. But if media reports on the allegations are correct, then "it will certainly damage the constitutional office of Chief Justice as well as it will damage the image of the entire judiciary in the country," he said. "It pains me that a District Collector had conducted an inquiry (on the land holdings of Justice Dinakaran in Thiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu)," he said. Speaking in general terms, Justice Singh, who retired in 1991, said that sometimes some allegations were made especially when a judge was very aggressive or not liked by some members of the Bar or litigant public. "But the kind of allegations (against Dinakaran) have not been made (It's the first time that such allegations were levelled against Judge). I don't think it had been made," he pointed out. Ever since reports came of Justice Dinakaran being elevated to the Supreme court, lawyers in Bangalore and Chennai have come out with allegations that he had grabbed land in Tamil Nadu in violation of the land ceiling laws. (Central Chronicle 14/10/09)

FIR against Amar Singh, Amitabh raises heat in Uttar Pradesh (5)

LUCKNOW: With the FIR filed against Samajwadi Party general secretary Amar Singh and actor Amitabh Bachchan snowballing into a point of confrontation with the Mayawati government, party president Mulayam Singh on Friday sought Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's intervention. (The FIR was filed on the basis of a complaint by one Shivakant Tripathi at the Babupurwa police station in Kanpur late on Thursday, naming Mr. Amar Singh, Mr. Bachchan and others under Sections 420, 467, 471 and 120 B of the Indian Penal Code, Sections 7,8,9,10 and 13 (1) (C) of the Prevention of Corruption Act and Section 3/4 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.) Mr. Mulayam Singh told journalists here that the Mayawati government was on a 'witch-hunt' and out to tarnish the reputation of Mr. Amar Singh and Mr. Bachchan. He said issues relating to companies are dealt with by the Union Finance Ministry and not the State government. He alleged that the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister was behind the FIR and dared her to arrest Mr. Amar Singh and Mr. Bachchan. Mr. Mulayam Singh demanded strict action against those who were conspiring against the Samajwadi Party leaders. He said Mr. Bachchan is an eminent personality who had won several honours in the country and abroad and Mr. Amar Singh was a veteran politician. The Samajwadi Party general secretary has been charged with money laundering and committing alleged financial fraud worth crores of rupees while he was chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Development Council during the Mulayam Singh regime. The name of Mr. Amar Singh's wife, Pankaja Singh, also figures in the more than 20-page complaint. The complainant has accused Mr. Amar Singh of misusing his official position from 2003 to 2008 and has alleged that the SP general secretary along with his wife amassed more than Rs. 500 crore through wrongful means. Mr. Singh has been accused of taking commission from the crores of rupees worth contracts given to his acquaintances during his stint as the UPDC chairman. Mr. Tripathi has alleged that the accused got small firms merged with big companies for alleged personal gains. The FIR states that crores of rupees were collected by one of the companies, Messrs. Energy Development Company Limited (EDCL) between 2005 and 2007. It states that another company owned by Mr. Amar Singh, EDCL Wire Project Limited had been handed crores of rupees worth contracts. The complainant alleged that 43 companies were merged with Messrs. Pankaja Art and Credit Limited and Messrs. Sarvottam Companies Limited and despite these companies being non-functional their shares were sold at a high price. The other charges include amassing crores of rupees through the

transfer of funds from one company to another, buying security shares without licence and investment trade. ADG, Law and Order (1), Brij Lal told reporters here that investigations are under way and if the need arose the case could be transferred to some other agency. He said the report of the Kanpur police would be awaited before taking the next step. (The Hindu 17/10/09)

Apex court stops cremation of PF scam accused's body (5)

New Delhi, October 19, 2009: The Supreme Court on Monday directed that the body of Ashutosh Asthana, the prime accused cum witness in a corruption case involving judges of the higher judiciary, should not be cremated "if it has not been until now", till further orders. A bench of D.K. Jain and H.L. Dattu issued the order on a plea by senior counsel Anil Diwan who had approached the court seeking an independent probe into the mysterious death of Asthana in Dasna Jail in Ghaziabad on Saturday. Diwan told the court that there was some uncertainty regarding reports of Asthana's cremation and accordingly, he sought the court's direction to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) that if his body has not been cremated till now, it should not be cremated till further orders. Approving Diwan's demand, the court told him to inform the CBI counsel of the directions. The court will hear the matter in detail on Tuesday. (Hindustan Times 19/10/09)

Amar singh case moved to Kolkata (5)

Lucknow/Kolkata, October 19, 2009: The Uttar Pradesh (UP) government on Saturday transferred the corruption case against Samajwadi Party general secretary Amar Singh to the Kolkata police. A complaint was lodged at a Kanpur police station that Singh, 53, created a string of shell companies and amalgamated them with six core firms controlled by him, mostly with addresses in Kolkata. The complainant, Shivakant Tripathi, said this was done to convert Singh's "black money into white". Singh had denied the charges and threatened to sue UP Chief Minister Mayawati because he felt she was behind it. Talking to the journalists, UP Cabinet Secretary Shashank Shekhar Singh said since a majority of the companies were registered in Kolkata, it would be appropriate for the police there to investigate the matter. He said the UP government had sought an explanation from police officers, especially from the officer-in-charge of the police station concerned, why the complaint was accepted since the Kolkata link was known. Kolkata Police Commissioner Gautam Mohan Chakraborty said: "We're yet to receive any such instruction or request." (Hindustan Times 19/10/09)

E-governance to check corruption in HP(5)

Shimla: Aiming to cut down paperwork in offices and check corruption, the Himachal Pradesh government is planning to adopt the e-governance model successfully implemented in Gujarat. Tata Consultancy Services, which developed the e-budget software for the Gujarat government, gave a detailed presentation to senior government officials here last week. "We are studying merits of e-governance model prepared by Tata Consultancy that has been implemented by Gujarat," chief secretary Asha Swaroop said on Sunday. She said the state has already taken several initiatives to popularise information technology (IT) in the government functioning to make delivery system faster. Initiatives like SMS gateway, e-samadhan and interactive web-based services have been launched, said Swaroop, who has also served as secretary in the information and broadcasting ministry. "We will see how can the model prepared by Tata Consultancy could supplement our efforts to expand the use of IT," she added. Principal secretary of IT department BK Aggarwal enumerated the various initiatives by the government to popularise IT in the hill state. The IT department has set up "sugam" centres in Shimla and Solan, where a person can deposit electricity and telephone bills, apply for driving licence and registration of vehicles by avoiding long queues. Buoyed by its success, efforts are on to open similar centres at Hamirpur, Mandi and Kangra districts, he said. The SMS gateway service, under which a person can get all relevant information through SMS, has been launched in Shimla, Hamirpur and Solan districts, Aggarwal said. Efforts are on to computerise the fair price shops under the public distribution system, the IT Principal Secretary said, adding the programme would soon start in Shimla town and Mashobra block of Shimla district on a pilot basis. He said a state-level data centre would be set up in Shimla at an estimated cost of Rs 40 crore. The Centre will have a foolproof mechanism with anti-hacking facility and safeguard data that can even withstand a natural calamity. Work is progressing to open a "lokmitra kendra" in every panchayat that would have at least one computer operated by a locally trained person to provide facilities like application for land records and other services to citizens, Aggarwal said. "The government's effort is to take the use of computers down to the grassroots level and make every government official computer

literate," Aggarwal said, adding that Himachal Pradesh has already been ranked second after Tamil Nadu as per a Data... (Financial Express 19/10/09)

