

## Telangana to make strong case for operational control over NSP

Hyderabad: The Telangana government is set to make a strong case for restoration of operational control over the Nagarjuna Sagar Project (NSP) at the 19th board meeting of the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB), scheduled for December 3. The State insists that as long as the Srisailem project remains under the operational control of Andhra Pradesh (AP), the operations of NSP should be the responsibility of Telangana. Despite the Union Home Secretary's directive to maintain the status quo regarding the maintenance of joint projects like Srisailem and NSP, this has not been realised.

Telangana has raised concerns over the key outlets of NSP, which AP took control of on November 29, 2013, and has not returned to Telangana. The State has borne the costs of upkeep and repairs to the crest gates of NSP, including the 13 gates on the AP end of the dam, but AP has been causing hindrances to routine maintenance works. Telangana will press for the inclusion of the operational control of NSP on the agenda, emphasizing the need for transpar-

ent and effective management of water resources. The State will advocate for the installation of telemetry systems at key outlets used by AP for water draws from Srisailem project, NSP dam and Prakasam barrage. This step aims to ensure transparent monitoring of water draws.

The first phase of telemetry installations did not provide accurate readings, and their replacement is an ongoing issue. The KRMB has proposed installing nine more telemetries as part of the second phase, but funding is required to proceed with the project. KRMB Headquarters The relocation of the KRMB headquarters to AP will also be a topic of discussion at the upcoming meeting. With the change of government in AP, the proposal to establish the KRMB headquarters in Visakhapatnam has been abandoned. The new government is keen on providing office space for KRMB in Amaravati, and the headquarters at Jala Soudha in Telangana is likely to be vacated soon. The confrontation between the two riparian States continues over water-sharing issues due to the lack of effective monitoring. Telangana has faced is-



sues in maintaining the NSP due to AP's control over key outlets and hindrances to routine maintenance works despite the fact that the State has also borne the costs of repairs and upkeep, including the crest gates

on the AP end of the dam. The upcoming KRMB meeting will be crucial in addressing these issues and ensuring fair and transparent management of water resources between the two States.

## Airport in Telangana's Adilabad still a distant dream, project yet to take off



Adilabad: The long-pending dream of an airport continues to remain as a distant dream for the people of Adilabad district even as resources needed for the facility are available. The State government recently sanctioned Rs 205 crore for acquiring around 280 acres of lands meant for airport at Mumnoor in Warangal district, following clearance given by Airports Authority of India (AAI) for the project recently. However, the Centre did not consider to develop an airport in Adilabad town even after local MP G Nagesh submitted representation to the Civil Aviation Minister a few months ago, dashing hopes of the people. Local MLA Payal Shankar called on Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy also and urged him to take

steps to establish an airport in Adilabad a few months ago. Accordingly, revenue officials sent a report incorporating details of 1,591 acres of land identified on the outskirts of Khanapur and Thantholi for the purpose of an airport and the value of the lands, Rs 438 crore, to the State government.

In August, Adilabad MP G Nagesh met Union Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu and appealed to him to sanction an airport for Adilabad. He claimed Naidu responded positively to his plea. He said that the Minister promised to create the airport if the State government hands over the land to the Centre, rekindling hopes of the people. Locals opined that public representatives from erstwhile Adilabad district

should exert pressure on both the State and Union governments to realise their dream of flying. They stated that four MLAs from BJP and Congress each could easily convince the governments and secure the facility. They reasoned that the legislators and MPs could thank the people of the region by striving hard to fulfil their long pending dream. People of the district have been demanding successive Union governments to create an airport as Adilabad town is located around 250 kilometers away from Hyderabad and Nagpur of Maharashtra. They are currently forced to depend on airports located in either Hyderabad or Nagpur to fly to different parts of the country and world for various needs, including education and business. "Businessmen of Adilabad town regularly travel to Nagpur, Hyderabad and Mumbai cities by air. They are left with no choice but to depend on airports in Hyderabad and Nagpur. People are forced

to spend more time travelling by trains in order to reach religious centres located outside Telangana," Jagadish Agarwal, a trader of the town said. Adilabad had an aerodrome. Incidentally, an aerodrome was established on a sprawling 369 acres of land on the peripherals of Adilabad town by the then Nizam of Hyderabad in order to fill fuel for fighter aircrafts proceeding to battlefronts in 1930. It had come under the control of the IAF, following Independence to the country in 1947. It was used as a refueling point again for helicopters used for training pilots till late 1970s. In 2014, the IAF proposed to convert the aerodrome into a full-fledged Air Force Station. It had sought district administration to identify adequate land for this purpose. Accordingly, 1,592 acres of land was identified by revenue officials under the limits of Kachakanti, Khanapur, Thantoli and Anukunta villages abutting the existing aerodrome in 2017.

## Singareni to deposit Diwali bonus for retired workers on November 27

Hyderabad: The Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) will deposit the Performance Linked Reward Scheme (Diwali Bonus) amount in the bank account of the workers who retired from the company during the financial year 2023-24 and be-

tween April 1 and October 24, 2024 on November 27. According to company Chairman and Managing Director N Balram, a total of Rs. 18.27 crore would be credited into the account of 2,754 retired workers, with a maximum of Rs. 93,750 each.

# Largely insulated from Manipur's chaos, Assam's Cachar tries to keep things that way

From heightened vigilance on the border to shutting markets early to holding peace meetings — authorities in Assam's Cachar are working overtime to ensure the communal fire from the neighbouring district of Manipur's Jiribam does not spread there. Separated only by a bridge, the Lakhipur subdivision in Cachar and Jiribam have a similar demographic profile — a mixed population of Bengali Muslims and Hindus, Meiteis, Meitei Pangals, Bishnupriya Manipuris, Biharis, Dimasas, Hmars, Kukis, Khasis, Rongmei Nagas, and so on.

With Jiribam on the boil since November 7 and violence claiming 21 lives so far, authorities and locals of both Meitei and Hmar groups in Cachar are being extra vigilant. On Tuesday afternoon, representatives of both communities held their first peace meeting in Lakhipur with local administration and police officers since the latest cycle of violence broke out. Those at the meeting, which included representatives of other communities residing in the area, said they discussed measures being taken by the police to maintain vigilance, instructions to avoid rumour mongering, shutting down markets before dark, and reporting suspicious activities to officials. Biren, MLAs to Centre: Go after Kuki militants, review AFSPA With Jiribam on the boil since November 7 and violence claiming 21 lives so far, authorities and locals of both Meitei and Hmar groups in Cachar are being extra vigilant. "Though people on both sides feel affected when we hear of what's happening to members of our communities in Manipur, we also want to

make sure there is no impact here. We've been reiterating that people should be careful not to react quickly to any kind of situation. For instance, many Manipuri youngsters go to the Hmar village of Hmarkhawlien to eat momos there. They should be careful not to get into arguments or fights because now, it will be seen as a fight between a Meitei and a Hmar," said Reena Singh, a resident of the area and chairman of the Manipuri Development Council. Police have also increased their presence at the borders. Assam IGP (Law and Order) P K Bhuyan told The Indian Express that personnel have been placed at locations from where "there is a possibility of miscreants infiltrating" into Cachar. "To ensure that no one takes advantage of the law-and-order situation in Jiribam to break the peace here, we are alert and have deployed commandos and all our police battalions here. We don't want any bad elements to enter and create unrest. We are working 24x7 to prevent this... We have informed local committees that if such people come here, they should report it to us so we can take lawful action. But we don't have any information yet of such movement," Cachar Superintendent of Police Numal Mahatta told reporters during a midnight patrol on Monday. The police have also temporarily stopped the movement of boats on the riverine route between Lakhipur and Manipur over the Barak River and are carrying out patrols there too. While Cachar has not seen any violence since the outbreak of clashes in its neighbourhood, it has still felt the ripples. When violence first broke out in Jiribam in



