

NEWS WRAP

AGD

THE NATIONAL RURAL employment Guarantee Act of 2006, was first introduced in India by the Maharashtra State Government in 1973, as a “food for work” programme for the poor. There have been increasing reports of irregularities in payment of wages. In comparison to some years earlier, the average mandays per year achieved, has declined to below fifty from fifty two.

In 2009-10, the Public Distribution System distributed food via PDS rationshops weighing 48.90 metric tons. But the food received by the population was barely 25.3 mm tons. The difference in weight of the food grains was not delivered to the poor or the rich by the PDS shops. The ‘lost’ food grains were diverted to the market, and the market sold it to the poor and rich at market prices. There is a leakage of food via PDS rationshops of about 48.3%. While the food subsidy of the union ministry of finance is annually about Rs 59,621 crore, the actual food subsidy is around Rs 38,875 crore as per PDS consumption.

DAMS IN TRIBAL LANDS

Tribals in Shahpur, Thane and Dahanu (Maharashtra) have been protesting against dams planned or being built in these areas. While the proposed dams would enhance water supply in Mumbai, the plans to build dams in Kalv, Susari, Shai and Balganga do not have environment clearances and violate National Rehabilitation Policy. Activists of *Shramik Mukti Sanghatana* affirm that the authorities did not conduct any social impact assessment. Kalv and Shai dams are planned in notified tribal areas, and would require 1000 hectares and 400 hectares of forest land respectively. Around 30% of Mumbai’s total water supply of 3350 million litres per day, is lost in leakages. The dams have been planned by the Konkan Irrigation Development Corporation, and being financed by the Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Development Authority.

PURGES IN CPC

The former mayor of China’s Chong-qing, Mr Bo Xilai was part of broader Maoist revival, and encouraged ‘Red Songs’, propaganda hymns promoted by the late Mao Zedong. As a politburo member, Mr Bo was seen as a central, not local official. Chongqing city was transformed into a police state, and nobody resisted Mr Bo. His “smash black” two year campaign convicted thousands of people for alleged organized crime. The judiciary was abused to persecute political critics, fight rivals and ruin entrepreneurs. Mr Bo’s administration invoked measures that allow police to lock people away without trial. The city was made cleaner and safer, and direct investment by foreign companies poured in, creating tens of

thousands of jobs. Beijing announced in mid-March 2012, that Zhang Dejang, a vice premier had replaced Mr Bo, as Chong-qing's party secretary.

As China's Communist Party prepares for once a decade handover of power, to the next generation of leaders in October 2012, Mr Bo's abrupt downfall focuses the divisions at the top of the Communist Party. Mr Neil Heywood, a British businessman was found dead in a hotel in Chongqing on 14 Nov 2011. The British Government is not accepting grounds of the businessman's death from alcohol poisoning, as advanced by the Chinese authorities. There are suspicions that the death could be linked to a power struggle in the Communist Party. The businessman had a relationship with the Bo family. □