Fresh autopsy cry in PF scam case (5)

New Delhi, Oct. 19: The Ghaziabad Bar Association today moved the Supreme Court seeking a second post-mortem in the mysterious death of a prime accused and witness in the multi-crore provident fund scam involving top judges. Initial post-mortem reports on Ashutosh Asthana, found unconscious in Ghaziabad jail and later declared dead in hospital, suggested death by poisoning. Jail authorities had claimed that it was a case of suicide. The scam, involving at least 13 high court judges and one from the Supreme Court, is related to fraudulent PF withdrawals from the Ghaziabad court treasury between 1995 and 2001. The Supreme Court had directed the CBI to probe the scam and report back to it. The agency is yet to complete its probe. The death of Asthana, who was in judicial custody, is ironical as the apex court itself has laid down guidelines to prevent custodial deaths and inhuman treatment of undertrials in many of its judgments over the years. The bar, on whose plea the apex court had directed the CBI inquiry, has raised doubts over the suicide claim and demanded that a special investigation team probe Asthana's death. It has said the second post-mortem should be done in Delhi. "If he (Asthana) has not been cremated, he should not be. If he has been cremated, a second post-mortem should be conducted of his viscera," said Anil Divan, the bar's counsel. Justice D.K. Jain, the apex court judge who heads the special bench dealing with the PF scam, asked the CBI counsel to find out whether Asthana's body had been cremated. The matter will be heard again tomorrow. The bar also claimed Asthana's family had feared threats to his life. Asthana himself had wanted to be shifted to a separate jail barracks because of this, the bar said in its application quoting his brother Shishir. Shishir has alleged that his brother was murdered at the behest of the judges allegedly involved in the scam, the bar told the apex court. In his confession before a magistrate, Asthana had said several sitting and retired judges of district courts and superior courts had benefited from the PF withdrawals. He claimed several judicial officers had also benefited and that the withdrawals were made with the sanction of their superiors. In some instances, huge amounts were withdrawn from the PF fund of Class III and IV employees, sometimes even twice a year, in the name of fictitious persons. The CBI is probing the claims. The apex court has sought a status report on the investigation and the case is likely to come up for hearing in November. The FIR lodged by Ghaziabad police in the case names 82 lower staff for allegedly siphoning off over Rs 7 crore from the PF corpus. But no FIR has been registered against the sitting Supreme Court judge, seven sitting high court judges and 10 serving district judges. However, six retired high court judges and two retired district judges have been named. (Telegraph 20/10/09)

CBI probe: 'Rodrigues role under scanner' (5)

NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH: With the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) recently asking it to look into the alleged irregularities into the allotment of two mega projects — Film City and Amusement-cum-Theme park — of Chandigarh, the CBI has begun investigations taking into account all the facts and figures submitted to it by the country's top anti-corruption watchdog. "CBI has already begun the probe and will also look into the reported roles, if any, of Punjab governor and Union Territory (Chandigarh) administrator General (retired) SF Rodrigues and others in the alleged irregularities," said a senior home ministry official. The official also made it clear that the ongoing inquiry would have no effect on Rodrigues' fate as the governor as "his term would, in any case, be ending next month". CBI officials including its spokesperson Harsh Bhal were, however, not available for comment. It is, therefore, not yet clear whether the agency has begun the probe after initiating a preliminary enquiry (PE) into the alleged irregularities or it has been merely looking into it through a 'discreet inquiry' — a step before filing a PE. The CBI will file a regular case into it only when it finds some basis into the inquiry conducted by the CVC. The Commission has already handed over all the relevant details/papers to the agency. The CVC had conducted the inquiry following allegations that the UT administration had violated certain rules and procedures for clearing the two mega projects — Film City and Amusement-cum-Theme Park — in Chandigarh. The UT administration has, however, been strongly denying the allegations, ruling out the possibility of any wrongdoing in the allotment of the projects. (Times of India 20/10/09)

CBI gets sanction to prosecute AICTE ex-officials (5)

NEW DELHI: HRD minister Kapil Sibal has given sanction to CBI to prosecute former AICTE chairman RA Yadav and former member secretary K Narayan Rao in another case of corruption relating to

Padmavathy College of Engineering in Tamil Nadu. Since both Yadav and Rao are joint secretary level officers, CBI had to seek the minister's permission. It is after conducting a preliminary enquiry that the CBI seeks clearance from the central government to file a regular case. Sources said the permission was sought on Monday and the minister gave the clearance the same day. Sources said Yadav, Rao and former AICTE advisor HC Rai periodically extended approval given to Padmavathy College of Engineering despite the fact that the institution did not have necessary infrastructure to run the courses. "Approval was being extended despite a local verification by Anna University based on which the college was banned," the source said. While seeking Sibal's approval, CBI had told the ministry that it found incriminating evidence of corruption on the part of Yadav and Rao. Sources said extension was purely based on alleged pecuniary benefits to Yadav. Yadav and Rao are already facing CBI prosecution after a surprise check on the regional office of AICTE in July caught Rao while allegedly taking bribe red-handed. Rao is alleged to have demanded Rs 20 lakh from the owner of an engineering college in Andhra Pradesh for approving his college. In Yadav's case, was found that he along with other officials were allegedly demanding money for processing the case of increase in intake of seats of the engineering college being managed by the complainant in the case. However, the slew of cases has not deterred Yadav and Rao from seeking political help. Immediately after CBI got into action, MPs cutting across party lines came out in defence of the duo alleging that they were being unnecessarily harassed. (Times of India 21/10/09)

Social audit better than vigilance committees: NGOs (5)

HUBLI: Chief Minister B S Yeddyurappa's statement that district-level Kavalu Samitis (vigilance teams) would monitor spending of flood relief funds, has not found favour with NGOs. They feel a social audit by village-level committee comprising of flood victims, will be better than vigilance committees full of government officials or legislators. "The CM's statement raises a lot of questions". There is no clarity on these Samitis, said Susheela Kamath, a member of the NGO SS Sangha. "Who will be the members of these bodies? Will flood-affected villagers be part of them? What will be the roles and responsibilities of these Samitis? Will they be able to reprimand officials if they go wrong? she said. She feels a decentralized social audit done by flood relief beneficiaries would be ideal. SSS works among SHG members in north Karnataka to create awareness about RTI and NREGA. "The biggest advantage of a social audit is that people are the driving force behind them. Social audit is any day better than any government appointed vigilance committee, Basavaraj G J of the Parivarthan NGO said. His organization is campaigning for transparency in governance. "Social audits of the NREGA scheme in Rajasthan have made the scheme more transparent and efficient. People in Rajasthan now have more information on what the scheme is all about and what does it have for them. We would have liked it if the government had spoken of a social audit", Basavaraj said. "Looking at all the committees the state government has constituted till now, we have little hope the CM will do a good job at constituting a vigilance committee. I am sure it will be filled by his own party men", Maruti Manpade, president of the Karnataka Pradesh Raitha Sangha said. The second best option after social audit is to have a committee that has a majority of flood victims, he said. They need to have a non political approach by including opposition members, and Raitha Sangha functionaries, he said. What is a Social Audit? Social audit is a process in which people, beneficiaries of schemes or calamity victims work with the government to evaluate the implementation of programmes or policies. The audit process is simplified and rewritten in lay mans language. The schemes implementation is made transparent. The audit report is made public. The feedback from the audit is made to improve the scheme next time. The most famous social audit effort has been the Jan Sunvai of the NREGA scheme by the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan in Rajasthan. The Union government's NREGA committee has used vital data obtained from the Rajasthan experiment, in improving it in stages. (Times of India 24/10/09)

