

# NEWS WRAP

AGD

It is now more than twenty-one months that Dr Binayak Sen has been in jail, after arrest by the Chattisgarh state government, on the charge of conspiracy with Naxalites, and functioning as a conduit between Naxalites. A year after his arrest, his trial began in the Raipur sessions court on 30 April '08, and he has already been denied bail twice. About forty prosecution witnesses have been examined so far. The state government raises allegations that practising doctor, Sen carried incriminating letters from jailed Naxalite, Narayan Sanyal addressed to another Naxalite Piyush Guha. Sanyal is imprisoned for plotting to kill Chandrababu Naidu, former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. The Government is relying on the custodial confession of Piyush Guha, made before two witnesses. Such custodial confessions are inadmissible in Indian courts. In an affidavit filed before the court, Guha has stated that he was tortured by the police to "confess". In the current trial, he is not listed as a prosecution witness. The government alleges that Sen and Guha were close acquaintances, who would have frequent meetings in hotels at Raipur. While being examined as prosecution witnesses in the ongoing trial, the hotel owners and employees turned hostile, stating in court that they "can identify neither Binayak Sen nor Piyush Guha".

The Chattisgarh state government has alleged that Sen visited Naxalite Narayan Sanyal thirty-three times in jail, posing as a relative of Sanyal. Under the Right to Information Act, data has surfaced which shows Sen had applied for jail visits, using human rights group People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL) stationery, where Sen was working as general secretary PUCL Chattisgarh. The top police authorities, however, look on PUCL as a "possible front organization of the Naxalites". The government may be relying on three letters recovered from Guha as evidence of Sen's guilt, but there is no evidence that Sen had handed them to Guha. The police have placed on court record, documents and a computer CPU, seized from Sen's residence. The Central Forensic Science Laboratory, Hyderabad has examined the CPU and other seized documents. Their findings indicate lists of anti-Salwa Judum and anti-globalization pamphlets. Such civil rights activists materials are far from pro-Naxalite action. Certain love letters between two Naxalites, where Sen's name is mentioned, do not point to commission of a crime. Dr Binyak Sen is in Raipur Central Jail, in serious ill health.

¶.....¶.....¶

Recession from the beginning of 2008, has led to total job losses of 2.6 million, for 2008, in USA, which is the highest since 1945. The US unemployment rate of 7.2 percent is the highest unemployment rate for the country since Jan 1993, when America was struggling with a jobless recovery from the 1990-91 recession. More than 11 million Americans are now unemployed, and USA now has to help millions of workers find new jobs. Cutting costs, bankruptcy of big firms including carmakers, and sweeping layoffs make the unemployment scenario more gloomier. There is fierce competition for jobs arising from the glut of fired workers. The Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAA) provides relief to only a fraction of the displaced, since the TAA serves those who have lost their jobs due to changing patterns of trade. The limited number of eligible workers are given counselling, training, income support and other services. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 ensures career centres for job searches, career counselling and money for training, often conducted at community colleges. Funding for WIA has declined 10% since 2002, to barely \$3.2 billion in 2008. Money spent on training by WIA does not exceed 40% of WIA budget. As the states struggle to balance books, the college budgets for higher education are bound to shrink during recession, just as demand for professional courses increase.

The US unemployment-insurance (UI) scheme pays lower benefits for a shorter period of time, to a smaller segment of the unemployed, in comparison with other industrialized countries. There is less work to return to during recession. The US states require beneficiaries to have worked or earned an amount that disqualifies many part-time and low-wage workers. Many people work part-time for family reasons and they are disqualified. The unemployed benefits typically last for only six months. About 60% of unemployed people do not qualify for benefits at all. During Dec 08, almost 24 lac workers filed a first claim for unemployment benefits.

¶.....¶.....¶

International adoptions each year have nearly doubled since the mid-1990s, from 22,200 children in 1995, to about 40,000 children in 2006. USA brings home more than half the global total adopted. With flourishing international adoption, there is evidence that babies in many countries are being purchased, coerced and kidnapped from their families of birth, about half of the forty countries, like Belarus, Brazil, Ethiopia, Honduras, Peru and Romania, which are top sources for international adoption, have temporarily halted adoptions or been prevented from sending children to USA because of allegations of corruption and kidnapping. Prospective parents who adopt in western countries pay adoption agencies between \$15,000 and \$35,000, which excludes travel and visa costs, and miscellaneous expenses. Since the adoption agencies' fees are disproportionately large for a child's home country, corruption is encouraged. UNICEF estimated in 2006 that there are 132 million orphans in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. 95% of orphans are older than five years, living with extended families, who need financial support.

India's pervasive poverty leaves many children, fending for themselves on the street. There are rarely healthy infants and toddlers in India, who need foreign parents. India's large and growing middle class, within India and overseas faces fertility issues, and may be looking for healthy babies to adopt. Appropriate legal papers related to orphans, are difficult to obtain. □□□