OPINION 6

PAKISTANI MILITARY

TIGHTENS GRIP

WORLD 8

ISRAEL BATTLES REGROUPING

HAMAS IN NORTHERN GAZA

NEXT ROUND OF TALKS FOR INDIA.

ASEAN TRADE PACT REVIEW IN JULY

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

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Nirmal Kumar Saha

Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury

Shatrughan Sinha

Mohammad Waliullah

Nandamuri Balakrishna

Asaduddin Owaisi

R.IP

TMC

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TMC

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INDIAN ELECTIONS TOUCH HALFWAY

CONSTITUENCY CANDIDATE

Begusarai

Krishnanagar

Asansol

Hyderabad

Bardhaman-

Durgapur

Hindupur

Kadapa

Phase IV Voting Today

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

fter 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 Moitra, AIMIM's Mahua

Asaduddin Owaisi, former cricketers Yusuf Pathan, Kirti Azad, Bollywood Shatrughan Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Ajay Kumar Mishra Teni Nityanand Rai, Madhvi Latha, Pankaja 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 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 Iammu 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 keeping in mind the terrain, time of sunset and security situation. 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

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.

Pawan Kalyan-led Jana Sena Party

Continued on Page 2

SINGHAL/SAMAR PANDEY/RISHABH MALIK

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

national Capital, The 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, and mothers, 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.

family Another 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 Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh to escape the hot weather.

Continued on Page 2

Kejriwal back with guarantees

• First guarantee: 24-hour

• Second guarantee: Free

education for everyone

Third quarantee: Mohalla

• Fourth guarantee: Land

the Agniveer scheme

Seventh guarantee: Full

Employment generation

Tenth guarantee: GST will

take on the BJP-led National

Democratic Alliance in the

manifesto and all parties that are part of the India Bloc

reclaiming

country's

by China.

reiterated his promise of full

statehood to Delhi and also

claimed that the INDIA Bloc

Government and his AAP

have not mentioned

anything related to

currently occupied

Addressing a Press conference at the AAP

form the next

the

land

Kejriwal

Ninth guarantee: End

be provided MSP

statehood to Delhi

Eighth guarantee:

corruption

be simplified

occupied by China will be

• Fifth guarantee: Discontinue

Sixth guarantee: Farmers to

electricity

clinics



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 Ranian Dimri/Pioneer

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 Lok Sabha polls. Interestingly, the Congress 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

Harvana the Delhi Chief Minister pitted his vows to the people of India, called "Kejriwal ki guarantee",

against the Prime Minister's headquarters, reiterated his r 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 its promises; my guarantees

People have to take a call whether to go for the Kejriwal ki Guarantee or

Kejriwal 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.

have proven track record,"

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, 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 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 "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 Continued on Page 2 | the Congress is a constituent

will be part of it. "The BJP has always failed on

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



Ladakh stands alone in Lok Sabha roll call

What should have been a direct contest between the BJP and the Congress in the Ladakh Lok Sabha constituency is now a threecorner 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 Gyalson, 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

of the INDIA Bloc. demands.

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 (UT) on Saturday.

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 Ladakh, has rushed Union Minister Kiren Rijiju to handle the situation. He arrived in the Union Territory

The agitation had intensified on March 6 with Leh observing a complete shutdown followed by a 66day 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

campaigning for Gyalson 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

Continued on Page 2



Parties in valley accuse local authorities of detaining workers on poll eve

 $E^{\text{ven before the gates of the}}_{\text{polling booths were thrown}}$ open to allow residents across five districts of Kashmir valley to exercise their right to franchise, for the first time after the Abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, two main rival contesting candidates running for the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat Sunday while demanding 'free and fair polls' accused the local authorities of harassing their party workers and detaining them ahead of the polling day. Post Abrogation of Article 370, the ground situation has remarkably changed in the Valley. The graph of terroristrelated violence and incidents of law and order situation has

has stopped, separatist politics has taken a back seat and this time no one is spearheading a campaign to boycott the Lok

In the last two weeks, the rival candidates took to the streets and organized campaign meet-

On the eve of the polling day, two main rival candidates raised a red flag claiming the local authorities were deliberately trying to manipulate the poll results

First Jammu and Kashmir National Conference candidate Aga Ruhullah Mehdi, while raising the issue on X (earlier Twitter), demanded his party workers' immediate

being picked up by the police since yesterday. I got a call from a senior colleague A R Rather informing me about the arrests of our workers from Chrarsharif. Similar calls from the colleagues from Khansahab and Chadoora. Would the Election Commission please care to explain these arrests? I also want the immediate release of our workers and those of PDP if the reports of their arrests are correct".

On the other hand, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) can-didate Para Waheed Ur Rehman in his post on X wrote, "In the past, Kashmir has experienced boycotts at the behest of separatists. Today, we're witnessing a similar scenario, with an IPS officer of ADGP rank, Mehdi wrote, "Our workers are Mr. Vijay Kumar, allegedly



ing out to the Election voter turnout by detaining and harassing our workers. Such Commission of India (ECI) to actions serve the interests of urgently address and relocate anti-national elements, not the official from his sensitive

passionate appeal to the Prime Minister and Home Minister of India to ensure free and fair polls in the valley. Without naming any official

Para said the events were akin to the "rigging" of elections in 1987., He wrote on X, Dear @PMOIndia and @HMOIndia, the Actions

of certain officials influenced by one political party are rem-iniscent of the mistakes made by Congress and NC in 1987. Arrests, harassment, and raids on PDP workers undermine the essence of democracy. We demand free and fair elections. Manipulating elections equals rigging and echoes the dark days of 1987, killing hopes in democracy. Hope you won't let anyone derail the process".

grid has been kept in a state of high alert ahead of the polling day on Monday.

Approximately 17.47 lakh voters have been enrolled in the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat from where a total number of 24 candidates are in the fray.

The high-profile seat is set to witness a triangular contest between NC's Aga Syed Ruhullah, PDP's Waheed ur Rehman Para, and Apni Party's Mohammad Ashraf Mir. The biggest challenge for the

Election Commission Authorities is to not only ensure higher voter turnout but also free and fair polls in the region. A little over 14 percent voter turnout was recorded in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. Dr Farooq Abdullah of the his rival candidate of the PDP by a margin of over 70,000

This time, PDP candidate Waheed Ur Rehman Para is giving a tough fight to the famous Shia cleric Aga Ruhullah Mehdi of the

National Conference.

Around 2,135 Polling Stations have been set up across 5 districts of Stringgar, Pulwama, Budgam, Ganderbal and Shopian. Over 8,500 polling staff, including reserves, will be deployed on duty on the polling day. A total of 26 Special Polling Stations have been established for migrant voters with 21 Polling Stations in Jammu, 4 in Delhi and 1 in Udhampur

BJP struggles to retain seven seats as 11 Maharashtra constituencies go to polls

T N RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

With no wave in the air, anti-incumbency staring in its face and the Opposition better placed than it was in the 2019 polls, the ruling BJP is battling hard to retain seven seats that it had won in the 2019 polls, as eleven Lok Sabha constituencies go to fourth phase of the polls in Maharashtra on Monday. Unlike in the 2019 Lok Sabha

polls when the BJP contested in alliance with the united Shiv Sena, it rode the Modi wave and walked away with seven out of the eleven seats, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) --- comprising Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (Sharad Pawar) - has made inroads int0 ruling party's strong holds and is threatening to upset its plans in three or four seats.

