

NEWS WRAP

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The 60th anniversary of the People's Republic of China was celebrated with a grand military spectacle in central Beijing on 01 Oct. 09. The People's Revolutionary army has been transformed from a revolutionary guerilla movement into a sophisticated military entity, armed with modern weapons and space-based surveillance systems. Deng Xiaoping's instructions re-iterate that China must be under the leadership of the Communist Party. The peasant army that swept the Communist Party to power is now a modern force. 2.3 million men under arms, comprise the PLA. Teams of police and counter terrorist squads have taken extra-ordinary measures to repress any opposition to the Communist Party, at the end of the sixth decade in power. Beginning with the 2008 Olympics to China as a leading solutions player in the world economic crisis, the 60th anniversary inside China, is a crowning glory.

Since the economic reforms commencing in 1979 in China, China's foreign trade has resulted in China building up a £1.25 trillion in foreign exchange reserves. 200 million Chinese citizens have been extricated from poverty. While Mao earlier aimed to overturn the international economic system, today's China is a "responsible stakeholder" in the world stage. The dollar no longer rules, and Britain and USA are struggling with recession. Beijing's "state capitalism" will be achieving a target of 8% economic growth in 2009. In the short run China has survived a decline of 2.5% in exports, and the loss of 20 million jobs. But China's "growth model" of cheap exports and low wages may not last in the long run. President Hu Jintao has pledged China to a significant reduction in carbon emissions. At the UN the Chinese President promised to clean up the environment and fight global warming. China has also committed to stop the spread of Nuclear weapons, and adhere to "Non-proliferation" obligations.

Even though armed with shiny new weapons systems, the PLA has no recent battle experience, and is riddled with corruption. India's hosting the Dalai Lama, makes India an enemy of China. China's virulent Nationalism is balanced with Beijing's policy of non-interference in other countries.

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Uncertainty looms over the Rs 40,000 crore greenfield steel plant to be built in Jharkhand, by the Arcelor Mittal Group. As per the memo of understanding (2005) with Arcelor Mittal and the then Arjun Munda Jharkhand state government, the steel major was to have purchased land directly from land owners, for setting up the mega steel plant in Khunti district. There has been fierce resistance against acquisition of land in Torpa area of Khunti district, organized by the Adivasi Mulvashi Janadhikar Manch, a tribal front led by Ms Dayamani Barla, a local tribal activist. Fighting for jal-jungle-jameen (water-forest-land), opposition to the direct purchase of land in Torpa, fear that the steel plant would destroy years of habitation in forest land, and culture of the area. In the absence of any rehabilitation package, there are worries as to where the displaced people would go to. Arcelor Mittal is pulling out from Torpa.

When there were indications that Arcelor-Mittal was considering re-locating its plant to neighbouring Gumla district, Ms Barla led demonstrations in front of

the Gumla district administrative office, demanding concrete rehabilitation plans.

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Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) is the administrator of the Cable TV Networks Act. In India the Act, is enforced by District Magistrates, Sub-Divisional Magistrates, and Commissioners of Police. Taking advantage of a complete lack of co-ordination between the central administrative agencies and the state level enforcement units, agents of TV channel companies conduct the modus operandi of illegal downlinking of several non-licensed TV channels into Indian households. Though not in the permitted channels' list of the union ministry of Information and Broadcasting, unscrupulous broadcasting in league with cable operators are beaming several non-licensed prominent Islamic TV channels like Peace TV, ARY Q TV, TV Maldives and Saudi TV. Union I and B ministry Instructions stipulate that all TV channels need to obtain downlinking permission for beaming within India.

The union government has recently accorded approval to 454 channels, for viewing in India, and cable operators are expected to strictly beam only the permitted channels. Several Islamic preaching channels which have either been rejected or never applied to the union I and B ministry, are being televised across India by the cable operators, violating all rules. Uplinked from Dubai, Peace Urdu TV, promoted by Islamic Research Foundation, headed by Mumbai-born Zakir Naik, is being beamed by several cable operators in Delhi. Cable operators have been illegally down-linking the channel by accepting payments from the channel agents. Popularly known as Quran TV, Pakistan based ARY Q TV is being illegally telecast by cable operators in Delhi, and other northern states. Saudi TV and TV Maldives are being downloaded in the southern states. The down linking is done in mainly Muslim-populated areas. Agents of the illegal TV channel companies deliver set top boxes free without cost to cable operators for receiving signals, and make annual payments as carriage charges, local police and town officials allegedly receive a share in the deal. □□□