

## NEWS WRAP AGD

WITHOUT INDIAN NUCLEAR experts studying technical parameters over which nuclear reactors to buy, the Union Government has signed preliminary deals with France's Areva, Russia's Rosatom and US-based General Electric to buy reactors. These are apparent gestures to friendly governments for helping India plunge into Nuclear energy. The French energy group Areva will build the Jaitapur Power Plant, scheduled to start with two-third generation European pressurised water reactors. Costing \$9.3 billion, the Jaitapur Power Plant will provide 3,300 mega watts of much needed power to Maharashtra. The power plant is to be built on a coastal region, famed for luscious Alphanso mangoes and bountiful seas. Residents of the once tranquil fishing village of Tulsanda, on India's western coast fear that the reactors will devastate their livelihoods. Since the crisis at Japan's stricken Fukushima-Daichi Plant, villagers of Jaitapur coast have been vigorously participating in protest marches, candle light vigils and hunger strikes. Ever since the 2008 Nuclear deal with USA, India is having ambitions of vastly expanding its nuclear energy capacity. The struggle India faces is highlighted by the intense protests at Jaitapur.

The proposed nuclear plant at Jaitapur is facing grassroots resistance, which extends well beyond those losing their land, in a wide area around the 936 hectare project site. The reactors proximity will affect mango prices, which is worrying farmers. Fishermen fear that discharges from the reactors could devastate fish stocks. Also coastal access is bound to be restricted, in anti-terrorist security measures. Prawns and mackerels are exported from the coast. But once the plant is built, boats will not be permitted to get close to the coastal fishing areas. During April 2011, in the Port of Sakri Nate, some 3 km from the proposed site, a fisherman was shot and killed, and several others injured, when the police opened fire on anti-nuclear protesters, who were mobbing the police station. The commercial terms for the Jaitapur Nuclear Plant are being negotiated by Areva with India's state owned Nuclear Power Corporation.

### AFTER THE DELUGE

A 13-year-old political party, the Trinamool Congress ended 34 years of CPI (Marxist)-led Left Front rule in West Bengal. The Left Front vote share declined to 39%. "Social democratic centralism" has fallen like the Berlin Wall, and the ruling Communist Parties in eastern Europe.

West Bengal state finances reveal that the liquidity crunch has become a regular problem for the state government, which has to use the Ways and Means Advances (WMAs) and overdraft facilities of the apex bank to pay for daily expenses. West Bengal's accumulated debt is around Rupees two lac crores. There are few earning assets like a functional industry. The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act (FRBM) requires a reduction in the revenue deficit, but the West Bengal Government is yet to adopt the FRBM norm.

Agriculture and jobs relating to it have been shrinking since the early 1990s. Only 2% of West Bengal's total land area is not arable. Proposed new industries are capital and technology intensive. Post elections inter-party clashes are leading to fatal casualties and grievous injuries, almost everyday. Over thirty years, West Bengal's share of manufacturing output has fallen from 13% to 3%.

### GULF MONARCHS

The Gulf Co-operation Council was formed in 1981, following the Iranian revolution, as an alliance of oil-producing monarchies, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman. Rivalries and political divisions have undermined efforts at economic integration, which have been only partly successful. The Arab republics, dominated by family rule, have proved most vulnerable to popular revolts during this year. The GCC has been assertive, and closing ranks to protect its members from the changes sweeping the region. In support of the ruling Sunni family, GCC troops entered Bahrain, and helped crush a Shia uprising. The organization granted \$20 billion in financial aid to Bahrain, and Oman, another Gulf monarchy that was affected by protests. The GCC is ensuring that no Gulf ruling family will be allowed to fall; nor will Iran be considered as the biggest regional threat, be permitted to take advantage of the unrest in North Africa. Riyadh insists that the Bahraini intervention was needed to counter Iranian meddling.

Jordan and Morocco are joining the Gulf Co-Operation Council of six oil producing Gulf Arab states. The two poorer countries have little in common, with existing members. The move would strengthen the political and economic capacity of the two countries' leaders, to counter popular challenge.

### **TIBET'S EXILED LEADER**

Lobsang Sangay, a Harvard educated academic has been elected prime minister of Tibet's government in exile. Since the Dalai Lama stated in April 2011, that he would retire from politics, Mr Sangay is the first prime minister, or Kalon Tripa, to be elected by Tibet's exiled community. The Dalai Lama's political responsibilities will largely shift to the prime minister. The Chinese government has long considered the Dalai Lama as a political schemer, engaged in 'Tibet independence' separatist activities. Mr Sangay has been active in the Tibetan Youth Congress, and China claims he directly planned violent protests in Tibet, during May 2008. □□□