One more factor that is working against the BJP is that unlike in the 2019 polls when it contested in alliance with the United Shiv Sena led by then chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, the ruling saffron party is contesting the 2024 polls in alliance with the breakaway group of the Shiv Sena led by chief minister Eknath Shinde which is not organisationally as strong as the rival Sena faction.

The eleven poll-bound constituencies that are spread over

three regions -- Nandurbar, Jalgaon, Raver, Jalna, Shirdi, (all in north Maharashtra) Aurangabad, Beed (both in Marathwada) and Maval, Pune, Shirur and Ahmednagar (all in Western Maharashtra).

That the BJP has a lot at stake in the election can be evidenced from the fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed election rallies in four poll-bound constituencies –Pune, Beed, Ahmednagar and Nandurbar.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addressed one rally in Pune, while his sister Priyanka Gandhi elicited an excellent response at the rally that she addressed in the predominantly tribal constituency of Nandurbar on Saturday. NCP chief Sharad Pawar has addressed more than half a dozen rallies, while Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray has not only been drawing crowds, but he has also been finding traction with the audiences.

As much as it is a high-stake election for the BJP, both the feuding factions of the Shiv Sena are slugging it out in three constituencies – Aurangabad, Maval and Shirdi (SC). The two factions of the NCP - led by Sharad Pawar and Ajit Pawar are locked in a keen contest at Shirur, where sitting NCP (SP) Dr Amol Kolhe is taking Shivajirao Adalrao Patil. Shivajirao Patil -- who was ear-

Shiv Sena - switched over to the Ajit Pawar-led NCP a few weeks ago, just to contest the polls on NCP (Ajit Pawar)

Unlike in the earlier three phases, there are not many known faces. The only relatively familiar face is Pankaja Munde, who is the eldest daughter of late BJP leader Gopinath Munde and niece of BJP national leader Pramod Mahaian.

The BJP has in a way rehabilitated Pankaja politically by giving her a ticket in place of her younger sister Dr Pritam Munde who – after the death of her father -- won the Beed Lok Sabha seat with a record margin of 6,96,321 votes. In the 2019 elections, Dr Pritam had emerged victorious by defeating the then United NCP nominee Bajrang Sonwane by a margin of 1.68 lakh votes.

A former minister in the previous BJP-led saffron alliance government in the state, Pankaja had been defeated by her cousin Dhananjay Munde in the October 21 State Assembly polls by a margin of 30.701 votes in their home constituency of Parli in Beed district of Marathwada.

This time around, her erstwhile cousin Dhananjay - who being a part of the Ajit Pawar-led NCP is also in the BJP-led MahaYuti -is assisting Pankaja

Pankaja is locked in a direct contest against Bhajrang

Sonawane of the NCP (Sharad Pawar). Mundes hail from the Vanjari community and has an excellent following among the OBC community members, while Sonawane is a Maratha. The contest in the neighbouring Aurangabad seat which is currently held by Imtiyaz Jaleel of the Asaduddiun Owaisi-led All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) has evoked considerable interest. Jaleel had surprised many in the state political circles by winning the Aurangabad seat for the first time. He had earlier in 2014 been elected to the Maharashtra Legislative

Central constituency. This time around, Jaleel is involved in a three-cornered contest against Sandeeprao Bhumare of the Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde) and former MP Chandrakant Khaire of Shiv Sena(UBT). It remains to be seen if the AIMIM candidate will be able to retain Aurangabad seat in this elec-

Assembly from Aurangabad

The Nandurbar seat has evoked considerable interest in the 2024 polls as both Modi and Priyanka Gandhi addressed rallies within 24 hours of each other. Priyanka, who evoked tremendous response from the tribal women voters present at

the Nandurbar rally, went hammers and tongs at Modi and advised the latter to learn lessons of courage and determination from her grandmother and late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who divided Pakistan into two,

In Jalgaon where the saffron party has replaced its sitting MP Unmesh Patil, the replaced BJP candidate Smita Wagh is taking on Karan Pawar from

the Shiv Sena (UBT).

In Raver, Raksha Nikhil
Khadase of the BJP is fighting Shriram Patil from the NCP (Sharad Pawar).

Maval is witnessing a direct fight between Shrirang Barne of the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and Sanjog Waghere Patil from the Uddhav Thackerayled Shiv Sena.

Given that both Modi and Rahul Gandhi campaigned in Pune, the contest here between Murlidhar Mohol of BJP and Ravindra Dhangekar of the Congress has evoked interest. the neighbouring Ahmednagar, Dr Sujay Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil of the BJP is taking on Nilesh Dnyandev Lanke of the NCP (Sharad Pawar).

In Shirdi constituency where the famous Shirdi temple is located, Sadashiv Lokhande of the Shiv Sena (Ekanth Shinde) is fighting Bhausaheb Rajaram Wakchaure of the rival Shiv

Modi accuses Congress of Muslim appeasement

Attacking the constituents of

SAUGAR SENGUPTA BARRACKPORE/SANKRAIL

Once again Prime Minister Narendra Modi has branded the Congress with Muslim appeasement saying the tricolour party has promised to introduce separate reservation policy for the Muslims at the cost of SĆs, STs and other backward castes.

Addressing massive election rallies at Barrackpore in North 24 Parganas and Sankrail in Howrah the Prime Minister on Sunday said that the "Congress is trying to take away the reservation SCs,STs and OBCs and give it to the Muslims ... but as long as Modi is there no such reservation will be allowed... no one can take away the reservations from the SCs or STs." Introducing a new coinage "Vote Jihad" for the Congress, Left and Trinamool Congress the Prime Minister said that these parties stood for corruption, anarchy and vote jihad which was the other name of appeasement politics.

The TMC, Congress and the Left pursue the politics of appeasement," so much so that the Hindus have been rendered into second class citizens in Bengal," the Prime Minister said referring to a statement by TMC MLA Humayun Kabir who had earlier threatened to throw the BJP people in Bhagirathi River.

