West Bengal Governor M K Narayanan is one of the very few governors who dutifully send a monthly report to the Centre. The report contains his assessment of the political and security situation in the state. In one of his recent reports, he is learnt to have informed the Central government that howsoever troublesome Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee may seem to be for the UPA coalition, she was unlikely to pull out.

Seating Problems

The conference hall at Andhra Bhawan in New Delhi, where the state chief minister holds his press conferences, has just got a Vaastu makeover. It seems Chief Minister N Kiran Kumar Reddy wanted his seat in the hall to face south instead of west, as it used to earlier. Interestingly, former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu also used to have a south-facing seat before Y S Rajasekhara Reddy got it changed to a west-facing seat.

Taxing Times

If some officers of the Health Ministry have their way, the government can impose an additional tax or cess on the public. The government is looking for different options to fund its next showpiece programme — the Universal Health Coverage scheme — that is being considered crucial for the UPA's chances in the 2014 general election. One of the proposals under consideration is the levy of a 'health tax'. At a recent meeting organised by the Public Health Foundation of India — whose head Dr K S Reddy is also the chairman of a high-level expert group on universal health coverage — there was active discussion on this tax proposal with some ministry officials making a strong pitch for it.

No More Goodwill

No prizes for guessing who will be affected by the Supreme Court's recent direction to the government to phase out 'goodwill' Haj delegations every year. Politicians like K Rahman Khan, Saifuddin Soz and E Ahamed have each been on this delegation three times since 2000. A judge from Jammu and Kashmir has also been part of this delegation three times. Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti has been there twice and so have some other MPs.

Status Quo

The ripples caused by Pulok Chatterji's entry into the PMO seemed to have settled for the time being. One clear indication of this is that the reporting line of the IFS
officers in the PMO has not changed. Vikram Misri, who joined the PMO recently, is learnt to be reporting directly to the National Security Advisor, in keeping with the arrangement that has been in place since the UPA came into power in 2004. Also, Chatterji did not accompany the Prime Minister on his recent visit to Seoul, thereby respecting the delicate balance of power between him and the NSA. Some insiders, however, believe that the Principal Secretary stayed back to deal with the fall-out of the CAG report on allotments of coal blocks.