June this year, around 1,000 displaced Hmar and Kuki people fled to Lakhipur to seek shelter. Now, locals estimate that around 400 people, mostly women, children and the elderly, are in informal relief camps in villages such as Hmarkhawlien, Chikhur, Mirpur and Lalpani, while many more are living in rented houses or with relatives there. Silchar, the district headquarters of Cachar, also saw tensions last week when the bodies of 10 Hmar men, who were gunned down by the CRPF in Jiribam, were brought to Silchar Medical College and Hospital. Hmar groups alleged a delay in handing over the bodies of the men, who Manipur police have labelled militants, and protested outside the

hospital. Local community leaders are also trying to find ways to keep the peace. "People are always on social media. We know we can't prevent that but we want to minimise the impact of false news. We are having awareness discussions with the public," said a senior member of the Hmar community who was part of Tuesday's meeting. This was the third such peace meeting held in Lakhipur since last year. "There is no issue at all between the locals here. We all know them, they know us. We have depended on each other for a long time; we go to the same markets. But there is a fear of unknown people entering our communities and influencing things," Reena Singh said.

# Conversations with Dalits in Maharashtra ahead of polls

In the winter of 1974, it was a volcano. Young men and women spouted forth from their grubby government chawls onto the snaking alleys of central Mumbai — the hope of a future free from the stench of caste bias and economic injustice steeled their hearts. e of independent India's longest-running movements — the 16-year-long Namantar struggle by Dalit activists to change the name of Marathwada University to Dr BR Ambedkar University. (HT Photo)

Today, a row of shops selling shirts and mobile phones line the street where their dreams were smashed. Sumedh Jadhav struggles to point out the spot where his elder brother Bhagwat was hit by a grinding stone during a march down the Worli suburb on January 9, 1974. In 50 years, large chunks of the suburb have gentrified. Two flyovers flank either side of the road where Bhagwat slumped to his death, and the damp, discoloured chawls only occupy some inner bylanes now. Jadhav's unsure steps now struggle to even cross familiar roads. "But we can never forget Bhagwat dada. He was the first martyr of the Dalit Panthers," he said. Built on the ideals of the Black Panthers, the Dalit Panthers were forged in 1972, as a response to the discontent brewing among the marginalised com-

munity at the cusp of the 25th anniversary of Independence. But even as they were gaining ground, the violence of 1974, known as the Worli Riots, sapped them of energy and caused a splintering in ranks. "The violence riots continued for months. A generation of young Dalit men was thrown in jail. Families alleged police brutality. It broke our momentum. People were also frightened. How long could we fight?" asked JV Pawar, one of the founders of the Dalit Panthers. Read more: Assembly elections: Voting in Maharashtra, Triggered by a Lok Sabha byelection, the Worli riots altered the course of Dalit politics in a state where Dr BR Ambedkar was born and which is often considered the cradle of the movement. It weakened the Panthers, snuffed out the possibility of a political outfit led by Dalits, and strengthened mainstream parties. Over the last 50 years, the script has largely remained the same. But the 2024 assembly polls can be a bend in that road. In these extraordinarily chaotic elections, contested by six big and at least 20 smaller outfits, the Dalit communities are undergoing a churn of their own, exemplified by the clash between two contrasting issues animating voters — fears around the Constitution versus the promises of subclassification of quotas. Dalit communities form around 12%

of the population of Maharashtra and have 28 of the 288 assembly seats reserved for them. In an unpredictable election that every party believes will be closely contested, they can act as an important swing vote.

In the Lok Sabha elections — the first electoral exercise since the two biggest regional outfits, the Shiv Sena and the Nationalist Congress Party, suffered vertical splits — Dalit communities largely backed the Maha Vikas Aghadi over fears that the Constitution could be changed and reservation harmed if the Bharatiya Janata Party-led alliance won a supermajority in Parliament. Rohit Jadhav was one of those who voted for the MVA. A resident of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, the 36-year-old hails from a family of Ambedkarites. "My father is a follower of Prakash Ambedkar (the grandson of BR Ambedkar and chief of the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi). But during the Lok Sabha polls, I moved to the Congress because local leaders were boasting about plans to change the Constitution," he said. The MVA won 30 of the 48 seats, including all five Lok Sabha constituencies reserved for scheduled castes. The Mahayuti (led by the BJP) won only 17. This time though, he is not so sure. "After all, this is not a national election, there is no threat to

the Constitution from a state government," he said.

Also playing on his mind is a late gambit by the BJP government — of forming a one-man judicial panel just before the elections to look into the question of subclassification of the SC quota. In August, the Supreme Court permitted states to internally subdivide the SC quota, arguing that the access of some communities to reservation benefits was unequal. The landmark decision immediately kicked off a furious debate, with some groups welcoming the verdict and others alleging that it will politicise the quota and cause division within the marginalised castes. The BJP reaped the benefits of stoking the anxiety among smaller SC groups in the assembly elections in Haryana with an identical strategy — form a panel, promise benefits under subclassification and successfully hive off a chunk of the vote that backed the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. In Haryana, its target was the second-largest SC group — the Balmikis. In Maharashtra, it is Jadhav's community — the Mangs. They are the second-largest SC community in Maharashtra, forming a little less than a third of the Dalit population. But the Mangs often complain that they're far behind the largest group, the Mahars, in socioeconomic indices and political power.

# The Creek Planet School Celebrates Creedotsavam - A Synergetic ???????

Hyderabad: The Creek Planet School celebrated its annual extravaganza, Creedotsavam 2024, with great pomp and splendor at the Ganti Mohana Chandra Balayogi Athletic Stadium, Gachibowli. The event was themed "Synergetic Extravaganza...the blazing glory of the CREEKS". This year's celebration was a testament to the school's commitment to fostering a culture of excellence, creativity, and teamwork.