INDIA alliance in Bengal he said, "the TMC, Congress and the Left have put Bengal into an identity crisis he said, "the TMC Attacking is calling the rest of Indians whocome to Bengal as outsiders whereas they give shelter to the infiltrators to the effect that in some districts the infiltrators have become majority ... this emboldens them to threaten the Hindus to throw them in the Bhagirathi River." Appeasement politics is a part of Congress and TMC'spolicy of "vote jihad," he said.The Prime Minister held addressed four rallies at Barrackpore, Sankrail, Chinsurah and Arambagh in Bengal. Earlier on May 3, Modi addressed rallies at Krishnagar,

Purba Bardhaman and Bolpur Lok Sabha constituencies. Saying that Bengal was an important state for the BJP the Prime Minister said the Congress, Left and such other parties ruled Eastern India for so many years but gave only poverty despite the states being capable, rich in capability mineral resources and agriculturally fertile. Attacking the TMC he said whereas the Congress stood for corruption and dynasticism, the Left gave anarchy the TMC combined the attributes of both the parties. "The TMC has given Tolabaji (extortion) in Bengal where no business is possible without giving commission ... corruption

is a full time business in Bengal

... TMC leadership means lust and anarchy," the Prime Minister

the Government for playing with the women's honour at Sandeshkhali he said, "the incident at Sandeshkhali has been watched by the entire country and shamed everyone," referring to some new video footages where a BJP leader was saying that the entire game was hatched by t he BJP in lieu of money the PM said "today they have started a

game," but the people of Bengal know the truth," adding how the Mamata Banerjee Government was trying to protect the persons accused of sexual attacks on women and grabbing their

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who too was addressing election rallies elsewhere however hit back immediately saying the Prime Minister had a new Sandesh (message) from Sandeshkhali and that was "Modi is going ... no one can save him from coming back to power." Referring to the twin incidents of Sandeshkhali where women were reportedly made victims of sexual assault and allegations of molestation leveled on Governor CV Ananda Bose by a contractual employee at Raj Bhavan in Kolkata, Baneriee said, "Modi ji is still telling lies about Sandeshkhali incident about which the truth is out

Fresh video again sparks ruckus in Sandeshkhali

SAUGAR SENGUPTA

There was fresh tension at Sandeskhali when a group of BJP supporters including women on Sunday thrashed some Trinamool Congress workers and virtually kept hostage a local MLA for making fake videos on the Sandeshkhali incident. The purported video suggested that the BJP had paid 72 women Rs 2,000 each to make false complaints of rape.

Local TMC workers Tatan

Gayen and Dilip Mallick were allegedly beaten up by the BJP workers while they were holding a closed-door meeting with the local TMC MLA Sukumar Mahto. The incident took place near the Sandeshkhali Police Station, A large contingent or RAF was deployed to defuse the situation. The incident took place during a protest movement by the BJP against alleged mak-



ing of fake videos where a BJP local leader was seen telling that the entire Sandeshkhali movement was thehandiwork of a senior BJP leader who had purchased women to make false claim of rapes. The Sunday's incident came simultaneously with another fake video emerging where it was alleged that the same BJP leader had promised Rs 2,000 each to 72 women to claim that they were sexually Shahjahan w assaulted by the TMC goons. CBI custody.

The Pioneer had not confirmed the contents of the video footage. Sandeshkhali is a riverine island at the mouth of Sunderbans in North 24 Parganas where a local TMC strongman Sheikh Shahjahan and his men had allegedly grabbed hundreds of acres of lands belonging to the poor farmers. Some of local women were also gang-raped according to initial complaints registered before the police. Sk Shahjahan was presently in

Retailer Association to support BJP Chandni Chowk candidate Khandelwal

Delhi voters...

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

n a major boost to the electoral prospects of Praveen Khandelwal who is fighting on BJP ticket from Chandni Chowk Lok Sabha constituency, the Federation of Retailer Association of India (FRAI), which represents a large number of micro, small, and medium retailers across the nation and has a membership of 42 retail associations has rallied behind the candidature of Khandelwal who is also the founder and general secretary of the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT).

At a programme held here recently, Abhay Raj Mishra, National Spokesperson of FRAI, urged fellow retailers to support Khandelwal's candidacy, citing his dedication to their cause. FRAI's endorsement is expected to significantly bolster Khandelwal's campaign for the Chandni Chowk seat, with the retail community comprising a substantial vote bank in the

Expressing gratitude for FRAI's support, Khandelwal emphasized his commitment to representing the interests of retailers and traders in the Lok Sabha. He pledged to end inspector raj for all retailers within one year of being elected. On the occasion, the FRAI members also highlighted the plight of micro, small, and medium retailers, particularly Kirana stores, highlighted their crucial role in the nation's retail landscape and hoped that once Khandelwal wins, their voices will be taken up in the Parliament.

The organisation has been actively working to address issues affecting the livelihoods of these retailers, advocating for policies to protect employment in the unorganized retail sector and promote ease of doing business in India, said Mishra.

Phase IV Voting...

From Page 1 The poll body accused Congress president Kharge of Mallikarjun

creating impediments in the conduct of free and fair elections and said Kharge's allegations are unwarranted, without facts and 'reflective of a biased and deliberate

attempt to spread confusion'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday addressed rallies in Barrackpore, Hooghly, Arambagh and Howrah, West Bengal and road shows in Patna.

The fourth phase also features a bit of glamour in the east of the country, where Bollywood veteran Shatrughan Sinha is seeking re-election in West Bengal's Asansol, and to the where south, actress Maadhavi Latha from the BJP is standing for the Hyderabad seat in Telangana. Latha is pitted against Asaduddin Owaisi, a four-time MP from the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen party. Two World Cup-winning

cricketers will be testing the political pitch in Bengal. The 65-year-old former Indian cricketer Kirti Azad, who was part of the 1983 World Cup winning squad is contesting from Bardhaman-Durgapur Sabha Constituency while Yusuf Pathan, 41-yearold former member of the Indian cricket team that won the World Cup in 2011, is testing political waters from

Baharampur seat Murshidabad against senior Congress Party leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, who has been representing since 1999. Yet, the most high-profile electoral battle in the State on May 13, is in Krishnanagar, where the fiery TMC parliamentarian and fierce critic of Modi, Mahua Moitra, is seeking a second term. In December 2023, the firebrand MP was expelled from parliament after being accused of accepting cash to

ask questions.

Kejriwal back...

From Page 1 He said, "This will cost the Government ₹5 lakh crore, half of which will be spent by the Centre and half by the States. To keep up the standards, every year, it will cost the Centre Rs 50,000 crore. This is not a lot of money keeping in mind that all children will have access to good education."

AAP's third guarantee is Mohalla Clinics."We will arrange good treatment for everyone. Mohalla clinics will be opened in every village, every locality," said the Delhi CM.

District hospital will be converted into Multispeciality Hospital, he

"Every person born in this country will get free treatment. Treatment will not be done on the basis of insurance as this is a big scam. We will create infrastructure. Rs 5 lakh crore rupees will be spent on healthcare," he added.

Announcing his fourth guarantee, Kejriwal said land occupied by China will be freed and Rashtra Sarvopari is our guarantee.

"China has occupied our land but our Central Government is denying it... Whenever we ask the Centre, it says no one has come into our land... The whole world knows as this is the era of satellite images. There is a lot of strength in our Army. All the land of the country which has been occupied by China will be freed. For this, efforts will be made at the diplomatic level on one side and the Army will be given complete freedom to take whatever steps it wants to take regarding this," he said. Scrapping Agniveer scheme is his fifth guarantee. Kejriwal promised to stop the contractual form of the Agniveer scheme and said all those who have been inducted through

programme will be given permanent postings. Stating that the scheme weakens the Indian Army, Kejriwal said, "The Agniveer scheme, wherein the youth is

inducted into the Army for four years and then asked to leave, has no ownership. This scheme was brought in because the Centre felt that the burden of salaries was too high. We have to spend for the country's security. We can't compromise on that front."

