

## Maoists

I WONDER why the government is showing such reluctance to make India a naxalite-free nation despite the loss of police and civilian lives (Cover Story, November 6). Naxalism will remain a strong internal threat as long as the sluggish Home Ministry has a soft corner for naxalites.

IPPILI SANTHOSH KUMAR  
SRIKAKULAM, A.P.

ANY movement inspired by the ideology of violence is anathema to democracy. Unless the Maoists abjure violence, no dialogue will yield fruitful results. It is not a "people's war" but a war against the people.

V.K. SATHYAVAN NAIR  
KOTTAYAM, KERALA

THE genesis of naxalism is not understood by many Indians. The general response is to criticise the violence unleashed by the Maoists. There is a sociological dimension to the problem. It is the destruction of the tribal way of living in several States because of big industrial projects. This has resulted in the loss of common ownership of resources, and the people affected face tremendous hardships. The notion that development is a panacea to all their problems hides the real issue.

It is not a question of development but one of people's rights. The naxalites have adopted aggressive tactics because of the injustice suffered by generations of their families. No doubt the violence factor is

## Cruelty to women

THE barbaric ritual of whipping women to drive away evil spirits is being touted as a holy practice ("Chasing spirits", November 6). It is unfortunate that the Tamil Nadu government is unable to contain this atrocity.

In parts of the Telangana district of Andhra Pradesh, some people believe that witches or sorcerers practising black magic are responsible for the mysterious illnesses and sudden deaths of their close relatives. The unfortunate men and women who are thought to be responsible are belaboured to death or burnt alive or have their front teeth knocked out in the belief they will not be able to chant the mumbo jumbo that caused the illness or death. Here, too, the State government does nothing except make sporadic arrests when the news is published.

Why can the governments in power not deal firmly in such cases by handing down deterrent punishment?

R. RAMACHANDRA RAO  
HYDERABAD

helping those with vested interests. To reach a workable solution to naxalism, the sociological factors need to be kept in mind.

SURYA RAKESH MOUDGIL  
HISAR, HARYANA

WHILE there can be no doubt that the Maoist movement must be contained, the government's approach is unidirectional and lacks vision. Confrontation to the exclusion of all other avenues betrays the narrow vision of the mainstream political parties. The proposed confrontation is going to cause untold mi-

sery to the poorest among the poor. One hopes that better sense will prevail.

T.V. UNNIKRISHNAN  
BANGALORE

## Tourism

THIS refers to the interview with V. Irai Anbu, Secretary, Department of Tourism, Tamil Nadu, ("Destination for all", November 6). The Tranquebar area is an excellent tourist spot but has not been developed. The hotel is beyond the budget of middle-class tourists. The Tamil Nadu Hotel cannot accom-

modate the many tourists who through the spot.

There is no one to conduct guided tours. The beach is not maintained properly. The power supply is poor. The train service from Mayiladuthurai to Tranquebar beach must be revived. Thirukkadaiyur is a great historical centre, but there is no government guest house, so one is at the mercy of private lodges.

The Secretary for Tourism must take bold steps to improve board and lodging facilities in these two places.

THOMAS EDMUNDS  
CHENNAI

## Peace prize

BARACK OBAMA is one of world's exceptional leaders, who are rare in history and who inspire not only their own nations but the whole world with their vision and humility ("Award for promises", November 6).

We can certainly be optimistic and hope that he will live up to his promises to bring new hope and change in the world for peace.

SYED KHAJA  
NEW DELHI

AS the supreme commander of the U.S. armed forces, Obama said he accepted the prize on behalf of a nation that ended a war (the Second World War) and is fighting a new war ("war on terror"). The last world war ended in 1945 because his nation vaporised millions of innocent people on a peaceful morning without warn-

ing, while the war on terror unleashed by his predecessor continues to maim and kill in Afghanistan and Iraq (directly) and Palestine and Pakistan (indirectly). His nation sows a thousand seeds of resentment and anger across the globe, converting peace into a non-viable entity.

ANIRUDDHA DAM  
KOLKATA

THE point that was overlooked in the article was that the closing date for nominations for the Peace prize ended within days of Obama's taking the oath of office.

And the rules stress that the prize is to be awarded to one who "...had done the most or the best...". What great things did he do in those few days?

