



**OPINION 6**  
PAKISTANI MILITARY  
TIGHTENS GRIP

**WORLD 8**  
ISRAEL BATTLES REGROUPING  
HAMAS IN NORTHERN GAZA

**MONEY 10**  
NEXT ROUND OF TALKS FOR INDIA,  
ASEAN TRADE PACT REVIEW IN JULY

NEW DELHI, MONDAY MAY 13, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

Established 1864



# the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



GT FACE  
FORMIDABLE KKR IN  
MUST WIN IPL GAME  
12 SPORTS

# INDIAN ELECTIONS TOUCH HALFWAY

## Phase IV Voting Today

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After a high-decibel campaign, the Lok Sabha elections will, on Monday, cross the halfway mark in its fourth phase of voting out of the seven-phase general elections, with 96 seats across 10 States and Union Territories going to the polls. This includes the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat in Kashmir, which will witness its first major election after the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. After Monday, 379 seats will have completed the polling.

The electoral fate of several prominent candidates like Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Union Minister Giriraj Singh, TMC's firebrand leader Mahua Moitra, AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi, former cricketers Yusuf Pathan, Kirti Azad, Bollywood actor Shatrughan Sinha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Ajay Kumar Mishra, Nityanand Rai, Madhvi Latha, Pankaj Munde, YS Sharmila, will be decided in the fourth phase. The BJP-led NDA has MPs from over 40 of these 96 seats.

According to the Election Commission, over 17.70 crore voters, including 8.97 crore male and 8.73 crore women will cast their vote for the 96 parliamentary constituencies in 10 States and Union Territory. Data showed



over 19 lakh polling officials have been deputed across 1.92 lakh polling stations. So far, voting has taken place in 285 constituencies since April 19. The voter turnout in the last phase stood at 64.4 per cent, which was the lowest compared to the preceding phases (66.14 per cent and 66.71 per cent respectively). Uttar Pradesh recorded the lowest turnout, while Assam saw the highest. The fourth phase voting will be held in all 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana, all 25 seats in Andhra Pradesh, 13 in Uttar Pradesh, five in Bihar, four in Jharkhand, eight

in Madhya Pradesh, 11 in Maharashtra, four in Odisha, eight in West Bengal and one in Jammu and Kashmir. Additionally, this phase marks the commencement of polling in Jharkhand and Odisha. According to the EC, the heatwave conditions are one of the reasons for lower voter turnout in the last three phases as compared to the 2019 parliamentary polls. Citing an India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast, the poll authority on Sunday said that "there is no significant concern regarding hot weather conditions for the polling in Phase 4".

Keeping in mind the hot weather conditions and people's reluctance to step out in the afternoon, the EC has increased poll timing in some Telangana seats. While the usual hours of voting are from 7 am to 6 pm, they are curtailed to 7 am to 5 pm, the EC has announced. Voting will simultaneously be held in all 175 Assembly seats in Andhra Pradesh, which is witnessing a triangular contest involving ruling YSRC, the Congress-led INDIA Bloc and the NDA, comprising the BJP, Chandrababu Naidu-led TDP and Pawan Kalyan-led Jana Sena Party (JSP). The run up to the fourth phase polling saw the EC and Opposition INDIA Bloc entering into a spat over delay in release of voter turnout data. **Continued on Page 2**



## Delhi Voters on Vacation

ADITI SHARMA/ABHI SINGHAL/SAMAR PANDEY/RISHABH MALIK ■ NEW DELHI

As the Delhi Lok Sabha Elections approach on May 25, residents and families face a tough choice between prioritising holiday getaways and fulfilling their civic responsibilities. With a long weekend on the horizon, starting from Buddha Purnima on May 23, until Sunday, May 26, residents might opt for travel over voting. People said keeping in mind the dynamic tariff in the hospitality industry they booked their travel and lodging plans much before the announcement of the Lok Sabha election schedule was announced and now they feel that to meet the obligation of voting they will have to incur a financial loss.

The national Capital, however, has a history of low voter turnout. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the total voter turnout in Delhi was 65.1 per cent, which declined to 60.5 per cent in 2019. The most upscale areas consistently record the lowest voter turnout rates, especially in the New Delhi and South Delhi constituencies.



Conversations with parents, teenagers, adults, children, mothers, and college students reveal Delhiites' divided priorities. With school summer vacation excitement building up, many families have eagerly organised trips to visit relatives or explore other destinations, seeking a much-needed break from their daily routines, as summer vacation starts around May 20.

The onset of summer vacations in Delhi's schools is likely to see a possibility of a dip in voter turnout for the Lok Sabha elections in the national Capital. People's pre-planned trips and travel arrangements due to children's vacations could

potentially hamper the participation of many voters.

Dharmendra Kumar, father of a boy who goes to Jaspal Kaur Public School, said, "Vacations will start from May 18, so me, my wife and children are travelling to Ujjain on May 23." When asked if he would miss the voting, he said he had already made plans and the dates of the elections were announced after booking the tickets.

Another family head Parmod Garg, who has a daughter studying in Sachdeva Public School, where the vacations start on May 16, said he is also travelling outside of Delhi, but their train tickets are still waiting.

He said if their tickets get confirmed, they will skip the voting. Many families said they would travel to different cities outside of Delhi as a tradition of visiting the nani's (maternal grandmother) house during summer vacations.

Delhites plan their trips during May and June to cooler regions of the country such as Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh to escape the hot weather. **Continued on Page 2**

## Kejriwal back with guarantees



Delhi Chief Minister and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal with party leaders Bhagwant Mann during a Press conference, in New Delhi, on Sunday. Kejriwal on Sunday announced 'Kejriwal ki Guarantee' — a list of promises for Lok Sabha elections

RAJESH KUMAR/SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Days after walking out of Tihar jail, Delhi Chief Minister and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal gave a renewed push to the Aam Aadmi Party's Lok Sabha polls campaign, announcing "Kejriwal ki Guarantee", listing 10 works (guarantees) that will be done on a war footing.

These include giving full independence to the Indian Army to reclaim India's land currently occupied by China, scrapping the Agniveer scheme, providing free electricity, education, and health, and creating two crore jobs in the next year if the Opposition's INDIA Bloc forms the Government at the Centre.

With polling yet to take place in 18 of the 22 Lok Sabha constituencies that the AAP is contesting — four in Delhi, 13 in Punjab, and one in Haryana — the Delhi Chief Minister pitted his vows to the people of India, called "Kejriwal ki guarantee", against the Prime Minister's "Modi ki guarantee". The Opposition bloc, which has parties such as Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Congress, Trinamool Congress, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam among others as its members, was formed to

- **First guarantee:** 24-hour electricity
- **Second guarantee:** Free education for everyone
- **Third guarantee:** Mohalla clinics
- **Fourth guarantee:** Land occupied by China will be freed
- **Fifth guarantee:** Discontinue the Agniveer scheme
- **Sixth guarantee:** Farmers to be provided MSP
- **Seventh guarantee:** Full statehood to Delhi
- **Eighth guarantee:** Employment generation
- **Ninth guarantee:** End corruption
- **Tenth guarantee:** GST will be simplified

take on the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance in the Lok Sabha polls.

Interestingly, the Congress manifesto and all parties that are part of the India Bloc have not mentioned anything related to reclaiming the country's land currently occupied by China. Addressing a Press conference at the AAP headquarters, Kejriwal reiterated his promise of full statehood to Delhi and also claimed that the INDIA Bloc will form the next Government and his AAP will be part of it. "The BJP has always failed on its promises; my guarantees

have proven track record," Kejriwal said. People have to take a call whether to go for the Kejriwal ki Guarantee or Modi Guarantee, he said. On the announcement of his guarantees, Kejriwal said this was delayed due to his arrest but there are still many phases of elections left. "I have not discussed it with the rest of the INDIA Bloc but this is like a guarantee that no one will have any problems with. I take this guarantee that after the INDIA Bloc comes to power, I will make sure that these guarantees are implemented," he said while making the announcement, adding he will press upon INDIA Bloc partners to fulfill these guarantees. "Out of the 10 guarantees, the first guarantee is that we will provide 24-hour electricity in the country. The country has the capacity to generate 3 lakh MW of electricity but the usage is only 2 lakh MW. Our country can produce electricity more than the demand. We have done it in Delhi and Punjab, we will do it in the country also. We will provide up to 200 units of free electricity to all the poor. It will cost ₹1.25 lakh crore, we can arrange it..." Kejriwal said while the AAP has fulfilled its "guarantees" of free power, good schools and Mohalla Clinics in Delhi, "(Prime Minister Narendra) Modi has not fulfilled his guarantees". The AAP's second guarantee is that it will arrange good and excellent free education for everyone. Government schools will provide a better education than private schools. "The country can progress only if children get access to proper education. "Today, the condition of schools is very poor. Over 18 crore children study in 10 lakh schools across the country and they have no future. In Delhi and Punjab, we have shown that we can do it and we will do it across the country," the AAP chief said. **Continued on Page 2**

## Modi rallies around allies

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with, his Cabinet colleague and candidate for Patna Lok Sabha constituency Ravi Shankar Prasad, Bihar Chief Minister and BJP's ally Nitish Kumar at a road show in Patna on Sunday evening. Earlier in the day Modi held a roadshow in Barrackpore in West Bengal. PTI



## Ladakh stands alone in Lok Sabha roll call

PTI ■ LEH

What should have been a direct contest between the BJP and the Congress in the Ladakh Lok Sabha constituency is now a three-corner fight with an alliance of local groups fielding an Independent to challenge the national parties.

The seat, the largest in the country in terms of area (173,266 square kilometers), goes to polls on May 20 — the first major electoral battle in the region after it was carved out of Jammu and Kashmir and granted Union Territory status in 2019.

While the BJP has fielded Tashi Gyalsong, chief executive councillor-cum-chairman of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (Leh), from the seat after dropping sitting MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, the Congress has nominated Tsering Namgyal as its candidate. Springing a surprise, the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) fielded Haji Haneefa Jan, the Kargil district president of the National Conference (NC), which like the Congress is a constituent



of the INDIA Bloc. The Congress has won the seat for the highest number of times — six — and had fielded Tsering Namgyal, the leader of opposition in the LAHDC, according to an agreement with the NC, as they were members of the INDIA Bloc and the Leh Apex Body (LAB). It was the LAB and the KDA that were spearheading the agitation in support of various demands of the Ladhaki people, including Statehood and sixth schedule of the Constitution, for the past four years. But it hit a block in March after the BJP-led Centre did not agree with the

demands. However, now with the KDA fielding Jan, the challenges for the Congress as well as the BJP has increased in this seat that has more than 1.84 lakh voters — a majority (95,926) in Muslim-dominated Kargil district and 88,877 in Leh district.

The resentment against the BJP over its Government at the Centre not fulfilling the demands is palpable and the party, which is eyeing a third consecutive term from Ladakh, has rushed Union Minister Kiren Rijiju to handle the situation. He arrived in the Union Territory (UT) on Saturday.

The agitation had intensified on March 6 with Leh observing a complete shutdown followed by a 66-day hunger strike which was suspended three days ago in view of the Lok Sabha elections. Renowned educationist and social reformer Sonam Wangchuk, who was also part of it, ended his 21-day hunger strike on March 26. Talking to reporters after arriving here on Saturday, Rijiju said, "...All the big demands of the people can only be fulfilled by the central government. I have come here to convey the message that any pending issue will be resolved by the (Narendra) Modi Government alone."

Seeking cooperation and support of the people of Ladakh, Rijiju said it is imperative for the BJP to win the seat because "if we lose the elections, we will be sad after doing so much for the region over the years, including fulfilling the dream of UT status". He said it is the right of the

people to raise their issues and "it is our responsibility to safeguard the future of Ladakh which is a very sensitive and fragile region having distinct culture, traditional practices, customs and language..."