The AAP's sixth guarantee is Minimum Support Price for farmers. "Farmers will be provided MSP as per the Swaminathan Commission report, said Kejriwal while announcing the guarantees. "You can give a life of dignity to the farmers, if you are paying them full prices for

their crops," he added. His seventh guarantee is full statehood to Delhi. "Our seventh guarantee is that Delhi will be given statehood which has been the right of the people of Delhi for many

decades," Kejriwal said. The AAP's eight guarantee is employment generation. INDIA Bloc Government will generate 2 crore new jobs annually to address unemployment concerns, the

Delhi CM said. Taking a dig at the BJP, Kejriwal said, "The system where honest people are being sent to jail and the corrupt are being protected will end. It is the biggest reason behind the country's

corruption."
"Our 9th guarantee is to end corruption and BJP's washing machine is the biggest cause of corruption in this country, said the AAP chief. He said, "The BJP's washing machine will be dismantled. Like we had attacked corruption at both the lower and higher levels in Delhi and Punjab, we will replicate it across the

Ladakh stands alone...

The entire NC unit of Kargil resigned from the party on May 6 to revolt against its leadership for "putting pressure" on them to INDIA support candidate Tsering Namgyal instead of Jan. The NC has won the seat twice in the past, while independents have won it thrice.

After attaining UT status, Ladakh witnessed elections to both Leh and Kargil chapters of the LAHDC in October 2020 and 2023, respectively.

While the BJP retained power in the Leh hill council elections by winning 15 seats -- five short of its 2015 election tally, the Congress increased its tally from six to nine seats while two seats

went to Independents. In the Kargil hill council elections, the NC-Congress combine won 22 seats against two by the BJP and two by Independents. The NC on its own got 12 seats and the Congress 10.

Amid intensified Lok Sabha poll campaigning, which also saw several BJP leaders, including national general secretary Tarun Chugh, reaching out to the voters, Gyalson had said his primary focus will be resumption of dialogue between the Centre and the Ladakh leadership for resolution of "pending

"My primary focus will be resumption of stalled

(between leadership Central Government). I don't believe that the dialogue is derailed but because of the Model Code of Conduct, no headway has taken place. Once the new government is in place, I am sure about the resumption of the dialogue," he had said. Congress candidate Tsering

Namgyal said his party has taken a historic decision to include granting sixth schedule to Ladakh in its manifesto. "We support the four-point demand of the LAB and the

KDA and we will forcefully raise the demands within and outside Parliament to fulfill the aspirations of the people," he said.

Vikas Dixit, a resident of Malviya Nagar, said with schools starting their summer vacations on May 15, and as a Government employee, he will also have a long weekend due to the elections, making it convenient for him to plan a

From Page 1

"With everyone rushing to book trips and vacations, ticket prices tend to rise as days pass. To sidestep any potential obstacles in our plans, we prefer booking in advance and plan our trips as early as possible. That's why we've decided to depart from Delhi on the night of May 20," Dixit said. The upcoming 10th and

12th-grade results have

already set in holiday plans

school teachers. "I've been studying and giving exams non-stop, now, I just want a break. Thinking of heading to hill stations with my friends for some chill time," he said. Conversations across

for teens, their families and

generations highlight the city's divided priorities and despite the election buzz, many families stick to their vacations, pre-planned emphasising the importance of relaxation amid school and work pressures. As the holiday mood sets in, the city contends with balancing with leisure responsibility. Although the Election Commission has issued an advisory of paid holiday on May 25 for private and public employees.

BJP steps up LS poll campaigning

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, Iayant 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 Shahbajade 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

BJP leader Manjinder Singh

Modi government.





#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 transparen-

cy.
"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

"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

The BJP leader also claimed Kerjiwal 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.

The society played a leading role in the country's freedom movement and in keeping the borders safe from the enemy after independence. The Jaat community's contribution in sports, farming and sacrifice is first," he said.

Dhankad addressed the cere-

mony while stating that the

community has a glorious his-

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



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to bolster voter Lturnout, 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.

Yaday 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 Trader's 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 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 seems ridiculous it proves right on Kejriwal an old hindi "Mungerilal 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

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

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 impor-Aadmi Party is saying that the tance 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 govern-ment 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 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 con-

guarantees, said that a person

sistently 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 guar-

anteeing 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

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, com-menced 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 Incharge 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 Shrinivaspuri, Harsh Malhotra in New Ashok Nagar,



Yogendra Chandoliya in Rohini-E, Kamaljeet Sahrawat in Bindapur, Bansuri Swaraj in Chanakyapuri, Praveen Khandelwal in Sitaram Bazar, Gupta in Rohini, Rajkumar Chauhan in Mangolpuri-A, Gajendra Yadav in Shadipur Ajab, Praveen Shankar Kapoor

in Chandni Chowk, Mohan Singh Bisht in Shriram Colony, Jitendra Mahajan in Rohatas Nagar, Abhay Verma Khandelwal in Sitaram Bazar, Ajay Mahavar in Yamuna Vihar, Arvinder Singh Lovely in Shastri Park, Vijendra 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 Ámit 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 coun-

try 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

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

 $I^{\rm n}$ a bid to tackle the issue of lillegal 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 com-

prehensive report. In her letter to MCD commissioner, Oberai 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

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

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 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 after his arrest but this did not fructify. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) became more united and stronger "after my arrest", the Delhi chief minister 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



my arrest that they will break the party and topple the gov-ernments in Delhi and

ernments 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 water and medicines

Later he held a road show in New Delhi and North-west

by his Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Kejriwal held a roadshow in Moti Nagar in support of party's New Delhi Lok Sabha candi-date 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 minis-

The AAP national convenor is out on interim bail till June 1. He has to surrender on

"They sent me to jail because I worked for you. The BJP

does not want that work of Delhi people are done," he

Kejriwal alleged that his insulin injections were stopped for 15 days inside TIĥar 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

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

Normal to below normal temperatures are likely in areas going to polls on Monday, according to the India Meteorological Department

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 sit-

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",

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 rore 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

As many as 175 assembly seats of Andhra Pradesh and 28 assembly seats of Odisha are also going to polls in this

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $T^{ ext{he Supreme Court is sched-}}$ uled 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 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 complainant 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

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 retweetOnly 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

a reprehensible tactic that

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 partywise break-up of criminal cases. According to the ADR report, 29 candidates have declared cases related to crime against

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 'crorepatis' (those with assets exceeding Rs 1 crore). The average asset per candidate stood at Rs 3.56

TMC complains to EC against NCW chairperson, BJP leaders

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Trinamool Congress on Sunday filed a complaint with the Election Commission against National Commission 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 woman from Sandeshkhali offences of forgery, cheating, fraud, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy upon innocent women 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 The TMC said during the referred to an interview of a interview, a woman from

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 complaint said.



Sandeshkhali alleged she was coerced through threats of vio-lence by Sharma and Das, to knowing its purpose. "Later, when the police issued her a

sign a blank paper without

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

...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

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

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 reinforce the robust defence ties between the two nations and discuss opportunities for regional security collaboration, defence ministry said here on Sunday.

