

NEWS WRAP

AGD

Between July 2009 and December 2011, there would be a phased withdrawal of American troops in Iraq. Waves of bombings after a spell of comparative calm, have caused apprehensions as the Americans withdraw. The spate of bombings that killed more than 200 people in Iraq in the last week of June 09, could be a prelude to increasing attacks on US military and the Iraqi government. The US officials are confident about the capabilities of the Iraqi forces, whom they have trained for the past six years. The first sale of oil field development rights is being pressed ahead by the Iraqi government. But the Iraqi government's not too strong authority could be undermined by factional rivalries. There is always a threat of civil war from the sectarian violence between Sunnis and Shiaites or between Arabs and Kurds. Resistance attacks are expected to continue and increase against the western coalition and increase against the western coalition forces and the other forces allied to it.

Although the US forces promise to suspend virtually all military operations USA would be furnishing "advisers" and "trainers" to urban Iraqi units. Unrestricted sorties would continue to be flown by US military helicopters. Before 2010, there is no significant reduction planned in the present strength of 131,000 US troops. With Sunni groups having been largely excluded from the security forces, most of the security commanders are loyal to the Shiaite government. Along with vast fire power in emergency reserve, the continued presence of US advisers would strengthen Iraqi forces, and might reduce the risks of serious violence. Even then government forces are tainted with reports of low morale, inefficiency, indiscipline and corruption. The pull back plan envisages 500,000 Iraqi police officers and around 250,000 Iraqi soldiers taking charge of security from 131,000 US forces.

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With a population of about 56,000, Greenland is a huge and thinly populated Island, in the Arctic. Greenland has been governed by Denmark for nearly 300 years. Becoming more nationalistic, Greenland has been agitating for limited home-role for the past three decades. In 1985, it withdrew from the European Community, thereby becoming the only people to secede from the EC. At a referendum in Nov 08, 75% votes called for loose ties with Denmark. Self government has been granted to Greenland from June 09. But Danish subsidies worth \$ 11,300 per annum every year continue. Fish exports, tourism, hydropower and off shore oil and gas exploration dominate Greenland's economy.

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The North Cachar Hills district (Assam) was formed in 1952. Of the district's 1.86 lac inhabitants, the Dimasa Tribals constitute only 35%. A resolution of May 2008 passed by the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council is attempting to change the name of the district to Dima Hasao Raj, after the Dimasa tribes. This has triggered ethnic clashes in the district, making the Zeme, Kuki and Hmar tribal communities insecure. The Jadhikhe Naiso Hosom, the apex body of the Dimasa tribals, and the underground Black Widow, are closely linked. There are

fears if the Barail range is declared a wildlife sanctuary, then a large number of Non-Dimasa tribes, would be uprooted from their land.

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After 32 years of state rule, West Bengal's Left Front and CPI(M) are faced with an impasse, culminating in the attack by CRPF, Rapid Action Force, West Bengal Armed Police and India Reserve Battalion on the Maoists siege at Lalgarh (West Midnapore district), in the third week of June 09. Armed Maoists are entrenched in areas covering 18 police stations of districts West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia. The last National Sample Survey brought out that 47% of West Bengal's poor did not have cards which entitle holders to subsidised food grains under various schemes. Several districts like West Midnapore have social and physical infrastructure levels, that are similar to or are worse than those of Bihar, Jharkhand and impoverished areas of Uttar Pradesh.

During the two spells of United Front Rule (about 19 months) and Left Front's rule between 1977 to 1992, 40% of West Bengal's population received land titles. Labour intensive cultivation in small plots, along with a boro rice led spurt in farm output, created an impressive agrarian growth between 1977 to 2002. Farm output growth provided economic space and the socially empowered middle peasants gained political power from panchayat representation. But CPI(M) ignored fundamental rural infrastructure and provisions of welfare measures to the poor and landless peasants.

Unregistered manufacturing, which covers non-farm establishments that offer informal employment, has a large share in West Bengal's total manufacturing. Political protection was provided to thin sector, in return for political support. State institutions steadily came under the control of CPI(M). But soon possibilities of further land distribution have been exhausted. Farm growth declined due to lack of mechanization in labour intensive and small plot cultivations. Neglect of rural infrastructure and welfare schemes have made the poorest districts a haven for Maoists. Attempts to create industrial employment have been confronted with agitational politics over acquisition of agricultural land. Left Front's losses in the last Lok Sabha elections have weakened state machinery and created administrative vacuums at the panchayat levels. There are no ready political and economic solutions. Adjacent to Lalgarh is Salboni, a wasteland, which is the proposed site of a 10 million ton steel plant. 100 projects of the size of ex-Tata's Nano car project at Singur, would have occupied less than 1% of the state's farm lands. □□□