

India at 60

WHETHER India is a federal state with unitary features or a unitary state with federal features is a moot point (Cover Story, February 26). It should be noted that the word “socialist” was inserted in the Preamble to the Constitution by an amendment. The Constituent Assembly gave women the voting right, which many Western countries had failed to provide. This shows the maturity of our founding fathers.

The legislative, the executive and the judiciary should play a balanced role in implementing the Constitution.

S. MURALI

VELLORE, TAMIL NADU

Rural health

THE article “Missing doctors” (February 26) is a realistic assessment of the state of public health in India. The Medical Council of India should be at the forefront of mobilising resources and ideas to make India a healthy nation. But, unfortunately, its members seem to be unaware of what is happening around the nation.

Sadder still, it has frustrated the efforts of individuals, State governments and other agencies to improve the health of citizens. The MCI should not have members who run private hospitals and medical colleges. India cannot aspire for superpower status with so

Zizek

THIS has reference to the writer’s observation that “it was not very clear what practical steps [Slavoj] Zizek was suggesting for the Radical Left and the world” (“World according to Zizek”, February 12). One should remember what the late Bishop A.T. Robinson said: It was not those who provided answers to the posers raised by people who rewrote history but those who asked in-depth questions that had not been asked before.

K. JOHN MAMMEN

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

many women and children dying of malnutrition, anaemia and preventable diseases.

J.N. MANOKARAN

CHENNAI

such initiatives will help find a solution to the hitherto unattended basic socioeconomic problems.

PRAKASH, JAGADEESWARAN AND RAJAN

COIMBATORE

Caste wall

THIS has reference to the report, “Another caste wall goes” (February 26).

The “caste wall” at Periyar Nagar in Coimbatore city has been demolished after 21 years owing to the uncompromising struggle launched by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Tamil Nadu Untouchability Eradication Front and the Aadhi Thamizhar Viduthalai Munnani.

People in different parts of the world have been informed of this good news by *Frontline* and *The Hindu*. Several copies of the *Frontline* report have been distributed to the public. Even while expressing our gratitude to you on behalf of the residents of Periyar Nagar, we express the hope that

Water

THE photographs in the article “WAR for water” (February 26) depict the struggles poor people undergo to quench their thirst. Election manifestos of many political parties do not talk about solving drinking water supply problem; instead, politicians promise people free colour TVs and gas connections and rice at Re.1 a kg. Poor people should be educated to fight for drinking water as one of their fundamental human rights.

B.P. PEREIRA

MADURAI, TAMIL NADU

Jyoti Basu

THANK you for paying tribute to Jyoti Basu (Cover Sto-

ry, February 12). The recollections of leaders and others who had been associated with him gave a perfect picture of the great man. The photographs were impressive, especially the one on the last page.

B. JAMBULINGAM

THANJAVUR, TAMIL NADU

THE delegation of a major portion of the magazine to paying tribute to Jyoti Basu was commendable, and the issue deserves to be considered a collectors’ edition. Many politicians, even those who disagreed with him, had extolled his simple style of living that was bereft of any of the trappings of office. He completed his tenure as Chief Minister four times and then relinquished it on his own.

R. RAMACHANDRA RAO

HYDERABAD

JYOTI BASU was the last Indian Communist leader admired even by his die-hard opponents. A communist by conviction, he was like a Gandhian in his personal life. His unassailable faith in Marxist theory defeated him and prevented him from adopting a pragmatic approach to solving the State’s economic woes. However, Jyoti Basu outperformed his counterparts in other States when it came to implementing agrarian reforms, introducing panchayati raj and upholding secularism.

BICHU MUTTATHARA

PUNE

JYOTI BASU was the candidate from the Baranagar constituency in 1952, and

Tata Steel & Salwa Judum

THIS is with reference to the story "Behind the concern" (February 26).

The article refers to a (draft) report brought out (March 2009) by the Committee on State Agrarian Relations and the Unfinished Task of Land Reform (Vol. 1), Ministry of Rural Development, GOI (www.rd.ap.gov.in/IKPLand/MRD_Committee_Report_V_01_Mar_09.pdf), made public on the Ministry's website in October. The draft report in its conclusion accused Tata Steel of supporting Salwa Judum without quoting any facts or evidence and thereby maligning our public image. The committee's final report was released and uploaded on the Ministry of Rural Development website more than a month ago (<http://dolr.nic.in/Committee%20Report.doc>). The final report has no mention of Tata Steel. However, the *Frontline* article made a reference to the draft report without checking the final report.

The two points mentioned in the article from the draft report – "The biggest grab of Tribal Lands after Columbus" & "The first financiers of Salwa Judum were Tata" – were withdrawn by the Ministry in its final report.

We would like to inform you that we signed a formal MoU with the Chhattisgarh government to set up a 5.5 MT steel plant in 2005. On the request of the State government, Tata Steel decided to set up its plant in Bastar.

We agreed to go to the Jagdalpur/Bastar area owing to the need we felt to develop one of India's most backward areas although it was not the best location – the area does not even have a proper railway connection, which is critical for a

Sanjay Choudhry
Chief, Corporate Affairs &
Communications
Tata Steel, Jamshedpur

steel project of the size we planned.

We would also like to inform you that the first movement against the naxalites was the "Jan Jagran Abhiyan", started in 1991 by Mahendra Karma. This later collapsed, and the leaders had to seek police protection to survive. In 2005, it was renamed Salwa Judum, meaning "Purification Hunt" (in the Gondi language), and it is reported that civilians were armed to supposedly fight the naxalites in the region. And in mid-2008, the movement's leader, Mahendra Karma, announced that Salwa Judum will soon cease to exist.