Giving details of his visit, officials said during his visit, the DG DIA is scheduled to interact with senior military leadership of Tanzania, including the Chief of Defence Staff of Tanzania Peoples' Defence Force, General Jacob John Mkunda, and his counterpart Major General M N Mkeremy, Chief of Defence Intelligence. In his visit to the Tanzanian National Defence College, he will discuss India's Security Perspective with future leaders



of the TPDF. The meetings will be aimed to foster mutual understanding and strength-ening bilateral defence coop-

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 through facilitated Government of India assis-

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

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

Individuals with adverse muscle composition were up to 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 func-

"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

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 calcu-

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 followedup for an average of 3.9 years, 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

Food insecurity rising among India's elderly: NITI Aayog

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tn 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 care-

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 Iustice 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, mus-

cle 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 preva-

lence of underweight is almost



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.

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 "Out of the total population of 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

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-inlaw, 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 docu-Comprehensive policies and interventions are essential to ensure their dignity, well-

the report summed up.

being, and inclusion in society,



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

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



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

Previously, in October 2023, India hosted the Country Led 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 Collaborative through

Governance', in partnership with the Agency for Integrated Rural Fire Management, Portugal, Korea Forest Service, and International Tropical Timber Organization at UNFF UNFF 19 culminated in a dec-

laration 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.



Sonia spent more than 70 per cent of MP funds on minorities, claims Shah

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday launched a blistering attack on senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, accusing her of "spending more than 70 per cent of her MP funds on minorities" and the Gandhi family of being experts in lying. Rahul Gandhi is fighting the Lok

Sabha elections from Raebareli the seat held by his mother Sonia Gandhi for the last two decades. She recently moved to the Rajya Sabha. Rahul Gandhi has also been fielded from Wayanad in Kerala.

Raebareli will vote in the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha elections on May 20. Shah also addressed an election rally in Pratapgarh where he said that Rahul Gandhi can be scared of Pakistan's "atom bomb" but the BJP is not, and that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir

belongs to India and "we will take it".

He was referring to Congress leader

Mani Shankar Aiyar's remarks on

Pakistan having the atom bomb. At an election rally in Raebareli, Shah said, "You gave the Gandhi family a chance for years, but no development work has been done ... (Congress) do not believe in development. They do not even come to you in your happiness and sorrows." Asking people to vote for BJP candidate Dinesh Pratap Singh, the Union minister said, "We will connect Raebareli with Modiji's development

'The 'shahzada' (prince) has come here to seek votes. You have been voting for many years. Have you



received anything from the MP fund? If you have not received it, then where did it go? It went to their vote bank. Sonia Ğandhi has spent more than 70 per cent of the MP funds on minorities," Shah claimed.

Intensifying his attack, he said, "This Gandhi family is an expert in lying. They are now promising Rs 1 lakh for every woman. In the Telangana (assembly) elections, they had said that they would give Rs 15,000 to every woman. The women of the state elected them (Congress) ... Forget about Rs 15,000, they did not even give Rs 1,500.

"Many people here told me that this is a family seat... It is true. The people of Raebareli have made the Gandhi and Nehru families win for years. But after getting elected from here, how many times did Sonia Ji and her family come to Raebareli? Okay, Sonia ji's health is not good, but has Rahul baba or sister Priyanka come?"

After the rally, Shah visited the residence of Samajwadi Party MLA from Unchahar Manoj Pandey, who

on February 27 resigned from the post of the party's chief whip and cross-voted in favour of the BJP candidate in the Rajya Sabha polls.

In Pratapgarh, Shah referred to Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar's remarks on Pakistan and said, "Rahul baba, if you want to be scared of the atom bomb, then be scared, we are not scared. Pakistan-occupied Kashmir belongs to India and we will take it." In a video, Aiyar has been heard saying that India should give respect to Pakistan as it is a sovereign nation and engage with it as it also possesses the atom bomb. He indicated in the video that if a "mad person" comes to power there and uses the atomic bomb, it will not be good and will have its effect

here too. While Aiyar said the video was old and dredged up now as the BJP's election campaign is faltering, the Congress said it totally disagreed with the remarks made by Aiyar some months

Addressing the rally, Shah said that this time, the people of Kaushambi would have to ensure three hattricks. 'First is to make Narendra Modi the prime minister for the third time. The second hattrick in UP is to completely wipe off the SP, BSP and Congress for the third time and the third hattrick is to make my friend (Vinod) Sonkar the MP for the third time," he said.

Polling in Kaushambi (SC) Lok Sabha seat too will be held in the fifth phase on May 20. INDIA bloc constituent Samajwadi Party's Pushpendra Saroj is the main challenger to the BJP in this

PM on a hat trick, moving towards target of creating of Viksit Bharat, says Anurag

PTI ■ HAMIRPUR

sserting that continuity in A sserting that continuty in governance is important for the country's progress, Union minister Anurag Thakur has said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is ready to hit an electoral hattrick and move towards the target of building "Viksit Bharat" (developed India). In an interview to PTI, Thakur said no charges hurled by the Opposition can

stick on Modi.

Dubbing as "laughable" the opposition's claim of victory in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Thakur exuded confidence that the BIP was well on its way to achieving the goal of 370 seats which includes the 303 seats it won last time and 70 seats where it finished second. These 70 seats were part of 160 parliamentary segments that the BJP had identified after 2019 to launch an extensive ministerial outreach.

"I can say after the third phase of elections that Modi ji is on a hat-trick. I say this due to one-sided polling. Congress workers have retreated from the battlefield. In Surat and Indore, Congress candidates withdrew from elections. In Odisha, they returned tickets. Rahul Gandhi ran away from Amethi and fled to Wavanad in 2019. Now he has come to Rae Bareli. I don't know where he will go next," the minister noted.

Thakur, a four-time MP from



Hamirpur in Himachal Pradesh contesting for the fifth time in a row, said it is in Modi's name that he was seeking people's mandate once again and also in the name of development works initiated over the last few years as MP.

Stability and continuity are key for the country's progress and enable the government to continue with policies and programmes to ensure India remains on track to become the third largest economy just as it has leaped from the 10th largest economy pre 2014 to the fifth largest under Modi rule," he said.

The senior minister also flagged an old video of veteran Congressman Mani Shankar Aiyar urging India to respect Pakistan and asked, 'How come they remember Pakistan and how come Pakistan remembers Congress?"

He also asked why 'tukde

tukde gang' people join the Congress and why PFI and SDPI support the Congress. "When anti-India forces support the Congress, a natural question that arises is to what extent can the Congress fall for votes,"

Thakur alleged. On whether the charges against Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi in the National Herald matter will be expedited, Thakur said probe agencies were independent to

"How much time the Court takes in punishing the culprits, no one can decide. From our side, action should have been taken against Rahul ji, Sonia ji and Chidambaram ji a long time back. Even in Nirbhaya rape case, the crime was committed in 2012 but the punishment was given in 2020. It is a legal process and courts have to decide," he

Bihar: Five Lok Sabha seats to go to polls, two Union Ministers in fray

PTI ■ PATNA

journev.

