

NEWS WRAP

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The Sumanhalli Society, a centre for the rehabilitation of leprosy patients, HIV-treatment, street kids, orphans and destitutes, is located on 50 acres of prime land in Bangalore. The society is run by Christian priests and nuns. The leprosy treatment and rehabilitation project started in 1977, on 63 acres of land, leased by the then Karnataka Chief Minister Devaraj Urs. The state government had aided a garments factory, started on the campus, which provides employment to over 100 people, including HIV patients, leprosy affected individuals and their families.

The prime land of the Sumanhalli Society in Bangalore is valued at about Rs 1000 corers. An adjacent 160 acres plot of the Beggars Colony, houses 922 disabled and destitutes, including the elderly and mentally disabled. In 2006, the Society handed over 13 acres out of 63 acres held, to the government for building a road. The Society had also agreed to a proposal, whereby 25 acres of land was to be taken by the government, for creating the campus of Visvesva-roya Technological University, and the remaining 25 acres would continue as grant to the Society.

Now in July 2009, the BJP-led Yedduappa government has announced plans to acquire the 160 acres Beggars Colony, on Magadi Road, for constructing a hospital, a bus terminus, and a large park. The Karnataka Cabinet has taken a decision for the acquisition of Sumanhalli Society property also, and the modalities of take-over are being finalized.

Over 1700 poor school children, AIDS affected patients, destitutes and disabled persons would be uprooted, as the government acquires the land for commercial use.



Ignited by the reports of the death of at least two Uyghur toy-factory workers, after they had been falsely accused of rape, Uyghurs came on the streets of Xinjiang province. The two Uyghurs were killed by their co-workers, belonging to the majority Han race in a south China factory. Violent frenzy followed. In the first fortnight of July 09, China mobilized thousands of troops to regain control of Urumqi, the capital of the western region of Xinjiang, after three days of rioting between Muslim Uyghurs and Han Chinese. Although the rioting in Urumqi began with attacks by Turkic-speaking Uyghurs on ethnic Han Chinese security forces and reprisals by Han mobs caused deaths to dozens of Uyghurs. Chinese official media claims the official death toll as 192, of which at least 46 of them Uyghurs. The Han Chinese constitute 92% of China's population. Similar to Tibet, economic development and immigration by ethnic Han Chinese have never been apart in Xinjiang Autonomous Region. The ethnic-Turkic Muslims of the region now comprise less than half of its twenty million population. Isa Yusuf Alpetkin, the exiled head of the Islamic Republic of East Turkestan died in 1995, at age 94. Rebiya Kadeer, an Uyghur business-woman, now living in USA, is the movement's new leader. The Chinese have been persuading foreigners that the protests in Xinjiang are linked to jihadist terrorism.

The uprising around Kashgar in western Xinjiang, in 1990, was speedily crushed. There was bloodshed following the pro-independence protests in 1997. In 2008, there were several terrorist attacks, including once in Kashgar, in which seventeen policemen were killed. A large number of Uyghurs are convinced that

their land, traditions and religion are being swamped by decades of Han immigration. The Uyghurs advance less in the civil service; and feel that the Han Chinese are prospering better in business. Xinjiang is rich in natural resources, and its oil and gas are benefiting China's rich coastal regions. At the same time, the Uyghurs have been pampered by the state, with preferential policies, such as being allowed to have more children.

Even though the riots were politically sensitive, the Chinese authorities allowed foreign journalists to go to Urumqi, to cover the aftermath, in July 09. However, the government swiftly restricted internet and mobile telephone communications.

During the recent unrest in Iran, the Iranian opposition had created considerable on-line discussions in China, as well as disapproving coverage in the official media. Within hours of the Urumqi riots, across Xinjiang internet access was cut, and international telephone calls were jammed. There was suspension of text-messaging services within forty eight hours. The media was provided access to a few broadband lines in an Urumqi hotel.

Turkey has been a haven for disaffected Uyghurs, including Isa Yusuf Alpetikin. Turkey's support for the Uyghur cause has been weakened by China's rapid economic rise and its growing international trade status. Erdogan, Turkey's prime minister had proposed a discussion of the rioting in the UN Security Council, which did not achieve any progress, given China's power of veto. But Turkey has cultural, religious and ethnic links with Xinjiang. China has been clamouring support for Kurdish separatists in Turkey. About 50,000 Turkic Uyghurs live in Kyrgystan; and about 300,000 Turkic Uyghurs reside in Kazakhstan, including the prime minister Karim Massimov. Around one million ethnic Kazkh and Kyrgyz citizens shuttle as traders in Xinjiang, and their respective governments are concerned for their safe return. Kazakhstan has sent a few separatists wanted by China back to Xinjiang. As rewards for central Asian co-operation, China has lent \$ 10 billion to Kazakhstan in a "loan-for-oil" deal. Members of the Shanghai Co-operation Organization, which links four central Asian states with Russia and China, received another \$10 billion each as aid. □□□