

Assembly elections

LOCAL development-related issues determined the outcome of the Assembly elections. But governments should not neglect the question of security (Cover Story, "Mixed signals", January 2, 2009). Voters should be commended for reiterating their faith in democracy by turning out to vote in large numbers. Political parties leading governments in the States and at the Centre should respond by providing transparent and efficient administration.

AKHIL KUMAR
NEW DELHI

THE Congress retained Delhi and grabbed Rajasthan from the BJP and Mizoram from the Mizo National Front in spite of inflation, the financial downturn and the terrorist attacks in Mumbai and elsewhere in the recent past. It was an incredible performance.

K.P. RAJAN
MUMBAI

THE Assembly election results show that the Indian voter has developed the ability to make judicious decisions amid propaganda-oriented campaigns. The results also show that people are more interested in real changes than in rhetoric. However, these results are not likely to determine the course of the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections.

ARVIND K. PANDEY
ALLAHABAD

THE Congress abandoned

the ideals of both Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru long ago and has made many enemies with its pro-United States policies. The BJP's ideology of Hindutva has divided the nation. The Mumbai tragedy was an offshoot of these policies. But Mayawati, Jayalithaa and N. Chandrababu Naidu are not better alternatives. The first two are not dependable, while Chandrababu Naidu's agenda has never favoured the common man. The Left in West Bengal provides an example of a sustained coalition in which the constituents swear by socialism and hence have a common ground. The Left should work towards replicating at the national level the West Bengal model in which parties with a common socio-economic agenda are together.

S.S. RAJAGOPALAN
CHENNAI

Mumbai attacks

THE article "Shift to diplomacy" was a cogent compilation of the reactions of world leaders to the terror attacks in Mumbai (January 2). Most criminal cases the world over are determined with the help of circumstantial evidence.

The circumstances of the Mumbai attacks strongly suggest that the operation was launched by groups from across the border. Faced with a hostile India, a determined United Nations and an unforgiving set of liberal activists who stand

for international peace, Pakistan will not have it easy.

H. SYED MADANI
TIRUCHI, TAMIL NADU

FRONTLINE presented the stories of underprivileged citizens who suffered in the terror attacks in Mumbai while the electronic media focussed on the five-star hotels ("Night of loss", January 2). It is easier to whip up war hysteria than to nurture a serious debate on terrorism.

S.V. VENUGOPALAN
CHENNAI

BRITISH Prime Minister Gordon Brown stated that three-quarters of the terrorist plots being investigated in the United Kingdom have links to Pakistan. It is high time Pakistan was declared a terrorist state. Its main industry is terrorism. Unfortunately, the United States blindly supports this industry by providing Pakistan all sorts of financial aid. All countries, including the U.S., must stop financially assisting Pakistan until it takes some real steps to crack down on the terrorist groups operating out of its territory.

M. KUMAR
NEW DELHI

Buddhist art

THE five-part series on Buddhist art by Benoy K. Behl was very informative and useful.

B. JAMBULINGAM
THANJAVUR

THE photographs published with Benoy Behl's "Himalayan home" (December 19, 2008) were fascinating.

Buddhism, which brings the message of brotherhood and peace, is particularly relevant in today's world.

SYED KHAJA
NEW DELHI

Sri Lanka

A DEMOCRATICALLY elected government in Sri Lanka cannot remain a mute spectator to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's mindless killings ("Shrinking lair", January 2). The government is right to use force to save civilians from falling prey to the LTTE.

It is a measure of the LTTE chief's hypocrisy that he should now seek India's help to stop the advance of Sri Lankan forces into LTTE-held territories, whereas in the past he accused India of meddling in the country's affairs. The Indian government did the right thing to send relief through the Red Cross. It is also time that political leaders in Tamil Nadu stopped indulging in slanging matches on the issue. The need of the hour is a political solution to the problem that will allow peace to return.

K.R. SRINIVASAN
SECUNDERABAD

THE LTTE does not truly represent the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

SHIV SHANKER AMAL
KOLKATA

V.P. Singh

THANK you for publishing the article "Icon of social

justice” on V.P. Singh (December 19, 2008). V.P. Singh rose beyond his class interests when he introduced a Bill in the Lok Sabha seeking to legalise the right to work as a fundamental right.