V.N. RAMASWAMY  
SECUNDERABAD

OBAMA deserves praise for framing peaceful dialogues and making efforts to take international relations to a new level. Nonetheless, he should not have got the award with such a short tenure. Was there no other person worthy of the award?

NIKITA BOTHRA  
PUNE

## Temple rituals

FLOGGING or witch-hunting is prevalent not only in Tamil Nadu but also in the rural areas of many States including Assam ("Chasing spirits", November 6).

Reports of women being killed on the pretext of their being witches often appear in local newspapers. These must be cases of mental illness and require treatment and care, not mauling. It is definitely the fault of the law

that these inhumane practices continue.

PANCHALEE TAMULEE  
GUWAHATI

EVEN though there is a ban on the age-old evil practice of whipping and an awareness mechanism is in place, it is unfortunate that it continues. No action is taken against these so-called priests by the authorities. It is time to do away with such practices, which not only violate the law but act against the basic tenets of humanity.

K.R. SRINIVASAN  
SECUNDERABAD

IT is a mystery why the local police and other government authorities do not take action to save the victims of whipping. If their consideration is vote-bank politics, they are cheating those who are not aware that these actions are illegal under sections of the Indian Penal Code.

At least some NGOs should take steps to eradicate this nonsensical practice.

B.P. PEREIRA  
MADURAI, TAMIL NADU

## Choosing a judge

THIS is with reference to "Controversial choice" (November 6). In order to keep tainted judges out of the judiciary, Law Minister M. Veerappa Moily has rightly mooted a Bill ensuring judges' accountability and mandating their appointment on the basis of merit.

However, before putting judges in the dock, we need to insulate our legislatures from tainted lawmakers. It would be appropriate to introduce a similar Bill for politicians as most political

parties today have tainted people.

MAHESH KUMAR  
NEW DELHI

THE article brings out the fallibility of the Supreme Court's collegium in elevating judges from High Courts to the apex court. The Forum for Judicial Accountability has rendered a signal service by gathering evidence against Justice P.D. Dinakaran. The Indian judiciary has won international accolades; appointees like Dinakaran will diminish its image.

While the Supreme Court laid down in 1997 a code of procedure to deal with the conduct of judges, there is no statute to enforce it. The need of the hour is for the Judges Standards and Accountability Bill to replace the Judges Inquiry Bill, which deals with the impeachment process, and for its early passage.

H. SYED MADANI  
TIRUCHY, TAMIL NADU

## Migration

THE U.N.'s Human Development Report states that migration is the prerequisite for development ("For a better life", November 6). Migrants leave their homeland because of its state of underdevelopment and are forced to live in horrible conditions at their workplace.

Then, how can migration be hailed as a sign of development?

E.A. IBRAHIM  
VYTTILA, KERALA

## Manna Dey

WHAT stands out in the interview given by Manna Dey

is his modesty (November 6). He paid respect to the directors with whom he worked and his fellow singers.

A.K. DASGUPTA  
HYDERABAD

## Tuition

EXTRACURRICULAR activities for most children in urban areas appear to centre around extra classes on the very same subjects they are supposed to be taught in school ("Tuition culture", November 6). The tuition concept is nothing new, but even up to the 1970s and 1980s, it was by and large meant for those who scored low marks or felt uncomfortable with the load in the classroom. But now things have changed completely, with children operating in cycles between school and tuition centres. Not at all the road to real learning.

S.V. VENUGOPALAN  
CHENNAI

THERE was a major misunderstanding in the article. Coaching for professional entrance examinations is totally different from tuitions for school board examinations. In the former, coaching becomes necessary since the syllabus and the type of questions asked are quite different from those in school examinations.

On the other hand, tuitions taken by teachers who teach the subject in the classroom are mainly to ensure that students pass school examinations without much effort. Tuitions at the primary level are really harmful as they prevent students from learning how to learn on one's own.

In one way, tuitions are

the revenge of the teaching community on a society that refuses to give it the necessary respect and remuneration it deserves.

S. SUNDARAM  
JAMNAGAR, GUJARAT

## Chidambaram

THE article "Unholy row" (October 23) points out the role of the Sangh Parivar in trying to create trouble at Chidambaram in the name of safeguarding Hindus but is biased towards the role of the key groups fighting against the hatred of Tamil and the casteist hegemony of the Dikshitars.