CBI arrests senior rly officer with 'bribe' (5)

Lucknow: The Anti-Corruption Wing of CBI in Lucknow today arrested the chief regional manager of Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), K M Tripathi, while he was allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 70,000 from a contractor for extending him favour in a catering contract. Tripathi, an IRS official, was caught at his official residence in Hazratganj area. During the search at his residence, which continued till late evening, the CBI team recovered about Rs 25 lakh in cash, two gold bricks each weighing half-a-kg, documents related to two flats, an illicit .9 mm pistol and three licensed weapons. A CBI official said Tripathi had allegedly demanded the money from the contractor who lodged a complaint

with the agency. The CBI team laid a trap and nabbed the officer red-handed, he said. Tripathi has been posted in Lucknow for the last 12 years and has served with various departments of the Railways, including as senior divisional commercial manager with the Northern Railways' DRM office here. The CBI would be referring the case of recovery of .9 mm pistol, 50 live cartridges and two magazines from Tripathi's house to the local Hazratganj police station. The CBI does not probe the Arms Act, an official said. The official said the CBI's special unit had put Tripathi's mobile phone on surveillance for the last few months and subsequently asked the Lucknow unit to conduct raid after collecting evidence. (Indian Express 1/11/09)

Dinakaran dropped from SC promotion list (5)

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India KG Balakrishnan has dropped the name of Karnataka High Court Justice PD Dinakaran from the list of those recommended for elevation to the Supreme Court. The name of Justice Dinakaran has been dropped due to the allegations of corruption and land encroachment against him. Five eminent Jurists had written letters to President Pratibha Patil, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, CJI KG Balakrishnan and Union Law Minister M Veerappa Moily appealing to them not to promote Dinakaran in view of the allegations against him. The CJI conducted an informal discreet enquiry and also sought report from Tamil Nadu government. The allegations of land encroachment were confirmed when District Collector of Thiruvallur, Palani Kumar, in his report to SC confirmed that Dinakaran had encroached on 197 acres of public land illegally. According to the CJI, the decision of the Supreme Court Collegium to not promote Dinakaran till the enquiry against him is completed has already been conveyed to the Central Government. Earlier, Moily had said "nothing will be done which tarnishes the image of the Judiciary". Meanwhile, the collegium has cleared the decks for elevation of four others to the Apex court namely Justice AK Patnayak (Chief Justice of Madhya Pradesh High Court), Justice Tirath Singh Thakur, Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court), Justice SS Nijjar (Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court) and Justice KS Radhakrishna (Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court).(CNN IBN 1/11/09)

Lokayukta urged to check corruption in media (5)

Belgaum: The Lokayukta should be given full powers to check corruption not only in the legislature, executive and judiciary but also in the media, said Minister for Minority Welfare, Haj and Wakf Mumtaz Ali Khan. Speaking at a press conference here on Monday, he said the rot of corruption has left no section of society pure. Rather it has taken deep roots calling for mass action from the grassroots to the top level. Mr. Ali, Executive Trustee of the Centre for Standards in Public Life, a registered Trust floated under the chairmanship of the former Chief Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah four year ago. Eminent personalities such as Kuldip Nayar, former Union Minister M.S. Gurpadswamy, lawyer Prashant Bhushan, besides senior legislator from Dharwad district Chandrakant Bellad and the former Minister B. Somashekhar are some of the members. Since its formation the centre has not undertaken any significant task. However, Mr. Ali elaborated on the objective of the centre and what the members proposed to do in the coming days. He stressed on the need to improve character of individuals in public life and inculcate humanitarian values which are missing because people are greedy. Mr. Ali said society had become so corrupt that people who voiced concern about corruption were themselves corrupt. Morality was all time low and it needed to be addressed collectively and decisively before the situation becomes totally uncontrollable. Yellow journalism is also widespread. In the recent past, news reports, articles and editorials in newspapers made an instant impact on Government and the people concerned. But, today even the best editorials fail to make any impact on the psyche of the society at large, let alone the Government. Suggesting concrete measures, he said the Union Government should bring in a legislation to seize all the black money of Indian nationals anywhere in the world. The Election Commission should amend the People's Representation Act to check the use of black money and prevent corrupt persons from contesting elections. Also, with huge cost involved in legal battle in courts, particularly in the Supreme Court, the Government should start "virtual courts" which would enable even poor litigant plead his or her case through video conferencing method from his home town or district headquarter. Mr. Chandrakant Bellad said: "We (read politicians) made the people corrupt. Unfortunately, the voter never bothers to question his representative in legislature or parliament once the election is over. It is high time that voter should exercise his voting rights and question their representative at every step". (The Hindu 3/11/09)

Money abroad can be recovered if UN convention ratified: NGO (5)

New Delhi, November 04, 2009: Transparency International India on Wednesday asked New Delhi to ratify the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, saying it will help recover assets and money stashed by its citizens in countries like Switzerland which has ratified the act. It also said ratification of the convention would signify India's commitment to effectively fight corruption and be transparent. "If India signs the act it will help the country to recover assets and money which are stashed in foreign countries. Under the convention, countries can freeze, seize and confiscate property owned by citizens of other countries in their country," Anupama Jha, Executive Director, of the NGO told reporters here. She said it would help India recover assets from countries like Switzerland where Indians are said to have stashed their money. "Since Switzerland has signed the convention it will help us recover or seize the assets. The convention also says the money or asset can be returned to the country to which the owner belongs," she said. (Hindustan Times 4/11/09)

Engineers booked for committing fraud (5)

HAZARIBAG: The district administration on Tuesday lodged an FIR against five engineers of the special division of the rural engineering organisation (REO) in connection with the alleged irregularities committed in the execution of about 400 NREGA schemes in the Barkagaon and Keredari blocks of the district. The FIR includes the names of assistant executive engineer Ghurani Ravidas, assistant engineers Sunil Kumar and Pappu Kumar and junior engineers Harihar Singh and Sanjay Singh. At various monitoring committee meetings held under the presidentship of deputy commissioner (DC) Vinay Kumar Choubey, several former MPs and MLAs and workers of different political parties had complained about irregularities committed by the REO's special division headed by executive engineer Ghurani Ravidas. They said that Ravidas used to collect cheques amounting to crores of rupees even when schemes were not complete. In several cases, the beneficiaries did not receive payments, they pointed out and demanded an inquiry against them. On the basis of the complaints, the DC instructed the assistant project officer (APO) of the District Rural Development Agency, Anil Kumar, to inquire into the irregularities committed by the engineers. After scrutinizing documents and meeting beneficiaries, the APO detected grave irregularities in several NREGA schemes. Later, he submitted an inquiry report to the DC who recommended the state government to initiate action against the guilty engineers. Following this, the state government suspended the five engineers and referred the file to the governor who directed the DC to lodge an FIR against the engineers. Rajya Sabha MP Mebel Rebello, who is a member of the NREGA central monitoring committee, had also received complaints against the special division engineers. (Times of India 5/11/09)

Railways too had Tripathi on its radar (5)

