

FARMERS: THE BJP'S
JAT HEADACHE

UTTARAKHAND:
DISASTER FORETOLD?

ARMY: SMALL
ARMS, BIG PROBLEM

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E.K. Palaniswami
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TAMIL NADU

THE GREAT POLL OPERA

EVEN WITHOUT THEIR STAR MASCOTS, THE
BATTLE BETWEEN THE MAJOR DRAVIDIAN
PARTIES PROMISES TO BE A POTBOILER



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SUBIR HALDER

WEST BENGAL ELECTION

THE THIRD DIMENSION

By Romita Datta

A broad 'secular' alliance is in the works in the run-up to the West Bengal assembly election, with the Congress-Left combine warming to influential Muslim cleric Abbas Siddiqui and his Indian Secular Front (ISF), launched on January 21.

Siddiqui is the 33-year-old pirzada of the Furfura Sharif shrine, which controls over 3,000 mosques in Bengal and holds sway among Muslims in the South Bengal districts of Hooghly, Howrah, South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas. His ISF includes eight organisations, representing

Dalits, Adivasis, backward classes and the Hindu Matuas, and promises Muslims and other 'weaker sections' a new deal based not on appeasement politics but their rightful place in society. "We will play kingmaker this time (assembly election)," Siddiqui tells the surging crowd at one of the numerous