Thupstan Chhewang won the seat for the BJP for the first time in 2014. However, he resigned from the party's basic membership in 2018 and is currently heading the LAB. "The BJP managed to retain the seat in 2019 with Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, who was denied the ticket by the party this time and who openly revolted against the decision. However, he joined the campaigning for Gyalsong after being persuaded by the BJP leadership. Trouble for the Congress candidate started when the KDA unanimously decided to field Jan as an Independent and also persuaded two others, who were contesting as Independents, to withdraw their candidature in his support. **Continued on Page 2**





# BJP steps up LS poll campaigning

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP in the national Capital made Sunday a super one with election campaigning at its peak connecting to a diverse range of voters as Delhi approaches its polling date, which is slated to be held on May 25, in the sixth phase of voting ahead of Lok Sabha 2024 elections. Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Assam Chief Minister Hemanta Biswa, Tejasvi Surya, Jayant Choudhury campaigned for the BJP candidates in the national Capital. Starting the election campaign, the saffron party flagged off a bike rally where several youth from Sikh community participated in support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The rally, with slogan SikhWithModi, was started from the state BJP office and reached the national headquarters via Connaught Place. Addressing the rally, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said the Prime Minister values every section of society, but the way the Kartarpur Corridor was opened for the Sikh community, Bal Divas was announced on the name of Veer Shabbajade on December 26, taxes were removed from langar, and the 350th birth anniversary celebration of Guru Govind Singh was organised, all these historic works were done by the Modi government. BJP leader Manjinder Singh



Ranjan Dimri

Sirsa said, "With the hashtag #SikhWithModi, today, the Sikh community is moving forward on the streets with the message that we all stand with Modi. Our dream of a developed India will be fulfilled under the leadership of Modi." BJP MP General VK Singh was also present at the rally. The Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha chief and BJP MP Tejasvi Surya took part in a roadshow for the BJP's Chandni Chowk candidate Praveen Khandelwal where he called Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal the "poster boy of corruption", saying he has no moral right to comment on graft or transparency. "Do you really think Kejriwal has any credibility left? He has made many u-turns in his political life. Many young people like us participated in the 2013 Anna Hazare movement, thinking it to be a non-political campaign against corruption," the Bangalore South MP said. "Starting from there to now, Kejriwal has cheated everyone who believed in the idea he presented. He is in an alliance with people he had openly criticised such as Lalu Yadav, Mamata Banerjee, Sharad Pawar, Uddhav Thackeray," he added. Kejriwal, who reached out to the people with the promise of transparency and clean governance, is now in jail facing severe charges, alleged Surya, who was renominated

by the BJP from Bangalore South. The BJP leader also claimed Kejriwal has no moral right to comment on anything even remotely connected with corruption or transparency. He is the "poster boy of corruption" in the country, Surya said. Senior BJP leaders including Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva, National General Secretary Dushyant Gautam, Delhi Lok Sabha incharge Om Prakash Dhankhad, BJP leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa, and all candidates distributed voter slips going door-to-door across various wards of Delhi nearly two weeks before the Lok Sabha elections in Delhi. This campaign was launched from Vinod Nagar and reached various different areas of the city covering different voters and constituencies. Reaching the Jatt community in the north west Delhi seat from where former BJP Delhi general secretary Yogesh Chandolia is contesting from, a felicitation ceremony was organised to recognise the contribution of the society. Dhankhad addressed the ceremony while stating that the community has a glorious history. "The society played a leading role in the country's freedom movement and in keeping the borders safe from the enemy after independence. The Jatt community's contribution in sports, farming and sacrifice is first," he said.

## NDMC, EC organise bicycle rally to raise voters awareness, boost turnout



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to bolster voter turnout, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) on Sunday organised a bicycle rally in collaboration with the New Delhi District Election Office and Khan Market Traders Association. The event, held at Khan Market, was attended by over 500 people, including the NDMC chairman Amit Yadav, senior officers and staff from various departments and traders from the market. Yadav said the rally has been organised to raise awareness about the importance of voting rights among people. He urged all the eligible voters to cast

their ballots on May 25, when the Lok Sabha elections will be held in the national capital. On the occasion, Khan Market Traders Association announced that all the food outlets of Khan Market will offer 15% discount to each and every voter who will visit the Khan Market after casting their votes with the mark of voting ink on 25th May in Delhi. The Bicycle Rally was covered the route about 06 km stretch of Khan Market to Humayun Road, Prithviraj Marg, Aurbindo Marg, Lodhi Road, Lodhi Garden, Maxmuller Marg to Subramanian Bharti Marg and ending at Khan Market Parking at Amrita Shergil Marg in New Delhi.

# BJP terms Kejriwal guarantees as false dreams

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva and its South Delhi candidate Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Sunday slammed Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's guarantees as false dreams and said his party will be wiped from the capital in assembly polls next year. Making these assertions here, Sachdeva also said it is ridiculous for a party contesting elections on only 21 Lok Sabha seats and whose account is not likely to open claiming to form government. Not only does it seem ridiculous it proves right on Kejriwal an old hindi "Mungeril ke haseen sapne", he added.

Responding to every guarantee of Kejriwal, Sachdeva said he is only an expert in selling false dreams. He knows that leave alone coming to power at the Centre, he is going to be wiped out from the Delhi state government in February 2025. So now he wants to remain in news by saying anything or something, Sachdeva added. He said Kejriwal only runs a government of lies and does politics of false promises, but now the people of Delhi and the country will not be misled by any of his promises. Now, no matter how many guarantees he gives; it does not seem possible for his party to open its account in the Lok Sabha elections. Replying to a question Aam Aadmi Party is saying that the

Lion has come out of Jail, Sachdeva said it is not Lion but a Wolf or an impostor has come out of the Jail. On the free electricity guarantee, Delhi BJP president said the entire country will get electricity exactly like it is available in Delhi - middle class buys at Rs. 8. Per Unit while for business class it is Rs 11 to Rs 13 per unit. On the education guarantee, he said not a single new school or college has been opened in Delhi in nine and half years and they are claiming to open schools in every village of the country. On the India's land to reclaim from the China guarantee, Sachdeva said the whole country knows how much importance the nation holds for him



since 2017 when this man stayed at the house of a declared terrorist in Punjab. On the scrapping of Agniveer scheme, he said, "How much he respects the country's soldiers, it became clear on the day when he asked for proof of the surgical strike from the army. On the Mohalla Clinics, Sachdeva said Mohalla clinics of Delhi have broken down and have become a center of pathological other tests scams, LNJP is a big Delhi government hospitals but has no MRI machine, the date for Ultrasound are given for after a year or so. Even Delhi High Court has reprimanded Delhi Govt. on poor health services." On the full statehood to Delhi, he said the chances of Delhi getting full statehood were

killed by Arvind Kejriwal by staging a sit-in at Rajpath in January 2014. That day it was almost decided that the law and order of Delhi, which is the capital of the country, must remain in the hands of the Central Government. On the corruption, he said a government whose Chief Minister and ministers are in jail not only for government scams but also for private business scams and who speaks against corruption, looks extremely ridiculous. After Aam Aadmi Party came to power in Delhi Municipal Corporation, now the corruption of AAP councillors is at its peak in the Municipal Corporation too. Bidhuri, ridiculing Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's 10

guarantees, said that a person who has been in jail for 50 days on charges of corruption and has to surrender again in jail after 20 days, is guaranteeing the nation a corruption-free governance. "A person who has been consistently deceiving the public by lying the most and whose lies have now been exposed, his guarantees hold no significance anymore," he said. He said that Kejriwal is guaranteeing to implement the Swaminathan Commission report for farmers across the country, while it has not been implemented even in Delhi. The farmers of Delhi were promised an increase in MSP before the elections, but they have realised that they were misled by lies.

## BJP begins voter slip distribution campaign in city

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Stepping up its preparations nearly two weeks before the Lok Sabha elections in Delhi, senior leaders of Delhi BJP, under the leadership of State president Virendra Sachdeva, commenced the voter slip distribution campaign at the booth level in Delhi. He launched this campaign today from Vinod Nagar. Across Delhi, National General Secretary Dushyant Gautam distributed in Dilshad Colony, Delhi BJP's Lok Sabha Election In-charge Omprakash Dhankhad in Rohini Sector 16, Deputy In-charge Dr. Alka Gurjar in Mehrauli booth, State Organizational Secretary Pawan Rana in Delhi Gate, Manjinder Singh Sirsa in Punjabi Bagh, MP Manoj Tiwari in Kadipur, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri in Shrinivaspuri, Harsh Malhotra in New Ashok Nagar,



Yogendra Chandoliya in Chandni Chowk, Mohan Singh Bisht in Shriram Colony, Jitendra Mahajan in Rohatas Nagar, Abhay Verma in Laxmi Nagar, Om Prakash Sharma in Vishwas Nagar, and Anil Bajpai in Gandhinagar Ward, distributed pamphlets door-to-door. On this occasion, Sachdeva said the strongest pillar of any election is the booth, and

without strong booths, success in any election is difficult. Therefore, BJP, while working on its strongest policies, is moving forward with great strength in this election. He said walking on the paths laid out by former National President Amit Shah and current National President Jagat Prakash Nadda, we will reach every voter through booth-level heads and also make them aware of the 10 years of work done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Gautam said this time's election is between corruption and work. On one hand, there is an alliance that is in coalition only to hide their corruption, and on the other hand, there is the Modi Government which has done many development works in the last 10 years that could not be done in the last 70 years. Dhankhad said the alliance between the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party is to advance the politics of corruption, while the politics of

the BJP is to take everyone together and move the country forward. The Modi government has built toilets in every house, reached kitchen gas, provided pure water through taps to every house, and ended the worries of expensive treatment for the poor with the Ayushman Yojana. But the Kejriwal government in Delhi only tells lies and plans conspiracies on how to do corruption in every scheme. Dr Alka Gurjar said BJP is once again going for a clean sweep on all seven seats in Delhi. There is no confusion for any Delhiite between the work of the Modi government and the corruption of Kejriwal. She said there is a government in Delhi that only knows how to mislead, but in the Lok Sabha elections, not only Delhi but every citizen of the country wants to see Narendra Modi as Prime Minister for the third time.

## Submit report on illegal parking in five days: Oberoi to officials

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to tackle the issue of illegal parking plaguing the city, Delhi Mayor Dr Shelly Oberoi has penned a stern letter to the MCD Commissioner, highlighting the detrimental impacts of illegal parking on public convenience, traffic flow, MCD's reputation, and financial stability. Urging swift and resolute action, the Mayor has asked the Commissioner to direct the concerned officials to identify, document, and address illegal parking hotspots, with a strict deadline of five days to submit a comprehensive report. In her letter to MCD commissioner, Oberoi said it has come to my notice that so many illegal parkings are being run in various parts of Delhi. "These illegal parkings are creating nuisance and inconvenience to the public due to traffic jams and also tarnishing the image



of the Corporation. Apart from this, it has also resulted in huge revenue loss to the Corporation. This is a matter of great concern." The MCD Mayor's letter reads further, "In view of the above, it is desired that necessary direction may be given to the concerned officer to identify various illegal parkings running in Delhi, to prepare a list of all the illegal parkings, to take stern action and submit the report to the office of

undersigned (Mayor) within 5 days." It's to be noted that incidents of illegal parking have been reported by a few newspapers in the last couple of days. These incidents have been reported in the bazaars of Subhash Nagar, Karol Bagh, Gaffar Market, Ajmal Khan Road. Taking note of these reports, AAP's MCD government has called for action from the commissioner against the culprits.

