

## Union Budget

IN all fairness it must be said that the Finance Minister has sought to restrict fiscal deficit to 5.5 per cent of the GDP, while basing his proposals on the hope that the national economy will perform better and that the global economy will move out of the dumps by the time he rechecks his sums in early 2011 (Cover Story, March 26).

At the same time, he has hedged his bets and ensured that even if there is no spectacular growth and the global economy continues to remain in the doldrums, the government will have sufficient revenue to fulfil its commitments.

J. AKSHAY  
SECUNDERABAD

## M.F. Husain

A TRUE artist is above caste and religion, and M.F. Husain is a perfect example of this ("Artist's alienation", March 26). He lives a simple life and does not compromise on his principles. He is an asset to any country.

It is unfortunate that he is forced to live outside India because of certain misguided champions of religion.

MAHESH KUMAR  
NEW DELHI

IT is surprising that the article laments the exit of Husain from his country when he did not respect the feelings of the majority of Hindus and continued to draw gods and goddesses in the

## GM technology

THIS is with reference to the Cover Story (March 12) on the GM debate. Monsanto concedes that pests have developed resistance to Bt cotton. The claim that pesticides need not be used in large quantities now seems misconceived. Insects are smart. They have been around for the last 500 million years. Resistance is an innate characteristic and is a process akin to natural selection. This has been dealt with by Richard Dawkins in his recent book *The Greatest Show on Earth*. Gene manipulation is not going to intimidate insects.

In the U.S., Monsanto is facing anti-trust actions. It recently went to court to force providers of organic milk to declare on their boxes that Monsanto-produced hormones are proven not to be dangerous! Such practices neither inspire confidence in the company nor are conducive to a rational debate on the benefits of GM technology.

The government should seriously ponder whether the proposed amendments to the law on GM technology are in the public interest. In the proposed law, criticisms of GM technology by the common man will attract penal provisions.

H.N. RAMAKRISHNA  
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nude. India is one country that has tolerated and welcomed people from all over the world, but respect towards one's fellow citizens is obviously something that the artist overlooked.

SANJEEV VASISHTHA  
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## Caste panchayats

IN my opinion, those who commit "honour killings" are guilty of killing honour. If one resorts to the *gotra* factor to ascertain incest, any marriage can be labelled incestuous ("Khap terror", March 26). Khap

panchayats are powerful because of their ability to mobilise a large number of people so that from the outside they appear to be democratic. However, they exclude women, the youth, and groups that are lower down in the caste hierarchy of a village.

The state cannot abdicate its responsibility; it should enforce the law of the land. Courts should strike down all the mandates of all extra-judicial bodies.

SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR  
MISHRA  
SAMBALPUR, ORISSA

## UPSC

NO subject related to the performing arts, such as Indian classical music, or fine arts appears on the civil services examination's subject list ("Hints of change", March 26). These subjects provide people with moral and ethical values and give them a humane touch, which is essential in today's civil services. Musicians have proved to be effective administrators/ managers. Shiv Shankar Menon and present Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao are good examples. Therefore, Indian classical music and fine arts should also be included in this examination.

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

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