

NEWS WRAP

AGD

The civil war which ended in Sudan in 2005, concluded with a peace agreement between the north and the south, which had assured that revenues from the southern oil-fields were to be shared equally between the two regions. The referendum for independence in South Sudan in Jan 2011, will most likely opt for secession. Luka Biong Deng, the minister of presidential affairs in the government of South Sudan has indicated to Khartoum that South Sudan will consider giving half its oil revenues, to the Khartoum government, for a limited period, even if the region becomes independent next year. The division of oil revenues would continue, to ensure economic viability, and the unity of the north. Sudan has proved reserves of 6.3 billion barrels of oil. About 75 percent of the oil is in the south, but the pipelines that convey the oil to export terminals and refineries, cross through the north. South Sudan needs North Sudan's co-operation to market its oil, while the North is in need of oil revenues from South Sudan. Oil provides about 98 percent of South Sudan's non-aid income from oil.

The proposals for a 50-50 division in oil revenues would be opposed by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, the former rebel army that rules South Sudan. The liberation movement hardliners, who have bitter memories of the civil war, dislike President Omal al-Bashir's Khartoum regime. Oil resources allow the north and south common interests, and are a possible safeguard against another civil war, after Jan 2011 referendum. Post-referendum issues are expected to be discussed by the SPLN with the Khartoum government, which would include the use of the Nile river, debt sharing, and border demarcation.

SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA

Iran and Israel are competing for "trade and aid" agreements in Africa. Iran is a new power in sub-Saharan Africa, where it has built the Khodro plant in Senegal's capital Dakar, for the Thies car. With offers of oil and aid, Iran is strengthening muslim sympathies in African countries, which have strong ties with the West. Along with the Khodro car factory, Iran is building tractors, an oil refinery and a chemical plant in Senegal, which has a 95 percent muslim population. Iran has trade links with Gambia, Mauritania, Nigeria and Sudan. With the 2008 military co-operation accord between Iran-Sudan, Sudan is Africa's third biggest arms maker. With Iranian aid, oil refineries and pipelines are coming up in Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

In order to confront Islamist militias and strengthen security, African governments like Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda look forward to Israeli projects like irrigation, military and intelligence technology; and Israeli arms and drone aircrafts. Iran's warm relations with Sudan and Eritrea makes the Red Sea a strategic battle zone, which could threaten Israeli shipping.

PUBLIC MORALS IN CHINA

In China, most people while optimistic about the economic direction of China, are furious at the state of public morals. Charts showing the biggest bribes and the most corrupt officials, alongwith stories of contaminated milk powder, fill

daily newspapers. Deng Xiaoping's glory of getting rich has reduced moral, political and ethical signposts in China. Earlier during the cultural revolution, Mao Zedong's Red Guards had crashed the symbols of tradition, religion and the teachings of Confucius. Now an officially approved film version, "Confucius", on China's most revered philosopher, is being promoted by the all-powerful Communist Party. Many Chinese critics have rejected the film and questioned the validity of a two-and-half-millenia-old philosophy, to modern-day Chinese society. Generated to serve feudal rulers, *confucianism* has been used to shackle people's thinking and reduce them to docility. Over the past ten years, the state-encouraged revival of *confucianism*, is an effort to fill an ideological and ethical void. The Chinese leadership, while trying to reduce social injustice, such as the widening gap between urban and rural standards of living, is opting for *confucianism*, to fill up intellectual and ethical vacuums in Chinese Civil Society. Teachings of confucius emphasize social stability, hierachy and the legitimacy of instructions from wise leaders. The idea that bad leaders can legitimately be overthrown by popular revolt is also part of *confucianism*. Similar to the British Council or Germany's Goethe Institue, Beijing has been establishing Confucius Institutes around the world. But the Chinese public have evinced a lack of interest in the "Confucius" film, as it has large access to information and ideas.

RESERVATION ROW

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has recently quashed a state law providing 4 percent reservation in government jobs and educational institutions to 15 socially and educationally backward classes amongst Muslims, stating that religion cannot be the basis for quota. This is the third time that the AP High Court has quashed a quota for Muslims, since 2004, elaborating that the law on quota for minorities was "unsustain-able" and "could not be implemented". The High Court order is a major set back for the AP Congress government, which had provided reservation among certain backward group of Muslims.

With West Bengal heading for municipal elections and civic polls shortly, the West Bengal state government has announced 10 percent job reservation for Muslims under the OBC category. The government scheme is designed to benefit Muslims who are educationally, socially and economically backward in West Bengal. Muslims comprise 25 percent of the state's population. The measure emanates from the recommendations of Ranganath Mishra Commission. The cream layer among Muslims, with an annual income of Rs 4.5 lac would not be considered for reservation. The state government maintains that reservation would bot be given on the basis of religion. The process of identifying Muslims who are educationally, socially and economically backward has reportedly commenced. The reservation will not exceed 50 percent total, conforming to Supreme Court directives.

KILLING COUUM RIVER

In the development schemes along the Cooum river and the Cooum restoration project, there has been a lack of clarity in planning. The social security issues affecting the people, residing in Chennai's suburbs have not been fully addressed. The proposed elevated expressway project between Chennai port and Madura

royal would be an impediment to the flow of water in the Cooum river. An objective of the proposed eco-restoration project is the unhindered river flow, in order to keep the waterway clean. The Chennai local government had taken several measures, such as land acquisition, eviction of slum dwellers, and floating of tenders, before obtaining clearance from Expert Appraisal Committee for Coastal Regulation Zone. There has been no proper analysis of environmental, social and technical issues. The adjustment of the elevated expressway project, was not safe, with several sharp, hairpin bends. Slum dwellers along the Cooum banks contributed only 1 or 2 percent of pollution. The discharge of raw sewage into the waterway was a major pollutant. Action is awaited to desilt the Cooum riverbed, near the mouth when it joins with the sea, to ensure sufficient flow, and also prevent flooding of residential areas. The radial roads in Porur and Pallikaranai have divided the water bodies, and inundated the neighbouring areas. People who have been re-settled in Semencheri and Kannati Nagar areas do not have adequate drinking water, electricity and roads. □□□