

## Telangana halts fine rice delivery to Food Corporation of India, focuses on Public Distribution System

Hyderabad: The Telangana government has halted the delivery of fine rice to the Food Corporation of India (FCI) by millers as part of the Custom Milling Programme (CMR). State Civil Supplies Commissioner DS Chouhan announced that the fine rice — 'Sannabiyyam' — will be exclusively allocated for the Public Distribution System (PDS) to meet its needs. He directed all District Collectors to ensure the smooth procurement of paddy and allocate it mill-wise to achieve the required quantities of fine rice. The PDS and other welfare schemes require a total of 21 lakh metric tonnes of Sannabiyyam, comprising 12.92 lakh metric tonnes for the central pool and 8.58 lakh metric tonnes for the state pool. As of now, eight lakh metric tonnes of paddy have been procured during the Kharif marketing season, with 'Sanna Rakam' paddy accounting for over 1.1 lakh metric tonnes. The paddy is being moved directly from procurement cen-

tres to rice mills. Chouhan emphasised that millers should deliver only fortified 'Sannabiyyam', properly stenciled on bags, to the Civil Supplies Corporation (CSC) at designated depots within the stipulated time for distribution under various schemes. The fortified rice is enriched with essential vitamins and minerals by blending it with fortified rice kernels (FRK), addressing micronutrient deficiencies. He wanted steps to ensure that only quality rice reached the consumers through the PDS. The guidelines specify that no more than 1 per cent by weight of the rice shall be small broken grains, and the content of mineral matter must not exceed 0.2 per cent by weight. Impurities of animal origin must not surpass 0.10 per cent by weight. Both raw and parboiled rice can be procured with a maximum moisture content of 15 per cent. A value cut applies between 14 per cent to 15 per cent moisture levels, but no value cut is required up to 14 per cent moisture. The blending ratio of forti-



ified rice may vary from 0.9 per cent to 7.2 per cent by weight, provided the prescribed

micronutrient levels are met as per the Certificate of Analysis (CoA) for FRK.

## Congress claims against BRS over Lagacherla row fall apart



Hyderabad: The Congress allegations against the BRS, accusing it of conspiring to create unrest at Lagacherla and orchestrating the alleged attack on the officials, appears to be falling apart. The Congress leaders, along with the police, are weaving a narrative holding the BRS responsible for the attack, citing the involvement of B Suresh, a farmer affiliated with the BRS. Hours after former MLA Patnam Narendra Reddy revealed that his confession was fabricated by the police in the remand report and released the original confession, fresh revelations indicate that more than a dozen of the 46 individuals named in the FIR for attacking the officials, have close ties to the Congress party.

Among them is A10, Ramu Naik who is a former deputy Sarpanch and a known Congress supporter, who was also involved in the alleged attack. Of the 21 persons who have been arrested, at least five belong to the Congress party. Notwithstanding their party affiliations, the villagers have been actively participating in the fight to protect their ancestral lands and opposing the proposed Pharma Village. The BRS leaders argue that the Congress is using their political affiliations as a smokescreen to avoid addressing the real issue and portraying the opposition as a conspirator to create unrest. "This attempt to politicise the protests is a deliberate distraction," said a senior BRS leader. "Yes, one of the farmers is affiliated with us, but does that

invalidate the legitimate grievances of the others? A large number of people named in the FIR, have connections with the Congress and other political parties. Does their party loyalty negate their right to fight for their land?" he argued.

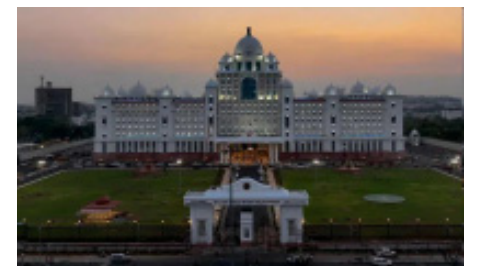
The Lagacherla farmers have been pro-

testing for past seven-eight months, voicing their anguish over losing their livelihoods and ancestral properties. The recent alleged attack on the officials including Vikarabad district Collector Prateek Jain, had only escalated the issue, with the Congress leadership giving it a political hue.

## Fire department conducts awareness on fire safety in Secretariat

Hyderabad: To create awareness about fire safety, the Fire Services department conducted an awareness programme for the SPF personnel at Secretariat on Saturday. G V Prasad, Assistant District Fire Officer and others explained in detail about basic fire safety awareness and how to use fire extinguishers / fixed fire installations to the personnel. The Fire department officials briefed the SPF personnel about the fire evacuation procedures, including fire safety and prevention.

A demonstration was also made before the SPF personnel on how to rescue from the terrace through Bronto Sky Lift (BSL) and the two men method consisting of breathing exercises and artificial respiration. Chief Security Officer of Secretariat Devdas and SPF staff participated in the awareness programme. Earlier, the Telangana Special



Police was entrusted with the task of security at the Secretariat. After the recent protests by constables from different police battalions, the security at the Secretariat has been handed over to Telangana Special Protection Force (TGSPF).

On November 1, about 214 personnel from the SPF assumed responsibility for the security at the Secretariat. They were assigned guard duties at the gates, patrol other areas, and conduct internal surveillance.



# 'I thought they would accept us one day' – 4 years after honour killing, fear of death looms over Palakkad family

Inside a cramped three-roomed tiled house in Elamannam, a village 14 km from Kerala's Palakkad district, 57-year-old Radha watches her 23-year-old daughter-in-law Haritha study for her upcoming Bachelor Business Administration (BBA) exams. Ever since her son Aneesh's brutal honour killing four years ago, Radha has been Haritha's shadow, carefully watching her every move and even taking turns with her daily labourer husband Arumughan to accompany her to college in Koduvayur 10 km away – all in a bid to make sure of her daughter-in-law's safety. Last week, the district court of Palakkad sentenced Haritha's father Prabhukumar, the second accused in the case, and uncle Suresh Kumar, the first accused, to life term for the 2020 killing of Aneesh, then 27. Aneesh was stabbed to death by the two men on December 25, 2020, when he and his brother Arun were running some household errands. According to the family and investigators, it was Aneesh's caste – he was a painter from the backward Kodachi-Kalla caste against Haritha's upper class and landowning Saiva Vellala (Pillai) family – that prompted the murder. At the time of the incident, Haritha and Aneesh had been married for only 89 days. Both Prabhukumar and Suresh Kumar are now in jail, but that hasn't stopped fear of death from permeating the everyday lives of Haritha and her in-laws. "When she has to attend her BBA class at Marian College in Koduvayur, my husband (Arumughan) drops her by bike. Then I go to college in the afternoon to accompany her back home. If she has an exam, I wait until she comes out," Radha, who was a farmhand until her son's murder prompted her to stop reporting to work, tells The Indian Express while Haritha chimes in: "My family had threatened to finish me off too".

