

# NEWS WRAP

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An increasing number of governments have started investing in nuclear power, as worries about carbon emissions and climate change keep ascending. The nuclear industry is never free from the risks of accident. Bomb making could be sustained, with materials and nuclear technology meant for electricity generation. The fears of theft and diversions keep growing, as nuclear material gets processed and reprocessed. Crude nuclear devices could be devised from radioactive debris, as mostly uranium-laden reactor fuel-rods get converted to plutonium-laden spent fuel. Thirty-one countries already operate large nuclear-power reactors. About fifteen additional countries have since 2005, disclosed their intentions for opting for nuclear power. Following the 2003 exposure of Iran's covert nuclear activities, Middle East countries like Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Turkey and Yemen, have expressed interest for "Nuclear or Strategic" options. Nuclear proliferation amongst the Muslim states has also been inspired by Israel. A Nuclear research reactor in Algeria, discovered in 1991, has been surrounded with air defences.

According to the Non Proliferation Policy Education Centre, Washington, the International Atomic Energy Agency is faced with budgetary constraints, for carrying out efficient inspections of either highly enriched uranium or separated plutonium. Camera black-outs can plague realtime remote-monitoring cameras. The material unaccounted for (MUF) often gets stuck in the piping.

India's nuclear bombs have never been illegal, as like Pakistan and Israel, India has never signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); unlike North Korea and Iran who had signed and violated the NPT rules. The nuclear agreement with USA (July, 2007), permits India to emerge from the Nuclear seclusion imposed after the "peaceful nuclear test" of 1974. India would have to agree with the IAEA safeguards for "civilian" nuclear facilities, before resumption of any nuclear commerce. It would also require an exemption from the 45-nation Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG), which bars nuclear trade with countries, like India, that do not apply international safeguards, to all nuclear facilities. India has not yet signed the test-ban treaty, nor has it reached a decision to end the production of fissile material, like uranium and plutonium, for bombs. Australia has agreed to sell uranium to India, even though India remains outside the NPT. China is keen on expanding nuclear co-operation with Pakistan, which feels threatened by India.



The expected Rs 50 crore subsidy to re-plant rubber in 33,500 hectares of rubber plantation in Kerala may not have intended benefits for small plantation owners. The Rs 90 per kg of rubber current prices is part of the rubber boom in the rubber plantations, prevailing since 2005. Subsidies will hinder unsustainable small plantations from mergers and enlargement acquisitions, leading to economies of scales.

The subsidy of Rs 211.35 crore for cardamom is uneconomical, as cardamom prices are falling, due to a glut in the world market, caused by cardamom from

Guatemala. Replanting cardamom is capital intensive, requiring about Rs 1.2 lacs per hectare, and a yielding period of at least two years.

Tea subsidy of Rs 476.10 crore may not raise re-plantation. Eleven of thirty three tea companies are closed, and production costs are higher than market prices, subsidy of Rs 180 crore for coffee, would face lack of confidence for assured higher prices. □□□