# If you choose AAP on May 25, I will not have to go back to jail: Kejriwal to voters

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal during a roadshow in Delhi on Sunday said if people choose Aam Aadmi Party on May 25, he won't have to go back to jail. Earlier, Kejriwal held a meeting with his party MLAs and leaders at his residence and claimed that the BJP's plan was to topple the AAP governments in Punjab and Delhi after his arrest but this did not fructify. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) became more united and stronger "after my arrest", the Delhi chief minis-

ter said while addressing MLAs of his party following a meeting here. This was his first meeting with the legislators after his limited outing of 21 days from the Tihar Jail, effected by the Supreme Court judgment giving him interim bail for election campaigning. Okhla MLA Amantullah was not present in this meeting. Khan and his son Anas Ahmed are facing allegations of assaulting and threatening staff at a fuel pump in Noida Sector 95. Police have claimed that Mr Khan and Anas are "underground".



"BJP people would say before my arrest that they will break the party and topple the governments in Delhi and Punjab," Kejriwal said. "They had a plan that they will arrest me, break the party, topple the government in Delhi and then in Punjab also. After arrest, their plan failed. You all did not break," said Kejriwal added all the MLAs did excellent work to ensure that the people of Delhi did not face any problem in getting electricity, water and medicines. Later he held a road show in New Delhi and North-west

constituencies. Accompanied by his Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Kejriwal held a roadshow in Moti Nagar in support of party's New Delhi Lok Sabha candidate Somnath Bharti. "I have to go back to jail after 20 days. If you choose jhadu (AAP's symbol), I won't have to go back to jail," the chief minister said. The AAP national convenor is out on interim bail till June 1. He has to surrender on June 2. "They sent me to jail because I worked for you. The BJP

does not want that work of Delhi people are done," he said. Kejriwal alleged that his insulin injections were stopped for 15 days inside Tihar jail. "If I went back to jail, the BJP would stop your work, free electricity, degrade schools and shut down hospitals and Mohalla Clinics," he charged. He also asked people to vote for Bharti since he would be available for people in need even at odd hours. The polling for all seven seats in Delhi will take place on May 25.

Below normal temperatures likely in regions going to polls today: IMD

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Normal to below normal temperatures are likely in areas going to polls on Monday, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Voting will be held in 96 constituencies spread across 10 states and union territories in the fourth phase of Lok Sabha elections. While the usual hours of voting are from 7 am to 6 pm, they are curtailed keeping in mind the terrain, time of sunset and security situation. In view of the hot weather conditions and people's reluctance to step out in the afternoon, the Election Commission has increased the poll timing in some Telangana seats. The voter turnout in the first three phases of the Lok Sabha elections was 66.14 per cent, 66.71 per cent and 65.68 per cent, respectively. The EC believes that the heatwave conditions are one of the reasons for lower voter turnout in the last three phases as compared to the 2019 parliamentary polls.



Citing the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast, the poll authority said on Sunday that "there is no significant concern regarding hot weather conditions for the polling in phase 4". The weather forecast indicates that the parliamentary constituencies going for polls "are likely to experience normal to below normal temperatures (± 2 degrees) and there will be no heatwave-like conditions in these areas on polling day", it said. In the last three phases, polling has been concluded in 283 seats out of 543. For Monday, over 19 lakh

polling officials have been deployed at 1.92 lakh polling stations for over 17.70 crore eligible voters, including 8.73 crore women. Polling will be held on Monday in all 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana, all 25 seats in Andhra Pradesh, 13 in Uttar Pradesh, five in Bihar, four in Jharkhand, eight in Madhya Pradesh, 11 in Maharashtra, four in Odisha, eight in West Bengal and one in Jammu and Kashmir. As many as 175 assembly seats of Andhra Pradesh and 28 assembly seats of Odisha are also going to polls in this phase.

SC to hear Kejriwal's plea against summons in defamatory video case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal challenging a Delhi High Court order upholding the summons issued to him in a criminal defamation case for retweeting an allegedly defamatory video circulated by YouTuber Dhruv Rathee in May 2018. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta is likely to hear the matter in which Kejriwal has admitted that he "committed a mistake" by retweeting the alleged defamatory video. On March 11, the top court asked Kejriwal whether he wanted to give an apology to the complainant in the matter. Kejriwal on February 26 told the apex court that he made a mistake by retweeting an allegedly defamatory video circulated by YouTuber Rathee related to the BJP IT Cell. The counsel appearing for complainant Vikas Sankrityayan has told the top court that Kejriwal may issue an apology on social media platforms like microblogging platform 'X' or Instagram. On February 26, the apex



court, without issuing notice on Kejriwal's plea challenging the high court order, had asked the complainant whether he wanted to close the matter in view of the petitioner accepting it was a mistake. Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Kejriwal, had said, "I can say this much that I made a mistake by retweeting." The top court had asked the trial court not to take up the defamation case involving Kejriwal till further orders. In its February 5 verdict, the high court said that reposting alleged libellous content would attract the defamation law. It said a sense of responsibility has to be attached while retweeting content about which

one does not have knowledge and added that retweeting defamatory content must invite penal, civil as well as tort action if the person retweeting it does not attach a disclaimer. The high court, while refusing to quash the trial court's 2019 order summoning Kejriwal, had said when a public figure tweets a defamatory post, the ramifications extend far beyond a mere whisper in someone's ears. It had said if the act of retweeting or reposting is allowed to be misused as it is still considered to be a vacant grey area of law, it will encourage people with ill intentions to misuse it and conveniently take a plea that they had merely retweeted a content.

Only 12 per cent of candidates in phase V are women, says ADR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The gap between the perception of women as significant vote banks and their actual representation as candidates in political parties is indeed stark, as has been revealed by the latest data analysed by Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) which shows that only about 12 per cent of candidates in the fifth phase are female. In the first phase of the elections, 135 (8 per cent) female candidates contested while 100 (8 per cent) women candidates fought in the second phase. Similarly, in the third phase of the elections, 123 (9 per cent) female candidates contested while in the fourth phase, as many as 170 (10 per cent) such candidates were in the fray. The ADR analysis also showed that nearly 23 per cent have declared criminal cases against themselves and about 18 per cent have serious criminal cases pending. Out of the total 695 candidates in the fifth phase on May 20, only 82 of them are women, the Association for Democratic

Reforms (ADR) said. Out of the 695 candidates under scrutiny in the fifth phase, 18 per cent (122 candidates) have serious criminal cases pending, including that of murder, attempt to murder, crimes against women, and hate speech. Three candidates have declared convictions against them. The ADR and National Election Watch analysed self-sworn affidavits filed by the candidates contesting in the phase five to get their criminal backgrounds, financial profiles, education, and gender. The report also gave a party-wise break-up of criminal cases. According to the ADR report, 29 candidates have declared cases related to crime against women. Out of 29 candidates, one has declared charge related to rape (IPC Section 376) and 10 have declared cases related to hate speech against themselves. A notable 33 per cent of the candidates are 'crorepatris' (those with assets exceeding Rs 1 crore). The average asset per candidate stood at Rs 3.56 crore.

TMC complains to EC against NCW chairperson, BJP leaders

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tirinamool Congress on Sunday filed a complaint with the Election Commission against National Commission for Women (NCW) Chairperson Rekha Sharma and BJP leaders including Piyali Das, alleging that they committed "criminal conspiracy by exploiting" innocent women of West Bengal's Sandeshkhali for political gains. In a letter to the EC, the TMC said they are filing a complaint against Sharma and Das for

"commission of serious offences of forgery, cheating, fraud, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy upon innocent women of Sandeshkhali and the entire electorate in general". "This is to draw your urgent attention to a deeply distressing turn of events, wherein, BJP leaders along with member(s) of the NCW have criminally conspired against the entire electorate and hence, warrants your immediate intervention," the TMC said. The complaint referred to an interview of a

woman from Sandeshkhali which was shared on social media on May 10. "It reveals that Sharma, Das have committed serious offences of forgery, cheating, fraud, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy by exploiting innocent women of Sandeshkhali for political gains. A link showcasing the said interview is provided herewith for your ready reference and in support of this complaint," the TMC said during the interview, a woman from



Sandeshkhali alleged she was coerced through threats of violence by Sharma and Das, to sign a blank paper without knowing its purpose. "Later, when the police issued her a

notice, she learnt that she had been made a de-facto complainant in a rape case. She realised that her signature was used to file a false rape complaint without her consent," it said. "...Such an act of obtaining a signature on blank paper through coercion to file a false rape complaint is not only an abuse of law and power, but also amounts to offences of forgery, cheating, fraud, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy. The exploitation of women for political gain is

a reprehensible tactic that undermines their rights and dignity. Such manipulation not only violates the rights of these women but also damages the integrity of democratic institutions," the TMC said in the complaint. The TMC said the actions suggest a calculated effort by the BJP leaders to undermine the reputation of the Mamata Banerjee-led party and an attempt to manipulate their way to power in West Bengal through illicit means, thereby disregarding the principles of level playing field.

The party also demanded the poll panel to issue directions to respective station house officers of competent police stations to initiate criminal proceedings against Sharma, Das and other unknown BJP leaders, and also to give directions restraining the BJP and its members from threatening the women of Sandeshkhali "who wish to withdraw false complaint". The TMC also sought orders restraining the BJP and its leaders from making any further false allegations concerning the Sandeshkhali incident.

DG DIA on official visit to Tanzania to boost ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Director General Defence Intelligence Agency (DG DIA) Lieutenant General DS Rana has proceeded on an official visit to the United Republic of Tanzania. The aim of this visit, scheduled from May 13-15 is to further reinforce the robust defence ties between the two nations and discuss opportunities for regional security collaboration, defence ministry said here on Sunday.



of the TPDF. The meetings will be aimed to foster mutual understanding and strengthening bilateral defence cooperation. Rana will also inaugurate the newly set up Defence Wing at the High Commission of India, Dar Es Salaam. As a gesture of goodwill towards expanding military cooperation, he will present the TPDF with Indian manufactured Bullet Proof Jackets. At the Command and Staff College CSC Arusha the DG DIA will

inaugurate the Library and lay the foundation stone for gymnasium that are being facilitated through Government of India assistance. India shares close, warm and friendly relations with Tanzania, which is bolstered by robust capacity building and avenues for defence cooperation. The visit of the Indian Military delegation is expected to further strengthen the elevated Strategic Partnership with Tanzania.

Poor muscle health common in obese people: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Poor muscle health is common in people living with obesity - and increases the risk of an early death, according to a study to be presented at the European Congress on Obesity (ECO) in Venice, Italy (12-15 May). Individuals with adverse muscle composition were up to three times more likely to die during the course of the study than those with healthy muscles, the Swedish study of people in the UK concluded. "We found that just by looking at muscle composition we can predict which individuals with obesity are most likely to die during the next few years," said lead researcher Dr Jennifer Linge, of AMRA Medical, a health informatics company in Linköping, Sweden. Weight loss is increasingly recommended in the management of chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease and weight loss drugs are allowing people to lose larger amounts of weight than in the past.



However, with drugs now achieving weight loss close to the magnitudes seen with surgery, the concern for potential adverse effects on muscle health, such as significant loss of muscle mass and reduced mobility, is growing. "Research has shown that although individuals with obesity have more muscle mass, their muscles are, in general, relatively weaker," said Dr Linge. "They also have lower

muscle quality, as well as reduced mobility and function. "Accurate assessment of muscle composition, assessing both quantity and quality of the muscles during evaluation these treatments will teach us whether significant and rapid weight loss is safe - especially for the more vulnerable patients, such as those with sarcopenic obesity or of older age." To find out more, Dr Linge and

colleagues used AMRA\* Researcher (software that provides body composition measurements from MRI scans) to analyse scans from 56,109 participants in the UK Biobank study. Muscle volume (muscle quantity) and muscle fat (indicating muscle quality) were quantified and a personalised muscle volume z-score (an indication of how their muscle volume compares to the average for their

sex and body size) was calculated. Participants were partitioned into four groups according to whether they had normal muscle composition, high muscle fat only, low muscle volume z-score only or adverse muscle composition (both high muscle fat and low muscle volume z-score). The participants were followed-up for an average of 3.9 years, during which time 174 died. The most common causes of death were ischaemic disease (coronary heart disease) and hypertensive disease (primary hypertension, hypertensive heart disease and hypertensive renal disease). While having low muscle volume z-score or high muscle fat alone was not significantly associated with a higher risk from death from any cause, adverse muscle composition (having both low muscle volume z-score and high muscle fat) was. This underlines the importance of assessing the amount of fat in muscle, as well as muscle volume, when evaluating muscle health, say the researchers.

