

## NEWS WRAP

### AGD

BETWEEN 2002-10, THE GOLD loan business in India achieved a compounded annual growth rate of 35 to 40%. The business boomed in 2011, riding on the back of a sharp 36% rise in gold prices in 2011. Estimates point to a doubling in size of the business in 2011, rising to Rs 75000 crore. Over the last couple of years, thousands in cities and towns of India, have resorted to 'gold loan', which has propelled non-banking finance companies on roaring business. Local money lenders and unlicensed firms are lending gold loans at three times higher rate than the organized sector. Those in urgent need of money tap non-banking finance companies, like Muthoot Finance in Madhya Pradesh, and Manappuram Finance in Tamil Nadu, who provide loans speedily, with scarcely any paper work, on the basis of pawned family gold. The continuous rise in gold prices has fuelled the risky gold-for-loans method. The non-banking finance companies provide gold loans varying from Rs 10000 to Rs 20000. Obtaining loans against gold, people are paying hospital bills, wedding expenses and education tariffs. Private sector banks have also started cashing in. HDFC Bank, Indian Overseas Bank and Indian Bank are amongst the lenders. The companies are charging between 12 to 24% interest, and offering a maximum loan of Rs 2450 per gram on 24 carat gold, and maximum of Rs 2055 per gram for 22 carat gold. There is no rush to auction, and defaulting customers are given 18 months to repay.

### TUBERCULOSIS

A recent report from a top Mumbai pulmonologist informs that around fifteen cases of tuberculosis have been noticed in the city, which are totally resistant to all of the current treatments. Since India began its current programme offering free testing and treatment to all, the number of deaths from TB declined to 2,80,000 in 2010, from 5,00,000 in 1997. Under the revised national TB Control Programme about 1.5 million of the 2 million TB patients in India, are currently being treated. Multi-drug resistance is created when patients discontinue taking the prescribed medicines, or when private doctors routinely prescribe wrong medicines. There have been similar cases of total drug resistance in Iran. While some of the laboratory tests require to be validated, India's TB prevention programme needs increased funding, more accountability, and more laboratories.

### CHAKMA AND HAJONG REFUGEES

The Chittagong Hill Tracts, with a non-muslim population of 97% was ceded to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1947. Between 1964-69, Chakma and Hajong Refugees were settled in Arunachal Pradesh's Changland and Tirap districts. Many of the refugees left the Chittagong Hill Tracts, as a result of persecution by the former East Pakistan Government. The refugees doubled in population between 1971-91, and Arunachal Pradesh has been demanding the Refugees' repatriation. Having lost their land consequent to construction of a dam in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, more than 56000 Chakma evacuees took shelter in Tripura state,

between 1980-95. Many were repatriated to Bangladesh, as they were citizens of the neighbouring country. The Union Government of India is considering granting of Indian citizenship to about 75,000 to 100,000 Chakma and Hajong tribal refugees.

#### TURKISH LAWS

Turkish defendants' rights are restricted by pre-trial detentions, which can last for ten years. There are extensive use of secret witness and obstacles that prevent defence teams from carrying out cross examinations of witnesses, and challenging the terms of incarceration. In spite of Turkish legal reforms in the past decade, the legal system is inadequate for protection of defendants. There are a huge number of cases pending against past and present army officers and journalists, accused of belonging to anti-government plots. Proceedings in separate cases have dragged in people who have nothing to do with terrorist organizations. Cases have been mounted against protesters calling for free education and school instruction in the Kurdish language. A high profile case revolves around the detention before trial of Ilker Basbug, the former chief of armed force. Mr Basbug had shut down websites that spread propaganda against the government and Islamists. □□□