LUCKNOW: Even before he was caught red-handed by the Central Bureau of Investigation accepting a bribe, senior Indian Railways officer KM Tripathi already had trouble brewing for him. He had been receiving correspondence from vigilance wing of the Railways over alleged "procedural irregularities in Lucknow regional office of IRCTC" and also his "behaviour". Lucknow office was already under the scanner of vigilance wing of the Railways. "Something might have come out of the investigations we were carrying out," a senior Railways officer posted at New Delhi told TOI on condition of anonymity. But before that, CBI raid happened and Tripathi was caught, he added. Tripathi, chief regional manager, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), Lucknow, was arrested on November 1 by the CBI from his official residence when he was caught red-handed accepting a bribe of Rs 70,000 from a contractor. While the CBI registered a case of bribery and disproportionate assets against him, a case has also been lodged with the Hazratganj police under provisions of Arms Act and Excise Act. "There is no record per se on how many complaints had come against individual regional offices," said sources. But they confirmed that complaints received against the regional office of IRCTC in Lucknow caused them to look into the matter. "Catering is one section that always receives complaints but there were complaints about the official's behaviour too," said sources. Had the charges been proved in the investigation, his case might have been referred to CVC through the Railway Board. And the official might have invited equally serious action against him as now. Tripathi is currently under suspension and till CBI does not complete its enquiry, his fate remains undecided. Since CBI is already investigating the matter, Railways might not do the same. Posting at IRCTC is a "sensitive one" going by the Railway's own categorisation that it has a lot of public dealing involved. Railway Board has clear directives that no official can occupy a sensitive post which involves lot of public dealing for more than four years (if it is not on deputation).

Besides, it has to be a two years' gap before an official resumes a sensitive post again. The Board has also laid down that any railway official can not stay for more than 10 years period at a place. But according to a vigilance official in one of the zonal railways, "we keep pressurising executives on this rule but it hardly helps". (Times of India 7/11/09)

A few black sheep don't make the entire Indian Army corrupt' (5)

The image of the Army has taken a beating recently. Earlier, it was for professional incompetence but after media reports exposed corruption among senior officers, fake killings and recruitment scams have shattered the image of Army as an honest and professional organisation. While there are certainly a few corrupt elements in the Army, it is unfortunate that certain sections of the media are portraying entire Armed Forces as a corrupt institution. Till a decade ago, associating the word corruption with Forces was considered a taboo as media felt it could demoralise them. Today, media houses are competing with each other to twist corruption cases linked with Army and discrediting the institution in its entirety. While none can justify the incidences of corruption in the Army, mistaking a few black sheep with the entire flock is neither appropriate nor acceptable. It is not possible to isolate the Army from the degeneration of moral fibre that has been accepted by the society as our fate for years. Very few take pride in being upright and talking straight. Courage, integrity and morality have been the major casualties in recent times giving way to hypocrisy and sycophancy and the Armed Forces have not remained untouched. No system can remain foolproof in such times as designing a fair system is one and letting it function effectively quite another. Vested interests don't let the system function, as the babu and politician combine ultimately controls the introduction of any major weapon system or equipment in the Army. Procurement of any equipment depends upon various factors including urgency, quantities required, import cost, production with foreign collaboration and indigenous development. However, the system which attempts to integrate many agencies like DGMO (Director General Military Operations), DGMI (Director General Military Intelligence), ADGWE (Assistant Director General Weapons and Equipment), DGQA (Director General Quality Assurance), DGSD, Ordnance, MOD in the procurement process of equipment tends to become unnecessarily complex and unwieldy. (Indian Express 7/11/09)

India 84th out of 180 on index of corruption (5)

NEW DELHI: Even as the Madhu Koda scam dominates headlines, the perception of public officials and politicians in India has dipped further. Transparency International India's (TII) corruption index released on Tuesday has ranked India 84th out of 180 countries. A silver lining to this dismal ranking is that with an integrity score of 3.4, India is the least corrupt country in south Asia excluding Bhutan. Also, India has improved its credibility score from 2.7 in 2001 to 3.4 in 2009. Speaking on the issue, TII chairman Admiral (ret'd) R H Tahiliani said, "The score this year is not particularly flattering but we can take consolation from the fact that the country's score has not gone from bad to worse." The evaluation of the extent of corruption is based on opinion from country experts -- resident and non-residents -- and business leaders. The corruption index measures perceived levels of public sector corruption in a country. In 2009, expert analysis was sourced from African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, Bertelsmann Foundation, Economist Intelligence Unit, Freedom House, Global Insight and World Bank. Resident business leaders whose opinions are reflected in the survey are IMD, Political and Economic Risk Consultancy and the World Economic Forum. New Zealand, Denmark, Singapore, Sweden and Switzerland are the top 5 honest countries. While China ranks 79th with a score of 3.6, Pakistan has a score of 2.4, Bangladesh (2.4), Bhutan (5), Nepal (2.3), Maldives (2.5) and Sri Lanka (3.1). According to TII, nearly half of the 180 countries have scored three or even lower points, a clear indication that corruption is perceived to be rampant. Haiti, Iraq, Myanmar and Somalia have recorded the lowest score of less than 1.5. Transparency International has found that there is a strong correlation between corruption and poverty, jeopardising the global fight against poverty. Tahiliani said the low score could directly impact foreign direct investments in the country which was needed for India to build infrastructure. (Times of India 18/11/09)

CBI to probe Andhra mining scam (5)

HYDERABAD: The Congress high command on Tuesday decided to take on the powerful Bellary iron ore mining lobby by directing the Andhra Pradesh government to request for a CBI probe into charges of irregularities, levelled by TDP, in the mining operations by Obulapuram Mining Corporation. Analysts said that by giving the green signal for the CBI probe, Congress president Sonia Gandhi has shown her

determination to prevent the mining lobby from influencing politics in Andhra in the manner that it had played havoc with Karnataka politics. It is also aimed at stemming the agitation launched by opposition TDP in the state, they said. OMC is owned by Karnataka BJP minister Gali Janardhan Reddy, who along with his brother installed the first BJP government in power in Bangalore, but recently led a rebellion against CM B S Yeddyurappa. Gali was close to late Andhra CM Y S Rajasekhara Reddy as well as his son and Kadapa MP Jaganmohan Reddy. After Gali held a press conference in Hyderabad last Friday and denied any irregularities in the mining activities of his company, Jagan had scheduled a press meet on Tuesday evening, ostensibly to clarify on the TDP's charges of his involvement in the alleged irregularities. But according to sources, AICC secretaries K B Krishnamurthy and Praveen Davar contacted the Kadapa MP and told him to call off the press conference as the high command had decided to go for a CBI probe into the allegations of illegal mining by OMC. "The high command called up Andhra CM K Rosaiah around 10.30am and gave the directive," the sources said. The CM soon summoned chief secretary P Ramakanth Reddy who was taking part in a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee headed by TDP MLA Nagam Janardhan Reddy. "After discussions between the CM and the chief secretary, the state government issued a three-line statement saying that it has decided to ask the Centre to order a CBI probe," the sources said.(Times of India 18/11/09)

Jamuna Devi rues corruption in NREGS (5)