Food insecurity rising among India's elderly: NITI Aayog

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a disturbing revelation, a report by the country's top think tank, NITI Aayog has said food insecurity is on the rise among India's expanding elderly population who seem to be battling between hunger and financial constraints along with negligence by their caretakers. Shockingly, nearly 6 per cent of individuals aged 45 and above are forced to reduce meal portions or skip meals entirely, while 5.3 per cent go without food even when hungry. Despite the proposed Poshan Abhiyan for the elderly by the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, its implementation is yet to see the light of the day, the report 'Senior Care: Reimagining the Senior Care Paradigm' pointed out. Studies have shown that between 50 and 80 years, muscle mass declines by around 30 per cent, and muscle strength reduces by 50 per cent. The BMR is 10-20 per cent lower in older adults compared to younger adults. The prevalence of underweight is almost



threefold (32 per cent) higher in rural areas than in urban areas (12 per cent) while overweight (27 per cent) and obesity (12 per cent) are more common among the elderly in urban areas, noted the report. Moreover, rural elderly face compounded challenges, with 71 per cent residing in areas lacking adequate medical infrastructure and essential facilities like electricity and communication. "Out of the total population of

the elderly in India, a very high proportion of them reside in rural India. Rural India still lacks medical infrastructure and other basic facilities such as electricity, communication, etc. Further, rural seniors reflect low healthcare utilization, along with poor financial cover," said the report. Medical expenses incurred by seniors are financed primarily out of pocket, and there is an urgent need for increased financing in senior care. The

report noted that "Only 1/5th of the older population (over 45 years) is covered by health insurance, which falls to 18 per cent of the people over 60 years. "The Government provides subsidies for healthcare through various schemes for seniors, but the coverage is limited to medical care upon hospitalization, limited cover for OPD, physiotherapy, medicines, memory care, home care, home-based palliative care, etc." The elderly in India currently comprises a little over 10% of the population, translating to about 104 million, and is projected to reach 19.5% of the total population by 2050. The authors of the report were not impressed with the benefits being doled out under the central flagship Ayushman Bharat Scheme under the Union Health Ministry. They said that though it covers all eligible low-income elderly, its utilization is limited. "Moreover, coverage of private sector insurance for seniors remains poor." The report also exposes alarming rates of abuse and ill-

treatment among the elderly. "Nearly 32 per cent of the elderly reported low life satisfaction while 5 per cent of the elderly reported to have suffered abuse and about 2/5th of them were ill-treated by their sons, daughters, and sons-in-law, and daughter-in-law," said the document. On the literacy front, the government's report stated that more than 55 per cent of the elderly population was illiterate. "The proportion of the elderly population that has never attended school increases with age. A higher proportion of elderly men (65 per cent) attended school than elderly women (35 per cent). "Also, literacy levels are higher among older adults living in urban areas than those living in rural areas. Nearly 60 per cent of older adults from rural areas do not have any formal schooling, compared to 29 per cent of those living in urban areas," said the document. Comprehensive policies and interventions are essential to ensure their dignity, well-being, and inclusion in society, the report summed up.

India ranks third globally in forest area gain from 2010-20

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Showcasing its achievements in increasing forest cover over the past fifteen years, India informed the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) that it ranks third globally in net gain in average annual forest area from 2010 to 2020. During the 19th session of the UN body held at the UN headquarters in New York from May 6 to May 10, India said it gives high priority to biodiversity and wildlife conservation, having expanded the network of protected areas to over a thousand wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, tiger reserves, biosphere reserves, and other wildlife habitats. The recent celebrations marking 50 years of 'Project Tiger' and 30 years of 'Project Elephant' underscore India's commitment to species conservation and habitat protection, the Union Environment



Ministry said in a statement. India also highlighted the creation of the International Big Cat Alliance, a global initiative aimed at protecting and conserving the seven big cat species worldwide through collaborative efforts. The country also informed the UNFF about the introduction of the 'Green Credit Program', a market-based mechanism rewarding voluntary environmental actions by individuals, communities, and the private sector. Previously, in October 2023, India hosted the Country Led

Initiative under UNFF in Dehradun, attended by representatives from 40 countries and 20 international organisations, focusing on forest fire management and forest certification. The recommendations from this initiative were presented during UNFF 19. The Ministry also organised a side event on 'Principles and Strategies for Landscape Integrated Fire Management through Collaborative Governance', in partnership with the Agency for Integrated Rural Fire Management, Portugal, Korea Forest Service, and International Tropical Timber Organization at UNFF 19. UNFF 19 culminated in a declaration to take urgent and accelerated actions to halt deforestation and forest degradation and to prevent land degradation, including the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests and the achievement of the Global Forest Goals.



[www.dailypioneer.com](http://www.dailypioneer.com)
[facebook.com/dailypioneer](https://facebook.com/dailypioneer) | [@TheDailyPioneer](https://twitter.com/TheDailyPioneer) | [instagram.com/dailypioneer/](https://instagram.com/dailypioneer/)

PAPER WITH PASSION

## Wild card

The interim bail to Kejriwal for campaigning adds yet another layer to an already intricate election

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who had been under judicial custody for 50-odd days after the Enforcement Directorate named him in the multi-crore liquor scam, has made a wild card entry as a participant in electioneering. Known for his dynamic role as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader, his sudden release from incarceration injects a new fervour into an intense electoral situation, particularly impacting the BJP's strategies and reinvigorating the Opposition campaign. As expected, Kejriwal has come down heavily on the ruling party, accusing it of subverting democracy and misusing law-enforcement agencies to imprison the Opposition leaders on one pretext or the other. Interestingly, he also now claims that the BJP's senior leaders are being sidelined and India is being pushed into a "one nation, one leader" paradigm. The situation is indeed ominous for the BJP; Kejriwal's absence had provided it with a temporary advantage to consolidate its support base without facing the AAP challenge in certain regions where it holds influence and sway. Kejriwal's return, however, resumes the battle in earnest and necessitates a reassessment of campaign strategy. The BJP must now recalibrate its outreach efforts to counter AAP's influence, especially in Delhi, Punjab and Haryana (The polling in Gujarat has already concluded). The party poses significant challenge to the BJP with its anti-corruption and populist policies. Though he is not the proverbial all-powerful leader, Kejriwal has the ability to galvanise support, particularly among urban voters and the youth, and his presence significantly boosts the prospects of the Opposition's INDIA bloc.



With the voting percentage remaining consistently low and several Supreme Court decisions going against it, the BJP must find new ways to take on its challengers. The party leaders have reached out to satraps Sharad Pawar and Uddhav Thackeray in Maharashtra ahead of Phase IV, but the latter have not responded positively to the BJP's overtures. In the light of these developments, the BJP must intensify its efforts to consolidate its support base and mitigate the potential impact of Kejriwal's resurgence. It must rely upon Modi's oratorical skills, aggressive campaigning, targeted messaging and new alliances to win in crucial constituencies. It is time for the BJP to capitalise on its nationalistic agenda and developmental initiatives to appeal to voters, presenting itself as the party best equipped to lead India forward. For the Opposition, Kejriwal's release offers hope and a renewed sense of purpose. By leveraging public dissatisfaction with the status quo, working to heighten the feeling of anti-incumbency among the electorate and raking up issues of public concern such as corruption, inflation and unemployment, the Opposition can cobble up a more cohesive and effective campaign. Given the unpredictable nature of voter preferences, it is hard to tell what resonates with them. They may act emotionally at times but they are not foolish, are they?

### PICTALK



India Gate lit in red to raise awareness on World Thalassemia Day, in New Delhi

PTI

# Pakistani military tightens grip



BHOPIINDER SINGH

Imran Khan's confrontational stance against the military establishment seems to be leading to his own downfall. Khan's defiance has only served to further isolate him

American scholar, Stephen Cohen, notes in his article titled 'Pakistan: Army, Society and Security, "There are armies which guard their nation's borders, there are armies which are concerned with protecting their own position in society, and there are armies which defend a cause or an idea. The Pakistan Army does all three". Even though it is a Military that has never won any war (1947-48, 1965, 1971 or 1999) and is struggling miserably to contain elements of religious extremism from across the Durand Line - it remains the last institution that hasn't succumbed to the curse of puritanism that is eating into the already moth-eaten Pakistan. It can be argued that besides the Pakistani Military, the two other pieces of the ruling trioka i.e., civilian politicians and the clergy, have failed the sovereign, far more. Counterintuitive as it sounds, the Pakistani 'establishment' (read, Military), despite all its manipulations is still the best bet to protect the Pakistani State from imploding.

Despite vile attempts by unhinged politicians and the clergy to fan divisive passions on the lines of sectarianism, regionalism, or ethnicities - the disciplined and 'monolith' construct of the Pakistani Military inherited from the British Raj integrated its diversities in Baluch Regiment, Frontier Force Regiment, Punjab Regiment, Sindh Regiment et al. Few derelictions like General Zia-ul-Haq or Hamid Gul aside, the institution was relatively westernized, moderate, and inclusive. It zealously protected its ways and interests with disproportionate budgetary allocations and ensuring that it always had the right of the way, formally or informally. It chose dispensations without harbouring any ideological preferences and brazenly chose and dropped those who didn't toe the line. It didn't really care about optics of contradiction and shifting preferences, as it chose between the Bhuttos PPP (Pakistan People's Party) and Sharifs PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz) with impunity. In 2018, the 'establishment' tired



of both the PPP and PML-N brought in and 'selected' Imran Khan's PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) as the face of governance, even though the strings were pulled by the Generals from neighbouring Rawalpindi.

But what they hadn't bargained for was the seriousness and immaturity with which the vainglorious Pathan from Mianwali would start imagining his own prowess. Imran mistakenly thought he had outgrown the need to remain beholden to the Pakistan 'establishment', and that was to be his undoing. A reluctant, screaming, and shouting Imran Khan was ousted from power and the much discredited and familiar faces from the past, ushered in. It was an important lesson in Pakistani politics. When the tide turns, any political force that appeals to the Generals, can stage a comeback. Except perhaps Imran Khan, who dug his heels and refused to learn from history. His cadre perpetuated the 'May 9' riots and plunder that spared no one - not even the 'no-go' zones of cantonments or residences of Generals.

The Pakistani 'establishment' did what it does better - care two-hoots for the popularity of Imran Khan and attacked his party, people and infrastructure. While Imran is arguably

the most popular leader and the most despised, it is the latter who are in power, courtesy the Pakistani Military. The obstinate Imran has boxed himself into a corner by pivoting his credentials to grandstanding against the Pakistani Military, and that denies him the realistic chance to return. His only chance to succeed with his current strategy is the Pakistani Military were to become irrelevant, but such a hypothetical situation would also make the survival of Pakistan as a sovereign state, untenable.

Faultlines deepen with the Military mouthpiece Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) insisting that dialogue with PTI is only possible if it "earnestly apologises publicly in front of the nation". It added for good measure that PTI must adopt "constructive politics" and avoid, "politics of anarchy". Clearly it would be suicidal for PTI to stoop so low after much theatrical defiance and acceptance of its role would scar PTI with anarchial and unpatriotic attributions (as despite history, Pakistani Military remains the beacon of patriotism, in Pakistani consciousness). This showdown with railing words between the Military and PTI also counters the accusations of 'false-flag operation', as alluded to by the

PTI. It seems the Pakistani Military is hell bent on making PTI and Imran pay dearly for daring to challenge the 'establishment', and this recent precondition for thawing relationship was meant to harden the divide and make it impossible for PTI/Imran to soften stand.