 $F^{\rm ive\ Lok\ Sabha\ seats\ in\ Bihar}_{\rm will\ go\ to\ polls\ on\ Monday,}$ when 95 lakh voters will decide the electoral fate of 55 candidates, including two Union Ministers. The seats going to polls are Begusarai, Ŭjiyārpur, Samastipur, Munger and Darbhanga.

In Begusarai Lok Sabha seat, which has the largest electorate of 22 lakh among the five constituencies, Union minister Giriraj Singh's bid for a second consecutive term has been challenged by CPI's Awadhesh Rai.

In 2019, Singh had defeated former JNU students' union president Kanhaiya Kumar, who was a CPI candidate, by a margin of over 4 lakh votes in the constituency

However, unlike last time, when it ploughed a lonely furrow, the CPI now has a truck with Congress and the mighty RJD, a combination that had paid rich dividends in assembly polls less than three

In Ujiyarpur, which has the lowest number of voters at 17.48 lakh but the maximum number of 13 candidates, Union Minister of State for Home, Nityanand Rai, is aiming at a hat-trick.

His main challenger is Alok Mehta, a senior RJD leader and former state minister who the MLA from the eponymous assembly seat. Mehta has also been a former MP from Samastipur, the name by which the Lok Sabha

seat was known before the 2019 delimitation. Samastipur is now the name of

a reserved seat, previously known as Rosera, where the battle is primarily between two debutants, both children of senior JD (U) leaders and ministers in the Nitish Kumar cabinet. Congress candidate Sunny Hazari has the benefit of his party representing a broader alliance, besides the fact that his father Maheshwar Hazari had won the seat for JD (U) in 2009.

The Hazaris had reportedly earlier approached Chirag Paswan, a close relative, for a ticket of his Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas). However, Paswan fielded Shambhavi Choudhary, daughter of Ashok Choudhary, another contesting polls.

minister known to be very close to the Bihar chief minister. At a recent rally in Bihar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged voters to support the LJP (R) candidate, whom he described as the "youngest" of all fielded by the BJP-led NDA.

Another seat with an intense contest is Munger, which former JD (U) president Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lalan' hopes to retain. His main challenger is RJD candidate Kumari Ānita, who is seen as a proxy to her husband Ashok Mahto.

Mahto, a dreaded gangster, is known for political ambitions and a strident anti-upper caste stance. However, conviction in criminal case him disqualified

A widower in his 60s, Mahto tied the knot with Anita two months ago, reportedly upon advice from RJD president Lalu Prasad. The muscle power that Mahto brings to the table seems to have caused some consternation in the NDA camp, though the PM had held a rally in the constituency.

A controversy was stoked with the release, on parole, of Anant Singh, a UAPA convict, whose wife Neelam Devi is the MLA from Mokama, falling under Munger Lok Sabha seat, and had crossed over from RID to (U) when the NDA government in Bihar won a trust vote in February.

Since walking out of jail, Anant Singh has been holding court at his residence,

predicting before supporters and media a massive win for Lalan, whom his wife had challenged in 2019 as the Congress candidate.

In Darbhanga, Gopal Jee Thakur feels confident of retaining the seat for BJP, his prospects having received a boost with a rally of the PM only last week. His main rival Lalit Kumar Yadav is the sitting RJD MLA from Darbhanga Rural and, hence, no pushover.

Besides, the RJD has received a shot in the arm with the return of former Union minister Ali Ashraf Fatmi, who had won the Darbhanga seat four times and is now trying his luck from the adjoining Madhubani, which goes to polls in the fifth phase.

DNA of Congress, SP, **INDIA Bloc similar to** Pakistan, says Yogi



PTI ■ SITAPUR/VARANASI

Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said the DNA of Congress, Samajwadi Party, INDIA bloc are similar to Pakistan where people are starving and there is lack of

starving and there is lack of development.
"The poor used to die of hunger during the time of SP-Congress. And now people are starving to death in Pakistan, whereas 80 crore are getting free ration in India," he said during a public meeting at Gandhi Degree College in Sidhauli in the Sitapur Lok Sidhauli in the Sitapur Lok Sabha constituency.

Sharpening his attack on the opposition, Adityanath said, 'Congress had opportunity for 60-65 years to work for the development of India, but it did not. There was lack of medical facilities during the UPA government. They used to play with people's faith, allowed the poor to die of hunger and drove farmers to suicide.

INDI alliance and Pakistan seem to be similar," he added. The chief minister urged people to ensure that the candidates of such political parties that dared to play with the future of the country lost their deposits in

campaign in different districts, Adityanath offered prayers at Baba Kaal Bhairav and Shri Kashi Vishwanath temples in Varanasi on Sunday morning. On Saturday evening, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Adityanath participated in the Ganga Aarti Ghat. Dashashwamedh Following this, both the senior BJP leaders held a late night meeting finalise preparations for Prime

roadshow Monday in Varanasi, according to an official statement. During his rally in Sitapur, Adityanath said those who are

Prime Minister Narendra Modi securing the position for bloc) oppose India, Lord Ram, marginalised communities, including scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, daughters, and businessmen. So the citizens have decided to reelect PM Modi with elect PM Modi with overwhelming majority to realise the dream of a developed and self-reliant India", he added.
"The Congress-Samajwadi Party didn't have a vision for development. The pace of development during their time.

development during their time was terribly slow as all that they were interested in was commission," he said. Adityanath reiterated his

allegation that if elected to power, the Congress and SP are conspiring to tamper with the reservations for backward classes, scheduled castes, and by altering the tribes Constitution framed Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar. He asked the people to not let the opposition interfere with their rights. He further mentioned that RJD's Lalu Prasad Yadav, a key member of the INDI alliance, had said in Bihar during the UPA government that he

would $\bar{\text{give}}$ OBC reservation to Muslims.Adityanath emphasised that Ambedkar had explicitly stated that reservations cannot be based on religion.
The chief minister further accused the opposition of

aiming to introduce a 'Jizya' tax by imposing inheritance tax on Indians' ancestral property. Continuing his attack on the opposition, Adityanath said they intended to grant the minorities the freedom of

eating beef, therefore promoting cow slaughter in the country, which the nation would never tolerate. If the state were governed by

the SP and the country by the Congress, Ram devotees would have faced bullets, akin to the events of 1990. Those who target Ram devotees, betray Ram, or support terrorists should not govern this nation,

Vijayawada LS constituency, a battlefield for two brothers

PTI VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada
Parliamentary
constituency has emerged as the battleground between brothers K Srinivas of Andhra Pradesh's ruling YSRCP and K Sivanath, candidate of the main opposition TDP in the May 13 Lok Sabha polls. While Srinivas is a seasoned

politician, a transport tycoonturned-politician, his younger brother Sivanath, also a businessman, is trying his electoral luck for the first time. Srinivas (58), the older brother, was a key TDP leader until some months ago but differences with some party leaders at the local and state level compelled him to jump ship to the Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSRCP in January, according to his supporters.