Haritha claims her parents "had always looked down upon people of the lower caste". "There were several Dalit families in our vicinity, but my parents did not have a good relationship with them. My father's interactions were mainly limited to the upper caste families, mostly relatives living in the same region. My father and uncle (both convicted in honour killing) even had a dispute with Dalit families in connection with a common land. Both faced criminal cases and were jailed for some time," she said. According to Haritha, she and Aneesh, a Class 5 dropout and the fourth of eight children, fell in love when she was in Class 10. Her family was well off, running a sewing machine business and also owning agricultural land. "Our relationship started during my school days. A year into it, my parents and relatives came to know about it. To make me break it off, my mother would assault me while my father would verbally abuse me. But Aneesh gave me courage and hope," says Haritha. In 2020, when Haritha turned 18, her family started scouting for grooms, arranging a match with a man from Coimbatore. On September 27 that year, when her parents were in Coimbatore to forward the match, Haritha married Aneesh at a local temple.

"We had previously decided that I

should continue with my education and secure a government job. But when my parents tried to rush through with another proposal, we hastily married," she says. When they found out, Haritha's furious family filed a police complaint and the couple was summoned to the local police station. The couple was eventually told they could live together and Haritha's family was warned against "harassing" them. According to Haritha, however, trouble began right outside the police station, when Prabhukumar threatened his daughter saying the life of her thali (a sacred yellow thread worn by many South Indian brides to signify being married) "will be only for three months". The two houses were only a kilometre apart, and sensing danger, the couple kept away from Elamannam for a week, instead staying with Arun's family in Alathur. However, they eventually returned to the home Aneesh shared with his parents and five other siblings. On December 25 – the 90th day of the couple's marriage – Aneesh and his brother Arun had gone to a nearby junction at Manamkulambu to purchase some daily provisions when the attack occurred. His brother had stopped for a soda and Aneesh was waiting on a two-wheeler outside a shop when Prabhukumar and Suresh came there on their bikes and attacked him with the iron rods they were carrying, dragging him to a nearby ditch. When Arun, on hearing his brother's cry for help, tried to intervene, they threatened to beat him up too. Then Suresh produced a knife and stabbed Aneesh multiple times, fleeing with his brother soon after.

By the time some locals took him to a hospital, Aneesh had already died. According to the postmortem report, he had 19 fatal wounds. Radha believes there could be another reason why Haritha's family disliked the relationship. "I had worked in the paddy field of Haritha's maternal uncle for many years. They might have thought my son marrying Haritha as an insult to them," she says. According to Aneesh's oldest brother Anil, the couple continued to face threats throughout the brief marriage and even complained to the police. "But no action was taken," he says. Meanwhile, the couple continued living at Elamannam, thinking the threat would die down and that Haritha's family would eventually come to accept her choice. What they didn't expect was how her father and uncle would murder her husband.

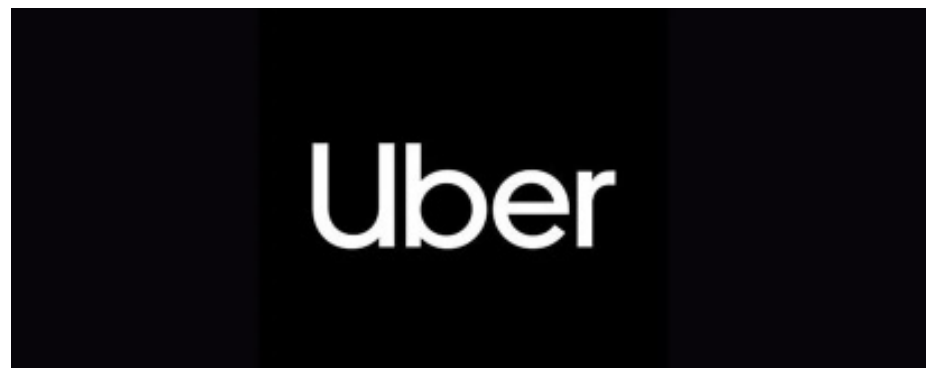
"We didn't plan to move to a place away from home. Our comfort was that all the family members (of Aneesh) were nearby. Besides, we have seen instances where such problems eventually get resolved with time. I thought one day my parents would accept our marriage and welcome Aneesh into their lives," said Haritha. Unlike Haritha's family, Aneesh's side knew nothing of the relationship initially, says Radha. "We only knew when they got married." For Haritha, going from her well-to-do concrete house to Aneesh's poorer home with no road access made for a significant change. The family has limited means, barely getting by with



Arumughan's daily wage of Rs 750 from the painting projects he undertakes in Palakkad town. But despite these challenges, she appears to have found solace in her husband's family. The tragic death of her husband had affected a few exams, but she now plans to go on with her plans – finishing her BBA, clearing Public Service Commission exams and eventually securing an MBA – with her in-laws' support. "Aneesh's parents and his siblings take care of me very well. I don't feel anything lacking here," she says. After Aneesh's murder, the state government offered Haritha an ex-gratia compensation of Rs 10 lakh from the chief minister's distress

relief fund. "I bought three cents of land (approximately 1,306.677 sq. feet) using that money. I want to build a house. A job and a house are my dreams. I have already petitioned the government for a job," she says. Haritha hasn't been in touch with her family since the incident, even avoiding her husband's murder trial and going to court only when she was called for examination. "At the court, I didn't even look at the faces of my father and uncle. I want the judiciary to give them a more severe punishment than life term and will petition the government to appeal against the trial court sentence. Because nobody should have to face this fate," she says.

## Uber introduces safety and ease features for drivers, including SOS and women rider preference



New Delhi: Ride-hailing app Uber on Thursday announced a host of new features such as SOS integration, helmet selfie and women rider preference for female drivers – all aimed at making experience for million-plus drivers on its platform "safer, easier and fairer". Further, in support of the government's Code on Social Security (CoSS), which seeks to provide a safety net for gig workers, Uber announced the promotion of registrations on the e-Shram portal, which is a unified database for gig workers and unorganised workers. To en-

courage participation and accelerate such registrations, Uber is offering cash incentives to the first 10,000 drivers who register on the portal. Key enhancements for drivers include SOS integration, helmet selfie, women rider preference for female drivers, and audio recording, as also upfront tipping, instant payments, and mentorship program. As part of fairer processes, Uber has lined up revamped earnings hub and Deactivation review centre, as well. Prabhjeet Singh, President,



# Sailaja Reddy Celebrates Birthday with Students at Laxmi Nagar Government High School

The government high school at Laxmi Nagar was filled with joy as Ms. Sailaja Reddy, an esteemed entrepreneur, socialite, and founder of Sailaja Aryan Foundation, chose to celebrate her birthday with the children of the school on 16th November, 2024. This meaningful event was coordinated by the Rotary Club Cantonment Secunderabad, which proudly adopted the school to support its students. During her visit, Ms. Sailaja Reddy delivered an inspiring speech focused on the importance of education and self-belief. She encouraged the students to strive for excellence, emphasizing that they are the future of the country. In a generous gesture, she announced that scholarships would be awarded to the top achievers in the grade 10 board exam to aid them in pursuing their intermediate studies.

