

## NEWS WRAP

AGD

Even before the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear crisis in Japan, Commerzbank of Germany has pulled out of the Jaitapur Nuclear Project, in coastal Maharashtra, citing “susceptibility and reputational risk”. Presently, India has 20 nuclear power reactors with a capacity of 4780 megawatts (mw), or 4.78 gigawatts (gw). India aims to have over 20 gw of nuclear power generating capacity, by 2020. For attaining a generating capacity of 63 gw by 2032, India has an agreement with USA. Private reactor builders such as GE and Areva have been allowed access to India’s power market, estimated at \$15,000 crores (over Rs 6,78,613 crores). However, safety controls are unable to guarantee whether India’s nuclear power plants would be able to withstand the impact of large natural disasters, like earthquakes and tsunami.

The French Nuclear Plant in Jaitapur, on coastal Maharashtra, is expected to have six units of European Pressurised Reactors (EPRs) of 1650 mw each. The new EPR nuclear design has been tried only in Finland. The land at Jaitapur is fertile, producing rice, alphonso mangoes, coconut, betel nut, cashew, pineapples and other fruits. Quake induced radiation threats from Japan have intensified resistance to a proposed nuclear plant in coastal Bhavnagar (Gujarat). Fears of pollution resulting in cancer, have led farmers not to give land to Nirma Cement Plant in Mahuva (Bhavnagar).

### **RULES OF ENGAGEMENT**

Army troops will be stationed in Chattisgarh, for countering the Naxals. In an area where the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) has not been invoked, the union government of India will provide legal protection for the military, in engagement with Naxals. The ostensible purpose is to set up merely a “battle manoeuvre range” for training purposes, and not the carry out operations against the Maoists. But the Indian Army wants “flexibility” to adopt a more proactive approach to self-defence; which could involve chasing Naxals in hot pursuit, if necessary. While acting self-defence is covered by the Indian Penal Code, the IPC does not provide enough legal cushion to security forces, for a wide range of measures. The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has decided on a military presence, on the edge of the Maoist infested Abujmad forest.

### **GOLD MINING IN COLOMBIA**

The newest front in Colombia’s long war is gold mines. Gold prices have surged in the last ten years. Combatants from multiple sides of the conflict over drugs have shifted into gold mining. Leftist guerillas from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and fighters from shadowy armed groups from rightist para military squads are exploring new sources of money in gold mining. Up and down the sweltering river basins around Medellin, miners with hoes are tearing up forest and tree canopies. While some of these small mines have existed for decades, newer mines emerge on a weekly basis. In the lawless backlands, miners use liquid mercury to separate gold from river sediments, giving the province of Antioquia, one of the highest levels of mercury pollution, anywhere.

### **US MIDDLE CLASS**

Thousands of middle class Americans have lost their jobs in the current recession. Buffeted by the financial crisis, millions of US citizens are receiving food stamps for the first time, now part of a million dollar benefit, which has recently been renamed the ‘Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program’ (SNAP). 44.1 million Americans are now being fed in some part by SNAP, which happens to be the highest number in the fifty-year history of the program. With the US economy reeling under high unemployment, the number of US citizens taking

succour from the program, has increased over the past three years, by almost 17 million, an increase of 61%.

### **SOCIAL MANAGEMENT**

Upheavals in the Arab world, and the Internet mobilized peaceful demonstrations in the dozen major cities on 20 Feb 2011, have led senior cadres of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to strengthen social management. Tighter controls have been introduced on cyberspace and “specific groups of people” covering dissidents, rights defenders and disenfranchised. The Chinese president Hu Jintao defines social management as “managing the people, as well as serving them”. Harmonious factors are maximized, non-harmonious ones minimized. The objectives of social management are being achieved by strengthening control of Internet-transmitted information, management of cyber space, improving guidance of public opinion over the internet, strengthening management of the migrant population and specific groups of people by maintaining data on them at the national level, strengthening control of non-public economic and social entities, and crushing social unrest in the bud. □□□