The Chief Guest, Wing Cdr. B. Srikanth (Retd.), Corporate Real Estate and Facility Manager, was welcomed by the school management, including T Pandu Ranga Chary (Vice Chairman), and Narendra P Edupuganti (Founder & Managing Director), Dr. Jayashree Nair (Head Academics), Dr. Jeevani Gadde (COO), principals and vice principals. The event commenced with a guard of honor, welcome address, lamp lighting, and prayer song. The Chief Guest declared the Creedotsavam 2024 open, followed by an invocation dance that set the tone for the rest of the evening. The opening ceremony also featured a special appearance by the dolphin mascot which was revealed by the hon'ble chief guest who delighted the audience with its energetic and playful antics. The students of Creek Planet School showcased their talents through various performances, including thematic displays, mixed relay races, balloon drills, pom-pom drills, parade drills, Flag drills, and martial arts. The students performed a synchronized mass drill using Lazims, Wands, Hoops, and dumbbells. Following the flag drill, the students presented a stunning saree drill, showcasing their cultural heritage and traditional values. The parents also participated in games and were awarded prizes. The event featured a range of activities that promoted teamwork, discipline, and creativity. From the energetic performances to the enthusiastic participation of parents, the evening was a celebration of the school's spirit and values. One of the highlights of the event was the felicitation ceremony for the Xth-grade students of 2023-24. The students were recognized for their outstanding achievements and received certificates and awards. The grand finale was a spectacular display followed by a torch drill. The students' performances were met with thunderous applause, and the evening concluded with a vote of thanks and the national anthem. Mrs. Nandini Agasara, National athlete graced the occasion and addressed the gathering, inspiring the students to strive for excellence in all aspects of life. She urged the students to maintain a healthy balance between their digital lives and physical activities. She emphasized the importance of regular sports participation, encouraging the students to stay active and engaged in outdoor pursuits, rather than spending excessive time on digital devices. The Creedotsavam 2024 was a resounding success, with over 6000+ students participating in the event. The chief guests awarded a total of 15000 certificates, 113 trophies, 113 runner-up trophies, 357 gold medals, 357 silver medals, and 357 bronze medals in individual sports such as Table Tennis, Chess, Running, Swimming, Skating, Hurdle race, and 1500 medals for team events including Kho-kho, Football, Throwball, Volleyball, and Badminton. The



Creedotsavam 2024 was a testament to the school's commitment to providing a holistic education that fosters creativity, teamwork,

and excellence. The school's management expressed their gratitude to the Chief Guest, Sri Ramesh Nagapuri, and all the guests who

attended the event. They also thanked everyone for their active participation and support in making the event a grand success.

## Can Oscar Piastri transcend the rear-gunner role and upend McLaren's hierarchy?

When the Formula One bandwagon re-groups in the land of glitz, glamour, and gambling in Las Vegas, ahead of the final set of triple-headers (Vegas, Qatar, and Abu Dhabi) to close out the 2024 season, both the titles are mathematically still up for grabs. Max Verstappen leads Lando Norris by 62 points, with 86 points still in play. McLaren leads Ferrari by 36 points, with Red Bull a further 13 adrift. Verstappen, barring catastrophic non-finishes in at least two events, will likely enter the new year as a quadruple world champion. The Dutchman's stunning drive in damp conditions in Brazil, where he took his eighth win, pretty much snuffed out any outside chance Norris might have had of fighting for the drivers' title. Meaningful impact While Verstappen and Norris have been the protagonists this season, there have been many impressive performers. One driver who has made a meaningful impact on the championship is the guy piloting the second McLaren — Oscar Piastri. In his sophomore campaign, the Australian is already a two-time race winner and has played a vital role in getting McLaren within striking distance of its first constructors' title since 1998. Often, teams have an

informal No. 1 driver whom they back to lead the charge, like Verstappen for Red Bull or Charles Leclerc for Ferrari. Although Norris is the entrenched McLaren team leader, Piastri's performances have been a little too impressive for him to be boxed into an understudy role. The team can credibly claim to have the grid's best driver line-up. Come 2025, Piastri, with two years of experience, including wins and podiums, could well shake up the hierarchy at McLaren. The 23-year-old's entry into the sport was shrouded in controversy when Alpine, where he was the reserve driver, unilaterally announced signing him for 2023 without agreeing a contract to replace the outgoing Fernando Alonso. In a stunning development, Piastri clarified a few hours later that he wouldn't drive for the team. Later, it emerged that he would take his compatriot Daniel Ricciardo's seat at McLaren. Alpine approached the FIA's Contract Recognition Board, which ruled in McLaren's favour after the French team did not have a proper contract. But despite being legally correct, Piastri was unfairly vilified by many, including some team bosses, who questioned his loyalty or lack thereof for being part of the Alpine Academy and choos-

ing to go elsewhere. Colossal pressure He debuted under colossal pressure, handling a McLaren that was woefully off the pace in the first half of 2023. However, as the car became quicker in the second half, Piastri found his footing and showed his true pace, nicking a few podiums and a sprint win in Qatar. The former F3 and F2 champion — he clinched both titles as a rookie — was not far off Norris, especially in qualifying. A good barometer of drivers is how quick they are in the high-speed sections. Piastri, like his manager and former F1 driver Mark Webber, was mighty around such corners, especially in places like Silverstone. While he was pretty quick over a single lap, he struggled in races due to poor tyre management, which boiled down to inexperience in managing the thermally sensitive Pirelli compounds. He has shown remarkable improvement in this area this year, and the results are there to see. This year, McLaren took a big step forward at the Miami GP, which Norris won. But it was Piastri who was the lead McLaren at the event, running in second behind Verstappen, despite not having all the upgrades Norris had. He could have won the race if not for a safety car intervention after he had pitted.

# Digital Arrest Scam averted by SBI Chandrayan gutta branch

State Bank of India staff of Chandrayan Gutta branch saved a senior citizen from Digital arrest and cyber fraud of Rs 46 lakhs. On 22nd Nov 2024 a retired PSU employee visited the branch with his spouse and presented a cheque at the counter for transfer of Rs.46 lakhs by way of RTGS. Shri B Praveen, Senior Associate who was at the counter sensed something amiss as the customer was tense and restless. With his keen instincts, he immediately escorted the couple to Branch Head, Dr. Shiva Kumar, AGM. The Branch Head welcomed the customer to his cabin and inquired about the transaction. The customers were made to feel at ease as the Branch Head listened to them attentively. They narrated the entire sequence of incident recounting their harrowing experience. The customer said "the video callers told him that they are from CBI and a network of individuals including a man

named Shri Sunil Goel have orchestrated a staggering scam of 100 crores. The police have arrested Sunil Goel and are now on the lookout to arrest him as the account opened had his KYC & Aadhar Credentials. For the last three days, the customer and his wife were held hostage under video call by the Cyber criminals. The couple were forbidden from contacting anyone or disclosing the matter. The scammers claimed that their men were waiting outside. The fraudsters threatened them and subjected them to emotional blackmailing. They said they will arrest him and his son if they didn't transfer 146 lakh from their fixed deposit account immediately to their account. In desperation, the customer and his wife decided to visit the SBI Chandrayangutta branch to transfer the funds. They submitted their RTGS fund transfer request for transfer of amount to the account of M/s Mizani Electratech held with ICICI Bank,

Pundlik nagar, Aurangabad. The Branch Manager, Dr. Shiva Kumar quickly sensed the gravity of the situation and contacted the children of the customer to post them about the incident and immediately lodged a complaint with the Cyber crime helpline 1930. Canara Bank was also reached out to verify if any account was opened in the name of customer. Canara Bank informed that no such account was opened and advised not to fall prey to such sinister plans plotted by the cybercriminals. With the active intervention of the Branch Manager the attempt of cyber fraud by criminals was foiled. The couple were thus spared from the trauma and catastrophic financial loss. The customer and his wife expressed their deep sense of gratitude to the Branch Manager and thanked the entire team of SBI Chandrayan Gutta branch. This incident is a testament to the exceptional service by SBI and their commitment to protect the customer from cyber

frauds. The series of cyber frauds being averted by the Bank in the recent times with the alertness displayed by the front office staff, amply demonstrates the commitment of staff in safeguarding customers' interest and protecting them from losing out their hard earned money to cyber criminals. Several of the initiatives taken by the Bank to educate the general public of the cyber frauds on various platforms are yielding dividends with many attempts by the fraudsters being thwarted. The Bank reiterates that the customers should always be vigilant and approach the nearby branch for guidance / help in case any doubt and also immediately report suspicious transactions / incidence by calling 1930 or by lodging complaint on the official government portal - [www.cybercrime.gov.in](http://www.cybercrime.gov.in)

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## Seminar on "How to Crack Civil Services on First Attempt" Held at CMR Technical Campus.