Reflecting on her special day, Ms. Reddy shared, "Feeling incredibly grateful as I celebrate my birthday this year. This day became even more special as I got to spend it with so many amazing children, sharing smiles and moments that truly touched my heart. I hope I was able to contribute in some small way to support their learning and dreams. There's nothing more fulfilling than spreading joy and making a difference, even in the simplest ways."

The celebration climaxed with Ms. Sailaja Reddy cutting a birthday cake, which was joyously sung to in Sanskrit by the students. The event took on a personal touch when she shared pieces of cake with the children and staff, warmly engaging with them on a bench as she conversed with the girls. In addition to the birthday festivities, students from grades 9 and 10 received essential supplies, including geometry boxes, note-



books, and a sweet treat of chocolates, all personally distributed by Ms. Reddy. The event was thoughtfully supported by Rotary Club members Rtn. Manju Gupta, the president, and joint secretary Rtn. Indira

Gummalla, who motivated the students to set career goals and pursue them diligently.

The joy and enthusiasm radiating from the students marked the day a resounding success, with many promising to put forth

their best efforts in their studies. The smiles on their faces showcased the positive impact of Ms. Sailaja Reddy's visit, reaffirming the belief that nurturing education and community bonds is vital for empowering students.

# Ramoji Group Launches Sabala Millets-Bharat Ka SuperFood

On the 88th birth anniversary of the Shri Ramoji Rao Garu, Ramoji Group proudly unveiled Sabala Millets - Bharat Ka Super Food. At the launch, Sahari Cherukuri, Director of Sabala Millets, said, "Sabala represents the wholesomeness of millets and a commitment to healthier living. It is bridging the gap between traditional Indian grains and modern recipes through innovation. It characterises our steadfast resolve to blend balanced nutrition with great flavour. We are honoured to launch this millet range on the birth anniversary of our founder, Shri Ramoji Rao Garu, as we pay tribute to his visionary dream for a healthier Bharat. Sabala will be a brand dedicated to fostering a positive and systematic shift in food consumption patterns, promoting balanced nutrition, and championing a sustainable future." This venture marks a transformative step in the Group's commitment to consumer health, offering millet-based products designed to cater to modern, health-conscious lifestyles without compromising nutritional integrity. Sabala Millets is committed to promoting a range of nutritious and tasty line of products for its consumers. In its first phase, 45 products and variants have been launched from

khichdi of various states to millet-based cookies, health bars, munchies and noodles, enriching the food category in India. Reflecting the vision and values of Shri Ramoji Rao Garu - trust, quality and excellence - Sabala Millets aligns with the growing demand for high-quality, naturally sourced ingredients. Millets, celebrated for their rich nutritional profile, are a powerhouse of protein, fibre, and essential nutrients, making them ideal for consumers seeking wholesome food options. The launch event offered guests a first-hand tasting experience of the new product range and an engaging presentation from Sahari Cherukuri followed by unveiling of the brand logo, brand film and the e-commerce website [www.sabalamillets.com](http://www.sabalamillets.com). As part of its outreach, Sabala Millets has also launched a digital campaign aimed at educating and engaging consumers on the benefits of millets, complete with recipes and tips for easy integration into daily



meals. The entire product range of Sabala Millets will be available for purchase on their official e-commerce site at

[www.sabalamillets.com](http://www.sabalamillets.com) offering consumers convenient access to nutritious millet-based options.



# Teach For India Launches Arts Fellowship in India

Celebrates its 15 year anniversary with a one a kind special musical 'With Love' showcasing Teach For India's special journey over the years. By 2032, plans to expand 3-5 cities in India and build 50,000 leaders to improve the education system with student leaders, teachers, teacher trainers, school leaders, entrepreneurs and government officials. Teach For India, a non-profit championing educational equity today, has announced the launch of its Arts Fellowship at the special showcase of its musical 'With Love' to commemorate the organization's 15-year anniversary in India. This is the second addition to the already existing two-year Fellowship program that Teach For India offers. With this new program Teach For India will now be able to further help children attain excellent education and provide Fellows with leadership development opportunities.

From 6th January 2025 onwards, aspirants can apply for the new full-time paid Arts Fellowship. This innovative program will empower Fellows to bridge the educational inequity gap by providing high-quality arts instruction that cultivates students' voice, expression, and connection across under-privileged schools in India. The Arts Fellowship has been developed from the learnings of Teach For India alums, external experts, and staff members working in the arts in education, culminating in the Arts Fellowship. To further its mission, Teach For India is expanding its operations to 3-5 new cities by 2032. This will increase its presence to 11-13 cities nationwide (currently, Teach For India is present in 8 cities, including - Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai and Pune). The organisation is committed to developing 50,000 leaders by 2032, including teachers, teacher trainers, school leaders, student leaders, government officials, and entrepreneurs.

Commenting on this momentous occasion, Shaheen Mistri, Founder & CEO of Teach For India said, "This is an extremely emotional moment for us. Reflecting upon 15 years of Teach For India's journey has been nothing short of a gratifying experience. With 1000 Fellows and 5000 Alumni impacting 50 million children nationwide, we have been working relentlessly towards bridging the ed-inequity gap in the country and building a nation of leaders. By launching the new Arts Fellowship, we hope to help students deeply immerse in local and global art forms and instill in them a lifelong appreciation and pride for artistic expression, enabling them to lead with creativity, compassion, and a commitment to societal change." About Teach For India: Teach For India is a nationwide movement of leaders working towards ensuring that every child in India receives an excellent education. Driven by the belief that meaningful change happens when we cultivate a collective force of leaders, Teach For India envisions an India free of poverty and filled with love. Our leaders choose education as the path to get there. Over the next decade, the organization aspires to build a movement of 50,000 leaders. They will work collectively, with love, to transform the lives of 1 in 10 children from low-income communities in and beyond Teach For India's regions. Through its flag-



ship 2-year Fellowship Program, Teach For India places India's brightest young minds in the most under-resourced classrooms in the country, providing aspiring leaders with the

support and ecosystem they need to manifest change at all levels of the Indian education system. Today, 1000 Fellows teach 33,500 students directly in classrooms

across eight cities. 5000 Alumni have gone on to establish or co-create organisations that are able to impact 50 million children across India.

