

NEWS WRAP

AGD

India's labour force numbers 500 million, and will add 110 million in the next decade. The job scheme, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005) promises 100 days of work per year to the unemployed, at a minimum daily wage, currently around Rs 120 (\$2.70). In many areas, this is higher than the lowest pre-existing private sector daily wages. Workers are encouraged to shift from private employment to the public dole. The programme with an annual outlay of \$9 billion, is the largest entitlement in India. A severe labour shortage has been one of the consequences. Employers find it difficult to match the dole, and are forced to pay more for labour. During peak farming seasons, farmer employers are unable to find field hands. The rural wages in some states are rising faster than the inflation rate. Labour costs are contributing to the increase in food prices.

The Employment Guarantee Act offers hardly any worker training that might raise participants' productivity, and prepare them to one day demand a higher wage from the private sector. Instead of acquiring marketable skills, workers are digging and refilling ditches. The scheme has arrested labour mobility, as workers in backward areas, find it easier to stay in their native places, and collect government dole.

LAND WITHOUT LAND DEED

JSW Bengal Steel, controlled by Sajjan Jindal, is in possession of an entire 4334 acres, required for a three million ton steel plant project in Salbani (West Midnapore / West Bengal), without signing any lease agreement with the West Bengal government. Of the 4334 acres in possession of the company, only 294 acres was purchased from locals, while the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation allotted 189 acres. The rest of the government vested land was transferred by the land reforms department of the West Bengal State Government. Nobody can hold more than 24 acres of land in West Bengal. The company has no approval of the state government to own such a big tract of land. Though an agreement was signed in 2007 between JSW Steel and the left front state government, for setting up the project only boundary walls have been erected around the 4334 acres. So far the company has invested Rs 250 crores in the proposed steel plant project.

FOOD SECURITY

Food subsidy and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS), the two schemes for food security through household based entitlements, together add up to more than Rs one lac crores in India. Food Security Schemes through targeted groups obtain only a quarter of that. Food deprivation continues as the percentage of children under age three, who have stunted growth is at 45% in India.

DOMESTIC RADICALS IN EUROPE

In recent years, security services in Europe and the USA have become excessively focused on Islamic terrorists. They have underestimated the threat of domestic radicals, including those upset by the growing influence of Islam. Anders Behring Breivik, the man blamed for July 2011 attacks, has said he was motivated by a desire to bring about a revolution in Norwegian Society. The bomb blast in central Oslo killed eight and the shooting rampage on the island of Utoeya, killed 68 participants of the Labour Party youth camp. Breivik accused the ruling Labour Party, of betraying Norway with "mass imports of Muslims". A 1500 page manifesto, "2083-A European Declaration of Independence", published on the Internet by Breivik, is driven by hate for multiculturalism. A nationalist and chauvinist revival has been an outcome of increased migration from abroad, and largely unrestricted movement of people within an enlarged European Union, such as the persecuted Roma minority. Leaders have condemned the violent actions, across the political spectrum of Europe. But even countries with liberal immigration policies are accepting that multi-culturalism has failed. Multiculturalism has encouraged "segregated communities", where Islamic extremism can thrive. The right wing scene in sovereign countries is connected to the rest of Europe through the Internet forums, where hate speech proliferates, and through right wing demonstrations. The National Front in France, compares Muslims praying in the streets, outside overcrowded mosques to the Nazi occupation. □□□