We emphatically declare that we have never supported or financed Salwa Judum or any such organisation. We are not connected with it in any way, now or in the past. Tata Steel has always been known as a company fully committed to the well-being of the communities it operates in, especially those of tribal people, with whom it has a 100-year-old history of engagement and sharing of the wealth generated by the enterprise in Jamshedpur. Our community development initiatives have ensured a qualitative improvement in the standard of living of the people of the operational and project areas, be it in education, health services, development of sports activities, increase in income, entrepreneurship development, empowerment of women, preservation of tribal culture, and much more.

This is a well-known fact, and there is evidence of this in the over 800 villages that we work in, which the members of the committee ignored during the survey. We would like to once again state that the said article has erroneously reported facts without checking them.

Left Word

Books by Che Guevara.



Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War

978-81-87496-86-1, PB, pp. xxiv+307, Rs 450 (Rs 315 for Book Club Members)

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my father campaigned for him in the Belghoria region where we lived. My father's cousin was an independent candidate. This became a matter of some concern as Basu was an outsider, and a local candidate could wean away many votes. My father took him to my cousin's house and sought the votes from his large joint family, which had many voters. The two opponents also greeted each other.

Before leaving, my father told his cousin: "Brother, you are a journalist. You know all about him and his politics. I am sure you too will vote for Jyoti Basu." Basu won. Later, many in the above family became Left supporters.

S. CHATTERJEE
BANGALORE

THE accolades showered on Jyoti Basu by the leaders of various political parties after his death only prove that he was a gentleman politician.

Wearing the gloves of communism, Basu stunted industrial growth in West Bengal, causing mass unemployment and forcing the educated youth to move to other States to find suitable work.

RAMESH KOTIAN
UDUPI, KARNATAKA

Haiti

AT a time when Haiti is helpless and in desperate need of food, medical assistance, fuel and shelter, the U.S. is playing politics by deploying its so-called peacekeepers ("Haiti's horror", February 12).

Why is the U.S. diverting flights carrying relief materials from Brazil, Italy

and other countries and giving priority to flights bringing in U.S. military personnel?

MADHAV KR. KARN
MADHUBANI, BIHAR

Machu Picchu

THE perfection of the interlocking blocks of stone says a lot about the skills of the people who built Machu Picchu ("Inca mystery", February 12). An article in the June 1994 issue of *National Geographic* said: "Archaeologists have discovered fragments of cotton cloth more than four thousand years old in coastal Peru and at Mohenjo Daro in the Indus valley." It goes on to say: "The historical town of Cusco was the seat of secular and religious authority. This power is reflected in the city's design in the shape of a puma, with the monumental fortress of Sacsahauman corresponding to the creature's head."

One cannot imagine that the Incas did not have a script, especially when one considers that they settled in South America after Guatemalan Mayans, who had a script.

Similarly, one cannot accept that the Indus Valley Civilisation did not have a script. These civilisations have lot in common.

K.V.S. KRISHNA
CHENNAI

WHAT a pity Francisco Pizarro and his fellow conquistadors decimated what remained of this enigmatic Inca empire, and that too under the garb of spreading the gospel.

The Peruvian government is perfectly justified in trying to reclaim the arte-

facts stored in the Peabody Museum.

ANIL K. JOSHI
NAINITAL,
UTTARAKHAND

Indians attacked

THERE is no denying that Indians in Australia are being subjected to racial attacks, and the Australian authorities cannot shrug them off as "opportunistic crimes" ("Hostile hosts", February 12). S.M. Krishna should address the issue with more seriousness.

TATHAGATA GHOSH
UTTARPARA, WEST
BENGAL

Iran

IN the article "Collision course" (January 29), the writer asked whether the post-election protest in Iran was an assault on the Velayat-e-Faqih doctrine. People around the world do not follow Shia Islam because Iran is a Shia country but because it is religion in which they find themselves comfortable. So any political development in Iran hardly makes a difference to the doctrine.

Moreover, the protest in Iran need not be exaggerated as it is just part of a political process. Iran is the only country that challenges the wrong policies of the West and has, therefore, been subjected to continuous sanctions since its Islamic revolution. The article would have been interesting if it had explored both sides of the situation in Iran, but unfortunately the pro-government rallies in which millions participated was not mentioned.

One needs to understand that Iran is a nation with a rich civilisation. Today, the West needs Iran more than Iran needs it because of its strategic geographic position in West Asia *vis-a-vis* the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

KASHOO TAWSEEF,
JAMMU & KASHMIR

Indian hornbill

THIS is with reference to the article "Cry from the Ghats" (January 29). Key to ensuring that the human population of an area helps conserve other species (such as birds) is to create an economic incentive. Has this been done for the hornbill?

SYED ANWAR OWAIS
SRINAGAR, J&K

Telangana

IN view of the sentiments prevailing at that point of time, Home Minister P. Chidambaram announced at midnight the government's decision on Telangana ("Talking peace", January 29). Now with the changed circumstances, the only course he can take is to resolve the issue through democratic consultations and by respecting the views of the people of Andhra Pradesh. What the government should do immediately is announce a development package for Telangana and follow the projects assiduously irrespective of the outcome of the deliberations.

K. NEHRU PATNAIK
VISAKHAPATNAM

ANNOUNCEMENT

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