Bhopal, Nov 13: Leader of Opposition in State assembly Jamuna Devi has regretted that in spite of repeated warnings given by her about corruption and misuse of funds in National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) meant to provide 100 days employment to labourers, State BJP Government has shown apathy towards it. She has demanded that seeing the corruption in this scheme State Government on the instructions of Central Government should appoint Lokpals who will probe the corruption in this scheme. She rued that there is starvation and exodus from Bundelkhand which is continuously facing drought for three years. The corruption in this scheme in three districts namely Sagar, Tikamgarh and Chatarpur which has been exposed by newspapers is a slap on the face of BJP Government. Jamuna Devi said that in these districts stop dams and reservoirs which were constructed with investment of lakhs of rupees have cracked before the water could be filled and poor quality roads have been eroded. Similarly other works were done with poor quality and works were shown on papers and the money was misused. Opposition leader of Madhya Pradesh State Legislative Assembly Ms Jamuna Devi paid tribute to the first Prime Minister of the country late Pt Jawahar Lal Nehru on the occasion of the 120th birth anniversary of him. It is mentioned that the birth anniversary of Pt Jawahar Lal Nehru on November 14 is celebrated Children's Day. She said that as per the dream of Pt Nehru "Modern India", which is being seen today. New development and progress are being done in new high and it is the real homage to Pt Nehru. With the consent of State Congress Committee President Suresh Pachouri, Entrepreneurs Cell State President Hardwarilal Sharma has appointed industrialist Bhagwat Singh MP Congress Entrepreneurs Cell State vice president. On appointment of Singh Congress President Sonia Gandhi, State Congress President Suresh Pachouri and Congress Entrepreneurs Cell State President Hardwarilal Sharma has congratulated him. (Central Chronicle 19/11/09)

Scam hearing (5)

Cuttack, Nov. 18: Orissa High Court today adjourned hearing of a PIL on the multi-crore derivative scam till tomorrow after an affidavit submitted by the CBI indicated that it was a fit case for investigation by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) or the Enforcement Directorate. Prabanjan Patra had filed the PIL seeking a CBI probe on an alleged Rs 25-lakh-crore derivative scam involving the Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999, (Fema) violations. The RBI had constituted an inter-departments group to review the derivative transactions. The group had found violation of regulatory guidelines which were of "serious nature", CBI superintendent of police, New Delhi, Mahipal Yadav said in the affidavit. Responding to it, the high court had on August 27 asked the CBI to submit a preliminary investigation report on November 4. The CBI, however, in an affidavit said: "The derivative contracts entered into by various banks may be looked into by RBI itself and/or Enforcement Directorate on bank to bank basis with the object to pinpoint the violations of the Fema, and regulations framed there under and to take appropriate action." (Telegraph 19/11/09)

Koda's net assets worth nearly Rs 1cr (5)

NEW DELHI: Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Madhu Koda, facing charges of money laundering of over Rs 2,000 crore, had put his net assets at nearly Rs one crore at the time of the Lok Sabha polls. In 2005, Koda had movable assets worth Rs 13 lakh, and by 2009, they rose to over Rs 94 lakh. His immovable assets also doubled to over Rs four lakh during this period. These disclosures were made by Koda himself -- first in the affidavit he filed with the Election Commission at the time of contesting the Assembly elections in 2005 and then earlier this year when he fought the Lok Sabha polls. Koda won on both the occasions -- from Jagannathpur in 2005 and Singhbhum this year as an Independent candidate. According to the affidavits, his cash holding of about Rs 30,000 in 2005 also rose to Rs 13.6 lakh in 2009. He also purchased shares in blue chip companies like Tata Steel, Reliance Petroleum and SBI, the EC website says. While in 2005, he had jewellery worth Rs 1.5 lakh, by 2009 he possessed ornaments worth nearly Rs 37 lakh. He owns agricultural land worth Rs 4.2 lakh as against Rs 1.1 lakh in 2005. Koda, who earlier this month said he was a "poor tribal", has total assets worth over Rs 98 lakh, as per his disclosure with the Election Commission. (The assets include bank deposits, bonds, shares, other savings, two cars (Bolero and Indigo), jewellery and land. He disclosed his bank deposits with three branches of SBI and one branch each of Allahabad Bank and Bank of India in Jharkhand. The companies where he owns shares included Allahabad Bank, Reliance Petroleum (which has now been merged with Reliance Industries), SBI and Tata Steel. In comparison, he had disclosed shareholding in only one concern -- Allahabad Bank in 2005. Most of these assets are in Koda's name, while some of the cash deposits, jewellery and land, are in the names of his wife Geeta and daughter Darshani Nagi. Koda, who rose from a labourer in iron-ore mines to the chief minister's chair, is now being quizzed for allegedly being part of a massive corruption scandal. The Enforcement Directorate and the income tax department over the past few days have unearthed Koda's alleged involvement in hawala transactions and illegal investments running into more than Rs 2,000 crore. It is also alleged that some companies in which Koda and his eight associates had invested the money were actually a front for Naxal groups. (Times of India 20/11/09)

Orissa gets evidence of Rs 400 crore mining scam (5)

BHUBANESWAR: Orissa state vigilance wing on Saturday admitted to have got evidence on mining scam worth Rs 400 crore and registered five criminal cases against mine owners and officials allegedly involved in illegal mining. The vigilance wing had begun investigations into mineral theft in July in the wake of allegations that mine owners, officials and politicians had looted public resources worth thousands of crores of rupees. It had lodged four cases of illegal mining and other activities in contravention of law against mine owners M/s Ram Bahadur Thakur (RBT) and M/s B K Das and some government officials including deputy director of mines (Joda) M M Biswal, and forest range officer (Joda) Dilip Behera. The corruption in those four cases was estimated at around Rs 140 crore. The anti-graft directorate registered the fresh cases under various sections of Prevention of Corruption Act, IPC, Mines and Minerals Development and Regulation Act and Forest (Conservation) Act after undertaking joint physical verification and inquiry into allegations of undue official favour. (Times of India 22/11/09)

'Koda scam probe may be handed over to CBI' (5)

Ranchi, Nov 29: Minister of State for Home Ajay Maken has said the Central Bureau of Investigation may be asked to probe the alleged Rs 4,000-crore money laundering scam involving former Jharkhand chief minister Madhu Koda. Speaking to reporters here, Maken said, "The Congress does not consider Koda innocent. We had launched an agitation against the corruption prevailing in the Koda government. He is no longer part of the UPA." He further said, "Two agencies, the Income Tax Department and the Enforcement Directorate (ED), are investigating the case and if the need arises, the CBI or any other agency could be asked to probe the scam." "The Congress is committed to weeding out corruption. We took action against (former Jharkhand governor) Syed Sibte Razi's aides (who was accused of corruption). Razi, who is now governor of Assam, has not been given an extension," he pointed out. The CBI had raided houses of Razi's aides, senior Indian Administrative Service officer Avinsh Kumar and private secretary Rajesh Thakur in Aug 2009. (One India 29/11/09)

Constitutional Protection for bureaucrats to continue (11)

New Delhi, November 29, 2009: Corrupt government officials don't need to worry. The government has decided to reject demands for diluting the constitutional protection accorded to bureaucrats against their removal, a demand reiterated just two months back by Law Minister M Veerappa Moily. The constitutional protection to bureaucrats was aimed at ensuring that they could act independently and honestly but often

stands in the way of the government proceeding against the corrupt as well. Moily had told a seminar on corruption in September that he had taken up the need to "revisit" the constitutional provision (Article 311) with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. But the government told Parliament this week that there was no proposal to amend the Constitution. "There is no proposal with the Government to amend Article 311 of the Constitution of India, which provides for certain protection to Government employees," Prithviraj Chavan, Minister of State in the Ministry of Personnel — the Prime Minister is the cabinet minister incharge — told Rajya Sabha on Thursday. Chavan also rejected suggestions that the government had proposed a new legislation for seizure of illegal assets of officials in corruption cases. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission had also made similar recommendations. (Hindustan Times 30/11/09)

