

# NEWS WRAP

## AGD

In Greece, Mr Costas Karamanli's New Democracy Party controls only 151 of the 300 seats in parliament. Mr George Papandreou's Pasok party is split between European Social Democrats and populist Nationalists. A coalition with Syriza, a left-wing party led by Alexis Tsipras, a 34-year-old who has never contested parliament, and Pasok is unlikely to work. Reforms introduced by Costas Simitis, the former president from Pasok, led Greece to adopt the *euro*. The Chinese export boom resulted in Greek shipowners reaping record profits. Expensive land on Aegean Islands was purchased by Russian oligarchs. Up to 2007, Greece's economic growth averaged over 4%. The conservatives in the government ignored social reform, particularly in education.

Now global economic slowdown is affecting education bills and jobs. Inflation is at 4.3%. Young graduates are facing unemployment rate of 21% compared with 8% for the general population. Student protests have been facing indulgence from the Greek authorities. Greek police have kept off the campuses, ever since the shootings of protesters in anti-military demonstrations in the early 1970s. But in the second week of December '08, Greece witnessed unprecedented violence, after Alex-andros Grigoropoulos, a fifteen-year-old schoolboy, was shot dead by policemen in Exarchia, a central district of Athens, which is also the home base of the anarchists. Protests over the shooting quickly spilled into the main streets of Athens, and soon across Greece. The demonstrators attacked police stations and public offices in a dozen cities. Five nights of riots caused damages estimated at more than 100 million euros. Greek youth's pent up anger was encouraged by the anarchists' penchant for mayhem. Bolstered in recent years by a bonanza of European Union and the euphoria surrounding the hosting of the Olympics in 2004, Greece's ruling elite stood in the line of fire. An array of grievances, from corruption in the government to low salaries and unemployment among the young, caused the popular uprising by thousands of citizens. A fifth of the Greek population is living below the poverty line, measured at 486 euros a month.

The Greek riots have sparked fears of widespread disturbances in Europe. The teargas and the demonstrators' chants carried a warning to European leaders of similar protests elsewhere, with the next phase of the global financial crisis. There were sympathy protests from Moscow to Madrid. President Sarkozy of France rejected budget proposals that would have cushioned the wealthy from losses.

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Cluster bombs rain small lethal bombs over a wide area. US led operations have often used the tactic in Afghanistan and Iran. A treaty banning the use of cluster bombs has been signed on 04 Dec 08 in Oslo, by 94 countries, which include US allies like Britain, Germany, France, Japan and Afghanistan. What NATO describes as a necessary flexibility for all sides to operate together, the treaty includes an exemption clause for signatories to conduct operations, alongside non-signatories like America. USA, Russia and China oppose the move to outlaw cluster munitions. Poland and Finland, wary of Russia, oppose the treaty. The cluster munitions treaty is also opposed by Israel, Egypt, Syria, North Korea and South Korea, as they fear future wars. Russia and Georgia had used cluster munitions in the 2008 war.

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There are 113 camps in 25 districts of Tamil Nadu, for Sri Lankan Tamil refugees. About 73,425 persons are accommodated in these camps, while 25,425 Tamil refugees are living outside the camps. For 2008-09, Rs 48.58 crore was allotted by the Tamil Nadu state government to these Tamil refugee camps, against an allotment of Rs 28 crore in

2004-05. Since recently the allowance given to heads of families living in the refugee camps, has been increased to Rs 400 per month, from Rs 200 (Aug 06). Allowance for the adults has been increased to Rs 288 per month from Rs 144; and the allowance for the first child of the family increased from Rs 90 to Rs 180. The benefits of the Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy Maternity Benefit Scheme and the Integrated Child Development Scheme were also being extended, to the women and children in the refugee camps.

Inmates of the Sri Lankan Tamil refugee camps have been given identify cards. Power supply has been widened to 24 hours power supply daily, against the earlier limitation of 12 hours power supply daily. The Tamil Nadu state government has been providing students of the refugee camps, with Note books, text books, uniforms, noon meal and free bus pass up to school class XII.

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There has been no incidents of communal violence in Jammu and Kashmir in 2008. The all-India figure of 855 incidents of communal violence in India in 2008, surpasses the previous year's figures of 761. With the recent attacks on Christians, Orissa has reported about 185 incidents of communal violence, followed by Madhya Pradesh having about 118 incidents, and Uttar Pradesh recording about 107 incidents. In 2007, Orissa had only 15 cases of communal violence. Of the 160 people killed in communal violence in 2008, Orissa has witnessed 28% of the deaths. In 2008, about 48 people were killed, and about 78 injured in Orissa, compared to three dead and 61 injured in 2007. About 32 people were killed in Madhya Pradesh, and 17 were killed in Maharashtra in Communal riots during 2008. □□□