## Why men are lonelier in America than elsewhere

ARE ISOLATED men driving American women up the wall? A recent sketch on "Saturday Night Live", which refers to studies concluding that males in America are increasingly friendless, suggests that they are. A young woman, frustrated by her boyfriend's inability to open up to anyone else, takes him by the hand and leads him to a "man park" (like the dog version) where, after a shy start, he finds fellow males to make friends with. Some viewers disliked the likening of men to dogs, but the sketch, which went viral online, illustrates fresh concerns about an old worry: the loneliness of American men.

As people in rich countries work longer hours, marry later and spend more time with their children, not friends, research suggests loneliness is increasing. A study by the University of Pennsylvania found a direct link between social-media usage and loneliness. More time spent online means less time building friendships. The problem may be particularly severe in America. A large international study by British academics found that people in individualistic countries (a measure on which America scores highest) reported

greater loneliness. America also has one of the highest divorce rates; men may be more likely to lose mutual friends after a split. A strong work ethic and geographical mobility (meaning friendships are liable to be lost or weakened as people relocate) is likely to exacerbate the problem.

A survey published in 2021 by the Survey Centre on American Life, part of the American Enterprise Institute, a think-tank, found that friendship groups have shrunk in the past three decades. The decline has been particularly marked among men. In 1990, 55% of American men reported having at least six close friends; today only 27% do. The survey found that 15% of men have no close friendships at all, a fivefold increase since 1990. Those who study male loneliness believe that a particularly American version of masculinity is in part to blame. Since 1990 Robert Garfield, a psychotherapist and author of "Breaking the Male Code", has run "friendship labs", men's therapeutic groups, which have shown him that men crave emotional connection. But American boys, says Dr Garfield, who has also run such groups

in Europe, are often taught that successful men exhibit particular traits—restraint, independence, competitiveness—at the expense of others. As women's and LGBT rights have advanced in recent decades, along with more emotional ways of connecting with others, "men are being asked to stretch themselves", Dr Garfield says. Over time, this is likely to have a positive effect on the way men relate to each other, but at the moment, "males are in a fighting phase".

Marc Schapiro, a 24-year-old English teacher from Maryland, agrees. He says he was taught male friendship is "stoic and lacking outward affection". But now he sees a different portrayal of friendship on social media, particularly by women and LGBT people. He would love, he says, to be able to "show more affection and drop the constant snide comments and ribbing", but he finds the disconnect between what he grew up believing about friendship and how he sees other people relating to each other unsettling. The "quasi-socialising" he and his friends do online, via games and various message boards, meets no real need, he adds.



# There's much to see and hear around us

I'm always perplexed by how oblivious to nature so many people have become, which is not good, especially if you are a child — that period of life where you see, smell and hear the most. For me, that's like being blind and deaf to your surroundings. In the last few weeks, I've been back in Goa and here's a list of what I've seen and heard, with, mind you, not making any special effort to do so. All you need to do is keep your ears and eyes open. Before dawn, there's the soft clopping 'whup-whup' calls of what I think are scops owls (a lovely sound to break the dawn's silence), from the trees, quickly followed by the ringing alarm-clock cackle of that old resident, the white-throated kingfisher and then the hysterical shrieking of the koels. The magpie robin is on leave these days, quieter but occasionally letting forth the occasional irritated 'chrr!' The black-rumped flameback cackle gleefully from the tall coconut palm, while the paradise flycatcher continues to coyly play hide and seek, indicating its presence by its short, succinct 'chtrr!' Hidden in the foliage the crow-pheasant lets out its ghoulish 'coup-coup-call', while the rufous tree-pie regales you with a series of dulcet, contralto notes.

Out on the beach at low tide, the ocean sighs and hushes as the breakers tiredly expend themselves on the shore as if relieved to have reached their destination, and over this background, you hear the soft, gentle squeaks of a flock of sand (I think) plovers taking flight. The ocean roar becomes louder and more thunderous as the tide sweeps in, but is still a soothing background refrain. At dusk these days, the great fruit bats are out and about, with their whopping one-metre wingspans, and crash heavily into the flowering areca palm outside your bedroom window. For a second they thrash about among the leaves, then silently — and somewhat malevolently — make their way hand over fist as it were towards the blooms, where presumably they drink deep and then soundlessly take off again. Every day, the squirrels dash back and forth across the balcony awnings like commuters hurrying back and forth from work. Two nights ago, a whirring sound like that of a small motor, right behind my head, made me quickly get up from my chair to check: a pair of dragonflies had decided to do the 'globe of death' motorcycle stunt, inside and around a large lampshade in front of which I was sitting. I had never known that dragonflies too — like demented moths — could be so attracted to the bright lights, but there you have it. Alas, one of them didn't quite make it, lying spreadeagled on the tiles the following morning.

There's so much to see as well. For the last two mornings, the first thing I noticed in the pool was a tiny mole shrew (which has poor vision) frantically swimming lengths: on both occasions, the silly fellow had to be rescued by the pool boy. A spindly elongated black spider, with legs like fine wire, lives under the aluminium pool railings — evidently, a successful ambush spot for it — because there was one like it exactly here during my last visit. In the mornings, floating about in the pool, a butterfly's wing — burnt orange and bordered in black and white, evidence that the dragonflies have had good hunting just above it. It pours one night and the pool crinkles into a broken blue glass; on sunny mornings, the sun spangles it silver, edged with dancing rainbows.

In August, we found three or four fat

green caterpillars demolishing a curry patta plant in the garden. On another plant next to it, another fuzzy white one, like a caterpillar, dressed for a punk rock night, is one I still haven't managed to identify. We took one of the green caterpillars, home — it had begun curling itself up to form a chrysalis, which it promptly did. And while I kept a hawk's eye on it for the following 10 days, it decided to protect its privacy and escape its cocoon, in the half-hour I was in the pool one morning. It must have been a swallowtail of some type — there are several around, as is another species with drab brown wings, attractively etched when folded up, but revealing a fiery orange when they open. It was too drunk deep and long from the areca palm blooms. You look casually over the balcony and there gleaming among the broad heliconia leaves below, a six-spotted jewel beetle, squatting like a neon sumo-wrestler, defying all comers.

On the beach again, you can't help but notice the vast squadrons of dragonflies whirring to and fro, protecting their private air corridors, some even landing on the sand just beyond the expiring wavelets. On the sand, clusters of fingernail-sized cockles, gleaming pearl white and intricately ridged. It's strange; a section of the beach will be empty and then just ahead, like a constellation of fallen stars, are shards of shells like broken



pottery, scattered everywhere. The sand itself is ridged and patterned differently in different sections of the beach, indicating the artistry of wind, water and the pull and push of the tides. You look out at sea — a lovely deep blue this morning — and there speeding across far in the distance, a flock of snow-

white birds winging swiftly across.