Koda arrested, blames 'high-level conspiracy' (5)

State Vigilance sleuths on Monday arrested former Jharkhand chief minister Madhu Koda in connection with a corruption and fraud case. The case was lodged on July 2 by the Vigilance, which alleged that Koda had misused his authority as chief minister and indulged in fraud along with two of his associates — Binod Sinha and Sanjay Choudhary — to amass property disproportionate to his known sources of income. The three face charges under various Sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act and the Indian Penal Code that include 406 (criminal breach of trust), 409 (misappropriation and defalcation), 423 (concealing property), 420 (cheating for gain) and 120-B (criminal conspiracy). After his arrest from his hometown Chaibasa, Koda, who for weeks avoided summons from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a separate multi-crore money laundering case, was produced before the special court (Vigilance) of Binay Kant Khan. The court remanded him in judicial custody for 14 days. Following his arrest, Koda said he was being implicated in false cases. "It is a high-level political conspiracy. I have full faith in the judiciary. I am sure I will come out clean as I had done nothing wrong," he said. The Vigilance is planning to take him on remand for interrogation. "We have enough evidence showing his involvement in the crime," IG (Vigilance) M V Rao said. The FIR against Koda, Sinha and Choudhary was lodged by the Vigilance after a directive from the court on a complaint by one R K Sharma. The complainant had alleged that the three along with three former ministers — NCP's Kamlesh Singh, Forward Bloc's Bhanu Pratap Shahi and Independent Bandhu Tirkey — had gained property disproportionate to their known sources of income. (Indian Express 1/12/09)

All six Jharkhand govts will come under corruption scanner: Congress (5)

Ranchi: The Congress said today that corruption issues of all the six governments in Jharkhand since its inception on November 15, 2000, will come under the scanner if it is voted to power. The party also said that it would strive to make the state a clean and developed one. "No corruption issue will be spared," All India Congress Committee national spokesman Mohan Prakash told a press conference here. "All means all," he replied when asked if the scanner would also apply for the erstwhile Babulal Marandi government. Marandi, who led the National Democratic Alliance government when Jharkhand was created, heads the Jharkhand Vikash Morcha (Prajatantrik), which is an ally of the Congress in the ongoing state assembly poll. Asked to comment on Madhu Koda government's performance during its 23 months regime supported by the United Progressive Alliance allies, he said, "It's head is now in jail. After Koda, now you should speak about Arjun Munda (another ex-CM of BJP)." All the former governments in the state had laid the 'foundation of corruption' that prevented the evolving of a good work culture. "It (corruption) even affected the administrators," he added. (DNA 3/12/09)

Fishing contracts: corruption charges levelled against Solanki (5)

Levelling charges of corruption against state Port and Fisheries Minister Purshottam Solanki in allotment of fishing rights contracts for various reservoirs, a leader from the fishermen's community has sought the government permission to file a case in the Gujarat High Court requesting CBI inquiry into the matter. Isaac Maradia, the complainant, has alleged the minister had demanded and received an amount of over Rs 11 crore from 58 contractors for rewarding them the fishing contracts for 58 reservoirs including Bhadar, Aji-3, Fofal, Machhu and others. As evidence, he has attached a letter containing an affidavit from a contractor who has claimed the minister had demanded Rs 30 lakh from them for awarding contract for Vatrak dam. Maradia, a resident of Bhagal village in Banaskanth district, has sought the permission in a letter addressed to the state Chief Secretary. Maradia, who has also requested the state government to order a probe and a CBI inquiry into the matter, said in the letter that he will go ahead with

a writ petition in case the government does not take any step within two weeks' time. At the heart of the controversy is the allotment of fishing rights for 58 reservoirs in the state in 2008, which the Fisheries Department had allotted without inviting tenders, causing a loss of nearly Rs 44 crore to the state. A couple of fishing societies had moved the Supreme Court in November 2008 when the Fisheries Department did not follow the Gujarat High Court order which cancelled the allotments and indicting the minister. (Indian Express 5/12/09)

284 graft cases against MCD staff pending (5)

New Delhi: Around 300 graft cases investigated by CBI and Anti-Corruption Branch were pending against officials of Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) with 53 of the charges for more than eight years. On the basis of conviction of the officials concerned, departmental action has been initiated in only eight cases of the total 292 cases registered against MCD officials by the two probe agencies, official sources said. While more than 215 cases are under various stages of trial, 56 are still under investigation. According to year-wise data of cases investigated by CBI and ACB of Delhi government, there are 53 corruption cases against officials of MCD dating before 2001. In 2001, 19 cases were registered while the figure for 2002 is 17 and 35 in 2003. In 2004, 19 cases are filed, 29 in 2005, 39 in 2006, 32 in 2007, 30 in 2008 and 19 in 2009 (so far). Among the MCD officials, 62 have retired even when the cases were pending. In comparison, there are 64 cases pending against officials of Delhi government, including those of autonomous bodies or boards, which were probed by the ACB. There is only one case dating before 2001 while the figures in since 2001 are 2 (2001), 3 (2002), 7 (2003), 3 (2004), 4 (2005), 13 (2006), 7 (2007), 13 (2008) and 11 (2009 till August 17). (DNA 6/12/09)

Uproar in Punjab house over job scam (5)

Chandigarh, December 10, 2009. The CBI indictment of Punjab Speaker Nirmal Singh Kahlon rocked the state assembly on Thursday, with the Opposition Congress demanding his resignation and disrupting the proceedings. The flutter at the House was triggered by a Hindustan Times exclusive report on a Rs 4-crore job-for cash scam during 1997-2002, the previous tenure of the Shiromani Akali Dal-Bharatiya Janata Party combine. The report, quoting the CBI, said officials of the state rural development and panchayat ministry under Kahlon allegedly offered jobs of panchayat secretaries in exchange for money. This afternoon, soon after the House assembled and the Speaker walked up to the podium, Leader of Opposition Rajinder Kaur Bhattal told him, waving a copy of Hindustan Times: "Kahlon sahib, you don't deserve to be on his august chair after the CBI charges of corruption against you." Immediately, all the Congress legislators, wearing black bandanas as a mark of protest, were on their feet, calling for the Speaker's removal. While noisy scenes were being played out on the floor of the House, Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal invited Bhattal for a two-hour debate on Friday – the last day of this four-day session – on various issues, including the CBI indictment of Kahlon. Badal insisted that no elected representative of the people had ever resigned unless charges were proved in a court of law. "There have been cases against former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, Buta Singh, and against you (Bhattal) and me as well, but nobody (amongst us) resigned," the chief minister said. (Hindustan Times 10/12/09)

50 MPs ready to impeach Dinakaran (5)

New Delhi, December 12, 2009: More than 50 opposition MPs from the Rajya Sabha on Friday signed a motion for the impeachment of controversial Karnataka High Court Chief Justice P.D. Dinakaran. The BJP, CPI(M), Janata Dal(U) and the Samajwadi Party are likely to present the motion to the RS chairman next week. "The constitutional requirement for moving the motion for impeachment of Justice Dinakaran is complete," BJP deputy leader in the House, S. S. Ahluwalia told HT. Senior CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury hinted a combined opposition could present the motion on Monday. A motion for impeachment of a Supreme Court or High Court judge can be moved in either House of Parliament after it is signed by 50 Rajya Sabha MPs or 100 Lok Sabha MPs. Dinakaran name was recommended by the Supreme Court panel of senior judges for promotion to the top court. Soon after, allegations of his involvement in cases of land grabbing and corruption arose. His promotion has been rejected by the law ministry. (Hindustan Times 12/12/09)

