

# NEWS WRAP

AGD

In Cuba the state has been imposing choice of consumption and production. Fidel Castro tried to build a “New Man” in Cuba, over half a century, by supporting all-embracing social provisions and limiting individual records. Production is low in Cuba. The population is ageing. Damages inflicted by hurricanes of 2008 and the continued economic embargo is driving Cuba’s economy to near bankruptcy. Wages are paltry and absenteeism at workplaces quite common. President Raul Castro discussed Cuban economic failures at the National Assembly, in August 2009. The economy’s inefficiencies were stressed. In October 09, at four government ministries, free canteens have been shut down, and workers given a wage increase of 15 pesos (\$ 0.60) a day, in compensation. This raises a worker’s salary by more than half, in return for losing a modest lunch. The Cuban government is creating incentives to work harder by raising wages, leading to increased productivity. Imports have been reduced by 30%, and budgets for state companies and ministries have been slashed. Foreign companies are waiting long spells to transfer abroad, hundreds of millions of dollars in profits, derived from joint ventures. The profits are locked in local banks.

Trusted military men, in charge of economic policy, are endeavouring to save foreign exchange and increase output. During 2008, workplace canteens received around \$350 million in imported food. While the Cubans may not value the true cost of free services, the monthly ration of staples could last only ten to fifteen days. Many food items are often unavailable. Across the island, the Cuban government is organizing numerous public meetings, where a wider ten-point plan is discussed. Future plans aim to end the monthly ration of free staples, and several perks, including free wedding cakes. President Raul Castro is decentralizing the economy, and providing more autonomy to state companies. Idle state land is being leased to private farmers. There are plans to use co-operatives by introducing greater flexibility. Family owned restaurants and take away food businesses are being encouraged. Fidel Castro has been opposed to markets. After a crackdown, licenses to run micro-businesses, such as restaurants and hair dressers, have been reduced from 350,000 to 200,000. In the harvests of 2009, bumper crops of tomatoes and rice were partially wasted, due to transport and processing problems. Though Cuba’s average wage is \$20 per month, there is an additional “social wage” of free housing, health, education, transport and food rations.

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Arunachal Pradesh (India) witnessed a 74% turnout at the Assembly polls on 13 Oct 09. Cadres of the Myan-mar insurgent outfit, Kachin Independent Army (KIA) crossed over into districts Tirap and Channlang, along the Myanmar border, and tried to influence and dictate the local people, to vote for Naga rebels. The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang faction) chief S S Khaplang has roots in the Hem’s Naga group of Myanmar. The KIA has close bonds with the NSCN (K) which has a wide presence in Tirap and Changlang districts. Naga and Manipuri rebel groups have ties with the KIA. Some of the Kachin rebels

from Myanmar are married to women from Assam and from the influential Singphos families in Changlang.

Kachins control large portions of opium growing land in Kachin and Shan provinces over which the Myanmar military junta have little control. Opium is smuggled into Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. Insurgent groups from north-east find shelter in Kachin rebel camps.

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Trained by the army, a new para military special forces training facility has been established in Raipur, to combat armed insurgents fighting the state. Left wing radical “Naxalite” / “Maoist” groups have a presence in 22 Indian states. They have deep entrenchments in Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar (South and Central), Orissa (North and West), West Bengal (South and West), Andhra Pradesh (North and Coastal), Maharashtra (Northeast), and pockets in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Launched by the union home ministry, the Cabinet Committee on Security, and the respective state governments, there is an ongoing massive drive to repulse the rebel strongholds across the country. The large scale military and para-military action launched on the Naxalite / Maoist movement, is reminiscent of the military and police operations of 1971 on the Naxal movement. The current operations exclude the army from the forefront. But the strategy to crush the Maoist strongholds is derived from “Operation Steeplechase” of July-august 1971, which was a joint Army-Paramilitary-Police operation, to quell the armed rebels in West Bengal, only months before the Bangladesh war. Army units were all quickly mobilized, from their peace time location, for moving to the East Pakistan border. In the interregnum before December 1971, the combat troops conducted an Internal Security duties operations, over a period of forty five days. Three army divisions and the 50 para brigade were deployed in West Bengal in mid-1971. The nearly 65,000 army personnel, who were deployed on the anti-Naxal drive mission, “did not fire a single bullet”. The army troops played the role of “area domination”, which enabled the police and civil district administration to penetrate the Naxal stonghold areas. Neighbourhoods in towns and cities, factory areas and rural naxal strongholds were cordoned off by army troops. Battle worthy army troops formed the outer perimeter of the operations, while police and paramilitary forces, carried out arrests and fired on naxals. Post-Bangladesh operations, certain army units returning victoriously from the Bangladesh border, were deployed on internal security duties in West Bengal, between 1972 to 1974, for short spells. Today the army’s role has been taken over by the CRPF and its Commando Battalion Resolute Action (COBRA) force. Action is being followed up with mass mobilization of police and administrative infra-structure in the recaptured areas. In 1971, the Naxal movement was in its early stages, and the activists were not well armed or adequately equipped. Today the Naxal guerillas are armed with AK-47 rifles, and even rocket launchers. The internal security operations of the army in 1971 (July-August) in West Bengal, had no written orders or records, to document the deployment of armed forces in West Bengal. Within a short period, Charu Mazumdar was arrested. □□□