By the time you whip your bins to your eyes, they've gone! A golden-orange dragonfly hovers in front of your face its wings rustling, distracting you again; as I mentioned so much to hear and see, without even trying!

## The pattern in Trump's picks for key jobs

To understand why he has picked Pete Hegseth as the secretary of defense, Tulsi Gabbard as the director of national intelligence, Matt Gaetz as the attorney general and Robert F Kennedy Jr as the secretary of health and human services, go back to Trump's perceived experiences with these institutions. Add to it the American electorate's views on these institutions — partly due to Trump's rhetoric but partly due to real lived experiences — and then juxtapose it with an election mandate that has given his insurgent political movement the authority to cause systemic rupture. It is these three features that explain why Trump has made a range of extraordinarily controversial and, from the point of view of many Americans, even dangerous choices. Examine this in the context of the broad areas of defense, intelligence and legal system, and public health. The world of defense

It is ironic that a leader who projects himself as a fierce American nationalist and who comes from the far-right tradition of American politics is so deeply contemptuous of the civilian bureaucracy and military leadership at Pentagon. This contempt stems from Trump's perception that this constituency was not personally loyal to him during his first term. It also stems from Trump's belief that the military establishment is responsible for pushing America into unnecessary wars and was nudging him in the same direction, despite his personal resistance and his movement's fierce opposition to these external entanglements. But what has enabled Trump to act the way he did in picking a junior army officer turned Fox News host to be in charge of a department that had 2.8 million personnel and a budget of \$900 billion is the discomfort that his supporters have also felt with the defense establishment. There is of course respect for veterans. But ever since Dwight Eisenhower warned

Americans about the military industrial complex in his farewell address, Americans have known that this complex has an interest in wars. Trump represents a post-9/11 generation which has seen America go into Iraq on baseless grounds, enter Afghanistan and stay on for close to two decades only to see the vanquished return as victor and American troops withdraw in disgrace, and then seen the U.S. spend extraordinary resources in Ukraine. The world of law and intelligence is ironic that a leader from a conservative political tradition that one would instinctively associate with having a higher comfort level with the state's most covert and secretly coercive arms is the most uncomfortable with it. This discomfort comes from Trump's own experience. During his first presidential run and in the first few years of his first term, America's investigative agencies found clues that suggested Russian involvement in Trump's campaign, links between Trump's advisors and Moscow, and Russian efforts to boost Trump's prospects especially through social media. Trump entered office with this stain and had to live with an investigation from a special prosecutor who eventually gave him a partial clean chit. Through it all, Trump developed a deep suspicion of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and sacked the head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The then attorney general and a majority of DOJ's lawyers refused to play along with Trump's conspiracy theories on the 2020 election. They prosecuted those involved in January 6 attack on the US Capitol. And in the past four years, DOJ has been actively pursuing cases against Trump on charges ranging from illegally retaining classified files to pressuring state officials to change electoral results to obstructing the certification of presidential results.

But what has enabled Trump to pick Gaetz — the most extremist House Repub-

lican, a subject of a House ethics investigation, a far-right maverick and a relentless critic of DOJ — as attorney general, and Gabbard — among the fiercest political critics of America's "deep state" and its role in dragging US to wars, an individual who many of these agencies suspect of having links with regimes adversarial to America — as head of national intelligence, is the wider discomfort that many Americans feel with the legal state and intelligence state. And like in the case of the military-industrial complex, here too, the Right has benefited from the critique liberals and the Left have made of the American surveillance state, of the covert role of U.S. agencies in ousting and propping up foreign regimes, of the selective use of domestic laws against actors, of the hounding of actors such as Edward Snowden who exposed the scale of U.S. national security surveillance. It is ironic that the leader who actually sanctioned the funding and approvals for the quickest rollout of Covid-19 vaccines to beat the pandemic is now deeply uncomfortable with America's health establishment. This discomfort comes from Trump's own interpretation of what went wrong for him in 2020. Convinced that he would have comfortably won a second successive term as president but for the wrong advice he was given on the pandemic, Trump believes that lockdowns were a mistake, that vaccines alienated his base, that school shutdowns were excessive, and that big pharma was working in conjunction with Democrats. As health officials saw it, this was just baseless. Lockdowns were the only way out at that stage, and even then America only imposed partial restrictions. The country still suffered the highest number of deaths in the world. They hold Trump's failure to warn the country and prepare systems in time, his erratic, inconsistent and unscientific medical advice.



# Knowledge Nugget of the day: Patent evergreening

The Indian Patent Office is set to hear Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust's objections to the patent claims filed by US-based pharmaceutical company Gilead Sciences on the HIV drug lenacapavir. Sankalp contends that two of Gilead's patent applications on the salt forms of lenacapavir are not innovative, and Indian patent law prohibits "evergreening."<sup>1</sup> According to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, "Patents is a statutory right granted by the respective governments. It gives one exclusive rights and bars others from making, using, selling and importing a product or process, based on the patented invention without one's prior permission." Patents encourage investment in drug development by offering 20 years of exclusive market access to its holder to recover their R&D investment.<sup>2</sup> Evergreening is where a company extends its patent on a drug by re-patenting slightly modified versions of the drug. For example, they might release the original drug in its salt form, even if this does not bring a therapeutic improvement.<sup>3</sup> India along with Brazil, Thailand, and South Africa one of the few countries with laws against evergreening. The Indian Patent Act, as amended by the Patents (Amendment) Act 2005 under Section 3(d), states that drugs cannot be patented if they result from the mere discovery of a new form of a known substance which does not result in the enhancement of the known efficacy of that substance. Section 3(e) of the Act restricts patenting mixtures of known compounds unless a synergistic effect is proven, and Section 3(i) prevents patents on treatment methods. Important cases on prevention of evergreening of patents? Novartis AG v. Union of India (2013): Novartis' patent application for the cancer drug Gleevec (imatinib), used to treat leukemia, was rejected as it did not show significant technical advancement. The decision, upheld by both the Madras High Court in 2005 and the Supreme Court in 2013, set a strong precedent against evergreening practices. Roche v. Cipla (2012): The Delhi High Court ruled in favour of Cipla in a patent infringement case over Roche's anti-cancer drug Tarceva. Roche's patent for the polymorph B version of Tarceva was rejected on the basis of Section 3(d). Johnson & Johnson's TB drug Bedaquiline: Last year, the patent office in India rejected the secondary patent of Johnson and Johnson's TB medication bedaquiline, used for the treatment of those with drug-resistant infections. Evergreening in the US? Companies can get a new patent for a drug by altering its formula or changing its dosage. Critics say a majority of drug patents given in the US are for tiny changes that give patients few benefits but allow drug companies to charge high prices even beyond the original patent life. Under the pay-for-delay deal, drug companies allow generic versions to be made available five years before their patent expires in mutually settled agreements between brand names and generic drug makers. Knowledge Nugget: Patent evergreening, semaglutide Challenge of

Evergreening of patents for India:

1. Despite these legal safeguards, evergreening remains a challenge in launching affordable biosimilars as seen in the ongoing controversy surrounding pertuzumab, used to treat certain types of breast cancer. In India, due to its heavy disease burden, population density, and lack of access to affordable medical care for a majority of the citizens, patent evergreening is a challenge.