As if on cue, the Pakistani Military is making efforts to normalise its relations with the historical ally, the United States of America (as the same was specifically targeted by Imran Khan). It also acts as a hedge against Chinese support, and it strengthens equations with Arab Sheikdoms, concurrently. As it is, the bloody battle ensuing currently for the Pakistani Military is with the Afghanistan based Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), whom Imran Khan or 'Taliban Khan' was particularly accommodative. Clearly there is no upside for the Pakistani State to retain the belligerence and extremist stand as championed by Imran Khan in his hustings, and therefore all such policies, PTI infrastructure, and Imran Khan personally must become the sacrificial goat. Imran has none, but himself to blame for the same.

*(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)*



A RELUCTANT, SCREAMING, AND SHOUTING IMRAN KHAN WAS OUSTED FROM POWER AND THE MUCH DISCREDITED AND FAMILIAR FACES FROM THE PAST, USHERED IN. IT WAS AN IMPORTANT LESSON IN PAKISTANI POLITICS

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### POLITICAL TURMOIL

Madam — Apropos the editorial "Testing Times," published on 11th May, this is my response. In Haryana, politics has become a chess game of checkmates who intend to play foul with one another. Consequent to support withdrawn by three independent MLAs, the ruling BJP Government has turned into a minority. JJP has submitted a letter to the Governor's office seeking the floor test for the Saini-led BJP Government.

In this era of political upheaval, JJP is embroiled in party discord. The news of its three MLAs indirectly supporting the BJP is going viral. In defeating the BJP, the chances of JJP breaking up are becoming stronger. At present, it is not only the time of litmus test for the BJP, but the opposition parties are self-indulgent in the dirty game of condemnation and their lust for power has forced them to join hands besides leaving ideological differences aside.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

### CENSORSHIP IN CINEMA

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Aamir Khan says he was unsure about censor board passing 'Sarfarosh' over mentions of Pak, ISI," published on May 11, this is my response. Aamir Khan's revelation about the challenges faced during the making of "Sarfarosh" sheds light on the censorship climate of its time. The film's bold portrayal of India-Pakistan tensions, despite concerns, resonated with audiences, earning both critical acclaim and commercial success. Naseeruddin Shah's reminiscence of Pakistani admiration for his role underscores the film's impact beyond borders.

The behind-the-scenes anecdotes, like the censorship of the goat scene, offer intriguing insights into filmmaking challenges. Director John Matthew Matthan's secrecy surrounding the film's theme adds to its mystique. Moreover, the actors' reflections highlight the film's significance in their careers, with Sonali Bendre expressing gratitude for a role that show-

### Palestine's struggle



Don't you know that the Palestinians, who were evicted by Israel from their land with the help of America, will not get their own country even in this 21st century? Seeing the suffering and pain of Palestinians, my doubt had changed into belief that, there is no justice anywhere in this world. Be it the United Nations or the International Court of Justice, no one has any right to end injustice. Only one law rules on this earth, and that is 'Might is Right' or "my way or

casual depth. Overall, "Sarfarosh" stands not only as a compelling thriller but also as a testament to cinema's power in addressing complex socio-political issues.

Kiara Sharma | Mumbai

### BOUNDLESS HUMAN POTENTIAL

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Traits of a Successful Person," published on May 11, this is my response. Every morning, as I delve into the pages of the newspaper, I find myself drawn to stories that transcend mere information—they ignite a spark within, nudging me to ponder the essence of human existence. The narrative about embracing our fullest potential resonates deeply, reminding me that life is an odyssey from the ordinary to the extraordinary. The analogy of muscles resonates profoundly—the notion that our minds, like muscles, require constant stretching to grow and adapt. It's a call to action, urging us to embrace challenges as catalysts for personal evolution. The tale of Rahul Bajaj's sons repurposing scrap from INS Vikrant for scooters exemplifies this ethos. It's a testament to the power of

highway". Now see, it has been 79 years since the UN was established. The UN General Assembly's recent resolution advocating Palestine's full membership highlights the international community's ongoing efforts to address the long-standing conflict and ensure the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and statehood, despite the lack of progress in the peace process. The Arab and Palestinian-sponsored resolution, which left the world body with 25 members absent, was approved by the bloc of 143 by 9 votes. The United States, along with Israel, Argentina, Czech Republic, Hungary, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, and New Guinea, competed against Papua and opposed it. The overwhelming majority vote will still deny Palestine full membership. Yes, Palestine will now attend some meetings. In some departments of the UN, its officers can be appointed.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

audacious ideas and the willingness to venture into the unknown. Moreover, the concept of the Universe conspiring in our favour strikes a chord of optimism. It's a belief in the interconnectedness of all things, where positive thoughts manifest into tangible outcomes. This aligns with the philosophy of shouldering responsibility with a 'YES MIND', fostering synergy and abundance within teams.

At its core, it's about cultivating a mindset of abundance, gratitude and unwavering faith in a higher power. Whether we attribute it to divine intervention or the cosmic dance of energy, the essence remains the same: the power of positive thinking shapes our reality. As I set down the paper, I carry with me a renewed sense of purpose—a reminder to harness the boundless potential within and embrace life's journey with open arms. For in the pursuit of greatness lies the true essence of being human.

Kabir Mehra | Hyderabad

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## Empowering working mothers financially

The crucial role of insurance in hedging uncertainty and financial planning for working women cannot be overstated

Mothers' Day is a truly special day to celebrate the amazing women who have played an irreplaceable role in our lives. Amidst the daily balancing act of career aspirations and family responsibilities, the critical need for securing their financial future often takes a back seat. Despite the gradual increase in insurance buyers, the proportion of women availing themselves of this essential protection remains disproportionately low. This underscores not only a gap in workforce demographics but also highlights a pervasive perception among women that life insurance is not a pressing necessity.

Mothers be it working professionals or homemakers are the unsung heroes of many households. The working mother adeptly managing both professional commitments and familial duties with grace and resilience while the homemaker juggles varying responsibilities within the home to ensure that their families are taken care off. They serve as pillars of strength, providing unwavering support and love to their



families. However, amidst the daily whirlwind of activities, the critical aspect of ensuring financial protection for their loved ones can sometimes be sidelined. In the realm of financial planning, term insurance emerges as a silent yet formidable shield, offering comprehensive protection against life's uncertainties. Unlike other forms of insurance, term insurance provides pure protection coverage, ensuring that in the unfortunate event of the policyholder's demise during the policy term, their beneficiaries receive the predetermined sum assured. Safeguarding the Future: For working mothers, term insurance holds paramount importance in safeguarding the future well-being of their loved ones. It acts as a safety net, ensuring that in the absence of the primary breadwinner, the family's financial needs are adequately met.

Whether it's covering daily expenses, children's education, or servicing outstanding debts, the lump sum payout from a term insurance policy alleviates financial burdens, allowing the family to maintain its standard of living and pursue future aspirations. One of the key advantages of term insurance is its flexibility and customization options, enabling working mothers to tailor their coverage according to their specific needs and financial goals. By accurately assessing their family's lifestyle, expenses, outstanding debts, and long-term aspirations, mothers can determine the optimal sum assured that adequately addresses their loved ones' requirements.

Life is inherently unpredictable, and while no one likes to dwell on worst-case scenarios, prudent planning for the unexpected is paramount, especially for working mothers. Term insurance provides peace of mind, knowing that irrespective of life's uncertainties, their family's financial security remains safeguarded. Whether it's ensuring continuity of education, preserving the family

home, or securing a comfortable retirement for aging parents, term insurance empowers working mothers to plan for the future with confidence and assurance. With the constant rise in inflation rates, retirement planning has become increasingly critical, especially for working mothers. It's essential for them to secure their finances before retiring. One effective method is to opt for a term insurance plan with a maturity benefit. This allows them to accumulate a substantial corpus over time, providing a lump sum amount upon maturity, thus ensuring financial stability during retirement. Whether women are achieving greater financial independence or assuming primary roles in caregiving and household management, it's crucial that they recognize the importance of securing their future. They must take proactive measures to align their savings and financial protection with their evolving needs and responsibilities.

*(The writer is an insurance professional; views are personal)*



LALITHA BHATIA



## FIRST COLUMN POLL RHETORIC: ETHICS TAKE A BACKSEAT

Politicians' spiritual claims and secular pledges belie their true motives



VINOD BEHL

In the heat and dust of national elections marked by the fiercest poll slugfest, we are seeing the ugly face of humanity with ethics getting a big hit. On the face of it, politicians of all hues flaunt their spiritual and secular credentials, making rounds of religious shrines and swearing by the secular constitution. But their public discourses in election rallies and conduct are to the contrary as they take to deception and false narratives with truth being a major casualty. With their poisonous outbursts, they display their unholy behaviour as they don't hesitate even to resort to character assassination to run down their opponents. In this digital age, the rampant use of AI makes matters even worse.

Today in the poll arena where money and muscle power have become a byword, we see dignity, honesty, and nobleness giving way to greed, dishonesty, wickedness and immorality. Seeing the ever-increasing trend of 'turncoats' and election engineering by political parties, we find that society is being divided on the lines of caste, community and religion, with impunity.

Truly speaking, the problem with us is that we humans are in a mad race for power and material possessions. This weans us away from spirituality. So overwhelming is the influence of materialism that we even forget our true identity as 'Spiritual Beings' (a constituent of Super soul /Divine Soul- God). Instead, we consider the physical body and all material assets associated with it as our identity. Blinded by the glitter of materialism, our true nature- purity and nobility gets completely overshadowed and we end up embracing sinfulness. And then we don't mind going to any length in selfish-



ness, cheating, corruption and criminality for material gains and to fulfil ulterior motives. Our intoxication of wealth and power leads to moral bankruptcy, robbing us of happiness and peace. We may have wealth and high positions. But what's its use if it comes at the cost of our moral values and ethics? Such material success is devoid of bliss. Humans are a crown creation among all species on this planet earth and we have been given this rare birth with a mission to know God and become one with Him. The oneness of God leads to the oneness of humanity. Once that self-realization dawns on us, our negative tendencies gradually give way to divine attributes. Maintaining the purity of our soul leads us to become true human beings, real and everlasting happiness and peace come into our lives when we stay connected with One God, the powerhouse of love, happiness and peace and learn to maintain a balance between spirituality and materialism.

In the midst of heated national elections characterized by intense political rivalry, we witness a disturbing erosion of ethics and morality. Despite politicians' outward displays of spiritual and secular values, their actions tell a different story as they resort to deceit and character assassination for electoral gains. As money and power dominate the political landscape, principles like dignity and honesty are overshadowed by greed and immorality. Political tactics based on division along caste, community, and religious lines further fragment society. Fundamentally, humanity's relentless pursuit of power and material wealth has distanced us from our spiritual essence. We often prioritise material possessions over our true identity as spiritual beings, leading to moral degradation and a pursuit of selfish gains at any cost. However, true fulfillment lies in aligning with our spiritual nature and connecting with the divine, which fosters unity and genuine peace.

(The writer is a veteran journalist; views are personal)

# AMU breaks the gender barrier

Professor Naima Khatoon's historic appointment as AMU's first woman V-C in over a century represents a significant milestone for gender equality in Indian academia



AKHTARUL WASEY



Fortunately, Professor Naima Khatoon has been appointed as the Vice Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University, a moment long-awaited by the Aligarhian community. Professor Khatoon's journey within AMU has been extensive, having served previously as the Principal of the Women's College. Her association with the university spans an impressive 46 years, beginning as an outstanding student who consistently excelled in her examinations. Graduating with a doctorate in Psychology in 1989, Professor Khatoon's rise to the Vice Chancellorship on April 22, 2024, a testament to her dedication and academic prowess.

