

NEWS WRAP

AGD

India has reached a total of 1.21 billion population as per the first results of 2011 census, adding 181 million people in the past decade. The new numbers are higher than the 1.19 billion estimate that the Registrar General of India had projected for 2011. The nation's population growth for the decade slowed to 17.64% (2011), from 21.54% (1991). Literacy increased from 65% to 74%. On the gender front, the sex ratio among children up to age 6, dropped to 914 girls for each 1000 boys, from 927 a decade earlier. Female foeticide continues to be widespread practice, because of a traditional preference in some communities for boys. Population density in India increased to average 989 people a square mile, up from 842 a decade earlier. New Delhi was the densest, reaching 29,000 people a square mile. The unemployment and job creation figures are due towards the end of 2011.

China's population being about 1.34 billion, India will surpass China as the world's most populous nation, anticipated around 2030. India has declined from the targets of "replacement fertility", generally considered to be roughly 2.1 children per woman over her life time, enough to allow a woman to replace herself and partner. The "dependency ratio" is the proportion of working age adults to the number of people too young or too old to work. The booming economies of three states, viz Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are linked to their lower dependency ratios, compared with poorer status that have been slower to reduce fertility. The fertility rates and dependency ratios vary widely across India.

KUDANKULAM NUCLEAR PLANT

The recently commissioned Kudankulam Nuclear Plant in Tamil Nadu is an Indo-Russian project, with an exlaimed outlay of Rs 13,170 crores. The two giant Nuclear Reactors of 1000 mw capacity, dominating the Kudankulam landscape, are the first commissioned Nuclear Plants in the world, after the Fukushima (Japan) catastrophe. The in-principle clearance for the next two reactors at Kudankulam, will result in the unit being a Nuclear Reactor cluster, having ominous portents, after the Japanese experience Kudankulam was a desolate village, where people were forced to migrate in search of jobs. The Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP) has transformed the village's economic profile, by offering jobs to almost every family in the village, ranging from 940 odd permanent staffers to thousands of contract workers. Several shops in the village are selling attractive consumer items like brand clothes and latest TV sets. Schools in the village have been renovated. The professional tax receipts income of the local panchayat, every month exceeds several lac rupees. But the risks of radiation accompany economic prosperity.

RAUL CASTRO'S CUBA

President Raul Castro of Cuba and Cuba's Communist Party Congress have limited the time of service in high political and state positions, to a maximum of two five year terms. Raul Castro has insisted that times had changed, and the system should change with them. With the agenda being "updating the Cuban economic model", a public debate on political matters is expected to precede the January 2012 special party conference, and constitutional referendum to follow it.

BIOFUELS, FOOD PRICES AND HUNGER

During this year, increasing food prices have caused riots and political turmoil in poor countries from Algeria to Egypt, to Bangladesh, where palm oil, a common biofuel ingredient furnishes nutrition to a poor populace. With food prices rising to 16% from Oct 2010 to Jan 2011, potentially an additional 44 million people in low and middle income countries, are sinking in poverty. The price of food is driven by bad weather that ruins crop yields, to high

old prices that make transportation costly. Now biofuels are contributing to higher prices and fighter markets. USA, European Union, China, India, Indonesia and Thailand have adopted biofuel targets, with insistence that 10% of transportation fuel must come from renewable sources like biofuel or windpower by 2020.

REFUGEE EMERGENCY

Caused by eruption of hostilities in Libya, uncontrolled migration is a politically sensitive challenge to North African countries and the European Union outlying states such as Greece, Italy, Malta or Poland. To escape the fighting, almost 600,000 people have fled across Libya's land borders. While the majority are in Egypt and Tunisia, about 70,000 are in Libya's four other neighbours, viz Algeria, Chad, Niger and Sudan. Fear of becoming targets for gunfire, hundreds of thousands of other Africans living and working in Libya are crossing the borders in desperation. □□□