

NEWS WRAP

AGD

PARTY CADRES AND LEADERS of the CPI (Marxist) are demoralized after suffering losses in the May 2011 Assembly Elections in West Bengal and Kerala. Workers and cadres are decreasing in number. Yet in West Bengal, the farmers, people with 'pattas' and 'bargas' to till their lands, and others who have been farming on lands yet to be vested by the government are being forcibly evicted and tortured. In Assam, the state government is keeping those with an identifiable vote banks, connected to the system of patronage. The Assam government is attempting to brand Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti leader, Akhil Gogoi, a Maoist. Gogoi and his peasant movement is providing the only reliance and shelter to disempowered, disenfranchised, and landless poor peasants. The Supreme Court has upheld the Allahabad High Court Order, which had quashed the acquisition of over 156 hectares of farmland in UP's Greater Noida, and allotment to builders and real estate developers.

THREAT TO COTTON CROPS

Rainfall in India's western state of Gujarat has been 80% below normal in June-July 2011, leading to a lower area under cultivation, since cotton sowing began in the first week of June 2011. There are heightened concerns over output in India's largest cotton providing state. Cotton acreage has been only 18% of the total area where cotton is usually sown in Gujarat. This is a decline of 36% from a year earlier. India is the world's second largest producer and exporter of cotton.

GREECE AUSTERITY PACKAGE

After months of infighting, Greece passed a 28 billion euro austerity package. Athens has been assured its next aid payment, avoiding sovereign default. Riots and protests have raged in Greece. The austerity package comprises tax increases, wage cuts, and the forced privatisation of billions of dollars worth of public utilities. The European Union signed off on a second 120 billion euro bail out, to keep Greece solvent through 2014. After approval of the board of the International Monetary Fund, the Euro-zone finance ministers signed 12 billion euro (\$ 17.4 billion) in Athens, in mid-July 2011. Greece has been unable to raise money in financial markets. Under the French plan for a rollover of Greek bonds, the banks would roll 50% of their exposure into a new 30-year Greek debt, and park 20% in high quality zero-coupon, European bonds, that could rise in value over time. Eurozone's leaders' focus preserving the single currency and avoiding further turmoil in the banking system has created unemployment, particularly among young people, inevitably bringing misery and unrest.

CUBA'S STRONG TRADE

When the Soviet Union and the former socialist countries collapsed in 1990, Cuba lost 85% of its trade. While Venezuela remains the largest trading partner, Cuba now has diverse trading partners like China, Venezuela, Canada, Brazil, Spain and even the United States under a food sales exception to the embargo. In 1989, about 90% of Cuba's export earnings came from the sale of sugar to the Soviet bloc. Since then, a break-down of Cuba's export earnings indicate that Nickel, Biotech products and tourism constitute a huge portion of its income. Half of Cuba's oil requirements at a preferential price, is supplied by Venezuela. Purchase of the services of Cuban doctors by Venezuela, accounts for 20% of Cuba's current annual earnings. Higher hard currency earnings enable Cuba to buy more oil than it could in 1989. Cuba supplies half of its own oil needs, and is completely self-sufficient in electricity production. □□□