One of the main reasons attributed to the exit of Srinivas from TDP was the party's decision to replace him with Sivanath as the candidate for the Lok Sabha election. Popularly known as Kesineni Nani and the owner of the now defunct Kesineni travels company, Srinivas,

Parliamentarian for nearly a decade, had also resigned as an MP when he had quit the TDP. Vijayawada Lok constituency encompasses the Assembly constituencies of Tiruvuru (SC), Vijayawada West, Vijayawada Central, Vijayawada East, Mylavaram, Nandigama (SC) and Nandigama

Jaggayyapeta. In the 2019 election, Srinivas secured 5.75 lakh votes, trouncing his YSRCP rival P V Prasad, who secured 5.66 lakh votes while Janasena's M Prasad Babu got 81,650 votes.



Srinivas's poll plank was the "dedication of his life for the city of Vijayawada," located in the heart of the southern state and also a major commercial

As a two-time MP, Srinivas did manage to gain some goodwill, said a 70-year-old local resident, K Tata Rao, who regularly spends his evenings on Bandar Road to relax over a cup of tea with friends.

'Kesineni Nani (Srinivas) developed flyovers in the city. Kanakadurgamma flyover and a flyover near the Benz Circle. He did a good job, he will come next time as well," Rao told PTI. However, he termed Sivanath contesting against his own brother as a "selfish

The younger Kesineni brother is testing the political waters and lacks the experience possessed by his older brother. Beyond the sibling rivalry, Rao, a retired government employee, said he and other common people were more worried about the fate suffered by the southern state due to what he described as the "apathy" of the BJP-led Central

Government.

He alleged that right from 2014, when Andhra Pradesh was bifurcated, the Central Government did not do anything worthwhile to the residual state.
"What did the Congress

government do at that time, it said they will give special category status (SCS) for 10 years and the BJP also supported it. BJP came to power and said SCS is a closed chapter. Ten years have passed by and what good did BJP do to Andhra Pradesh?" he asked. Rao reminded that the PM had promised SCS "at the feet of Sri Venkateswara Swamy in Tirupati" in the run-up to 2014 polls and yet he broke his

Though the southern state is contributing thousands of crores of rupees worth GST, Rao said the Narendra Modiled Centre is not "returning its rightful share" of tax revenues. In all issues concerning Andhra Pradesh including the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant privatisation issue, which is opposed by people, Rao claimed the BJP government has done "immense injustice" and continues to do it.

promise.

Vasco turnout hit as Goa registered voters headed back to UP for family weddings: MLA

PTI ■ PANAJI

The Lok Sabha poll turnout has been affected in Goa's Vasco assembly segment as many electors registered there left before the polling date for their native places in Uttar Pradesh to attend family weddings, local BJP MLA has

claimed In the May 7 polls to the two Lok Sabha seats in the coastal state, the Vasco assembly segment, which comes under the South Goa Lok Sabha constituency, witnessed the lowest turnout of 68 per cent, as per official figures.

Goa recorded 75.20 per cent turnout during polling on May 7. The voting was 76.34 per cent in the North Goa Lok Sabha seat and 73.90 per cent in the South Goa parliamentary constituency, according to data released by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Vasco assembly segment has been the BJP's stronghold. Talking to PTI on Saturday,

Vasco MLA Daji Krishna Salkar said during the campaigning, efforts were made to convince voters to stay back till the polling day. But we could not stop them from going to their native places as this is the wedding season and everyone has to participate in the functions," he said

If elections were held in the non-wedding season, the turnout would have been more, the Vasco MLA claimed. He said Vasco has several

voters with transferrable jobs

as they work in the Indian

Navy, at the Mormugao Port



government establishments. Hence, there are many people whose names are there in the voters' list but they have stopped staying in Goa after transfer, Salkar

Notably, the Indian Navy's INS Hansa base is located near the Vasco assembly segment.

Salkar said he has filed a complaint with the Election Commission of India (ECI), seeking the deletion of names of those who have been transferred elsewhere.

A group of voters has two voting cards, one in Vasco and the other at their native in neighbouring Karnataka, he said. These voters travelled to

their native places in Karnataka to exercise their franchise as the date of polling in Goa clashed with that in their state, he claimed. In South Goa, the Congress denied renomination to its sitting MP Francisco Sardinia and fielded Viriato sitting Fernandes against BJP candidate Pallavi Dempo and Revolutionary Goans Party's Rubert Pereira.

Congress, BJP spar after MP CM's gaffe about his party MLA

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Congress has taken a swipe at Chief Minister Mohan Yadav after he apparently forgot the assembly seat of his party MLA from the state during an

The BJP, however, hit back saying the Congress is upset because of the welfare works done by Yadav's government. A video of CM Yadav, during a programme on Friday at Janapav (the birthplace of Lord Parshuram) under the Mhow assembly seat in Indore district from where Usha Thakur is the BJP MLA, surfaced on social media on Sunday.

Yadav, while addressing the gathering, is heard in the video congratulating his cabinet minister Kailash Vijayvargiya on his birthday. ʻI congratulate Kailash ji Bhaisaheb. He worked here together with Usha ji. Now even though Usha ji is no longer the MLA here, earlier Usha ji was the MLA here." A voice from the public is then heard saying she is "still the

MLA from here (Mhow)". Amid laughter, the CM then said, "Bharat Mata ki Jai. I thought you were shifted to Indore number-3, sorry Didi. The video also shows Indore-3 seat MLA Golu Shukla sitting at the dais where the CM was delivering the speech. The MP Congress shared the video on its X handle and claimed, "Meet the bhulakkad (forgetful) Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh. Calling his

own sitting legislator a former MLA. The MLA from another

area also had to stand up and

get his seat confirmed."

"The DNA of Congress, SP,

parliamentary election. Before embarking on election

Minister Narendra Modi's filing scheduled nomination

corrupted and do not want India to develop are upset over www.dailypioneer.com

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Wild card

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

elhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who had been under judicial custody for 50odd 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 cer-



tain 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 consis-

tently 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 oratorial 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 antiincumbency 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?



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

Pakistani military tightens grip



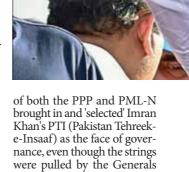
Imran Khan's confrontational stance against the military establishment seems to be leading to his own downfall. Khan's defiance has only served to further isolate him

merican scholar, Stephen Cohen, notes in his article title 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 troika 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 Balouch 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 (Pakistan People's Party) and Sharifs PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz) with

In 2018, the 'establishment' tired ture. While Imran is arguably

PTI



Rawalpindi.

neighbouring

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' aid what it does better - care two-hoots for the popularity of Imran Khan and attacked his party, people and infrastruc-



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 the most popular leader and the Bhuttos and Sharifs 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 theatric 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 snowdown 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 PTİ 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 Sheikhdoms, concurrently. As it is, the bloody battle ensuing currently for the Pakistani Military is with the Afghanistan based Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TPP), on 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

(1 ne writer, a military veter an, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

THE EDITOR

Empowering working mothers financially



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

other's 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 neces-

Mothers be it working professions 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 unwaver-



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 ing support and love to their needs are adequately met. tion, preserving the family

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 longterm 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 educahome, 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 **CENSORSHIP IN CINEMA** 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 The behind-the-scenes anecdotes, like measures to align their sav-

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

ings and financial protection

with their evolving needs

and responsibilities.

