

News Wrap

AGD

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (since 2004) has failed to guarantee rural jobs. “Distress migration” continues, as prospective workers are not assured of work. Without assurance of even piece jobs, prospective workers migrate from one village to another. Rural migration makes the annual targets for annual guaranteed wage employment erroneous. There is also no co-relation between wages of Rs 110 per day and inflation.

Teesta waters

The Teesta river commences to flow from Sikkim, and cascades through North Bengal, before entering Bangladesh. The proposed Teesta river water sharing agreement between India and Bangladesh has not materialized. The West Bengal government had agreed on sharing of up to 25000 cusecs of water, but the final version of the agreement aimed at sharing 33000 to 50000 cusecs, which would hurt the interests of West Bengal. The Teesta’s lean season water flow has not been jointly studied and surveyed by Indian and Bangladeshi experts. The surface and ground potential of water resources in the Brahmaputra Basin, consisting of sub-basins of the Sankosh, the Raidak, the Torsa, the Jaldhaka and the Teesta rivers are apparently sufficient to meet the requirements of West Bengal and Bangladesh. The tracts to the south and to the west of the Teesta-Brahmaputra (Jamuna) confluence do not need any water from the Teesta sub-basin, as their requirements are met by the Jamuna sub-basin in Bangladesh. By discharging water to Bangladesh through the Teesta barrage, India generates additional hydel power.

Bangladesh has not signed any treaty with India, which would have provided transit facilities for the movement of Indian goods, and the use of Chittagaong and Mangla ports. Under an agreement 111 Indian enclaves will go to Bangladesh and 55 Bangladesh enclaves will come to India.

Third Arab Regime Falls

After the speedy ousting of the Tunisian and Egyptian presidents, Muammer Gaddafi’s Libya has crumbled in the face of a popular rebellion. Even though a transitional government was established on 26 Feb 2011, western powers were dragged into military intervention, and a conflict verging on civil war had fallen into a stubborn stalemate between Feb 2011 and Aug 2011. Following the mysterious assassination of the rebel military commander Abdel Fattah Younes, the Libyan rebels made sustained territorial gains, sweeping down from the western Nafusa mountains towards the port of Zawiya, Gaddafi’s compound Bab-al-Aziziya and Tripoli. And now Gaddafi is dead. So is his legacy. Before the start of the civil war, Libya produced about 1.6 million barrels of oil a day, but the six-month-old conflict has reduced the flow to only 50,000 b/d. Eastern rebels, western guerrillas, NATP allies, Gaddafi loyalists and rival tribes comprise the many competing factions and overlapping agendas in Libya. Mustafa Abdel-Jalil, the chairman of the rebels’ Transitional National Council is keen to quickly consolidate their control of Libya.

End of CeaseFire

During the third week of August 2011, Palestinian militants killed at least seven Israelis, in a rapid chain of attacks on civilian buses and cars, on a highway next to the border with Egypt. Within hours after accusing Gaza militants of exploiting weakening Egyptian control in the Sinai Peninsula as a new route for violence following Egypt's political revolution, Israel carried out retaliatory air attacks against Palestinian targets in the Gaza strip. Twenty three Palestinians were killed, including senior members of a Hamas-affiliated militia. The military offensive was the deadliest outbreak of violence along the Israel-Egypt border, since their 1979 peace treaty. While Hamas has denied that the militants came from Gaza, and the governor of South Sinai (part of Egypt) has denied that the attacks came from the Peninsula, in recent months there have been several attacks on a natural gas export pipeline in Sinai. Weapons smuggling into Gaza has increased. Israeli casualty toll included twelve civilians, one soldier and dozens wounded. Five Egyptian security officers were killed in the intense gunfight between Israeli soldiers and a Gaza based militant group, called the Popular Resistance Committee. Since Hosni Mubarak was ousted as Egypt's president, Israel has been wary of losing another regional ally. Egyptians have been demonstrating against Israel, demanding an end to exports of natural gas to Israel and the introduction of more Egyptian forces in Sinai, the Egyptian Territory that serves as demilitarised zone between the two countries.