An interesting facet of her appointment is the transition from her husband, Professor Muhammad Gulrez, who held the position of Acting Vice Chancellor prior. Professor Gulrez is recognised for his significant contributions to West Asian Studies and has displayed exemplary integrity and resilience during his tenure. Professor Khatoon's administrative journey within AMU includes noteworthy positions such as Chairperson of the Department of Psychology and Director General, Superintendent, Provost and more.

Her appointment as Vice Chancellor also holds historical significance, marking her as the second Muslim woman to hold such a position at a Central University. This achievement follows Dr. Najma Akhtar's appointment as the first Muslim lady Vice Chancellor at Jamia Millia Islamia five years prior. The legacy of women's Leadership at AMU traces



HER STRATEGIC APPOINTMENTS, SUCH AS THAT OF PROFESSOR ANWAR MASUD ALAVI AS PRINCIPAL OF THE WOMEN'S COLLEGE, REFLECT HER COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE INSTITUTION

back to its inception, with Begum Sultan Jahan being the university's first elected Chancellor in December 1920.

Professor Khatoon's contributions to the field of Psychology are well-documented, with six books and 31 papers, earning acclaim both nationally and internationally. Her academic pursuits have taken her across the globe on various academic assignments, enriching her perspective and expertise. Beyond her scholarly achievements, Professor Khatoon's adeptness in administrative roles underscores her capability as a leader to steer AMU towards greater heights of excellence.

Recognising in the evolving landscape of education, there is a pressing need to boost departments offering professional and technical education while also introducing emerging disciplines. Professor Khatoon's leadership is expected to facilitate the successful launch of these new programmes. Additionally, there is a call to establish new centres for regional and area studies, building upon the foundation laid by previous leaders like Professor Abdul Aleem.

Her strategic appointments, such as that of Professor Anwar Masud Alavi as Principal of the Women's College, reflect her commitment to academic excellence and diversity within the institution.

It is anticipated that Professor Naima Khatoon will leverage the expertise of the internationally renowned scholar, Professor Abdur Raheem Kidwai, Honorary Director of the K. A. Nizami Centre for Quranic Studies. Professor Kidwai, besides being a Professor of English, has earned acclaim for his critiques on the translations of the Quran into English and other languages. The Department of Islamic Studies and the Faculty of Theology at AMU hold the potential to evolve into Think Tanks for Muslims worldwide. Aligarh Muslim University, known not only for its academic excellence but also as a centre of Muslim culture and Civilisation can reshape the narrative. Indian Muslim faculty Members specialising in Islamic Studies and Sunni and Shia theology dedicated to nation-building and community welfare. They are well-positioned to provide guidance grounded in scriptures and to serve as beacons of harmony and unity within the Indian Muslim community.

The AMU Jama Masjid stands out as perhaps the only mosque, besides the Kaaba and the Prophet's mosque, where both Sunnis and Shias offer congregational prayers. This model of fraternity should be emulated across India. Nigerians should take the lead in promoting better understanding and unity among

various schools of thought. Aligarhians take pride in the fact that the first educational institution to impart modern knowledge was established at Aligarh. The election of a Muslim woman as Vice Chancellor of AMU, following in the footsteps of Professor Najma Akhtar, underscores this legacy. Professor Naima Khatoon, who has recently assumed office, brings with her impeccable academic credentials and a commitment to faith. Her success will undoubtedly bring honour to AMU and our nation. The appointment of the first female Vice Chancellors at both AMU and JMI reflects the evolving landscape of our country. Asrarul Haq Majaz, the author of the AMU Tarana (Anthem), an eminent Urdu poet, had expressed the hope that women would one day be the catalysts for social transformation. This hope is gradually being realised. It is heartening to note that Professor Khatoon, in addition to her academic achievements, embodies this spirit as a practising Muslim woman. We extend our best wishes to Professor Khatoon and fervently pray for her remarkable progress.

(The writer is Professor Emeritus, Jamia Millia Islamia & Former Vice Chancellor, Maulana Azad University, Jodhpur; views are personal)

# Indian troop withdrawal marks regional paradigm shift

India's strategic redeployment of troops from the Maldives reflects evolving alliances and diplomatic shifts in the Indian Ocean region

In a move that underscores the evolving dynamics of regional geopolitics, the recent withdrawal of Indian military personnel from the Maldives has sparked discussions about the future of Indo-Maldivian relations. This strategic redeployment, marked by the departure of the final batch of Indian troops stationed in the archipelago, comes amidst shifting alliances and diplomatic recalibrations in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

The name "Maldives" is believed to have originated from the Sanskrit words "Mala" (meaning "garland") and "dvipa" (meaning "island"). Together, they form "Maladvipa", which translates to "garland of islands." This name reflects the unique



SANTOSH MATHEW

geography of the Maldives, which is an archipelago consisting of numerous coral islands grouped in a chain formation in the Indian Ocean. Over time, the name evolved into "Maldives" in English. The Maldives, a nation comprising 1,192 coral islets strategically positioned across key east-west international shipping routes, has historically been a significant partner for India in its maritime

security endeavours. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Neighbourhood First Policy" and the broader framework of "Security and Growth for All in the Region" (SAGAR), India has sought to deepen its engagement with its maritime neighbours, including the Maldives. However, the tenure of President Mohamed Muizzu has witnessed a series of policy shifts, with the Maldives increasingly gravitating towards China while seeking to reduce dependence on India across various sectors, including healthcare, food security and defence cooperation. President Muizzu's "India Out" campaign during the presidential election last year signalled a departure from the traditionally close

ties between the two countries. The concern over the Maldives falling into China's debt trap diplomacy is indeed significant. As the Maldives seeks investments and infrastructure development, it must carefully navigate its relationships with external partners to avoid potential pitfalls. While Chinese investments can offer growth opportunities, they also come with the risk of indebting the nation and compromising its sovereignty. The withdrawal of Indian military personnel, comprising more than 80 troops responsible for operating helicopters and an aircraft gifted by India, symbolizes a tangible manifestation of this evolving relationship. Muizzu's insistence on the

complete repatriation of Indian troops by the May 10 deadline underscores his administration's commitment to reshaping the Maldives' foreign policy orientation. Simultaneously, the Maldives' burgeoning engagement with China, evidenced by recent agreements on military equipment and training, adds a layer of complexity to the regional dynamics. While the Maldives retains its sovereignty to pursue partnerships that align with its national interests, the strategic implications of deepening ties with China amidst heightened Indo-Pacific tensions warrant careful consideration. From India's perspective, the withdrawal of military personnel from the Maldives

reflects a pragmatic response to the evolving geopolitical landscape. The decision to respect the Maldivian Government's request for repatriation underscores India's commitment to upholding the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of its neighbours. Moreover, the withdrawal process, facilitated through four rounds of meetings of the India-Maldives High-Level Core Group, highlights the diplomatic maturity and bilateral dialogue mechanisms that underpin Indo-Maldivian relations. Despite divergent policy trajectories, both countries have demonstrated a willingness to engage constructively and find mutually beneficial solutions.

Looking ahead, the recalibration of Indo-Maldivian relations presents opportunities for both countries to reevaluate their strategic priorities and explore avenues for collaboration in areas of mutual interest. Whether it involves maritime security cooperation, economic partnerships, or regional connectivity initiatives, the foundations of the Indo-Maldives relationship remain resilient amidst evolving geopolitical realities. As the Indian military withdrawal from the Maldives marks the closing of one chapter, it also heralds the beginning of a new phase in bilateral relations—one characterized by adaptability, pragmatism and a shared commitment to fostering stability and prosperity in the Indian

Ocean Region. Amidst the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean lies the Maldives, Asia's smallest nation and South Asia's only archipelago. The Maldives' pivot towards China raises concerns, but a shift towards closer ties with India presents a win-win scenario. Embracing India offers strategic stability, economic growth and cultural affinity, fostering a robust Indo-Maldives partnership. By aligning with India, the Maldives secures regional harmony and safeguards its sovereignty while India gains a trusted ally in the Indian Ocean, reinforcing mutual interests and prosperity for both nations.

(The writer is an associate professor, views are personal)

Israel battles regrouping Hamas in northern Gaza

AP ■ RAFAH (GAZA STRIP)

Israeli forces pushed deeper into Gaza's southern city of Rafah on Sunday and battled Hamas in parts of the devastated north that the military said it had cleared months ago but where militants have regrouped.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken reiterated opposition to a major military assault on Rafah, telling CBS that Israel would "be left holding the bag on an enduring insurgency" without an exit from Gaza and postwar governance plan.

The expanding Rafah operation has drawn warnings from neighbouring Egypt, whose foreign ministry said it intends to formally join South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice alleging Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, which Israel rejects.

cannot take place," United Nations human rights chief Volker Turk said in a statement, adding he cannot see how it can be reconciled with international humanitarian law.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a Memorial Day speech vowed to continue fighting until victory in memory of those killed in the war. Netanyahu has rejected post-war plans proposed by the United States for the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

a standoff.

Israel's air, land and sea offensive has killed more than 35,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants in its figures.

HEAVY BOMBARDMENT IN THE NORTH Palestinians reported heavy Israeli bombardment overnight in the urban Jabalya refugee camp and other areas in northern Gaza, which has suffered widespread devastation and been largely isolated by Israeli forces for months.

Residents said Israeli warplanes and artillery struck across the camp and the Zeitoun area east of Gaza City, where troops have battled militants for over a week. They have called on tens of thousands of people to relocate to nearby areas.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the top Israeli military spokesman, said forces were also operating in Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun. The two towns near Gaza's northern border with Israel were heavily bombed in the opening days of the war.

"Hamas' regime cannot be toppled without preparing an alternative to that regime," columnist Ben Caspit wrote in Israel's Maariv daily, channeling the growing frustration felt by many Israelis more than seven months into the war.

CIVILIANS FLEE IN THE SOUTH

The United Nations' agency for Palestinian refugees, the main provider of aid in Gaza, said 300,000 people have fled Rafah since the operation began there. Most are heading to the heavily damaged near-city of Khan Younis or Mawasi, a tent camp on the coast where some 450,000 people are already living in squalid conditions.

Rafah was sheltering some 1.3 million Palestinians before the Israeli operation began, most of whom had fled fighting elsewhere.

Israel has now evacuated the eastern third of Rafah, and Hagari said dozens of militants had been killed there as "targeted operations continued". The United Nations has

Profound sadness and anger grip Israel on its Memorial Day

Tel Aviv: Ruby Chen's son, Itay, was killed in the Hamas attack on October 7. But unlike scores of other families of soldiers killed that day, Chen doesn't have a grave to visit because his son's remains are held captive in Gaza.

"Where are we supposed to go?" Chen said. "There is no burial site for us to go to." Memorial Day is always a somber occasion in Israel, a country that has suffered through repeated war and conflict throughout its 76-year history.

warned that a planned full-scale Rafah invasion would further cripple humanitarian operations and cause a surge in civilian deaths. Rafah borders Egypt near the main aid entry points, which are already affected. Israeli troops have captured the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing, forcing it to shut down. Egypt has refused to coordinate with Israel on the

delivery of aid though the crossing because of "the unacceptable Israeli escalation," the state-owned Al Qahera News television channel reported.

A senior Egyptian official told The Associated Press that Cairo has lodged protests with Israel, the United States and European governments, saying the offensive has put its decades-old peace treaty with

the prime minister down."

Israel marks its Memorial Day for fallen soldiers and victims of attacks beginning at sundown Sunday with an official ceremony and smaller events the following day at military cemeteries across the country. The solemnity is then abruptly interrupted by the fanfare of Independence Day, which begins Monday evening.

Israel - a cornerstone of regional stability - at high risk. The official was not authorized to brief media and spoke on condition of an anonymity. US President Joe Biden has said he won't provide offensive weapons to Israel for Rafah. On Friday, his administration said there was "reasonable" evidence that Israel had breached international law

trauma of October 7 looming large, each day is expected to feel dramatically different from previous years.