Hyderabad, 23rd November 2024: A seminar titled "How to Crack Civil Services on First Attempt UPSC master class" was successfully conducted at CMR Technical Campus, Medchal, organized by G5 Media Group and KP's 21st century IAS academy. The event aimed to motivate and guide students aspiring to join the civil services. P. Krishna Pradeep, Chairman of 21st Century IAS Academy, Hyderabad, delivered the keynote address. He emphasized the authority and responsibility entrusted to civil servants, citing the example of IAS officer Rajni Sekari Sibal, who upheld her integrity by refusing unethical instructions from a former Chief Minister of Haryana. Her courage was later vindicated when the Chief Minister was jailed in 2013. Krishna Pradeep emphasized that the primary mission of his academy is to nurture leadership qualities in students and prepare them to become the future leaders of the next generation. Dr. Bhavani Shankar, Chief Mentor of 21st Century IAS Academy, spoke about the academy's two decades of excellence in coaching and its aim to secure at least 20 ranks in the UPSC annually. Dr. Raji Reddy, Director of CMR Technical Campus, in his speech announced the campus's plans to launch a Civil Aspirants Club shortly, which will support students in their preparation and aim to achieve commendable results in the civil services examinations. Dr. Konda Srinivas, Dean FSA welcomed the gather-



ing. Y. Varun, director of 21st century IAS academy, B. Prashanth, Asst Professor, Giri Prakash, Director G5 media group were

present. Meghana and Manasa of 3rd year students moderated the seminar. The seminar was well-received by attendees, who

expressed appreciation for the motivational and practical guidance provided by the speakers.

## After US indictment, Adani Group stocks shed Rs 2.45 lakh cr market value

New Delhi: After US prosecutors charged billionaire Gautam Adani over his role in an alleged years-long scheme to pay \$250 million bribe to Indian officials in exchange for favourable terms for solar power contracts, the Adani group stocks faced heavy drubbing during the morning trade on Thursday, with the combined market valuation of all the listed firms getting eroded by Rs 2.45 lakh crore. The stock of the group's

flagship firm Adani Enterprises plunged 22.99 per cent, Adani Ports dived 20 per cent, Adani Energy Solutions tanked 20 per cent, Adani Green Energy plummeted 19.53 per cent and Adani Total Gas tumbled 18.14 per cent on the BSE. Shares of Adani Power slumped 17.79 per cent, Ambuja Cements cracked 17.59 per cent, ACC fell 14.54 per cent, NDTV dropped 14.37 per cent and Adani Wilmar declined 10 per cent. Some of the

group firms also hit their lowest trading permissible limit for the day.

The combined market capitalisation (mcap) of all the ten listed group firms eroded by Rs 2,45,016.51 crore during the morning deals. In the equity market, the BSE benchmark Sensex traded 536.89 points lower at 77,041.49 and the NSE Nifty quoted 186.75 points down at 23,331.75. US prosecutors

charged Adani, 62, his nephew Sagar and other defendants for paying over \$250 million in bribes between 2020 and 2024 to Indian government officials to win solar energy contracts on terms that could potentially bring in more than \$2 billion in profit. This, they alleged, was concealed from the US banks and investors from whom the Adani Group raised billions of dollars for the project.

# Jhansi hospital fire | The fire that engulfed newborn babies

On the night of November 15, Dharmendra Raikwar, 31, and Bhagwati, 27, were seated in the waiting area outside the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) of Jhansi's government-run Maharani Laxmi Bai Medical College Hospital. Their week-old son had been admitted there with a fever. Suddenly, they heard screams about a fire. "When we went inside, we saw that someone had broken the windows of the ward and had started handing out babies," Dharmendra says. Babies were lifted out of incubators and their needles and tubes removed, to save them from the fire. Amid the pandemonium, an infant was thrust into their arms. Relieved that they had been reunited with their son, the couple admitted him in the district hospital in Lalitpur district, located about two hours away. However, their happiness was short-lived. The next morning, the authorities called them, along with the parents of other children who had been admitted in the NICU, back to Jhansi to identify their babies.

"I could not believe my ears when they said that my baby had died in the fire and that the baby we had got was someone else's," says Bhagwati, sobbing. "Nobody can understand the pain of a mother who has lost her child. They even did a post-mortem on our child." The family lives in the Bar block of Lalitpur in a mud house with a broken roof and damaged walls. Their three-year-old daughter plays nearby. The fire claimed the lives of 10 newborn babies. The Uttar Pradesh government has ordered a multi-level probe into the incident and also formed a four-member committee, headed by the Director General of Medical Education and Training, Kinjal Singh, to investigate it. The team arrived in Jhansi on November 18 and is yet to submit its report to the government. The government announced an ex gratia of ₹5 lakh to the family of each deceased baby and ₹50,000 to the families of injured babies.

U.P. Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, who also holds the health portfolio, went to the hospital to take stock of the situation on November 16. However, his visit became controversial after videos emerged on social media showing workers cleaning the premises and sprinkling lime powder on the roads — a practice commonly seen before welcoming VIPs, in India. A horrific night at 10.20 p.m. on November 15, several families sat in the waiting area outside the special newborn care unit (SNCU) of the medical college hospital. Others were preparing to sleep. No parent is allowed inside the unit unless they are called by the hospital staff to feed their child. The SNCU is divided into three sections based on the child's criticality. The NICU is the inner-most room. When a few families went in to feed their babies, they saw that a fire had broken out. Kripal Singh was waiting outside the SNCU with his daughter who had been called inside to breastfeed her newborn. As he walked in, he says, he saw a nurse running out with one of her legs on fire. "There were more nurses there. So we just started picking up children in whatever condition they were, and handing them to the people outside," he recalls. Megha James, 32, a nurse posted at the NICU, was among the first to spot the fire. "I was preparing an injection while a doctor was treating a child. Suddenly,

an oxygen concentrator caught fire. We tried to control it. We called a ward boy, who tried to douse it with a fire extinguisher. But the flames had spread by then," she recalls. James says plastic from equipment was falling everywhere. The hospital staff tried to douse the burning plastic on the floor with their footwear, but failed. "My uniform also caught fire," James says. "So I removed it and threw it away." She was treated at the hospital's burns unit. The medical college principal, Dr. Narendra Singh Sengar, says the oxygen concentration in critical childcare units is kept at 49% as compared to the 21% in normal atmosphere, to help children breathe easily. This, he believes, could have worsened the fire in a short span of time. The Paediatrics Department at Jhansi's Maharani Laxmibai Medical College Hospital. Hearing the chaos, more family members rushed inside the SNCU. Some of them wrapped infants in blankets and ran out. Soon, black smoke blocked the entrance. In about 20 minutes, a fire tender arrived at the scene and put out the fire, according to hospital authorities. While 39 of the 49 children admitted in the three rooms were rescued, the fire, suspected to have started from a short-circuit, killed 10 infants in the NICU. Among the rescued babies, 16 suffered injuries. The hospital and the district authorities moved the remaining infants to the emergency ward, say officials. On November 16, most children were moved to the paediatric ICU of the hospital, while others were admitted to other government and private hospitals in the city. Since the tragedy, five more children, who were rescued from the fire, have passed away. However, Dr. Sengar claims that they died from illnesses. The families allege negligence.

