

NEWS WRAP

AGD

Over the years, Kashmiri Pandits have fled Kashmir Valley, with an exodus crescendo in 1990. Now large numbers of Kashmiri Muslims are leaving Kashmir Valley. About 13000 Muslim families from poverty stricken villages of Doda, Budgam and Baramullah districts of Kashmir have emigrated from the state, as they were tired of the violence, frequent disruptions of civil life, and the fear of armed militants and the security forces. Around 10000 families have taken refuge in Delhi, about 2800 families in Mumbai, and 145 families in makeshift tents, peripheral to garbage dumps, on the suburbs of Kolkata. In the hope of getting absorbed in the local carpet making industry, some muslim migrants have proceeded to Bhadohi, in Uttar Pradesh. Frequent bandhs, curfews and killings have destroyed tourism and livelihoods in Kashmir Valley. But rehabilitation in Kolkata is proving difficult, as there are insufficient job opportunities. Meagre savings are withering, and carpet weaving and shawl making skills do not have any demand. Certain NGOs are distributing food doles. Some migrant Kashmiri Muslims are planning to leave Kolkata, and return to the troubled valley. There are cases of militants looting and burning houses of Kashmir Muslim migrants, and death threats if the migrants return. The J and K government is unappreciative of the flight of muslim migrants from the state. The tents set up by Kashmiri muslim migrants, off Belghoria Expressway, near Dakshineswar, on the outskirts of Kolkata, may be dismantled soon.

ILLEGAL QUARRYING

An illegal open cast iron ore mine, was being operated by a private firm at Cavern, 75 km from Panaji (Goa). The illegal quarrying was being done on predominantly tribal land, where tribals depend on the forest land and agricultural produce, for their daily survival. Iron ore was being illegally extracted from Devdongar (god's hill), where local tribals refrain from plucking leaves from the sacred hillock. For several months, the tribal villagers had been protesting that the illegal mine should be closed down. The illegal mining continued with the help of armed, private guards. On 01 March 2011, about 200 tribals held hostage the Director of Mines, Goa. The agitation led to the Goa State Pollution Control Board withdrawing consent to operate under Air and Water Act. Subsequently, the Director of Mines issued order for halting mining operations, removal of machinery and initiating proceedings to cancel the lease. The Chief Minister of Goa, Digambar Kamat, is also the Mines minister.

1984 RIOTS IN CHILLAR

As a fall-out of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984 October, anti-Sikh rioters killed 31 sikhs on 02 Nov 1984 in Chillar village on the outskirts of Rewari (Haryana). The hamlet consisted of sixteen sikh families, who had migrated from Pakistan, at the time of August 1947 partition. Police were informed immediately, and a FIR was registered at Jatusana Police Station against unknown persons, on 03 Nov 1984. Successive Haryana governments have attempted to hush up the mass killing. The police claim that the FIR has been lost, and none of the perpetrators have been identified.

GRAMEEN BANK

Bangladesh's Grameen Bank was founded by Muhammad Yunus, the Nobel Peace Prize winning micro-finance pioneer. It is revered as model for micro-finance, which has been replicated by rural institutions, around the world. Taking deposits from the rural poor, the Bank has about \$955 million, in outstanding loans to 8.3 million borrowers. The Bank's wide array of social enterprises, includes Grameen Telecom, a non-profit entity which holds a

34% stake in Bangladesh's largest mobile phone operator. Recently, the Bangladesh Bank, a central bank that regulates the finance sector, declared that Muhammad Yunus, aged 70 years, has been relieved of his responsibility as managing director, Grameen Bank. Mr Yunus's appointment at Grameen, had been "non complaint" with a special law governing the institution. The central bank had not sanctioned retention of Mr Yunus in office, after his 60th birthday, the usual retirement age. The supporters of Mr Yunus feel that he is the victim of vendetta by Sheikh Hasina Wajed, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, and her administration. Expressing open scepticism about the benefits of micro-finance and outright antipathy towards its famous pioneer, Sheikh Hasina had recently accused micro-lenders of "sucking blood from the poor in the name of poverty alleviation."

BEL MONTE DAM

President Dilma Rouseff's new government in Brazil believes that for the Brazilian economy to grow by 5% per year in the next few years, Brazil needs to add 5000 megawatts electricity per year, to its installed capacity. Sustainable energy is aimed to be assured by the proposed Bel Monte Dam, costing about \$11 billion, and expected to produce 11,200 megawatts of hydro-electric power, annually. Around fifty and sixty Amazonian tribal leaders are opposed to the proposed hydro-electric project to be built on the Xingu river, one of the Amazon's biggest tributaries, as it will destroy their homes and livelihoods. Brazil's 90% power comes from renewable sources, compared to 18% world average. It is feared that Bel Monte will destroy the livelihoods of people living beside the Zingu river; and flood 516 sq km and lower the Zingu river's level as it passes between two indigenous reservations. A drought is afflicting the Amazon basin and the dam could suffer from irregular rainfall. The project will attract nearly one lac migrants, outsider workers and their families, which could result in conflicts with indigenous communities.□