More than 600 Israeli soldiers have been killed since Hamas launched its surprise attack on October 7, when thousands of militants rampaged across southern Israeli military bases and sleepy communities on a Jewish holiday. Roughly 1,200 people were killed that day, about a quarter of them soldiers, and another 250 were taken captive into Gaza, according to Israeli authorities. The attack sparked the war, now in its eighth month, which has killed more than 34,700 Palestinians, most of them women and children, according to local health officials.

protecting civilians - Washington's strongest statement yet on the matter.

Israel rejects those allegations, saying it tries to avoid harming civilians. It blames Hamas for the high toll because the militants fight in dense, residential areas. But the military rarely comments on individual strikes, which often kill women and children.

Fourth Indian held suspected role in killing of Nijjar

PTI ■ WASHINGTON/ OTTAWA

A fourth Indian national has been arrested by Canadian authorities in connection with the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a week after police arrested three Indians linked with the high-profile case that has severely strained India's relations with Canada.

Amandeep Singh, 22, a resident of Brampton, Surrey, and Abbotsford areas of Canada, has been charged with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder. Nijjar, 45, was killed outside Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia on June 18, 2023.

"This arrest shows the nature of our ongoing investigation to hold responsible those that played a role in the homicide of Hardeep Singh Nijjar," said Superintendent Mandeep Mooker, the Officer in Charge of IHIT. "IHIT pursued the evidence and gained sufficient information for the British Columbia Prosecution Service to charge Amandeep Singh with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder," the police statement said.

Investigators said no further details of the arrest can be released due to ongoing investigations and court processes. Citing a source familiar with the case, the Global News reported that Singh is believed to be one of the two armed men who opened fire on Nijjar. The shooters were then seen running to a

getaway car.

Like his co-accused, Singh arrived in Canada on a temporary visa, but was allegedly involved in violent crime, the source said.

The four hitmen are suspected of links to the Bishnoi gang, it added. Singh was one of five men charged with firearms and drug offences following a traffic stop in Brampton by the Peel Police Specialized Enforcement Bureau on November 3, 2023.

During the arrests, police seized an FN 509 9mm pistol with a 24-round extended magazine, and two extended magazines with 24-round capacities containing 9mm ammunition, police said at the time. IHIT investigators on May 3 arrested three Indian nationals — Karan Brar (22), Kamalpreet Singh (22) and 28-year-old Karanpreet Singh — for the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. All three individuals are Indian nationals living in Edmonton and have been charged with first-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder. The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar. India has dismissed Trudeau's charges as "absurd" and "motivated." Nijjar was a Khalistani separatist and he was wanted in India on various terror charges.

Days after Trudeau's allegations, India asked Ottawa to downsize its diplomatic presence in the country to ensure parity. Subsequently, Canada withdrew 41 diplomats and their family members from India. India has been asserting that its "core issue" with Canada remained that of the space given to separatists, terrorists and anti-India elements in that country.

Ohio police officer killed after being 'ambushed' on disturbance call; suspect sought

Euclid (Ohio): An Ohio police officer was shot and killed after being "ambushed" while answering a disturbance call over the weekend, and a suspect was being sought, authorities said Sunday. Police in the Cleveland suburb of Euclid said officers were dispatched just before 10 p.m. Saturday to a home due to a reported disturbance.

"While police were investigating, a gunman ambushed an officer, striking him with gunfire," police said. The officer, whose name wasn't immediately released, was taken to a hospital but succumbed to his injuries, police said. "Multiple law enforcement agencies" were involved in a search for the person responsible, authorities said. The Ohio attorney general's office posted photos online of the 24-year-old suspect and the vehicle being sought.

WKYC reported that residents who live on the street reported hearing about a dozen gunshots. Euclid police asked in a statement early Sunday that people "keep the fallen officer, his family, loved ones, and our agency in your thoughts and prayers." WJW reported that the officer was a military veteran and had been on the force for less than two years. "He was an amazing human being. Just a great heart. Had an incredible smile. The world's a better place with him in it," said Euclid Police Chief Scott Meyer. Mayor Kirsten Holzheimer Gail said in a statement Sunday that "we find ourselves grappling with a profound sense of sorrow and disbelief." The mayor called on the community "to come together in solidarity and support, not only to honour a hero who selflessly served and protected us but also to offer strength to one another in this time of grief."

Trump tells crowd he's being forced to endure 'Biden show trial' in hush money case

AP ■ WILDDOOD

Sandwiched between his appearances in court, Donald Trump headed on Saturday to the Jersey Shore, where he repeatedly blamed President Joe Biden for the criminal charges he's facing as the presumptive nominee prepare to face off in the November election and called his New York hush money case "a Biden show trial." Blasting the Democratic president "a total moron," Trump before a crowd of tens of thousands repeatedly characterized the cases against him as politically motivated and timed to harm his ability to campaign. "He's a fool. He's not a smart man," Trump said of Biden. "I talk about him differently now because now the gloves are off."



Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, drew what his team called a "mega crowd" to a Saturday evening rally in the southern New Jersey resort town of Wildwood, 150 miles (241

kilometers) south of the New York City courthouse where he has been forced to spend most weekdays sitting silently through his felony hush money trial.

Lisa Fagan, spokesperson for the city of Wildwood, told The Associated Press that she estimated a crowd of between 80,000 and 100,000 attendees, based off her own observations on the scene Saturday, having seen "dozens" of other events in the same space.

Trump was joined on stage by several high-level endorsers including North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and NFL Hall of Fame linebacker Lawrence Taylor, who is still listed as a registered sex offender after pleading guilty in New York in 2011 to misdemeanor criminal charges of sexual misconduct and patronizing an underage

prostitute.

The beachfront gathering, described by Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-N.J., as the largest political gathering in state history, was designed to serve as a show of force at a critical moment for Trump, who is facing dozens of felony charges in four separate criminal cases with the election less than six months away. Hours before he was scheduled to take the stage, thousands of Trump loyalists donning "Never Surrender" T-shirts and red "Make America Great Again" hats crowded onto the sand between the boardwalk and carnival rides to greet the former Republican president. "The everyday American people are 100% behind him," said Doreen O'Neill, a 62-year-old nurse from Philadelphia.

Fire burns down almost entire shopping centre

Warsaw (AP):

A fire broke out on Sunday morning in a vast shopping centre housing 1,400 shops and service outlets in the Bialoleka district in Poland's capital. The fire brigade said more than 80 per cent of The Marywilka 44 shopping complex was on fire, and 50 teams, including chemical and environmental rescue specialists, were carrying out rescue operations.

A police spokesman told the news agency PAP there were no injuries reported. Authorities also sent a text message warning Warsaw residents about the fire and telling them to stay home with the windows closed. Footage aired by private broadcaster TVN24 showed thick black smoke rising over the area.

Rise in UK knife attacks stokes public anxiety

AP ■ LONDON

A familiar horror reached Pooja Kanda first on social media: There had been a sword attack in London. And then Kanda, who was home alone at the time, saw a detail she dreaded and knew all too well. A man with a sword had killed a 14-year-old boy who was walking to school. Two years ago, her 16-year-old son, Ronan, was killed by two sword-wielding schoolmates while walking to a neighbour's to borrow a PlayStation controller.

"It took me back," Kanda, who lives near Birmingham, said about Daniel Anjorin's April 30 killing in an attack in London's Hainault district that also wounded four people. "It's painful to see that this has hap-

pened all over again."

In parts of the world that ban or strictly regulate gun ownership, including Britain and much of the rest of Europe, knives and other types of blades are often the weapons of choice used in crimes. Many end up in the hands of children, as they can be cheap and easy to get. Although the number of fatal stabbings has mostly held steady in England and Wales over the past 10 years, headline-grabbing attacks and an overall rise in knife crime have stoked anxieties and led to calls for the government to do more. "Knife-enabled" crime — in which knives were used to commit crimes or someone was caught illegally possessing one — rose 7 per cent in England and Wales last year,

the government said last month, noting some localities were not included.

In London, such crimes jumped 20 per cent. The other two UK countries, Scotland and Northern Ireland, keep their own statistics. With knives so readily available, there's only so much that can be done. Of the 244 fatal stabbings in England and Wales in the 12 months ending with March 2023 — the most recent figures available — 101 were committed with kitchen knives, far surpassing any other type of blade, according to the Office of National Statistics. But the uptick in knife crime and a steady drumbeat of shocking attacks, including those that killed Ronan Kanda, Daniel Anjorin and three people in Nottingham last year, has

pushed the issue to the forefront.

"It seems like every day something like this is reported in the press," Sanjoy O'Malley-Kumar, whose 19-year-old daughter Grace O'Malley-Kumar was among the Nottingham victims, said on "Good Morning Britain" after the recent attack in London.

In last week's local elections, candidates debated policies such as stop-and-search. Even movie star Idris Elba has weighed in. "I can pick up a phone right now, type in knives and I'll get inundated with adverts for them," the London-born star of "The Wire" and "Luther" said during a protest in January. Guns are heavily restricted in the UK and there's not much debate about it.

Duchess of Sussex, speaks with women about her Nigerian roots

AP ■ ABUJA (NIGERIA)

Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, says it's been "humbling" to find out through a genealogy test that she is partly Nigerian as she met with women in the West African nation on Saturday. On her second day in Nigeria, where she is visiting for the first time with Prince Harry to also promote mental health for wounded soldiers and young girls, Meghan acknowledged Nigeria as "my country." She added: "It's been eye-opening to be able to know more about my heritage."

"Never in a million years would I understand it as much as I do



now. And what has been echoed so much in the past day is, 'Oh, we are not so surprised when we found out you are

and head of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). "It is a compliment to you because what they define as a Nigerian woman is brave, resilient, courageous, beautiful," Meghan told the audience. The Duchess of Sussex had announced on her podcast in October 2022 that she found out through the DNA-based test that she was "43 per cent Nigerian". Her first reaction after finding out was to tell her mother, she said at the event in Nigeria's capital, Abuja. "Being African American, part of it is really not knowing so much about your lineage and background... and it was exciting for both of us," she said.

now. And what has been echoed so much in the past day is, "Oh, we are not so surprised when we found out you are







# AN: PRE-DIABETES ALERT

Certain skin changes can signal underlying health issues like insulin resistance and diabetes. Characterised by dark, velvety patches on the skin, often in body folds like neck and elbow, Acanthosis nigricans (AN) is one such condition. ARCHANA JYOTI gives more details

**CASE 1**  
 Suniti Verma, a 35-year-old woman, noticed dark, velvety patches forming on her neck and underarms. Initially dismissing them as a result of friction or aging, she became concerned when the patches started spreading and became thicker over time. After visiting a doctor, she learned about AN.



**DR LAKSHMI NAGENDRA**  
 Associate Professor, Department of Endocrinology, JSS Medical College, Mysore



**DR SUNITA SAYAMMAGARU**  
 Endocrinologist



**DR NAVAL K VIKRAM**  
 Endocrinologist, Department of Internal Medicine, AIIMS, Delhi



**DR ATULA GUPTA**  
 Dermatologist, Skin Aid Clinic, Gurugram

**CASE 2**  
 Manohar, a 45-year-old man, has been feeling increasingly fatigued and thirsty lately. During a routine check-up, his doctor noticed velvety patches on his neck and suggested testing his blood sugar levels. The tests revealed elevated glucose levels, and Manohar is now diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

**CASE 3**  
 The parents of Maria, a 14-year-old girl, became conscious when they noticed dark patches forming on her armpits and groin area. They initially attributed them to hormonal changes during puberty but became worried when the patches did not fade over time. They took her to a pediatrician, who diagnosed her with AN and recommended lifestyle changes to improve her overall health.