As family members and hospital staff recall the tragic turn of events, they say everyone was only focused on one task, which was to save as many babies as they could. Yakoob Mansoori and Nazma Bano gave birth to twin daughters on November 9. Mansoori was able to save about seven children from the fire, but not his own. His little girls were charred beyond recognition, he says. Dharmendra's father, Munna Lal Raikwar, says there was no time to think. "All the children, dead or alive, were lying on a sheet on the floor outside the unit," he says. When infants are admitted in hospital, they are given tags with details such as their parents' names, and their weight and other measurements. But given the emergency, the parents say they did not check these tags while rescuing the infants or taking them to the emergency ward. Some tags got lost, too. Consequently, children got swapped or remained missing for a couple of days before being reunited with their parents. Kuldeep Singh from Parsaha village in Mahoba district stayed put outside the paediatric intensive care unit (PICU) as his child had gone missing. "My wife was constantly sobbing. We did not move from here (outside the PICU) and kept asking the doctors about him. When a doctor called us to identify our child and we saw him, we started crying," he says, as he helps out parents of other children with formalities. The 15-day-old, who had suffered minor burn injuries, had been handed to another family. Similarly, Kripa Ram Yadav, a



resident of Bamer village in Jhansi district, had to wait until the next evening to be reunited with his seven-day-old son. Anger everywhere. Many families fault the hospital staff for the tragedy as well the administration for poor crisis management. Guddi Devi stares at a photo of her grandson near the hospital's emergency ward. The infant was rescued from the fire, but passed away on November 17. Devi's husband, Sattu, says that there was not enough medical staff to rescue the children. "We rescued him ourselves and his oxygen supply was cut for a while. Many children were bleeding as their drip had to be removed during the rescue," he says. The child's father, who had suffered a paralysis attack just a day before his son was born, is undergoing treatment in Lucknow.

Many people also claim that most of the fire extinguishers were dysfunctional and that the staff was not trained to use the ones that were functioning. Dr. Sengar says the expired extinguishers were kept in a storage room nearby and were brought out by people to break the windows amid the chaos. He contends that a fire safety audit was conducted in June and an electric audit was done in January this year. Ahead of the safety audit in June, 126 fire extinguishers were refilled, he says. Days after the tragedy, a few small capacity extinguishers, manufactured in 2019, are placed outside the window of the SNCU. While the average life of an extinguisher is 10-12 years, the equipment requires annual servicing, usually signified by a sticker with details. Only two large extinguishers had stickers that said that they had been serviced and refilled in June 2024. They are valid until June next year. The rest did not have details about an expiry date. Some people also allege that once the blaze grew, some staff members "fled the scene". Dr. Sengar denies the charge. "There were eight staff members, including two doctors and two nurses, in the ward. They all saved children," he says. The SNCU, which had 12 incubators, can admit 18 children, says Dr. Sengar. At the time of the incident, it had 49 infants. Hospital officials say that the count sometimes increases to nearly 60 — three times the limit. It is common practice in hospitals in U.P. to fit two or three infants in a large incubator, Dr. Sengar says. In the medical college hospital, going by the calculation, some incubators had up to four. Guddi Devi stares

at a photo of her grandson near the hospital's emergency ward. The infant was rescued from the fire, but passed away on November 17, 2024.

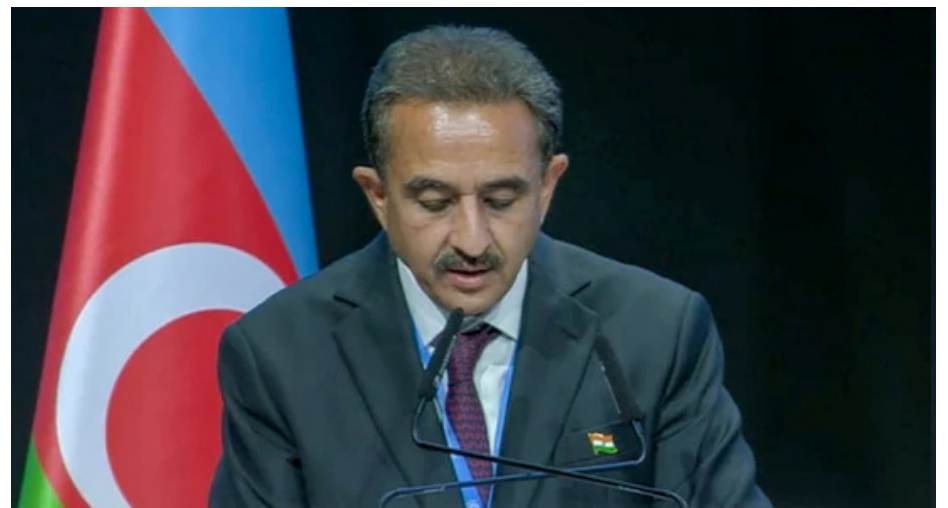
A.M. Faruqui Dr. Sengar says the SNCU had been in use for 12 years. A new 51-bed unit is under construction and is expected to begin operation in the next five months. He says most departments receive a high footfall as the hospital caters to the healthcare needs of at least 10-12 districts of U.P. and Madhya Pradesh. The patient influx has increased over the years. According to official data shared by Dr. Sachin Mahur, Chief Medical Superintendent of the medical college hospital, the patient footfall in the outpatient department and emergency wing was 6.4 lakh in 2023 compared to 4.9 lakh in 2022. This year, between January and August, it was already 4.14 lakh. Similarly, the number of patients who were admitted went up from 41,615 in 2022 to 49,089 in 2023; and 31,650 patients were already admitted till August this year. As per 2021 data, U.P. has a doctor-patient ratio of 1:2,158, which is much higher than the national ratio of 1:836 and more than twice the World Health Organization norm of 1:1,000. This burden reflects the lacklustre healthcare system across the Bundelkhand region and the high costs of private facilities. Dr. Sengar says he receives patients from districts including Jhansi, Mahoba, Lalitpur, Hamirpur, Jalaun, and Banda in U.P.; and Shivpuri, Datia, Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh, Panna, and Niwari in M.P. Patients and their families, most of them from poor socio-economic backgrounds from outside Jhansi, travel 80-250 kilometres to get to the hospital. They come mainly for critical care, he adds.

Why people came to Jhansi Apart from Dharmendra and Bhagwati, Sanjana and Sonu Kushwaha, who are also from the Bar block of Lalitpur, lost their son in the fire. Both families ended up at Jhansi's medical college hospital after being denied treatment at the community health centre (CHC) in Bar and in government hospitals in Lalitpur city. Sanjana's child could not be delivered at the CHC and she was referred to Lalitpur. "They did not have a bigger machine (in Lalitpur) to operate on him, so they asked us to take him to Jhansi," she says. Similarly, Bhagwati's son was referred to Lalitpur, as he had a fever.

