

NEWS WRAP

AGD

An estimated 60% of India's 1.2 billion population is below the age of 25. Authorities feel that India's "demographic dividend" could help the country with advantages in the global services industry. Talent could be exported to countries with ageing societies. While India has long played down the importance of learning the Chinese language, now the introduction of the teaching of Mandarin in Indian state schools is being considered. The move represents a policy shift. Presently Chinese languages are barely taught in India, even though China is India's largest trading partner and neighbour across the Himalayas. India has recently responded favourably to a proposal by Beijing to establish Confucius Institutes, which teach Chinese, in the main Indian centres of learning. The number of students learning Mandarin across the globe continues to grow. The Confucius Institutes, established in 2004, conduct Chinese language and culture classes. They also present a world view, which conforms to the Chinese Communist Party objectives.

TRIBAL WRITINGS

There are about twenty-five newspapers and magazines published from Junglemahal (West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia districts in West Bengal). The publications like *Khond Rond* (Research), *Sili*, *Tetre*, *Kherwal*, *Haheer*, *Chiti Sakam*, *Umul*, *Nawa Ipil*, *Jug Sirijol*, *Sar Sagun* and *Adavasi Sambad* are in Santhali / Hindi / Bengali. The magazines are well circulated amongst tribals, some being prestigious literary bi-monthly magazines of Tribals. Ever since these magazines recently focused on 'Violence and terror' unleashed by Maoists in the name of tribal welfare, many of the magazines have suffered restrictions on circulation, and some have stopped publication. At least half a dozen Santhali newspapers, fortnightly, monthly, bi-monthly being published from Junglemahal have shifted to the outskirts of Kolkata and other semi-urban towns. Many of the newspapers have adopted 'self imposed censorship' on maoist and marxist violence. Some writers have been forced to leave their rural homes and seek shelter in urban areas. Short stories, limericks, poems for children and satirical verses highlight the victims of politics. There are also writings in favour of extremists.

MAFIA ASSETS

In over two years of Silvio Berlusconi's centre-right government in Italy, police have arrested around 7000 Mafia suspects across Italy, and seized assets valued almost 20 billion euros. Italian society is confiscating Mafia assets, and using them for social purposes. A funfair has sprung up in the badlands of Naples' mob Camorra. A horse breeding farm, owned by Michele Zaga, a Mafia cigarette baron, has been seized by law enforcement agencies, and turned over to a social co-operative, and named after Peppino Diana, an anti-Mafia priest shot dead in his Church in 1994. The farm will soon produce the area's famed mozzarella cheese, and serve as an education centre. Villa Casaldi Principe, a villa with a black marble bathroom was once owned by a mafia hitman, is now operated by Beppe Pagano, as a social centre for people with psychiatric problems. A villa garden has an open air theatre. Disadvantaged workers tend to fruit orchards and vegetable plots, confiscated from the Schiavone clan. The Eureka co-operative sells the products locally. The anti-Mafia activists in Naples receive recognition and support from foreign governments, who are worried about the penetration of organised crime.

US TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

The dynamic technology sector of USA escaped serious setbacks in recession, and profits in 2010 have increased. But the high-tech companies have been slow to hire. The US unemployment rate is around 10%. The technology industry may not succeed in steering a recovery, and achieve sustained US employment. There is tremendous uncertainty in the technology sector, as indications are emerging that people with particular advanced skills may not be needed anymore. There are shrinking opportunities in the high-skill fields in USA. Employment has actually fallen in computer systems design, Internet publishing, data processing and software publishing. Computer scientists, system analysts and computer programmers are suffering 6% unemployment. While this unemployment rate may be favourable with the rampant joblessness in the manufacturing sector, it is still considerably higher than the US unemployment rates in other white collar professions. Robust technology hiring is slowing down owing to increased automation and the addition of highly skilled labour outside USA, at lower cost. □□□