2. Patent evergreening poses a significant threat to public health by impacting the accessibility and affordability of essential medicines. While India's legal framework aims to curb such practices, recent studies reveal that around 72 per cent of granted pharmaceutical patents are minor or secondary. The need for stronger scrutiny and opposition is obvious.

3. With India being one of the biggest manufacturers of generics, the country's patent law has a specific section that disallows the ever-greening of patents. It says that a drug cannot be termed an invention if a new form of the same substance is developed without any significant improvement in efficacy.

4. To safeguard public health and promote genuine innovation, India needs to strengthen its patent opposition mechanisms, ensuring that the patent system serves its intended purpose rather than extending monopolies through minor modifications.

**BEYOND THE NUGGET:** Biosimilars<sup>1</sup>. Biosimilars refer to a biologic



that is very similar to the one that has been cleared by the authorities for prescription by doctors. That is why they are also called follow-on biologics. They have the same efficacy, are as safe as the reference biologic, and are used to treat the same disorders as the first biologic drug.

2. India is a pioneer in the global biosimilar market. It was the first country to approve a biosimilar product for Hepatitis B. Today, there are 98 approved biosimilars in India, with at least 50 in the market, the most in any country. Many India-made biosimilars have been approved in markets like the US.

3. The Indian biosimilar market was valued at \$349 million in 2022 and is estimated to expand at a growth rate of 25.2

per cent per annum from 2022 to 2030 to reach \$2,108 million by 2030.<sup>4</sup> Under the Make in India Initiative, the Centre has launched the National Biopharma Mission (NBM) — an industry-academia collaborative mission managed by the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council. This \$250 million mission, co-funded by the World Bank, aims to accelerate biopharmaceutical development.

5. Despite these efforts, India has a mere 3 per cent share of the global biosimilar market. One of the biggest barriers faced by Indian biosimilar manufacturers is patent evergreening. Subscribe to our UPSC newsletter. Stay updated with the latest UPSC articles by joining our Telegram channel — IndianExpress UPSC Hub, and follow us on Instagram and X.

## Air was bad even before 'severe' AQI

Wednesday was the first "severe" air pollution day in Delhi this winter, making it the most delayed arrival for a "severe" day in a year. Does this mean that Delhi is enjoying relatively clean air this post-monsoon season? Data analysed by HT, shows that this is not the case, thanks to 14 days of back-to-back "very poor" air days; the city has averaged an air quality index, or AQI, of 272 (classified as "poor") in the first 44 days of the season, which is par for the course for early weeks of winter. It is only in November that Delhi has shown a big departure from past trends of severe days... has made a comparison for AQI only since 2018 because the number of air monitoring stations in Delhi prior to 2018 were less than half of the 39 that operate currently. Data since 2018 shows that Delhi generally records severe days (when AQI is 401 or higher) in only four months — October, November, December and January. In January this year, Delhi recorded three severe days, fewer than only the number of such days in 2019 (seven days) and 2021 (six days). There were no severe days in October this year, but no year had a severe day in October after 2019. Even in 2018 and 2019, only one and two severe days were recorded in October. The city,

however, has clearly bucked historical trends this November, with only one severe day so far, compared to three to seven such days in the 2018-2023 period....and weather has played a big role in this

To be sure, warmer temperatures, which help air quality by preventing accumulation of air pollutants close to the ground, had a big role in Delhi avoiding severe days so far this year. At the Safdarjung station — considered representative of the city's temperatures — minimum temperatures have averaged 17.6°C in November so far. This is 3.1°C warmer than the average minimum temperature in these days in the 2018-2023 period; and 1.5°C warmer than the warmest year (2019) in the 2018-2023 period. Minimum temperature is useful for tracking temperature's impact on air quality because it is in the early hours of the day that the air quality is the worst on an hourly basis (See chart 1).

To be sure, winds have also helped air quality this November. For example, the bursting of firecrackers turns Delhi's air severe often in the days following Diwali. This did not happen this year (Diwali was celebrated on October 31) because faster winds cleaned up the pollutants from firecrackers. Even without severe days, the

average AQI is still as bad as usual

The above trends must also be read with the fact that the threshold for severe days is arbitrary. For example, an AQI of 400 (classified as "very poor") is not going to feel much different than an AQI of 401 (classified "severe"). Therefore, HT also checked the average AQI for the post-monsoon season. This shows that the average AQI for the first 44 days of the season this year is 272. Three years each have recorded an average AQI worse and better than 2024 since 2018. This makes sense. While warmer temperatures have kept severe days at bay, a completely dry post-monsoon season has prevented even a single "good" or "satisfactory" day (categories assigned to AQI of up to 100) in this 44-day period. Such a dry post-monsoon season happened only in 2018 and 2020 in the seven-year period analysed here. They were much cooler years, however, and experienced somewhat worse AQI than 2024. In addition, as the accompanying chart shows, the average AQI for these 44-days has varied by only 62 points between the best and worst year from 2018 to 2024. Clearly, the swing in air quality in the post-monsoon period is never very drastic and largely the result of the weather.



# India's tea, sugar exports raise sustainability concerns at home | Explained

India is one of the world's largest agricultural product exporters. The Indian agricultural export is valued at \$53.1 billion in 2022-2023, up from \$8.7 billion in 2004-2005, a six-fold increase in less than two decades. For an economically developing economy like India, exports play a significant role in strengthening the economy by increasing revenue, foreign exchange, and transactional options. But the rapid surge in exports poses multiple challenges to the sustainability of the production, processing, and distribution systems of the respective commodities. In this context, it's important to answer two questions regarding the sustainability of an agricultural commodity system.

First, when can an agricultural commodity be considered truly sustainable? The sustainability of such a commodity isn't just about economic sustainability, which is driven by productivity. Ecological and social factors, aided by good governance, help build a sustainable production system, so the sustainability of an agricultural system depends on three pillars: ecological factors, economic aspects, and social aspects, underpinned by robust policies underlying all of them. Second, should sustainability considerations only apply to production? No. Since the lifecycle of a commodity extends across pre-sowing, on-farm production, and post-harvest stages, sustainability applies to them all. Tea and sugar, two prominent commodities in India with a large domestic and export-oriented consumption base, offer good examples to illustrate the problems herein.

