

NEWS WRAP

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Established by the Kyoto climate programme, the UN's clean development mechanism (CDM) encourages prosperous countries to fulfil emissions targets, by financing clean energy projects in developing countries. The UN fund is being misused by chemical, wind, gas and hydro companies, who are claiming carbon reduction credits, for projects that should not qualify. No genuine pollution reduction is being made. The European companies and governments, who are buying the credits from projects, have been unable to meet their carbon reduction targets. The market for CDM credits is presently worth nearly \$20 billion a year, and is expected to rise to \$100 billion, within four years. Over 1000 projects have been approved, and around 2000 more are under process. Under the mechanism, emission reductions must be in addition to those reductions without the project. The "additional emissions reduction" is impossible to prove, and subject to abuse. Investigations by academics have revealed that even though the Chinese government encourages hydro, wind and natural gas-fired plant industries, every new plant being built in China, over the next four years, has been applying for CDM credits. Again, CDM finance was not needed for three-quarters of all registered CDM projects, as they were complete at the time of approval. The rich countries have been overpaying by a massive amount. A UN treaty on climate change is weakened as Britain tries to obtain funds for developing countries through the World Bank, instead of through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

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Indian soap operas are popular in Afghanistan, on black and white screens. Horrified with references to Hindu deities, female skin and allusions to sex, the Afghan government has ordered four Afghan TV stations, to take off five Indian TV serials immediately. Women in Afghanistan have acquired greater rights, following social changes since 2001. But elderly Afghans and many rural inhabitants are alarmed by the dissolute life of cities. The new generation in the expanding urban areas look forward to fresh ideas and entertainment.

A powerful conservative lobby in Afghanistan has been trying for orthodox measures, with presidential elections due in late 2009. Recently a parliamentary sub-committee pursued proposals for banning women's make up, jeans for men, and public intermingling of the genders. Influential groups in parliament are linked to armed bands and drug smuggling. President Hamid Karzai is supported by hardline groups like Hizb-i-Islami, the party of warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. While food prices are rising phenomenally, Taliban violence, corruption and crime are spreading. Displaying Islamic credentials is politically motivated. Most of the advertising revenue of Afghan TV stations emerges from TV soap operas.

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Twelve (Uttaranchal, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu) of India's 28 states are affected by Naxalite insurgency. Attracting landless

labourers, students and intellectuals, the radical revolutionaries have their political roots in 1967. Year 2004 saw the resurgence, with the Marxists and the Maoist splinter groups, uniting to form the Communist Party of India (Maoists). The movement has 10,000 to 20,000 armed fighters, and at least 50,000 active supporters. The politics of armed revolution is thriving in areas without roads, electricity, running water and Telephones. Government officials are unavailable to render assistance to the "original dwellers".

Since the last three years, Chattisgarh police has appointed thousands of young men and teenagers as civil militia and 'special police officers' of "Salwa Judum". This rural police outfit, illegal though, has been provided with weapons, and trained to fight the Maoists. 60,000 people have been forced out from their villages, into police camps. Under the draconian Chattisgarh Special Public Security Act, scores of peasants, cloth merchants, journalists and doctors are under detention without trial, for dealings with "unlawful organizations".

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Nuclear Power Corporation of India (NPCIL) have reduced generation levels of all their nuclear power plants, to 40 to 50% plant load factor, owing to fuel shortages. At the beginning of 2008, fuel shortages had delayed the commissioning of two new nuclear plants at Rajasthan Atomic Power Station (RAPS). Unit IV at Kaiga (Karnataka) was scheduled to be commissioned in June 08. Fuel shortages have delayed commissioning of the New Unit, by at least six months. The June 08 target of adding about 1300 mw fresh capacity has been upset. Lack of gas supplies has led to delays in operation of a gas based power plant Gautami (Andhra Pradesh). The proposed Indo-US Nuclear deal could have allowed India to gain access for imports of uranium, from other countries.

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Kerala produces the highest number of Christian priests and nuns in India. Out of 102, 810 Indian nuns, 33,226 nuns come from Kerala. Again, 7216 novices hail from Kerala. In India, barely one fourth of male aspirants enter the Christian seminary, and the balance return to non-clerical life. Severe social stigma and church and family pressures deter nuns to return to normal life. Oppressive limitations on nuns have caused about fifteen suicides by disillusioned and unbalanced nuns, over the last fifteen years. The Kerala Women's Commission has now called for legal action against parents, who compel underage daughters to join the cloister. It has asked the state government to fix a minimum permissible age for young women, to opt for nunhood. The Commission has been demanding measures to ensure no young woman who becomes a nun, is deprived of her right to family property, as is the legal precedence now. The commission seeks that the government evolve measures to rehabilitate nuns, who wish to shed the cassock, and return to normal social life styles. There is no data available on the number of underage girls from Kerala who have been forced to enter the nun's cloister due to parental or family pressures, nor is data available on the number of nuns who wish to return to lay life.□