

NEWS WRAP

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Since July 07, 63,000 Arabs have become unemployed in the Gaza strip, following the collapse of the manufacturing industry, which was suffering from the scarcity of raw materials and export markets. Gaza Strip's population of 1.5 million is existing on merely \$ 1 m or 67 cents per person, for each day. Poverty and isolation continue to plague Gaza, even though Hamas has raised the levels of domestic security, after capturing power from the Fatah. The current economic crisis could lead to violent protests against Israel and other foreign powers, which are considered as enabling the siege of Gaza. Hamas and its police, the Executive Security Force (ESF) have prohibited the carrying of guns on the streets, drug dealing, and car theft. No coalition of anti-Hamas elements exists. Since August '07, members of the ESF have attempted to disarm members of the Islamic Jihad and Fatah.

USA has promised more economic aid for Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas. The president of the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert met on 06 august '07, on the West Bank in Jericho. Even though the problems in Gaza were not publicly addressed at the meeting, the Palestinian president would want the removal of roadblocks and the freeing of prisoners.

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Soviet imperial mythology is being revived from the North Pole to the Mediterranean. Leading two Russian mini-submarines to the bottom of the Arctic Ocean beneath the North Pole, Artur Chilingarov, an adventurer and deputy speaker of Russia's parliament, collected gravel and planted the Russian flag. According to geologists, the region could have substantial reserves of oil, gas and minerals.

The relationship between Russia and Georgia has been hostile for months. There are no direct transport links between the two countries. For health reasons, imports of Georgian food and wine are banned in Russia. The Georgian government claims that recently a Russian-produced missile was dropped near south Ossetia, by a Russian SU-24 bomber, which violated Georgian air space. The Russians affirm non-involvement, and that the missile was fired by Georgia itself. Georgia is trying to regain the breakaway enclaves of South Ossetia and Abkhazia; but Russia supports the separatist areas, to the extent of issuing Russian passports to the residents.

Russia has suffered the loss of key ports and the reduction in the size of the Naval fleet, since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Russian Naval base in Syria has been standing empty. Recently Russia's Naval commander has suggested "to restore its permanent presence" in the Mediterranean, using the Baltic and Black Sea fleets. While the balance of power may not be upset in the Mediterranean, Israel may suffer fears of a renewed Russian co-operation with Syria, and the return of Russian ships to Syria.

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All in the search for gold, copper, palladium, or any metal which has cash value, E-waste recycling is a thriving business in India. Currently, 150,000 tons

of e-waste are produced annually in India; and illegally India imports about that amount from the West. Metals from 183 defunct computers, could have a recycled value of \$24,000. Unorganized labourers, with precision, remove cream coloured plastic casings from old desktop computers, separate hard drives from circuit boards, and strip PVC coating from copper wires. The work is hazardous, as the recyclers are exposed to toxic metals like lead, mercury and cadmium. Till date there are no guidelines for domestic-e-waste. By labelling used electronics equipment as “mixed scrap metal”, it is not difficult to dodge prohibitions on import of used equipment. Recycling scrap electronics is profitable for computers and mobile phones; and not profit yielding in global commodities markets for fluorescent bulbs, air conditioners, refrigerators and microwaves. The flow of waste is going to the informal sector, in the absence of any legislation. The two government-recognized e-waste recycling facilities in Chennai and Bangalore, together re-cycle about 1000 tons a year, which is less than 1% of India’s total e-waste. An Indian waste-management firm is building an e-waste recycling facility in Hyderabad.



A recent report by the Asian Development Bank points income inequality rising over the past decade in fifteen of the twenty one countries studied. Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, that is the countries worst hit by the 1997 financial crisis, are the exceptions. The Gini coefficient for measuring income inequality varies from 0 (perfect equality, with everyone having the same income) to 1 (perfect inequality, where one household takes everything). China’s Gini coefficient has risen from 0.41 in 1993, to 0.47 in 2004, the highest in Asia after Nepal. The Gini coefficient is 0.36 for India. 99.8% of the population in India’s richest state have access

to the internet. The report also notes that while India has made significant progress in reducing poverty, income inequality remains a major challenge. The report highlights the need for comprehensive reforms to address these issues, including strengthening the legal and regulatory framework for e-waste management and promoting sustainable economic growth.