Free from Bihar, burdened by scams (5)

If and when it comes into being, Telangana has only to look to Jharkhand for a list of don'ts. In the nine years since it was carved out of Bihar to "empower its indigenous people", the state has been rocked by scandal, political conspiracy, corruption and Maoist bloodshed. Unlike its twin siblings Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand - also born November 2000 - mineral-rich Jharkhand has failed to reap the benefits of micro-statehood. It has had four chief ministers - Babulal Marandi, Arjun Munda, Shibu Soren and Madhu Koda - heading six governments in nine years. It has constantly teetered on the brink of political uncertainty. Soren and Koda, among others, are accused of corruption. More than 40% of Jharkhand's population is SC and ST. This segment is arguably as deprived today as a decade ago. Perhaps more so. In 2000, only a few districts in the region were affected by Naxalism; today the red rebels hold sway all over. Things are so bad that Jharkhand is being forced to ask itself the question: Would it have been better to stay with Bihar, especially with Nitish Kumar as chief minister? Perhaps. The new state's troubled politics has always divided it. Right from the start, the single largest party in the 81-member assembly never had a majority. Politicians were forced routinely to bend every rule in the book to make the magic number and unscrupulous Independent MLAs flitted from one alliance to another, becoming cabinet ministers, or in Koda's case, chief minister. Economist Ramesh Sharan says the political instability "has largely let corruption go unchallenged (even though) corruption has a long history in this region and the fodder and bitumen scams had their roots in Jharkhand". But R K Jha, former head of Ranchi University's political science department, insists that Jharkhand's "bitter experience" cannot be used to argue against smaller states. "Decentralization has worked in Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand," he points out. "It was the urge to end Lalu Prasad's misrule that made people hanker for a separate state." The new state's first chief minister, Babulal Marandi of the BJP, demonstrated some vision but administration went downhill after that, says Jha. The state has not prospered in any sector despite having a budget surplus two years in a row. But money meant for development was siphoned off and the state spent just Rs 1,500 crore till mid-October, less than a quarter of what it could have. "The nine-year experience has been extremely bitter," says academic-turned-politician Ram Dayal Munda. "The idea of a separate state - essentially for the rights of its own people - is lost today because the people who managed it were not its own." (Times of India 13/12/09)

NREGS social audit issue turning into people's movement (5)

JAI PUR: Call it people's mistrust in the motive of the government or simply their desire to see the logical conclusion to the social audits, the issue of large-scale corruption in NREGS is on the threshold of becoming a people's movement in the state. Despite repeated assurances from chief minister Ashok Gehlot to look into the graft cases and nail the corrupt, more than 1,000 persons from various fields across the state, including well-known social activists, will take to the streets in the state capital on December 15. The rally would be demanding transparency in NREGS and action against all those found misappropriating funds during the social audit of the scheme at Bhilwara. The rally will begin from Saheed Smarak and end at Civil Lines crossings where it will culminate into a massive public meeting. The rally would be led by prominent social activists like Aruna Roy, Nikhil Dey and Shankar Singh of Rozgar Evam Suchna Ke Adhikar Abhiyan and other social organisations. Most of these organisations are involved in the social audits of NREGS work in many parts of the state when the high court put a stay on it after a PIL was filed. However, what irked these organisations is that though the government was quick to pass an order terminating all social audits after the stay order, it refused to fix a date for its resumption. What the organisations fear that the court order might just be used by the government as a tool to put curtains on the audit, which has been seeing a lot of turmoil in the state with the gram panchayats protesting against it. "With the panchayat elections round the corner, the government would not like to annoy the local leaders as that would upset the ruling party's calculations," they feel. The rally would also protest the treatment meted out to many of those involved in the audit at villages and demand action against those responsible. While many of them were threatened with life, others were even beaten up and chased away by villagers. "There is a big gap between what the government is saying and what it is doing. After what has happened, the social audit has become a joke. People in villages think that they can do anything and get away with it. If the government doesn't take any concrete step now, it will put a question mark on the scheme itself," says Dey. The organisations have demanded that the government realigns the scheme in such a way that it becomes mandatory to make online for everybody to see all the work and the expenses incurred by the panchayats, else no money should be given to them. They have also demanded to make it mandatory for the panchayats to procure materials only from those firms that are registered under sales tax rules so as to do away the system of making payments on kachcha' bills, which is the foremost reason

for misappropriation of funds. The other demands include putting up display boards at all work sites with details of the scheme and the payments made written/pasted on them for the sake of the workers and all concerned. Meanwhile, the government met representatives of the organisations and assured them of its will to carry on the audits but sought some more time. But with the issue becoming a people's movement now, the government would have to address it before it is too late. (Times of India 14/12/09)

Excise dept in Rs 40cr scam: Opposition (5)

PANAJI: Opposition leader Manohar Parrikar on Thursday alleged that the state excise department is involved in a Rs 40 crore alcohol scam spreading across three other states. Parrikar told the assembly during Question Hour that he had evidence to prove his allegations. He demanded that the case be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). He said he would depose only before the CBI. "I have done research over the last three months. I have got excise gate passes and have also availed information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act about gate passes issued by the excise department. None of the gate passes in my possession have been mentioned in the information given through RTI," he said. Parrikar further alleged that the Goa excise department has been carrying out the scam in connivance with the excise departments of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. "I am making serious charges and I am ready to prove them. Will the chief minister constitute a CBI inquiry and remove the excise commissioner?" he said. Chief minister Digambar Kamat replied, "We will definitely inquire into the matter. Let the finance secretary look into it." However, Parrikar was in no mood to relent. "I will only depose before the CBI and not before any state officials as I don't trust them. I want the investigation to be handled by a central agency. It can also investigate this scam which is spread to the excise departments of other states," he said. Parrikar also alleged that while almost 10 lakh litres of unaccounted for alcohol had been imported by Goa from Punjab and other states, the north east was also importing alcohol from Goa. He claims to have smelled that something was amiss. "Why is the north east importing alcohol from Goa when they could do the same from closer states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh? These consignments are being pilfered on the way and the money is being used to fund terror networks," the Opposition leader alleged. Parrikar admitted that though he could not substantiate this allegation at present, he had documents in hand to prove his other allegations. "The corruption is rampant in the excise department, right from a Grade IV employee to the excise commissioner. Is the chief minister not interested in bringing revenue into the state? There is no need to implement professional tax if we block this leakage," Parrikar said. (Times of India 18/12/09)

Some of the most sensational crimes of the year (5)