It is not surprising that the Bill could not be made into law.

SUNIL BARAN
CHAKRABORTY
KOLKATA

Campus violence

THE violence in Dr. Ambedkar Government Law College, Chennai, (“Caste on campus”, December 19) and the clashes that have become common in many educational centres in our country make one wonder whether the academic world is reaching its nadir.

What is happening to the ideal that institutions of higher learning are places where knowledge, toned with wisdom, is cultivated and shared for the betterment of society?

S.R. DEVAAPRAKASH
TUMKUR, KARNATAKA

Barack Obama

OBAMA winning the elections is a good sign of the change in the thinking of American people. Improved relations between whites and blacks will lead to development (Cover Story, “Long road ahead”, December 5).

Indian politicians, especially those who are trying to divide India on regional or caste lines, can learn a lesson from this. In fact, it is voters who must throw out such leaders in the forthcoming elections. But in In-

dia most voters are easily fooled by such politicians.

MAHESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI

OBAMA’S extraordinary journey to the White House will definitely inspire people and has raised many hopes all over the world (“Eastern interests”, December 19). Looking at his manifesto, one finds that he is in favour of globalisation. He has helped create legislation regarding lobbying and electoral fraud, climate change, nuclear terrorism, and care for U.S. military personnel returning from war.

Throughout his campaign, he emphasised the issues of ending the Iraq war, increasing energy independence, and providing universal health care. At one point, he identified these as his top three priorities. No doubt, a few of his policies might make things tough for India, but he will bring about a fundamental change at the national and international level. This will help the U.S. and India come closer.

VINOD C. DIXIT
AHMEDABAD

WHILE Obama has made all the right noises about the India-United States strategic partnership, some aspects of his campaign rhetoric have been disturbing. He has spoken of fiscal disincentives to curb outsourcing. More ominously, he has spoken of appointing a special envoy to resolve the so-called “Kashmir question”. For a decade now, since the Kargil war, the Kashmir issue has ceased to bother Washington. In seeking to resurrect it, Obama is doing nobody a favour. He has been elected to

solve America’s problems. Let that remain his primary focus.

J.S. ACHARYA
HYDERABAD

Chandrayaan

IT was a historic and proud moment for all Indians when the Moon Impact Probe, with the Indian tricolour painted on it, impacted on the lunar surface (“India on the moon”, December 5). It is said that there are two or three ways of reaching the moon. The Russians and the Americans have used the tested approach of sending a spacecraft into a low-parking earth orbit and then boosting it to the lunar orbit.

ISRO scientists, on the other hand, propelled Chandrayaan-1 beyond the moon and brought it back to circle the earth and then took it back to the moon to reduce its velocity and insert it into its lunar orbit. By these manoeuvres, Chandrayaan-1 has been placed into its final orbit at an altitude of 100 km above the moon. It shows ISRO’s command over space.

R.P. HARRINI
CHENNAI

Assam

TERROR attacks are carried out with arithmetical precision (“Shock of Assam”, December 5). Initially, they spread shock and panic, leading to an eruption of protests on the streets. Bandhs are called by political parties. When the security apparatus fails to prevent bomb blasts and loss of life, mobs torch vehicles and other public prop-

erty. This in turn forms a vicious cycle.

The article mentions that the possibility of outside forces providing support for carrying out terror attacks could not be ruled out. No force from outside would be able to carry out any major strike without the help of local militant groups. Communalising terrorist attacks is not logical. Terrorists have no religion, language, caste or creed.

T.V. JAYAPRAKASH
PALAKKAD, KERALA

Chess

VISWANANTHAN Anand is not merely a chess player; he is an institution in himself (“Lord of the board”, December 5). In a country where he had no one to look to for any kind of help, support, patronage or directions, he became the youngest Indian to win the International Master Title in 1984 at the age of 15, and he arrived two years later on the international scene by winning the World Junior Chess Championship.

He has many firsts to his credit. But much more important than his individual exploits is his single-handedly effort in bringing forth a chess revolution in India.

Today we can boast a total of 26 Grand Masters (as on October 2008), with 17 men and nine women in the category.

AMITABH THAKUR
LUCKNOW

ANNOUNCEMENT

Letters, whether by surface mail or e-mail, must carry the full postal address and the full name, or the name with initials.