

NEWS WRAP

A G D

This year China and Mongolia celebrate the 800th birth anniversary of Emperor Genghis Khan. The Chinese province of Inner Mongolia has about four million Mongols and just a few hundred Darkhats, who are members of a Mongolian tribe, believed to have been appointed by Genghis to assume the hereditary duty of guarding his mementoes. Ethnic Han Chinese, who outnumber the Mongols have migrated to Inner Mongolia over the last fifty years, to work in factories, and convert pasture grazing lands into farms.

The four-lane expressway along the bends of the Yellow River, transports tourists to the mausoleum in the Ordos plateau. During 2005, Inner Mongolia achieved 22% economic growth, the fastest compared to any other region in China, caused by a rush to exploit coal and natural gas reserves. Ordos city, about 60 km north of the mausoleum is a boom town of government buildings, hotels and restaurants. Adjacent to the mausoleum is the Genghis Khan theme park, spread over 80 sq. km.

The local Darkhats are aggrieved over the low compensations, for the loss of their land. There is more focus on the theme park, and less on the mausoleum. Sacred spots around the mausoleum have been desecrated by new roads.

Led by the former communist party, the Mongolian government is promoting a divine, Genghis cult. The portrait of Genghis Khan is everywhere from cigarette packets, vodka bottles, bank notes to Ulan Bator's recently named 'Chinggis Khan Airport'. Mongolia and China ignore Genghis Khan's bloody conquests, and hail him as a peaceful ruler who encouraged trade, wealth flows, technology and ideas over vastly different cultures and about sixty ethnic groups. Much attention is paid to Genghis Khan's unification of China, without any notice to his army's invasion of the Rhine and massacre of Muslims. Mongolia's annual growth rate has been 6 to 7% for the last three years, while multinationals have extracted coal, gold, copper and iron ore. The local Darkhats complain that mineral wealth is being shipped out of Mongolia without any benefit to the Mongolians.

The mining boom is being fuelled by demands from China. Vital port facilities are provided by China for Mongolia's exports. Notwithstanding Mongolia's nationalism, officials avoid criticizing China. Recently the Ulan Bator's main Buddhist Monastery invited the Dalai Lama, and the invitation was not from the Mongolian government.

The 'Third neighbour' policy of the Mongolian government, allows it to escape from Russian and Chinese influences. Japan is Mongolia's biggest aid donor. Mongolia supported USA's military operations in Iraq, and despatched about 200 support troops to Iraq; the first time since Mongolian soldiers, under Helugu, Genghis Khan's grandson conquered Baghdad.

Towards the end of December '06, Irish Republican Army leaders expressed willingness to call a special conference of Sinn Fein members, to explore support for policing in Northern Ireland, by the Unionists. The Sinn Fein wants the responsibility for administering justice, should be handed over to a devolved Belfast government by

2008. But many Republicans distrust the Royal Ulster Constabulary; and many Unionists still remember the deaths of scores of RUC officers.

The Spanish Civil War commenced seventy years ago, in July 1936. The transition from fascism to post-General Franco democracy in Spain, has been without truth commissions, and without any of Gen Franco's officials being tried for excesses. References to the civil war have been excluded from politics to social parleys, by a pact of forgetting, through an unwritten agreement. Reminders of the bloodshed have been appearing recently in Spanish Newspapers. Socialist Prime Minister Jose Zapajero has introduced a draft law before the Spanish Parliament, which would identify the victims, wronged by both the warring sides, in the conflict, but not those who harmed them. Public recognition would be given to the victims of the civil war, and also to the sufferers of the 36-year-old Gen Franco dictatorship. The centre-right opposition feels that this could re-write history, and stoke old prejudices. Left campaigners want the sentences of Gen Franco's Tribunals struck down. They have been uncovering mass graves, filled in by Gen Franco's firing squads.

Since October 2002, police encounter killings have been on the rise in Gujarat. While the police statements on exchange of fire are always there, the fatal casualties indicate a consistent pattern. The encounters occur at night or just before the out-break of dawn. There are no police casualties in the exchanges of fire. Witnesses are confined to police personnel only. The shootings arise from political motivations, personal vengeance, communal fanaticism and crime dealings. Names of some of the dead have been published in the "Indian Express" of 11 January 2007. The killings remove individuals, destroy evidence, and in no manner restore trust in the criminal judicial system.

Police in Chattisgarh are inflating the figures of surrendered 'Naxals', in order to earn a good name. 19 of the 79, who surrendered before the Chief Minister and the State Home Minister during January '07, have been released by the police in Bastar, since the charges have been found to be "frivolous". The villagers were earlier detained for "pasting Naxal orders", "collecting firewood" and "cooking food for Maoists". Many of the surrendered 'Naxals' are Congress activists, BJP cadres, and extremely poor villagess tempted by the Rs. 1000/- surrender money. ~~del del del~~