# India flags mitigation burden at Baku meet

While India and the Global South are bearing huge economic burdens in mitigating climate crisis, severely limiting their capacity to meet developmental needs, it has not dampened India's resolve on climate action, Kirti Vardhan Singh, minister of state for environment and external affairs said at COP29 on Tuesday. "The high Carbon Emission Development Pathways of the Global North in past have left very little carbon space for the Global South. However, our growth trajectories for fulfilling the primary needs of sustainable development and poverty eradication cannot be compromised," he said as he presented India's national statement. "Despite not contributing to the problem, we in the Global South are bearing huge financial burden on account of climate actions for mitigation on the one hand, and losses and damages caused by climate change on the other, thus severely limiting our capacity to

meet our developmental needs, he said. "What we decide here, will enable all of us, particularly those in the Global South, to not only take ambitious mitigation action but also adapt to Climate Change. This CoP is historic in this context," Singh said, cautioning that decisions at COP29 should be guided by the core principles of Equity, Climate justice and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities provided in the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement. The context of different national circumstances, sustainable development goals and poverty eradication, particularly in respect of the Global South should not be lost sight of. The next round of Nationally Determined Contributions is due for submission the next year. The breach of carbon space seems imminent towards the end of this critical decade, Singh underlined. "It is imperative, therefore, that the developed countries show leadership in mitigation actions, as required under Paris Agreement, by not just advancing their net zero targets but providing enough carbon space for developing countries like ours to develop," he said. Developed countries need to appreciate that huge costs are being imposed on a developing country like ours for undertaking the climate actions, Singh said. "What we



decide here on NCQG must be founded on the principle of climate justice. The decisions must be ambitious and unambiguous, taking into consideration the evolving needs and priorities of the developing countries, and their commitment to sustainable development and eradication of poverty," India's statement added. Singh added that India achieved its 2015 NDC targets on emission intensity reduction and non-fossil based installed electricity generation capacity much earlier than

2030 and have further enhanced ambition. India's Renewable Energy Capacity has nearly tripled from its 2014 levels and it's on the course to achieve the 500 GW target by 2030. India has launched the Mission LiFE-Lifestyle for Environment to encourage the sustainable lifestyle practices at the global level. Mission LiFE inspires individuals, communities and societies to exercise choices and behaviours that focus on mindful utilisation of resources.

## Why immediate emission cuts from China may not be all that good

Despite being the world's second largest economy, China is considered a "developing" country by the United Nations, and is not mandated by the international climate change architecture to cut its greenhouse gas emissions in the short term. However, China has been the world's biggest emitter for more than 15 years, and now accounts for well over 30% of annual global emissions. If China does not reduce its emissions, the world is unlikely to meet its emission reduction targets. As things stand, the world is nowhere close to the minimum emission cuts required for 2030 — at least 43% over 2019 levels. Estimates suggest that annual global emissions in 2030 would be barely 2% below 2019 levels.

Why China is crucial The need for Chinese emission cuts is almost never discussed. Now, a first-of-its-kind analysis has suggested that China needs to reduce its emissions by 66% from current levels by 2030, and by 78% by 2035 to become 1.5-degree compliant. The modelling has been done by Climate Action Tracker (CAT), an independent scientific project that measures progress towards the 1.5-degree and 2-degree Celsius temperature targets mentioned in the Paris Agreement adopted in 2015. The overarching goal of the agreement, which came into force in 2016, is to hold "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels", and pursue efforts "to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels". In 6 years, China must reduce carbon emissions by at least 66%. Study The international climate framework applies a differentiated approach, demanding higher climate actions, including emission cuts, from the rich and developed world, while allowing

developing countries greater flexibility to plan their energy transitions. So, China is not expected to make the required deep emission cuts in the 2030 or 2035 timeframes. In fact, China's emissions are still increasing, and are expected to be about 0.2% higher this year than in 2023, according to the latest estimate of the Global Carbon Project, which seeks to quantify GHG emissions and their causes. Double-edged weapon But paradoxically, the hypothetical situation in which China does manage to make these very deep emission cuts in the short term may not be in the best interests of the world. This is because, ironically enough, it can have the effect of slowing down the deployment of renewable energy — not just within China, but in the rest of the world as well. Despite very rapid deployment of renewable energy like wind or solar — it added more than 300 GW of renewables just last year — China remains heavily dependent on fossil fuels. The share of renewable energy in its primary energy supply is still in single digits, and coal continues to generate more than half the country's electricity.

As of now, renewables are only adding new capacities in the country — they are not replacing fossil fuels. Emissions reductions would require the rapid phasing out of coal and other fossil fuels. This can have a negative impact on industrial production. Importantly, the manufacture of solar panels and wind turbines that are used to harness renewables like solar or wind, involves the liberal use of fossil fuels. And the global production of solar panels and wind turbines, as well as their supply chains, are heavily concentrated in China. China controls more than 80% of the global manufacturing of solar panels, dominating every step of the



process, and about 60% of the global wind turbine production. Supplies of other clean energy technologies such as batteries, hydrogen electrolysers, and critical minerals — all of which are crucial to effect the global energy transition — are also concentrated in China. Deep emission cuts in the short term could thus constrain the global supplies of renewable energy equipment, and slow down energy transitions everywhere. It would surely jeopardise the global renewable energy tripling target for 2030.

For world, it's Catch-22 If China does not reduce its emissions quickly, the global emission targets for achieving the 1.5-degree threshold are likely to be missed. But if it does so, that might disrupt supplies of renewable energy across the world, making it difficult for countries to phase out fossil fuels, and thus reduce emissions. Several countries are now realising this danger of over-dependence on China for critical technologies and resources related to clean energy. The disruption of supply chains during the Covid-19 pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of over-concentrated production processes. At least

a part of United States President-elect Donald Trump's anxieties related to China seem to stem from these concerns.

The diversification of renewable energy supply chains, particularly solar photovoltaic manufacturing, is now a central theme of most discussions on energy transitions. It is not that other countries cannot manufacture these products — but competing against the Chinese on costs could be difficult. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), China is the most cost-competitive location for manufacture of all components of the solar PV supply chain. "Costs in China are 10 per cent lower than in India, 20 per cent lower than in the United States, and 35 per cent lower than in Europe," the IEA said in an assessment published in 2022. (Special Report on Solar PV Global Supply Chains) Beijing's unique advantage No country has benefited from the international climate framework as much as China has. China happened to be at the right place at the right time — but it also made full use of the opportunities that came its way.

# If diamonds and pencils are made out of carbon, how is it that pencils can write?

I awkwardly resist and say “I actually do need a pencil.” She judges me a bit and hands me one, probably wondering why an adult might need this. As it turns out, ‘pencil’ is one of many words young adults use to refer to cigarettes, which is unfortunate because a pencil should just mean a pencil. While tables and smartphones are all the fad, some of us still prefer the pencil. They are a technological marvel and very resourceful. They can help push in electrical sockets, keep your teeth fit (if you chew on them), and punch open a food packet. And of course they can help you write. Each pencil has a black-grey core surrounded by wood. When you sharpen the pencil, the core becomes more exposed, and the pencil can write better. We regularly use pens to write but they have a thick liquid ink inside. This is essentially a coloured liquid that flows like any other liquid, be it water or oil. Since it flows on paper and has a colour, it leaves its footprints behind as it flows, and in this way pens write. But the core of a pencil is solid, like a metal spoon. If we move a steel spoon on paper, no amount of metal spills on the paper.

