markets, from lead-laced toys to the larger scandal of tainted baby milk and many other products.

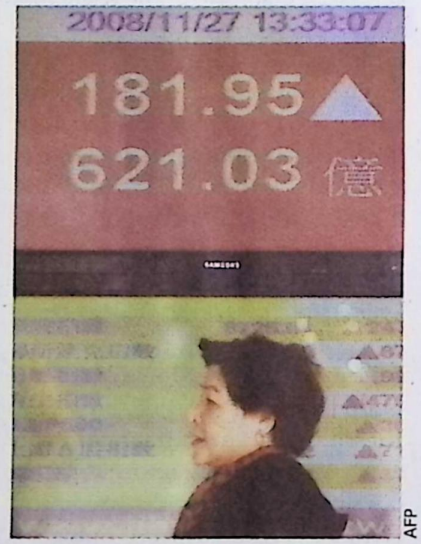
While China has acted to redress the problems, they remain as examples of lack of regulations and consumer protection and disregard for accountability as part of the production system. Individual rights being limited, people can't complain but have to wait till the party/government acts, which they do when export hurts only.

The situation of those who are not participating in this explosive economic growth is well documented but this has been allowed to grow as an inevitable by-product of the new policies. Since this growth is happening under the leadership of the Communist Party, it's a bit quizzical because if the CP doesn't take care of the people, and there are no alternative power centres, one wonders who will. Millions are not benefiting from the economic miracle and one has no idea what kind of resentment is brewing socially in China which turns to force to control public resentment.

India is the closest to the western model and definitely has the most developed political system amongst the emerging countries. However, India too has left behind its hungry millions and its economic growth again is centered in a small middle class, marginalising its millions of poor and some extreme poor. Historically, India has ignored its poor but lacked a consuming middle class and significant upper class both of which it has now.

However, there are millions of unhappy and resentful people within India, politically and economically -- and some are part of militant insurgencies especially in the north-east. Indian PM Manmohan Singh, had once also described the Indian Maoists who are battling security forces in many parts of India as India's most significant security problem. Caste issues, regional politics, high level of poverty, problems of militancy and insurgency and growing economic disparity within India makes India's sustained economic success somewhat unstable, even unsure.

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AFP

**Environmental Meltdow n, Security Nightmares**

Environmental issues were not considered serious matters even a few years back, but not today. Scientists and civil society leaders both recognise that unless something dramatic is done very soon, within a year or so, and carbon emissions are brought down, the world including the G-20 countries will find it almost impossible to survive.

The catch is, both India and China with their billions of people, have reached the top echelon of emitters though with relatively low per capita emission. So, western countries especially the US, Japan and Canada who want to continue emitting as before are insisting that all countries agree to some emission cuts, a move which both China and India oppose.

On the face of it, it does mean that China and India will have to rein in their economic growth somewhat -- which they find a political impossibility. It seems to have become the prime cause of global concern and some major decisions will have to be made by end 2009 at Copenhagen, but till date such agreements don't seem close. It has become a major crisis.

Although the notion of security is widening, including both economic and energy issues, the dominant thinking is still related to military security. Of the major threats of this kind that range through the world, the jihadist threat is the principal one. However much one hates terrorists, it's clear that in this asymmetric world, they have emerged as the most significant security threat, choosing their targets and enemies at will.

If US reports are to be believed, the counter-terror actions of the US to bring down al-Qaeda have not worked although Osama bin Laden is isolated from the group. On the other hand, so many groups have sprung up all over the world that one central al-Qaeda itself is no longer relevant as a force. It has become a movement and not an organisation, and reflects the growing nature of post-modern notions of threat and insecurity.

The jihadist threat is, however, also regional. Much of the Arabian angst comes from the US and allies' links to a misfit prescription for the end of the Middle East problem. This anger has locations outside the region and in most Muslim communities, but the core al-Qaeda activists are Middle Eastern and so are its actions.