New Delhi, December 22, 2009: The alleged rape and murder of two women in Shopian in Kashmir, the kidnap and murder of a call centre employee in Delhi, the gang rape of a management student in Noida, the mysterious death of a Muthoot house scion in Kerala, and actor Shiney Ahuja's arrest for allegedly raping his maid were some of the sensational crimes that hogged newspaper headlines in 2009. Following is a list of some of the major crimes of the year: The deaths on May 30 of Neelofar on Jan, 22, and her sister-in-law Asiya on Jan, 17, in Shopian town of Jammu and Kashmir state continues to hog the limelight. The deaths led to a massive furore in Kashmir Valley with allegations that the women were first raped and then murdered, with some pointing fingers at the security forces. The CBI in its Dec 14 report to the state high court ruled out rape and murder and said the women died due to accidental drowning in a stream. The kidnap and murder of call centre employee, Jigisha Ghosh, 28, outside her south Delhi house on March 17 this year rocked the national capital. Jigisha was speaking on the phone and walking towards her apartment after being dropped by a cab hired by her office, Hewitt Associates, around 4.30 am when she was pulled into a car by some men. Police say the killers made her give them her bank debit card secret identification number and withdrew Rs 20,000 from an ATM. They killed her and dumped the body near Bhatkal Lake in Faridabad and then went on a shopping spree with her credit cards. Four men were arrested. The Aug 21 murder of Muthoot house scion Paul M George, 32, shocked Kerala and grabbed national headlines. George, a bachelor, was travelling in a car at night with two men who have several criminal cases against them. His body was found in Alapuzha. Questions were raised about what George was doing with two known bad elements. Police have arrested 19 people on charges of involvement in the murder while his father, MG George Muthoot, has asked for a CBI probe. The gangrape of a 24-year-old MBA student in the vicinity of the capital Jan 6 was among the most sensational crimes. The girl, a resident of south Delhi, was with her male friend inside a car parked near the Noida Expressway when a group of 10 youths, back from playing a cricket match, dragged her out of

the car. They took turns to rape her. According to police, the rape was in celebration of their cricket victory. The youths were arrested. Another case that hogged the limelight was the alleged staged shooting by police of 24-year-old MBA student Ranbir Singh in Dehradun on July 3. He was allegedly shot at point-blank range 30 times by Dehradun police. The CBI said police personnel first beat up Singh in the lockup and then drove him to the Ladpur jungles near Dehradun where they fired 30 shots at him from close range. Goa was very much in the news in 2009. A 25-year-old Russian woman was allegedly raped by a Goa politician. The woman, who was employed as a Russian liaison representative in a five-star resort in Goa was having dinner with a woman friend on Dec 1 night when she was offered a lift by John Fernandes. She alleged Fernandes raped her in the car. The politician will have to surrender before the Goa trial court as the Supreme Court on Friday told him that he deserved no relief in the form of pre-arrest bail. The coastal state was in the news in October too when 10 bodies, including that of seven young women, were found in a span of three days. The killings were the handiwork of two groups - a scrap dealers gang and two local goons, who along with women accomplices, would rob and kill their victims. In another shocking crime, Orissa cadre Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Jagadananda Panda killed four members of his family 'one by one', firing at them from his service revolver before turning the gun on himself in his home in Deogaon in Bargarh district. The incident took place in July. Panda was a 1983-batch IAS officer and had worked in several important positions in the Orissa bureaucracy before he left for Delhi on a central deputation in 2006. The crime scene did not spare Bollywood. Actor Shiney Ahuja was arrested in June for allegedly raping his domestic help. Shiney has reportedly told the court it was not rape but consensual sex. He was in the lock-up for nearly four months and denied bail on at least two occasions. He had come to Delhi to his parent's home. He is at present out on bail and back in Mumbai. In Haryana, a young woman, Alka, consumed poison along with her husband outside the office of the Rohtak range inspector general of police, alleging she was raped by five men and the police were not taking any action. Alka died in a hospital in Rohtak while her husband, Sunil, survived. She allegedly took the extreme step after she failed to meet the IGP. (Hindustan Times 23/12/09)

Koda Scam, Maoist Violence Shook Jharkhand in 2009 (5)

The arrest of ex-chief minister Madhu Koda on corruption charges and the brutal beheading of a police officer by Maoists rocked Jharkhand in 2009, a year which also saw the state going under President's Rule and assembly elections that threw a hung verdict. The year started with signs of political instability as JMM supremo Shibu Soren had to step down after failing to enter the state assembly, drubbed by a relative greenhorn in politics in the January 3 Tamar bypoll. Jharkhand came under President's Rule as no combination came forward to stake claim for the formation of a fifth government in as many years. Assembly elections were held towards the end of the year but the state again returned a fractured verdict in which JMM appeared to be holding the key to the new government. The Congress-JVM(P) alliance emerged the single largest group. The state also had to face Maoist onslaught throughout the year. Naxalites kidnapped and beheaded Special Branch Inspector Francis Induwar in October, triggering a nationwide outrage and prompting the Centre to promise tougher actions to combat the growing threat to internal security. Koda's arrest for his alleged involvement in a Rs 2,000- crore money laundering scam grabbed national headlines. A countrywide search by Income Tax sleuths at the residences of his aides unearthed the scam. After defying summons from Enforcement Directorate, Vigilance and IT departments, Koda was finally arrested by the state Vigilance Bureau from Chaibasa on November 30 when he was venturing out to address a poll meeting. He was sent to judicial custody by a special vigilance court in connection with a disproportionate assets case. Three of his ex-cabinet colleagues -- Kamlesh Singh, Enos Ekka and Harinarayan Rai -- were also sent to judicial custody in separate DA cases during the year. The Enforcement Directorate has filed cases against Koda and some of his ex-ministers and aides charging them with money laundering and illegal investments. The Income Tax department also conducted raids on Koda's residence and several of his aides in connection with tax evasion while the state Vigilance Bureau has been probing DA cases against half of Koda's former cabinet ministers. RJD supremo Lalu Prasad said Koda had become chief minister only after all UPA allies supported the independent MLA to shut out "communal" BJP. The Congress, however, claimed that Koda was replaced by Soren as chief minister in August 2008 as the party had "zero tolerance on corruption". Corruption issues dogged the year with the CBI booking two IAS officers on graft charges. One of them had been the Officer-on-Special Duty to the then Governor Syed Sibtey Razi. Among a bunch of PILs against former ministers accusing them of corruption during their tenure, the Jharkhand

High Court also admitted one against former chief minister Arjun Munda and served him a notice. (Outlook 26/12/09)

Year 2009: 20 murder, 15 rape cases reported in S Goa (5)

MARGAO: During the year 2009, twenty murders were reported in various parts of South Goa out of which 17 were detected. Compared to this, in the year 2008, twenty-two murders were reported out of which 15 were detected while in the year 2007 in all 18 murders were reported and 12 were detected. The South Goa superintendent of police, Mr Allan D sa when contacted said that some sensational murders that hit the headlines in the current year have been detected. He said that in Quepem five murders were reported and all were detected while at Colva, Margao and Maina-Curtorim, two murders each were reported and they all were detected. He said that no murder cases were reported under Sanguem and Harbour police stations this year. According to the information, in the year 2008 four murders were reported in Margao and all four were detected while three murders were reported at Curchorem and all were detected. In the year 2008, three murders were reported in Vasco and one was detected while this year there was no murder cases in Vasco, said police. In the year 2009, 15 cases of attempt to murders were reported of which 13 have been detected. In Margao, four cases of attempt to murders were reported and all have been detected while at Maina-Curtorim and Curchorem police stations, three cases each of attempt to commit murders were reported of which Maina-Curtorim police detected two and Curchorem police detected three cases. In the year 2008, in all 9 attempts to commit murders were registered in South Goa of which 7 were detected while in the year 2007 in all 9 attempts to commit murders were reported and 7 were detected. In 2009, 15 cases of rape were registered and 13 were detected of which Margao, Quepem and Vasco registered two each cases and detected all cases registered by them while Maina-Curtorim registered three rape cases and detected two while Curchorem police registered three rape cases and detected all the cases. In all 15 cases of rape were registered in 2008 and all 15 cases were detected while in the year 2007 in all 15 cases were registered and all were detected.(Nav Hind Times 27/12/09)

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