

## NEWS WRAP

### AGD

New oil fields in Brazil are to be trapped between five and seven kilometres under the sea, below thick layers of unstable salt. The Brazilian state controlled oil giant, Petrobras plans to spend about \$6 billion annually, in the development of new oil fields. Planning for the rolling out of oil barrels, includes new refineries, gas terminals and drilling rigs. The proposed capital spending would be about \$174 billion, which is larger than the economy of certain South American countries. The planned investment in the sub-sea fields envisions production of 5.7 million barrels of oil and gas per day by 2020, which would be more than 50% of the Saudi Arabian output. By the time oil is pumped up from below the ocean, the Petrobus oil and gas investments will not be unprofitable even if oil prices remain at \$45 a barrel, as several oil companies have cut investment and production. Current oil and gas production is about 2.7 million barrels per day.



From the beginning of the 1970s, birth control campaigns have been in vogue in China. The 1979 laws restrict city dwellers to having one child only, and rural people are allowed two children, if the first child is a girl or disabled. Chinese birth control policy has prevented 300 million births, reduced poverty and raised life expectancy to 73 years. Even then the Chinese population is growing by eight to ten million every year. A law in 2002 prohibited coercion for pregnancy termination or sterilisation. But recent Chinese media reports point to regular pregnancy tests and pressures for abortion and sterilisation. Besides human rights violations, there are a range of financial penalties and threats of losing jobs.



The Sarkozy government views that the new threat to France is from a group of Marxists, and not al-Qaeda. Nine members of a village commune were charged by the police in Feb 09, with causing a bomb scare in a Paris store, and with sabotaging overhead power lines, with the aim of disrupting a commuter train. Evidence of their involvement extended to a Julien Coupat contributing a recent book on civil disobedience, that contained ideas of disruption in rail traffic, and members of the commune in possession of “document listing train timings”, namely, a train time table. No lives were threatened by the village commune, as the sabotage of power lines merely caused inconvenience, and the seized “bomb” was an old stick of dynamite, without any detonator. The French interior minister, Michele Alliot-Marie sees a New generation of violent “ultra-leftist anarchist” radicals. In reality, a group of eccentric, anti-capitalist vegetable growers are being considered a national menace.



While it is true that Russia does not have any ‘Memorial Memory’ policy, which makes it without any defence mechanism against the onslaught of “defamatory projections and aggressive phobias”, forty-nine journalists have been killed in Russia since 1992. By number of fatal victims in the media, Russia is third after

Iraq and Algeria. The western style democratic revolution that signalled the end of Soviet Union, has been replaced by a new authoritarianism. The pre-Soviet past was forgotten in the post-Soviet era. Since real democracy has not lasted long, temporary amnesia is being imposed about the Soviet years. 'Memorial' is an important NGO in Moscow, which documents human rights atrocities under Stalin. The offices of 'Memorial' were raided in Dec 08, and thirty hard-drives containing twenty years of interviews and archival material about the Gulag and post-Stalinist political prosecutions were seized.

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The union government of India's interim budget (Feb 09) avoided large expenditures, changes in taxation, and explicit economic stimuli. Deficit financing for 2008-09 has increased from a targeted 2.5% to 6%. After several years of 25% growth in tax collections, tax collections in 2008-09 have fallen by about Rs 60,000 crores. Agriculture has been showing a 3.7% growth rate. The government allocated over Rs 99,000 crores to flagship infrastructure development schemes for 2009-10. But industrial output contracted 2% in Dec 08. Around 320 million Indians live below the poverty line. Defence allocation has been Rs 1,41,703 crores, almost a 35% increase from the provisions of last year's budget. The government has allowed an extension in interest subsidy, for exporters in labour intensive sectors, like gems and jewellery, until Sep 09, at a cost of Rs 500 crores.

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The killing rampage in Mumbai of 26 Nov 09, resulted in the gunning down of more than 170 people, including 33 Muslims, scores of Hindus, Christians and Jews. Nine bodies of the killer young men still lie in a morgue in Mumbai, as the leadership of India's Muslim community describe them as "murderers" and not "martyrs". The bodies are not being permitted burial in the main Muslim cemetery of Mumbai. The 7.5 acre Bada Kabarstan graveyard is managed by the Muslim Jama Masjid Trust. The Indian Muslims are the second largest Muslim community in the world after Indonesia's Muslims. By refusing to bury the nine Pakistani Muslim terrorists, the Muslims of Mumbai have delegitimized the suicide-murderers.

On the other spectrum, twenty-one alleged terrorists of the Indian Mujahideen (IM) group, have been charge-sheeted by the Mumbai police, before the Maharashtra Control of Organized Crime Act Court. The charges include involvement in the planning and execution of bomb blasts across India, forming an organized crime syndicate for terror related activities, hacking into Wi Fi accounts to send e-mails claiming responsibility for the Ahmedabad and Delhi blasts, and for Surat's unexploded bombs. The alleged terrorists have been involved in different explosions in different cities, since 2005. Apart from the 21 arrested terrorists, the charge-sheet has named six others, as accused who are wanted.

Relating to the 26 Nov 08 terrorist assault on Mumbai, the arrested 'fidayee' terrorist Ajmal Amir Kasab has been charge-sheeted along with 47 accused of which three were arrested, nine killed in gun battles with security forces, and thirty-five cited as absconding or missing.

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