Ironically, both the Sangh Parivar and the CPI (M) (which the article praises for its moderate stand) like to call these organisations "fringe groups". The Human Rights Protection Council, a so-called fringe group, has been fighting the various tactics of the Dikshitars from the lower courts to the High Court since 2001.

ARASU BALRAJ  
CHENNAI

## Islamic banking

THE article "Inclusive banking" (October 23) gave one a clear perspective of where things stand today with respect to Islamic banking in India. The phrase Islamic banking, I feel, should be replaced with "ethical banking" so as to avoid any unnecessary bias in perception amongst the general population and to avoid its exploitation for vote-bank politics.

AMMAR AHMED  
DUBAI, UAE  
CONTRARY to popular be-

lief, "Islamic banking" is beneficial to people of all faiths because it is safe, ethical, accountable and ensures a fair rotation of money, which results in an equitable distribution of wealth.

Our current banking system is fraught with the dangers of sub-prime lending. Islamic banking addresses this issue in an efficient manner and so has the potential to lift the world from the current economic crisis.

As far as the Indian economy is concerned, Islamic banking could result in a substantial inflow of cash from rich Muslim nations.

DOULATH KHAN M.  
MOHAMED  
CHENNAI

## Science history

I TAKE strong exception to Geert Somsen's remark that cognitive science is not objective and hence is ideological (Interview: Geert Somsen, October 23). Somsen has not understood what cognitive science is.

Today, cognitive science or cognitive neuroscience is more global than he seems to think. Science crosses the barriers of culture, nation, caste, creeds, and so on, and above all, ideologies.

A. KANTHAMANI  
KOZHICODE, KERALA

## India & China

KEEPING in mind their huge responsibilities, India and China need to behave responsibly and resolve border issues by adopting a pragmatic approach ("China bogey", October 23).

The sections of media in both countries that engaged in unnecessary propaganda should be dealt with firmly.

NEERAJ KUMAR JHA  
MADHUBANI, BIHAR

## William Safire

I HAVE been a regular reader of *Frontline*, particularly Safire's "The English Language". His writings are a treasure trove of witty, humorous and sometimes eccentric phrases.

He fearlessly used words to attack solecisms, euphemisms, gaffes and the like, making a potpourri of delectable words that satiated a linguist's hunger for unabated analysis of modern-day language.

ROOPASHI KHATRI  
BANGALORE

## Encounter deaths

INJUSTICE, fake encounters and corruption have become the bane of our nation ("Getting away with murder", October 9). Our judicial system is so complicated that the only outcome is injustice. In this state of affairs, is anyone safe?

M.M. HAQUE  
WEST BENGAL

I DISAGREE with the article "Anger in uniform" (October 9). Without giving any valid reason, it states that "encounters" are the birth pangs of a worsening public order situation and the inadequacies of the Indian criminal justice system and that third-degree methods come naturally to some police officers.

One may ask why their superiors did not train them to restrain their anger and

allow jurisprudence to prevail.

M.R.A. XAVIER

TUTICORIN, TAMIL NADU  
I HAVE been a keen reader of *Frontline* for the past 17 years. But I would request you not to blow isolated incidents out of proportion. The Ishrat Jahan case is important, more so if it indicates a trend in the way the police work. But India has much larger issues to worry about - such as poverty and malnutrition.

SRIRAM BAJRANG  
BULUSU  
CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS,  
UNITED STATES

## Arunachal

I WOULD like to congratulate the writer of the article "Prisoners of geography" (October 9) for introducing readers to the living conditions of the people of Vijayanagar, Arunachal Pradesh. It should be an eye-opener for the State and the nation at large that while we bother so much about maintaining our territorial geography, we are perhaps less concerned about the plight of those who reside within its forgotten peripheries.

They surely deserve a bit more attention.

GORKY CHAKRABORTY  
DIBRUGARH, ASSAM

### CORRECTION

In the interview with Prakash Karat (November 6), the last sentence in the answer to the last question should read as follows and not as published: "By targeting a few so-called enemies of the people, one cannot bring about any change in the system of injustice existing today."

### ANNOUNCEMENT

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