

NEWS WRAP

AGD

Trade by China and India, four South Asian countries, namely Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan, was almost equal during the 1990s. Over the last ten years, China has outstripped India in building deeper trade ties. On the other hand, China and India have an expanding business relationship with each other. Recently China has become India's largest trading partner. Both countries have advanced similar positions in global trade and climate change negotiations. But a history of tense relations continues in the world's two fastest growing major economies. India and China share a disputed border, over which there was a war in 1962. As China exercised growing control over Tibet, India gave shelter to the Dalai Lama, who fled Tibet. China has close military ties with Pakistan, a country with which India has fought three wars.

Now China is investing millions of Yuan, into Hambantota (Sri Lanka), to turn a fishing hamlet into a booming new port. Earlier, as part of the world's brisk trade with China, ships from other countries, stacked with oil, machinery, clothes and cargo, sailed past Hambantota, a small town near India. China's ambitious trading strategy in South Asia is reshaping the region, and forcing India to realign relations with its neighbours, and improve economic ties. Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan provide new markets and alternative routes to the Indian Ocean for China, as Chinese ships reach the countries through the strait of Malacca. China has been developing port facilities in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar, and is planning to construct railway lines in Nepal. China's expanding sphere of regional influence is undermining India's natural influence in the areas.

NPA

The New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of Philippines is fighting a Maoist insurgency for the last 41 years. Their struggle is the longest in Asia. The Philippines military has recently been arresting a large number of health workers from community health centres, with charges that the health workers were conducting training courses in bomb making. Those arrested are tortured, threatened and forced to say they were guerillas. The arrests are discouraging medical professionals from serving in poor and underserved areas, in the Philippines country-side.

CRAZY MEDICINE

In recent years, Cambodia has experienced a sharp increase in the use of methamphetamines, known in Thailand and other parts of South Asia, as "crazy medicine". Heroin users comprise a smaller number of people. Though unreliable, Cambodian government figures for drug use in Cambodia, range from 6,000 to 20,000. According to United Nations estimates, almost half a million people in Cambodia are drug users. The Cambodian National Authority for Combating Drugs reported in 2008, that 2382 people were detained in government drug detention centres, and almost all of them involuntarily. Some families without any other recourse, pay the drug detention centres, to admit

relatives. The New York-based monitoring group, *Human Rights Watch*, have recently documented treatment at these centres, which extends to physical abuse, and the involuntary administration of an experimental drug. At eleven government-run centres, abuses like electric shocks, beatings, rape, forced labour, and forced donations of blood have surfaced as evidence. Sadistic violence, torture and inhuman treatment are widely practised, throughout Cambodia's drug detention centres. Inmates are denied treatment for drug dependency.

In Dec 2009, the Cambodian authorities administered an experimental herbal drug, imported from Vietnam, but not registered for use in Cambodia. No systematic follow-up was done, after patients were released to their homes, or to the streets. Besides drug users, a number of vagrants, beggars, prostitutes and the mentally ill, are locked up in the drug treatment centres. The Cambodian government has dismissed the Human Rights Watch Report as "without any valid grounds".

SILDA RAID

On 15 Feb 09, Maoists attacked an Eastern Frontier Rifles Camp at Silda (West Midnapore) and brutally killed 25 EFR personnel, of whom 19 jawans hailed from Darjeeling district. Besides intelligence lapses on the part of West Bengal's Home Department, one third of the jawans on duty on the fateful day, were not in armed attention mode. The top Maoist squad in Bengal-Orissa-Jharkhand (BOJ) zone, known as "headquarters action squad" had for the first time moved into West Bengal for conducting assaults, like in Silda. With more than 70 members, the squad which was active in Orissa, was stationed in forest areas of Kotsila for three days, before the attack. The squad fired from AK 47 weapons, INSAS rifles and SLRs. Their firepower exceeds that of any armed squad in West Bengal. The West Bengal state government has now adopted a 'shoot to kill' policy against left wing extremists. The security forces in West Bengal will hunt down Maoist cadres, inside neighbouring states too.

MILK PLAN

There is a need to raise the domestic production of milk in India, from 2.5 million metric tons to 5 million metric tons, a year. The increasing demand for milk has been propelled by the increasing income of rural households, and hike in the salaries of government employees. Millions of small and marginal farmers are dependent on the dairy industry, as a source of livelihood. Attempts to import milk would adversely affect the interest of small farmers. The National Dairy Plan, drawn up by the National Dairy Development Board, tries to raise milk production to match the estimated 180 metric ton annual demand for milk in 2021-22. Doubling of milk production over a period of 15 years can be achieved by improving productivity, through genetic improvement of milch animals and optimal use of feed and fodder. Breeding, feeding and animal healthcare programmes, if co-ordinated scientifically, could raise the share of marketable surplus of the organised sector, both co-operative and private dairies, from 30 percent to 65 percent.

Co-operatives procure just 2 percent to 3 percent of the total milk production in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh; whereas Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF/AMUL) and The National Dairy Development Board (NDDB/Mother Dairy) procure nearly 40% of total milk production. There is hardly any organised procurement in other states. Besides procuring milk with North Gujarat (Banas-kantha, Mehsana and Sabarkantha) and South Gujarat (Kheda, Panchmahal and Vadodara) Amul and Mother Dairy are obtaining milk from the Saurashtra-Kutch region. The milk farmers in Gujarat have been benefited, with prices being paid at Rs 250 a kg for fat, increasing to Rs 325 a kg.

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