India is the world's fourth-largest tea exporter and second largest producer and makes up 10% of global exports. The latter totalled 188.76 million kg in 2022, with a value of \$641.34 million, an increase of 21.47% year on year in volume and 12.43% year on year in value. The total value of Indian tea exports for 2022-2023 was \$793.78 million. Domestic consumption constitutes 80% of total production. The top export destinations of Indian tea are the United Arab Emirates, Russia, Iran, the U.S. and the U.K. There is also growing evidence of stresses being imposed on production systems across the tea value chain. Three major challenges in the tea industry are the management of human-wildlife interactions, burgeoning chemical use, and labour concerns. An estimated 70% of tea plantations are situated at the periphery of forests and host the migratory routes elephants need to move around, resulting in frequent interactions with humans and human property and damage. Likewise, synthetic pesticides constitute up to 85% of total pesticide use in tea plantations. This degree of reliance on such pesticides increases the chemical residue in the final product. Researchers have already documented an increase in the incidence of DDT, Endosulfan 35 EC, Dicofol 18.5 EC, and Cypermethrin 10 EC in tea. Exposure to these substances can increase the risk of cancer, diabetes, impaired neurodevelopment in children, and neurotoxicity. Finally, the labour rights and working conditions of the tea estates cannot be undermined. More than half of tea

plantation workers are women and they are often underpaid. The working conditions are also hazardous and workers often lack protective gear. Despite regulations under the Plantations Labour Act 1951 (amended in 2010 to strengthen worker safety), safety standards are almost never fully enforced. There is a critical need for better management practices in and around tea estates in India, stricter monitoring of the maximum residue limits for pesticides, and better enforcement of existing labour regulations.

India is the world's second-largest sugar producer, with 34 million metric tonnes of production, about a fifth of the global production. India's sugar exports grew by 291% from \$1,177 million in FY 2013-2014 to \$4,600 million in FY 2021-22 and 64.90% in 2021-2022. The country exported sugar to 121 countries, according to the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics. About 50 million farmers depend on sugarcane cultivation in India. An additional half million depend on sugar and allied factories. According to NITI Aayog, the industry has an annual turnover of Rs 1 lakh crore. But for the exports' economic value and the industry's significant rural employment, it also has considerable adverse environmental effects — but in particular water resource management. Sugarcane is well-known for requiring a lot of water to cultivate. On average, 1 kg of sugar requires between 1,500 and 2,000 kg of water. Sugarcane and paddy occupy around 25% of the gross cropped area in India and consume 60% of the country's total irrigation water, reducing the availability for other crops and also stressing groundwater resources. In the last six or seven years, the area under sugarcane cultivation has almost doubled in Karnataka and Maharashtra. Natural ecosystems like grasslands and savannahs in these states have also been converted to plant sugarcane. Along with the ensuing biodiversity loss, this change has increased the pressure on water resources and increased the need for sustainable water use and alternate cropping patterns. In fact, implementing drip irrigation in these states could lower water consumption by 40-50%. The social dynamics of sugar industries narrate another story. Media reports have unearthed poor working conditions, including long working hours. Rising temperatures in peninsular India acts as a threat multiplier, increasing the risks to workers' physical and mental well-being. Workers trapped in vicious debt cycles incur even more stress. Strengthening regulations and encouraging structured and responsible production practices are important to reduce these effects and promote sustainability. Even as the sustainability challenges of these commodities persist, there are some others that promote long-term ecological and socio-economic sustainability, and their successes could serve as templates to address the problems plaguing tea and sugar. One prime example is millets, a sustainable option with which to increase domestic consumption as well as exports. Millets are resilient to harsh conditions and don't require more inputs to weather resource constraints.



They preserve soil health and ensure nutritional security.

The growing importance of millet export is evident in the export statistics. India reached a major milestone in 2021-2022 when it exported millets valued at \$62.95 million, up from \$26.97 million in 2020-2021, almost a 2.5-fold increase in a single year. In FY 2022-2023, the country shipped 169,049.11 metric tonnes of millets and millet-related products worth \$75.45 million. This rising demand highlights their potential as a sustainable agricultural commodity contributing to economic growth and environmental resilience. Agricultural commodity production in India lives in a unique context: a large domestic consumption base and now a rapidly growing export base. These dynamics may benefit producers and consumers but they could

also yield a paradox: whereby increasing dependencies between different actors in the supply chain compromise ecological and social sustainability concerns. There are successful tales of increasing production and trade volumes but concerns also continue regarding the trickling down of some of those economic benefits to producers and farm labourers, and regarding the vitality of India's natural resources. There needs to be more focus on addressing environmental issues and safeguarding the health and safety of both workers and consumers to develop an inclusive agrarian economy that benefits both local communities and global markets. Dasari Giridhar is a research associate and Manan Bhan is a Fellow in Residence — both at the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Bengaluru.

## Hyundai plans to make India a car production hub for emerging markets

New Delhi: Hyundai Motor India (HMI), the country's second largest carmaker, has drawn up ambitious expansion plans for making India a production hub that will also cater to the rising export demand for its vehicles in the emerging markets. HMI Managing Director Unsoo Kim said in a conference call that the car major would be expanding production to meet the growing demand in the domestic market as well as the export market in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and South Asia.

"We are seeing the domestic volume is increasing and the export market is also increasing. And then, we have a very suitable product lineup for emerging markets," Kim said. Kim said that a healthy mix of domestic and export volumes will enable the company to not only secure profitability but gain a natural hedge against market fluctuations. Hyundai Motor India has recently expanded its production capacity by acquiring a new plant in Pune to cater to the growing demand. The addition brings Hyundai's overall manufacturing capacity in India to 1.1 million units. "We are developing our EV ecosystem in India. We are planning to launch four EV models, includ-

ing the CRETA EV. And we are also localizing EV supply chains like the battery pack, driver train and the battery shell," Kim said.

Hyundai claims to have recorded a robust 30 per cent growth in registrations, further strengthening its market position. Inventory levels now stand at under four weeks. Hyundai is also poised to launch new models like the Alcazar facelift and the highly anticipated Creta EV to push sales and garner a bigger market share.

However, during the July-September quarter, export volumes slowed due to the disruption in shipping caused by the attacks in the Red Sea region which are a fallout of the geopolitical crisis in the Middle East. Hyundai Motor India listed in the stock markets last month following a \$3.3-billion IPO that was the country's largest-ever primary share sale.

The issue was subscribed over 2.37 times. The offer received bids for 23.63 crore shares as against 9.97 crore shares on offer. The Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) category was subscribed 6.97 times. The Non Institutional Investors (NIIs) category was subscribed 0.60 times.