These are just a few cases that several endocrinologists and dermatologists are getting frequently which they say is being often attributed to sweltering heat waves. But health experts warn that in actuality, the AN signals something deeper than just a change in appearance.

Endocrinologist **Dr Lakshmi Nagendra**, Associate Professor, Department of Endocrinology, JSS Medical College, Mysore recently tweeted, "This patient with velvety patches on neck came with cosmetic concerns and was diagnosed with diabetes. This is known as AN and could be a harbinger for underlying diabetes and metabolic disorders. Get yourself tested!"  
**Dr Sunita Sayammagaru**, a renowned Diabetologist and Endocrinologist too highlighted the issue as she posted, "As we navigate through the scorching heat wave in Telangana, it's essential to address concerns regarding our children's skin health. I've noticed quite a few mothers approaching me, mistaking their kids' darkened neck regions for sun tan and seeking creams to alleviate the darkening. AN manifests as darkening of the skin and the appearance of blackish, velvety patches around the neck, armpits, and groin."

"Sometimes, skin tags may also be present. Importantly, this condition is frequently associated with obesity and metabolic syndrome, with insulin resistance being a common underlying disturbance. "Insulin resistance is a precursor to developing prediabetes and diabetes, occurring when the child begins producing more insulin than usual. Therefore, addressing AN is not merely a cosmetic concern but a significant health issue that warrants attention. "It's essential to understand that there are no cosmetic treatments for AN. Treatment lies in addressing the root cause, which primarily involves weight loss.

Given the alarming progression of diabetes in India, focusing on weight loss is imperative for the well-being of these children. "I urge all parents to prioritize their children's health by seeking appropriate medical guidance and adopting lifestyle changes aimed at promoting weight loss and improving metabolic health. Together, we can safeguard the future health of our children and mitigate the risk of developing chronic conditions like diabetes. "It is usually seen in Obesity and Metabolic syndrome and the underlying disturbance is Insulin Resistance. Insulin Resistance is a precursor to developing prediabetes and Diabetes and occurs when the child starts producing more insulin than is usually seen. "The only definitive treatment is lifestyle modification which ensures weight loss. And given the rate at which Diabetes is progressing in India, weight loss is a must for these kids. **Dr Naval Vikram**, a well-known endocrinologist at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi said that insulin resistance, which physically manifests as AN can lead to type 2 diabetes. He explained insulin resistance occurs when the body's cells do not respond effectively to insulin, a hormone that helps regulate blood sugar levels. To compensate, the pancreas produces more insulin,

leading to higher levels in the bloodstream. This excess insulin stimulates the growth and multiplication of skin cells, resulting in the appearance of AN. He said AN can be found in conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, polycystic ovary syndrome, and certain drugs or endocrine disorders. The underlying causes must be identified and treated, as AN itself can be considered a marker for these conditions. **Dr Naval** has conducted several studies in the field of metabolic disorders with special emphasis on insulin resistance and obesity and his work explained insulin resistance also plays a significant

role in the development of type 2 diabetes. Over time, the pancreas becomes unable to maintain sufficient insulin production, leading to consistently high blood sugar levels. **Dr Sunita** added that weight loss mainly happens with diet control. Weight loss doesn't happen much with exercise. There is no point in a child cycling for 45 minutes and eating biscuits and cakes. Food control alone is the mantra. "The easiest way for a child to lose weight is to restrict processed foods and junk foods. Anything that comes out of a packet like chips, crisps, instant noodles, or biscuits to be avoided. Anything made out of maida like bread, burgers, buns, pizza, etc to be avoided. Anything sugary to be avoided like soft drinks, carbonated drinks, sweets, chocolates etc. Anything deep fried, especially deep fried items from outside to be avoided." According to **Dr Atula Gupta**, Dermatologist, Skin Aid Clinic at Gurugram, AN appearance can cause distress and self-consciousness. There is no single "cure" for prediabetic pigmentation or AN, she said, noting that the most effective treatment approach is multifaceted, combining targeted therapies like topical medications or lasers with management of the underlying cause. "While treatments for AN can help improve the appearance of darkened skin patches, they may not eliminate them. "It is essential to have realistic expectations and understand that results may vary depending on the severity of the condition and individual response to treatment."

Fortunately, there are several treatment options available, including creams and laser therapies, that can help improve this pigmentation. She said that Retinoids, derived from vitamin A, are commonly used to treat AN by promoting cell turnover and exfoliation of the affected skin. Topical retinoids help to lighten pigmentation and improve the texture of the skin over time. Tretinoin, a topical retinoid, has shown some success in reducing hyperpigmentation and thickening associated with pre-diabetic pigmentation. Similarly, agents like ammonium lactate can help remove excess keratin buildup, a hallmark feature of pre-diabetic pigmentation. "Then we have laser treatments which offer a more targeted approach for managing pre-diabetic pigmentation," she added.

**NEWS BRIEF**

**International Nurses Day celebrated**

Organ donation from brain dead patients can indeed be a lifeline for those in need of organs, such as hearts and livers. It's essential to raise awareness about organ donation and encourage people to consider this selfless act that can make a significant difference in the lives



of others, said **Dr Vimal Bhandari**, former Director of the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO). He was speaking at an event held at ESIC Medical College and Hospital, Faridabad recently to mark the International Nurses Day as a part of the Continuing Nursing Education (CNE) program of the College. It was inaugurated by its Dean, Professor Asim Das. The occasion was graced by College Medical Superintendent **Dr AK Pandey**, Dean **Dr Sandeep**, besides senior administrative staff, including **AK Ranga** Deputy Director. **Dr Bhandari**, who currently heads Kidney Transplant Unit and Department of Surgery, ESIC Medical College also led the organ donation pledge taken by the nurses at the college and hospital. A comprehensive discussion was also held on palliative care, pain management, and psychological aspects of severely ill patients.

**HAPPY Mother's Day**

A mother's love is everything. It is what brings a child into this world. It is what molds their entire being. A mother's love is the strongest energy known to man.

—**Jamie McGuire**

"A mother's arms are more comforting than anyone else's."

—**Princess Diana**

"A mother's love for her child is like nothing else in the world. It knows no law, no pity, it dares all things and crushes down remorselessly all that stands in its path."

—**Agatha Christie**

## Nursing in India: Insights from a Male Nurse

In India, nursing remains predominantly female bastion, but perceptions are changing, breaking stereotypes along the way. Meet **KANISHK YADAV**, a Nursing Officer at AIIMS, Delhi, whose journey into the profession was sparked by his mother's treatment in a hospital, where he witnessed the profound respect given to healthcare staff. In a discussion with **ARCHANA JYOTI**, he offers a glimpse into his role, challenges, and aspirations within this evolving landscape

**What inspired you to pursue a career in nursing?**  
 My mother's gallstone treatment in a hospital during my 10th grade ignited my interest in healthcare, seeing the respect for the staff there motivated me to become a healthcare worker.

**Could you describe your typical workday as a male nurse?**  
 Working in a high-dependency unit, I care for critically ill patients and assist over 50 patients daily with various blood-related treatments across hospitals and departments.

**Have you faced any specific challenges or prejudices as a male nurse in a predominantly female-dominated profession in India?**  
 Despite nursing being female-dominated, I've experienced acceptance and support from colleagues. The increasing presence of male nurses globally has positively influenced acceptance by patients over time.

**Do you feel your gender influences your career advancement opportunities in nursing?**  
 Once one becomes a professional nurse, opportunities are equal for all, irrespective of gender.

**How do cultural norms and societal expectations influence**

**your role as a male nurse in India?**  
 Nursing has its code of ethics based on cultural norms and societal expectations, emphasizing patient comfort, safety, and privacy. These guidelines are easier to follow now with increased male nurse representation.

**How do you navigate gender-specific cultural sensitivities while providing care to patients of different genders?**  
 We explain procedures to patients and relatives, offering assistance from female colleagues if needed, ensuring compliance with ethical standards during all medical procedures.

**Do you believe there's been a shift in societal perceptions regarding male nurses in India in recent years?**  
 There are few states left where we find only female nurses. Now, we can see representation of male nurses from every corner of the country. This shows the society has accepted male nurses. During Covid-Pandemic we all must have seen many motivational stories of male nurses working tirelessly along with their female colleagues. Many male nurses have received Florence Nightingale for their exemplary work, I think these all have helped us.

**What support systems or**



**KANISHK YADAV**, Nursing Officer at AIIMS, Delhi

**resources do you feel are necessary to enhance the representation and inclusion of male nurses in Indian healthcare settings?**  
 Patients' feedback is most important to make our presentation stronger. They all work as ambassadors for us. If they are satisfied with our work then the policymakers will start thinking of us as far as our participation is concerned. Second, our work is teamwork, if my team members from bottom to top feel the same, also helps us a lot. All Policymakers (Health) empower a particular group after getting positive feedback from these two. My

**BREAKING THE SHIELD**

**DR T DILIP KUMAR**, serving as the President of the Indian Nursing Council, and **DR. RAMLING B. MALI**, holding the position of President at the Maharashtra Nursing Council, stand as notable examples of male leaders in the nursing profession. **STANLY JONES** is the Chief Nursing Superintendent at the Southern Railways Hospital in Chennai. **Demand for Male Nurses in the Nursing Profession**  
 In India, at least 20.5% of nurses in 2018 were male, according to a WHO report.

concern is to give an equal chance to all team members to represent themselves.

**How does your workplace promote diversity and inclusion among nursing staff?**  
 Our workplace reflects "unity in diversity," with staff from various states collaborating effectively, fostering an environment conducive to learning and growth.

**Have you observed any gender-specific differences in roles or responsibilities among male and female nurses in your workplace?**  
 Roles in the medical field are gender-neutral, but as a male nurse, I may have certain responsibilities towards female patients, such as during CPR procedures. During CPR, I am supposed to take charge of giving compressions and a female colleague can be given the responsibility of medication, calling other team members, activating the alarm, etc.

**What strategies do you employ to foster collaboration and teamwork among colleagues, irrespective of gender differences?**  
 We attend training sessions, workshops, and seminars, participate in clinical case discussions, and engage in regular communication to foster a collaborative environment.

**What are your career aspirations within the nursing profession?**  
 I aim to inspire change through exemplary work and community service, believing in the principle of leading by example. I learned this during the COVID-19 pandemic when I requested to deputize in the COVID-19 ICU and the story went viral after one of the faculty members saw this. I received hundreds of messages and calls from every corner of India and my story inspired them a lot to work for the nation in crisis. Same is the story during blood donation, organizing medical camps, etc.

**What advancements and best practices do you find in nursing, particularly in the Indian healthcare context vis-à-vis worldwide?**  
 India's healthcare system is evolving rapidly, with initiatives like the establishment of nursing simulation labs and new nursing colleges, indicating a commitment to producing skilled nurses.

**What advice would you give to aspiring male nurses in India, considering the unique challenges and opportunities they might face?**  
 I encourage aspiring male nurses to master their craft, and work with dedication, compassion, and passion, embracing challenges as opportunities for growth.

**How do you envision the role of male nurses evolving in Indian healthcare in the coming years?**  
 It's not limited to any gender. I would say that the role of Nurses in Indian Healthcare is increasing and becoming demanding day by day. As the healthcare system in India strengthens, it would require more skilled and empowered nurses to fulfill the requirements and upliftment of the healthcare system.

**What changes or initiatives do you believe are necessary to further promote gender diversity and inclusivity in nursing in India?**  
 Recruitment initiatives like the inclusion of male nurses in the Military Nursing Services would promote gender diversity. Exclusionary practices should be addressed to ensure equal opportunities for all nurses.

**Do you foresee any specific trends or challenges that might impact the nursing profession, particularly for male nurses, in India?**  
 Gender-specific reservations in nursing vacancies and the need for specialization present challenges. However, initiatives to address these issues and meet the growing healthcare demand are imperative for the profession's advancement.

