

## NEWS WRAP

### AGD

INDIA IS A PRIME COUNTRY FOR outsourcing for foreign companies, which take advantage of its cheap, English speaking labour force. Simultaneously, Indian companies are outsourcing their own jobs within India. At any of India's glittering new shopping malls, selling expensive foreign and domestic brands, a large number of the store clerks, janitors and security guards are on the payrolls of outsourcing companies, and not those that own the mall or the stores in it. With India's laws very protective of workers, the free-wheeling private sector is increasingly powering the economy. A number of agencies based in Bangalore, created thousands of jobs by fielding temporary workers for companies in India's cities, that want to expand their workforce, while dodging India's stringent labour laws and bypassing the hiring of permanent employees. In a scenario where the government wants to produce 500 million skilled workers over the next two decades, India's software outsourcing companies, with each having 50,000 to 60,000 employees, are illegal business. The contract workers lack job security, and are paid as little as half of what permanent employees earn, and who receive few social security benefits. Indian factories with 100 or more workers are not allowed to lay off employees, without the government's permission. Between New Delhi and Jaipur, at the new industrial boomtown Maneswar, there are more than 100,000 workers, who work in the factories of Indian and multi-national companies like Maruti Suzuki, Videocon, Mitsubishi and Honda, of which there are about 30% workers on contracts.

### GUNSHOTS AND STRATEGIES

In the last week of Nov 2011, the Maoist second-in-command and chief of its insurgency operations Koteswar Rao alias Kishenji, was shot allegedly in a fake encounter with Security Forces, in Burisole forest (West Midnapore). The Maoists have retaliated with attacks on politicians' convoys, IED blasts, firing on security vehicles and bandhs. Within the CPI (Maoist) organization the Maoist Co-ordination Committee (MCC) faction is steadily taking over from the People's War Group (PWG) faction, the dominant group in junglemahal of West Bengal. The central committee consists of 32 members—18 from PWG and rest from MCC. The MCC follows "targeted killings" of police informers and exploiters. Arrested Maoists are generally those the Maoists wanted to get rid of due to shift in allegiance. The majority of surrendered Maoists are those expelled from the party a long time ago, for being close to the Trinamul Congress during the Assembly elections. Sabyasachi Panda is the new organizing secretary of CPI (Maoist) in West Bengal.

### EGYPT'S ELECTIONS

Even before the polls had concluded in Egypt's first parliamentary elections since the ouster of president Hosni Mubarak, leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood's political party, the Freedom and Justice Party claimed that the unexpectedly high turnout for the parliamentary elections indicated a popular demand for more civilian control. While the Muslim Brotherhood wants to

exert its influence through parliament, the military council and generals have put their own stamp on the draft of a new constitution, by providing themselves with permanent political powers and protection from civilian scrutiny. Early election results indicate that the Freedom and Justice Party have taken about 40% of the vote. A quarter of the votes has been claimed by the ultra conservative Islamists, called *Salafis*, many of whom view most popular entertainment as sinful, and reject women's participation in voting and public life. The two groups of Islamists combined control nearly 65% of the parliamentary seats. The results will not be final before two more rounds of voting.

## REFORMS IN CUBA

Cuba's President Raul Castro is trying to liberalise the island's Soviet-styled economy, while safeguarding the communist system, established after the 1959 Cuban revolution. Since Nov 2011, the Cubans can legally buy and sell houses in more than five decades, what many have done for years. However, there are restrictions on how much property can be owned. The communist government of Cuba has allowed people to own homes, but in theory never allowed them to sell their properties for money. With the swap of houses of equal value acceptable for years, the Cubans have supplemented trades with under the table money, when trading a smaller house for a bigger one. The notion of home sales, as approved by the Communist Party, Cuba's only legal political party, will allow Cubans a straight purchase or sale, but they will have to pay taxes. There will be no more fears of losing a home, acquired in an illegal manner. People would be limited to owning one house as a permanent residence, and another as a weekend or holiday home. Most reforms have been tempered by rules aimed at limiting accumulation of wealth and property. □□□