How then does a pencil write?

Carbon and its phases The core of the pencil is made of carbon — the same carbon most of us are primarily made of. Carbon is one of the most common elements on our planet. It can come in different phases and forms. In ambient conditions, water is a liquid. When it’s hotter, it becomes vapour, a gas. When it’s cold enough, it becomes a solid called ice. These phases of matter have completely different properties. You could sit (with some inconvenience) on a block of ice but you shouldn’t risk sitting on a pool of water. Yet both are made of the same molecules of hydrogen and oxygen: H<sub>2</sub>O. The difference is in how these molecules connect to each other. Similarly, when carbon atoms are arranged and stacked in different ways, they have completely different properties. Imagine each carbon atom has four hands. Each hand is a restless electron. If the hand forms a bond with another carbon, the atoms share the electron and it becomes calmer. In this way, if the carbon atoms arrange themselves in the form of an Egyptian pyramid-like structure, they form a diamond. Diamonds are shiny, transparent, and the hardest material known in nature. This is why it’s often used to cut other metals. No wonder diamonds are expensive and, for no fault of their own, often confused with expressions of love. The real magic lies with the carbon in a pencil. Graphite and sandwiches Pencil cores are made of carbon, too, but a different form called graphite. Unlike in diamonds, the carbons atoms in graphite are arranged in sheets, like slices of bread in a sandwich. Each layer contains carbon atoms connected to each other with three hands — that’s a very strong bond. However, the bonds between sheets are weak. Each layer in this arrangement is called graphene. When graphene is stacked in multiple layers, it creates graphite — which is at the core of a pencil. If you like, imagine the pencil’s core to be a tower of your favourite sandwich, containing millions of layers of bread with some cheese, patties, and/or sauce in between. If both graphite and diamond are made of carbon atoms, why can’t we write with diamonds? Writing by

sliding When you write using a pencil, you are sliding the core of the pencil on paper. In the process, you’re forcing the carbon atoms of the pencil to slide on the atoms of the paper. If you slide a hard material like diamond or a steel spoon on paper, the atoms of the material are so tightly bound to each other they have absolutely no interest in leaving and moving to the surface of the paper. But something amazing happens when you slide graphite. Graphite has layers of graphene. And just as it is slightly harder to remove a slice of bread from the middle of the sandwich than from the top, sliding graphite on paper sloughs off graphene-like layers onto the paper. This is how scientists first discovered graphene, too. They stuck cellophane tape on graphite and then ripped it off. When they looked at the tape under a microscope, they found thin layers of carbon stuck to it, i.e. graphene. As you go on wiggling the pencil, more and more layers of carbon come off. Each of these layers is black and shiny and is readily apparent to the human eye. This is how a pencil can write even though it lacks liquid ink. Condensed matter physics Carbon atoms arranged in one way behave so differently from when they’re arranged in a different way — even though each carbon atom itself behaves the same way. Diamond is whitish transparent while graphite is shiny



and black. These differences arise based on how the electrons the carbon atoms share behave even though, again, all electrons are the same. The underlying physics here is similar to why birds form patterns in the evening sky or how even humans behave so differently when they are in large groups. We may not be able to predict the behaviour of even a single bird or a person in general, but when they get together, they can acquire altogether new behaviours. The same is true

for cars in traffic and ants in a colony. This field of study is called condensed matter physics. If you want to explore it more, consider taking an undergraduate degree in physics. And the next time you have some time to spare on a casual evening, consider getting yourself a pencil. Sharpen it well and sketch. As you find your lines shaping up your thoughts, don’t forget to thank those hundreds of carbon atoms selflessly sliding off at your will.

## Cultural Encyclopedia of the Dard Tribe by Suheel Rasool Mir

The Dard tribe, once a pivotal element in the sociocultural and historical matrix of the Kashmir region, now exists as a spectral presence. Their erasure reflects history’s selective memory that leaves only traces of their past significance. Suheel Rasool Mir’s latest work delves into the intricate origins of the tribe. His Cultural Encyclopedia of the Dard Tribe: Journey Through Gurez and Ladakh is a rigorously researched and intellectually audacious endeavour that deftly captures the socio-historical essence of the Dard-Brokpa tribe in the regions of Gurez and Ladakh and illuminates their rich culture, traditions, rituals, and social structure. Drawing on a diverse array of methodologies — local knowledge, storytelling, memory, case studies, ethnography, and participatory research — the author weaves an intricate narrative. Through 15 meticulously structured chapters complemented by ethnographic diagrams, Mir presents an exploration of the Dard-Brokpa experience. He delves into the Dardic ethos that manifests in festivals, music, sports, ornaments, culinary traditions, and also examines the climate’s profound influence on the tribe’s way of life. In the opening chapter, Dardistan emerges as a multifaceted realm, comprising Gilgit-Baltistan, Gurez, and Ladakh — the sacred terrains of the Dards and Brokpas. This section not only delineates the nuanced distinctions between the two groups but also intricately weaves together their linguistic heritage, illuminating the rich interconnections and cultural dialogues that have shaped their identities within this historically vibrant landscape.

The forthcoming chapters provide a nuanced analysis of the Dards of Gurez, Kargil, and the Dha-Hanu Valley. By exploring the sociolinguistic dimensions and ethnographic aspects of the tribe, the text reveals the interplay of heritage and identity as these communities adapt to the challenges of modernity while remaining rooted in their traditions. The author, a researcher on ethnicity and a keen observer of cultural dynamics, possesses a profound understanding of the sociolinguistic intricacies of Dard communities. With a background in sociology, his work seeks to illuminate the diverse identities of these groups, contributing valuable insights into the rich tapestry of Himalayan heritage. A captivating synthesis of cultural anthropology and ethnography, the book reveals the intricacies of Dard identity across these regions. Through this lens, the work not only enriches scholarly dialogue on Himalayan cultures but also invites readers to appreciate the subtle complexities that define the Dard experience.

The social structures of the tribe are characterized by intricate family dynamics, where kinship extends beyond biological ties, fostering a strong communal identity. Their language serves as a cultural cornerstone, while religious beliefs shape rituals surrounding life events, including death, which reinforce communal bonds. The author explores the tribe’s social structures by highlighting the adaptability of family and kinship dynamics. Through an examination of marriage customs, language, and religious practices, alongside discussions of education and caste stratification, the work illuminates the chal-

enges faced by Dard communities and their evolving identity. The chapter entitled Dard-Brokpa Women of Gurez & Ladakh vividly portrays the lives of women in those specific areas and celebrates their remarkable resilience. It highlights their vital roles within their communities, showcasing how they navigate challenges and ultimately embody the enduring spirit of Dard-Brokpa culture. Modernization and globalization are exerting profound pressures on indigenous cultures, and threatening traditional practices and identities everywhere. As global influences infiltrate local communities, the challenge of preserving cultural heritage while adapting to change becomes increasingly complex. The author examines how the Dardic community has embraced a localized economic system and resilient agricultural practices, effectively shielding their identity from the encroachments of modernization. The book offers a rare insight into the sociocultural fabric of a people who are often overlooked in mainstream discourse, making this an essential read for anyone interested in indigenous Himalayan cultures. It captures the emergence of Gurez as a tourism hotspot within Jammu and Kashmir, offering a fresh perspective on the impact of modernization on traditional lifestyles. Suheel Rasool Mir’s Cultural Encyclopaedia will serve as a vital conduit for the community, allowing them to reconnect with their past and paving the way for the sustainable evolution of their rich cultural traditions. It will also serve as a vital resource for policymakers, scholars, and anyone interested in understanding these unique people.