# Chinese netizens wonder if their economy is in “garbage time”

These have been heady times for players of China’s stockmarkets. After the government began ramping up measures in late September to inject new life into a flagging economy, share prices soared, before settling back a bit as investors waited for details. Senior legislators are poised to reveal more stimulus measures on November 8th. But public anxiety about the economy’s long-term prospects may prove hard to dispel. That was true even before Donald Trump, who is threatening massive tariffs on Chinese goods, became America’s president-elect. Debate on Chinese social media offers clues to the way that at least some people are pondering the future. As always, given heavy censorship of China’s internet, discussions are cautious, using nudges and winks to convey grievances that might upset the Communist Party. The economy is high on the long list of topics that net nannies monitor closely. They are keen to stamp out gloom.

For those inclined to pessimism, the awarding on October 14th of the Nobel prize in economics to three academics at American universities—Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson and James Robinson—provided an opportunity to air it. Messrs Acemoglu and Robinson were already known in China for their book “Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty”. Three years after the English version was published in 2012, a translation was launched in China. It caused a stir. The book argues that countries’ long-

term economic success depends mainly on the nature of their social and political institutions, rather than culture, climate or geography. Those with institutions that are “inclusive”—that is, work in the interests of diverse groups rather than a narrow elite—are better at ensuring sustained growth than ones that are “extractive”, it posits. The authors say China’s economic institutions have become more inclusive since the era of Mao Zedong. This has enabled China’s astonishing economic expansion in recent decades. But they say China’s political institutions remain extractive, making it “likely to run out of steam”.

It is remarkable that such an argument can be aired in China, especially under Xi Jinping, who took power soon after the book was published in English and swiftly moved to silence the type of liberals who would be its natural fans. The Chinese version omits much of the authors’ argument about China, especially parts that are critical of its political system. Mr Acemoglu says he and his co-author felt “it was still worth trying to reach the Chinese audience in this form” even though it was a “very painful episode”. Readers could still deduce their point. And striking elements remained, for example that “authoritarian growth is neither desirable nor viable in the long run, and thus should not receive the endorsement of the international community as a template for nations in Latin America, Asia and sub-Saharan Africa”. Mr Xi would beg to differ. Since the Nobel prize



was awarded, there has been renewed interest in the work, with some Chinese netizens recommending it (and nationalists attacking it). “There is uncertainty in China’s future,” posted one user of Weibo, a social-media platform. “If it does not further reform, improve its inclusive economic system and establish an inclusive political system, China’s rapid development will be unsustainable. Re-reading this now is truly eye-opening.” He attached a glowing review of the book written in 2015 by Wu Jinglian, one of China’s most famous economists. Such sentiment is reflected in an idea that began spreading online last

year: that China has entered the “garbage time of history”. It refers to an American sports term used to describe low-quality play at the end of a match when competitors run out the clock because the result is already clear. Chinese netizens adopted it to express their feeling that China is stagnating. In July state media assailed the term. On Guancha, a nationalist website, an academic accused its users of “attempting to create public expectations that the nation will inevitably fail”. As China unleashes its stimulus package, expect no let-up in the government’s attacks on grumblers.

## K.P. Sharma Oli playing the “China card” by going to Beijing, Nepal should balance ties: Former Nepal PM Prachanda

Slamming Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli for playing what he called the “China card”, former Nepali PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal, now Leader of the Opposition, said that India-Nepal ties are under a strain due to the new government’s policies and that there is a “danger” that the border-dispute would be rekindled. In an exclusive interview with The Hindu here, Mr. Dahal, popularly known as Prachanda, said that he had taken India-Nepal ties to “new heights” during his 18-month tenure that ended abruptly in July when he lost a vote of confidence in parliament and was replaced by a coalition between Mr. Oli’s UML and the Nepali Congress party. Speaking at the Kantipur Conclave organized in Kathmandu, you said that you took India-Nepal ties to new heights during your most recent term (December 2022- July 2024). Yet just four months later, there seem to be a number of tensions and issues that have cropped up in the relationship- why do you think that has happened?

During my tenure India-Nepal ties indeed were taken to new heights. During my visit there in June 2023, and talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we reached several important agreements and a deep understanding that was far-reaching. I returned this year for Mr. Modi’s oath-taking

ceremony (in June 2024) and spoke with him and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar I feel proud that we were able to build strong relations based on both country’s national interests. I feel what is happening in Nepal at present after my government was ousted, is wrong, vis-à-vis India- this is not right. PM Oli is going to Beijing soon, and officials say India has not issue an invitation so far. This is the first time we are seeing a Nepali PM not come to India first after coming to office. Where does the problem lie?

This is proof of the immaturity of the present government led by PM Oli. They should have shown some maturity in their ties with both the neighbouring countries. KP-ji is going to China for a bilateral visit, but it seems this visit is more about using the ‘China card’, which is wrong. Our history, culture and geography dictate that we must balance our relationship, and he must acknowledge Nepal’s unique relationship with India before going [to China]. This should not have happened. Two major issues between Delhi and Kathmandu seem to be over India denying Nepal’s request, which you had made publicly last year for additional overflight routes to Pokhara and Bhairahawa airports, and India’s refusal to buy any hydropower or goods that have a

Chinese component. What is the solution? On the Hydropower issue, India and Nepal announced historic agreements last year, including the purchase of 10,000 MW by India. We were close to an agreement on taking forward the Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project, and I think that if I had been allowed to remain in power another six months, that would have been finalized. On the border issues too (Susta-Kalapani-Limpiyudhara), Mr. Modi said that we would have resolved the issue with the intense engagement we had, and India had sent that message to Nepal. I fear there’s a danger that given the situation now, this is going to be reopened again and become a bigger issue. We need to move carefully, improve ties and resolve this issue.

From India’s perspective, it seems Nepal changes its government very often, it is hard to keep up with the political scenario. You are now in the opposition again; do you see yourself reclaiming the Prime Minister’s post? I don’t want to be in the race for the Prime Minister at present. I want to focus all my attention on creating a better bond with the people in Nepal, and not to run behind the post. But my fear is what if the post runs behind me, and our party will have to decide what to do if that opportunity arises. Right now I just want to spend my energy improving the party’s standing



with the public. Not all will come together, but many would like to join [us], and hopefully they will. Nepal was the last host of the SAARC- which has not been organized since 2014 due to India-Pakistan tensions. Is SAARC finished, and should the region look at other ways to work on South Asian issues? The problem with SAARC must be resolved. The major role in this is India’s, as it is by far the largest country in the region, so we would hope that India can find a way out, and we would always support that. SAARC must remain, we can’t abandon it.