

NEWS WRAP

AGD

Higher government spending on infrastructure, expansion of the tourism industry, and the world's highest rail link connecting Lhasa-Golmud-Beijing have contributed to Tibet's GDP growth rate remaining above 12% for the past seven years. Tibet's growth rate was 14% in 2007, which has been two points higher than the national average. With incomes rising fast, a new middle class has emerged in Lhasa. There was a 24.5% increase in disposable income of urban residents in 2007. But in Tibet politics and religious activities are never separate. The Han Chinese, in Lhasa's old quarters, have gained the maximum from Tibet's economic growth. The Hans operate the majority of the shops. About half of Lhasa's population is composed of Han Chinese. Rising demand in the rest of China for a traditional medicine, known as 'caterpillar fungus' has led to rising incomes for Tibetans in rural areas. Prices of goods, imported from China, have been rising fast in Tibet. The boom in manufacturing as seen in other parts of China has not caught up, and the Lhasa Economic and Technological Development Area is almost *empty*.

The hardline policies of Tibet's party chief, Zhang Qingli, a Han, have been resented by Tibetans. Following a clash between two monks and security officials outside the Rampoche Temple, in Lhasa, riots broke out on 14 March 08. Tibetans destroyed non-Tibetan shops, dragging merchandise onto the streets, and setting goods on fire. Tibetan shops marked by traditional white scarves tied through window shutter handles, were spared destruction. About twenty two people have been killed by rioters, mostly in fires. The riots involved mainly ordinary citizens, but monks have always spearheaded separatist movements in Tibet. Lhasa's main monasteries have been sealed off by the police; and troops holding bayonets have been deployed along roads in Lhasa, which lead to the main monasteries. Protests have been originating from Lhasa's main monasteries at Drepung, Sera and Ganden. There has been unrest at Samye monastery, 60 km east of Lhasa, Labrang monastery in Gansu province, Kirti monastery in Sichuan province, and Rongwo monastery in Qinghai province. Besides attacking Han Chinese shops, protesters have targeted symbols of state power and government owned property. The security challenge has become acute, as the Olympic flame, earlier carried up the Tibetan side of Mount Everest, is due to arrive in Lhasa on 20 June 08.

A large number of Tibetans view the Olympic games of August 08 in Beijing as a wonderful opportunity to bring world attention to Tibet's problems, under Chinese rule. Tibetan activism may embolden other ethnic minorities in China, like Muslim Uighurs in the far western region of Xinjiang, or calls for political freedom in Inner Mongolia. For the time being, China has suppressed the worst outbreak of violence in Tibet, since 1989. The Dalai Lama, in India, had called for an end to the violence, but China has blamed the Dalai Lama for inciting the violence in Lhasa and other areas of Tibet. On 27 March 08, at one of Tibet's holiest shrines, the Jokhang Temple, in Lhasa, there was an angry outburst by a

group of thirty monks, complain-ing "absence of religious freedom", when foreign reporters were being shown around Lhasa by Chinese government officials.

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While 67% of India's population has voting rights, and therefore, presumably voter's identity cards, figures for voting rights in West Bengal are only 58%, according to the Election Commission. It has been inferred that nearly 48 lac eligible people in West Bengal, do not have voting rights. Actual voters are about 5.04 crore. There are allegations that CPI(M) cadres have forcibly excluded supporters from other political parties, from the electoral rolls. Guidelines recently issued by the Election Commission have stipulated that owning a ration card is no longer sufficient to become a voter. This makes it difficult for Bangladesh infiltrators to enroll as voters in West Bengal.

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A majority of the Indian Insurgent Groups (IIGs), operating out of Bangladesh, have deep rooted connections in India's north-east. Eleven IIGs, which include United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaac-Muivah), All Tripura Tiger Force, National Liberation Front of Tripura, People's Liberation Army, Hynnep-wtrep National Liberation Council, National Democratic Front of Bodoland, United Achik National Front, Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam, Kamtapuri Liberation Organization and United National Liberation Front have been operating from at least 141 camps in Bangladesh. The insurgent outfits dominate Sherpur, Chittagong, Cox Bazar, Mymensingh, Rangamati, Sylhet, Banderban, Dhaka, Hobiganj, Khagrazhari, Moulvibazar, Pancha-garh, Nilphamari, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts of Bangladesh. Tactical and Financial support has been reportedly extended by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Bangladesh's Directorate General of field Intelligence (DGFI). The foreign intelligence agencies have been using the outfits for circulating counterfeit currency in the north eastern states.

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A majority of India's nuclear plants have exhibited a downfall in their operating capacities, compared to 2006-07; leading to a 10% reduction in overall power generation. The capacity factor of ten of the seventeen units of the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) has declined in 2007-Feb.08, compared to the previous year. While four of the plants have displayed a marginal increase of 2 to 5% in their operating capacities, Unit I Kala-pakkam fell by 36%, and Unit Kakrapar fell by 21%. The seventeen power plants generated a combined 18,800 million units (MUs) of electricity in 2006-07, whereas in the current year it has fallen to 15,600 MUs. Maintenance problems have caused a shut down in the units at Narora, Kaiga and Rawat-bhatta. Resumption hinges on replace-ments of coolant channels, generators, and feeders. Units I and II at Tarapore are running at 90% capacity, after receiving emergency fuel supplies from Russia in 2007. A shortage of fuel supplies will continue, till the Indo-US civil nuclear co-operation agreement becomes operational. □