# Rafael Nadal — serial winner, racquet-wielding philosopher and an invincible spirit

Whenever a favourite sportsperson retires, there is a part of us that dies inside. It did when Sachin Tendulkar bid adieu and it did when Roger Federer waved goodbye. As Julian Barnes wrote in *Levels of Life*, "What is taken away is greater than the sum of what was there. This may not be mathematically possible; but it is emotionally possible." Rafael Nadal's exit from competitive tennis is sure to leave a similar feeling. For two decades, the Spaniard — winner of 22 Majors, 92 Tour titles, a ludicrously high 14 French Opens, two Olympic Gold medals and five Davis Cups — did not just occupy the court but pervaded every inch of our collective minds. Now, this long-lasting love story will be a thing of the past. However, when fans look at Nadal's career in retrospect, its radiance in their memories would have swelled manifold. He first burst onto the scene as a 17-year-old in 2004 when Federer was the *numero uno*. While the Swiss' ethereal style of play had mesmerised the world, Nadal, with his more down-to-earth rugged artistry, carved out a niche. His performances on the red dirt (14 French Opens, 63 trophies in all), and a game built on supreme athleticism and top-spin-heavy strokes may have stereotyped him as a warrior and a brutalist, but he was far from a one-surface master. All-court

excellence Nadal was adept on the Wimbledon grass — two titles, three finals and three semifinals — where his razor-sharp instincts, magic hands and first-rate volleying shone through. Hard courts did trouble him, with the unforgiving surface causing significant wear and tear, from his back to both his hips, knees and all the way down to his toes. There was a stretch in 2017-18 where he withdrew or retired from 11 of the 12 hard-court events he entered. But that did not stop him from winning four U.S. Opens to become the most successful men's player at Flushing Meadows in the 2010s. The vanquishing of Daniil Medvedev in the Australian Open final in 2022 with a miraculous come-from-behind victory, after having spent the prior months contemplating retirement because of a chronic foot injury, was arguably the Spaniard's greatest. Always a student that Nadal could play for so long and so well was down to how he evolved. Locked in two erasing rivalries with Federer and Novak Djokovic, he showed that there was always space to grow. He polished his serve, elevated the forehand and coated the backhand with a point-ending veneer. Rafael Nadal during a tribute after playing his last match as a professional tennis player in the Davis Cup quarterfinals at the Martin Carpena



Sports Hall in Malaga, southern Spain, on November 20, 2024. All of which resulted in 912 consecutive weeks in the top-10, 23 wins over World No. 1s, 17 years between his first Major and last — each a record. Along with Ken Rosewall and Pete Sampras, Nadal remains the only male to have won Slams in his teens, 20s and 30s. He got better with elapsed time. A wholesome package But Nadal was more than just a tennis player. He was a racquet-wielding philosopher who

valued effort over outcome, normalised self-doubt and nervousness, and relished pain. He had a polite word for everyone, threw no tantrums and didn't break a single racquet in anger. Human memory, though, is a trickster. It hides the past and exaggerates the recent, like Nadal's struggles in the last two years. But when the clouds clear and the dust settles, light will only shine on his many incredible highs. It is his invincible spirit that will long endure.

## An ominous threat of escalation on the Ukraine war front

It has been predicted that the war in Ukraine will end once the US President-elect Donald Trump takes office because, simply put, he entered the electoral race with a promise to end ongoing wars. However, the outgoing US president, Joe Biden, who wants the US to continue arming Ukraine in its defence against Russia, has just revealed a last trick up his sleeve. On November 17, the US, along with the UK and France, approved the use of long-range missiles by Ukraine. On Tuesday, the Ukrainian forces launched strikes inside Russia using the American-made ATACMS rocket, which has a range of 300 km.

This is a critical development in the conflict in Ukraine. In the recent past, after Ukrainian forces entered Kursk, the Russian army officially began their Kursk offensive in September. Kyiv, in retaliation, asked for permission from the US and the UK to use the ATACMS and Storm shadow long-range missiles to launch attacks on Russian cities. Washington was willing to listen to President Volodymyr Zelensky's request. Meanwhile, Russia's security council proposed new offensive changes to Moscow's nuclear doctrine. Following Moscow's aggressive posturing, the US and UK decided against permitting Kyiv to launch the missiles. However, quite clearly, as Biden's days in the White House are numbered, the president aims to keep Washington in the fight.

There is a general perception of a likely, and upcoming, ceasefire ending the war in Ukraine. Various plans of an endgame are

in circulation including a 20-year moratorium on Ukraine's Nato membership, freezing the conflict by creating a demilitarised zone governed by non-UN/US peacekeepers and the cessation of military aid to Ukraine, forcing Kyiv to negotiate with Russia. The Kremlin, however, is not very optimistic about a ceasefire as Moscow holds the view that the previous Trump administration was happy about sanctions and that the US is leveraging Europe to make Nato countries spend more in arming Ukraine. However, the Biden administration, citing recent changes in the battlefield, with Russian forces making quicker gains in the Donbas and the news of North Korean troops deployed in the conflict, allowed Ukraine to use long-range weapons. Ukraine using long-range weapons to strike inside Russia will trigger a rapid escalation of the conflict. Within the outer fringes of the ATACMS range falls the regions of Smolensk, Kaluga, Tula, Kursk, Bryansk, Oryol, Voronezh, and Rostov on-Don. These regions have military bases, airfields, and large-scale troop concentrations that have the potential to slow down Russia's advance in Donetsk and Lugansk.

The Chairman of Russia's Duma Committee on Foreign Affairs and the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, Leonid Slutsky, warned of the consequences of such an attack. He said it would imply the direct participation of the United States and European nations in the conflict in Ukraine, as troops from the US, UK and France would have to liaise with Ukrainian forces to use the weap-



ons system. This would entail "the harshest response from Russia," referring to a nuclear escalation. However, the timing of the permission to use long-range weapons is not ideal for Kyiv as it came after a significant delay. The Ukrainian forces have had to grapple with similar delays in receiving other weapons platforms such as the HIMARs, Abrams tanks, and F16s from Washington. With close to 60 days until the next administration takes office, Ukraine may not be able to receive enough ATACMS to significantly change the course of the war. The US signals this development not as a last-ditch effort to sustain Washington's support to Ukraine but as a retaliation against Russia's alleged deployment of North Korean troops

in Kursk, as, in Biden's calculus, Russia's escalation could not be overlooked. The decision, even though rooted in symbolism, also is a very calculated step. Moscow, factoring in the ground realities of Ukraine using these weapons and the nature of Ukraine's future attacks, may not rapidly escalate the tempo of its invasion in Ukraine, as an endgame is still in sight. A day after Ukraine was granted permission, six ATACMS missiles were launched at an arms depot in Bryansk Oblast; Russia intercepted five missiles and damaged one. President Vladimir Putin, in response, signed a decree approving the changes to the fundamentals of the Russian Federation State Policy in the Field of Nuclear Deterrence.