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

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

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

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- this ethos. It's a testament to the power of

Palestine's struggle



on'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

cased 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 hat 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

highway". Now see, it has been 79 years since

the same.

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

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

Kabir Mehra | Hyderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneér@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

POLL RHETORIC: ETHICS TAKE A BACKSEAT

Politicians' spiritual claims and secular pledges belie their true motives



n 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 Al 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 everincreasing 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



AKHTARUL WASEY

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



ortunately, Professor Naima Khatoon has been appointed as the Vice Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University, a moment long-awaited by the Aligarian 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 Professor achievements, Khatoon's adeptness in adminis trative roles underscores her capability as a leader to steer AMU towards greater heights of excellence.

Recognising in the evolving land-scape of education, there is a pressing need to boost depart-ments 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 diverIt 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 impeccable academic credentials Studies and the Faculty of and a commitment to faith. Her Theology at AMU hold the success will undoubtedly bring otential 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. Aligarians 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 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 (The writer is Professor

Emeritus, Jamia Millia Islamia & Former Vice Chancellor, Maulana Azad University, views are personal)

Indian troop withdrawal troops marks regional paradigm shift

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

n 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



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 part-

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

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. name reflects the unique ner for India in its maritime from the traditionally close Muizzu's insistence on the

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 beneficial solutions.

complete repatriation of 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

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 with-

drawal 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. Warnings continued against the growing offensive in Rafah, considered the last refuge in Gaza for more than a million civilians as well as Hamas' last stronghold. Some 300,000 people have fled Rafah following evacuation orders from Israel, which says it must invade to dismantle Hamas and return scores of hostages taken in the Oct 7 attack against Israel that

sparked the war. 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 gover-

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 reiects. The statement cited "the worsening severity and scope of the Israeli attacks against Palestinian civilians". "A full-scale offensive on Rafah 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. Gaza has been left without a functioning government, leading to a breakdown in public order and allowing Hamas' armed wing to reconstitute itself in even the hardest-hit areas. Israel has vet to offer a detailed plan for postwar governance in Gaza, saying only that it will maintain open-ended security control over the coastal enclave home about 2.3 million Palestinians.

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 postwar plans proposed by the United States for the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, to govern Gaza with support from Arab and Muslim countries. Those plans depend on progress toward the creation of a Palestinian state, which Netanyahu's government opposes. The Oct 7 attack killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took another 250 hostage. Militants still hold about 100 captives and the remains of more than 30. Internationally mediated talks over a cease-fire and hostage release appear to be at

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. Israel says it has killed over 13,000 militants, without providing evi-

HEAVY BOMBARD-MENT IN THE NORTH Palestinians reported heavy Israeli bombardment overnight in the urban Jabaliya refugee camp and other areas in northern Gaza, which has suffered widespread devastation and been largely isolated by Israeli forces for months. UN officials say there is a "full-blown famine" there.

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.

"It was a very difficult night," said Abdel-Kareem Radwan, a 48-year-old from Jabaliya. He said they could hear intense and constant bombing since midday Saturday. "This is madness."

First responders with the Palestinian Civil Defense said they were unable to respond to multiple calls for help from both areas, as well as from

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. 'The only people who can govern Gaza after the war are Gazans, with a lot of support

and help from the outside."
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 nearby 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

November election and called

his New York hush money

case "a Biden show trial."
Blasting the Democratic pres-

ident "a total moron," Trump

before a crowd of tens of thou-

sands repeatedly character-

ized 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 differ-

ently now because now the

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. The absence of a final resting place is being felt acutely now, as Israel marks its Memorial Day for fallen soldiers, when cemeteries are brimming with relatives mourning over the graves of

their loved ones. "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 76year history. But Chen's tor-

warned that a planned fullscale 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

Trump tells crowd he's being forced to endure

ment underscores how this year it has taken on a profound and raw sadness cou
Memorial Day for fallen so pled with percolating anger over the failures of October 7 and the war it sparked.

Families of the fallen, along with broad segments of the public, are demanding accountability from political and military leaders over the blunders that led to the deaths of hundreds in the deadliest attack in the country's history. "Too many people were killed on that day because of a colossal misjudgment," said Chen, who for months thought his son was still alive after he was snatched into Gaza, before receiving confirmation earlier this year that he was dead. People who made the misjudgment need to pay, from

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

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. Grouping the two days together is intentionally meant to highlight the link between the costly wars Israel has fought and the establishment and survival of the state, a contrast that this year will be hard to reconcile at a time when Israel is actively engaged in warfare and Israelis feel more insecure than ever. With the

Israel - a cornerstone of region-

al stability - at high risk. The

official was not authorized to

brief media and spoke on con-

dition of anonymity. US

President Ioe 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

since Hamas launched its surprise attack on October 7, when thousands of militants rampaged across southern

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 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 offi-

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

fourth Indian national has Abeen 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 highprofile 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 firstdegree murder and conspiracy to commit murder.

Nijjar, 45, was killed outside Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia on June 18, 2023.

The Integrated Homicide Investigation Team (IHIT) of the (RCMP) said that Singh was arrested on May 11 for his role in the killing of Nijjar. He was already in the custody of the Peel Regional Police for unrelated firearms charges, the release

"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

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

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 28the 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

ror 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.

Khalistani separatist and he was

wanted in India on various ter-

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 coun-

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

"Multiple law enforcement agencies" were involved in a search for the person responsible,

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."

'Biden show trial' in hush money case **AP** ■ WILDWOOD 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 nominees prepare to face off in the

Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, drew what his team called a "mega crowd" to a Saturday evening rally in the southern

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

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 New Jersey resort town of charges of sexual misconduct Wildwood, 150 miles (241 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 62year-old nurse 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 Marywilska 44 shopping complex was on fire, and 50 teams, including chemical and environmental rescue specialists, were carrying out rescue operations.

A police spokesperson 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.

Crews prepare for demolition to remove Key bridge structure

PTI ■ NEW YORK

gloves are off."

Crews are preparing to use Controlled explosives to demolish a large piece of the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge atop the cargo vessel Dali that has been stranded since March in Baltimore with its crew of 20 Indians and one Sri Lankan onboard after it collided against the bridge. The Key Bridge Response Unified Command is scheduled to use precision cuts made with small charges to remove a large section of the bridge wreckage from on top of the Dali.

The Key Bridge Response Unified Command said in a statement that the safest and swiftest method to remove the bridge piece from on top of the Dali is by "precision cuts made with small charges. This is an industry-standard tool in controlled demolition that will break the span into smaller



pieces, which will allow the work of refloating the vessel and removing it from the federal channel.

The 2.6-km-long, four-lane Francis Scott Key Bridge over the Patapsco River came crashing down on March 26 after the 984-foot ship 'Dali' collided against it. The crew onboard the Dali included 20 Indians and one Sri Lankan. The crew has

been on the ship since the accident and has been cooperating with the investigation.

The exact time of the precision cuts will depend on multiple environmental and operational factors. Authorities said that the small charges, a standard controlled demolition tool, will split the large section of truss at specific locations to create multiple, smaller sections, which

barges already on scene to remove these sections of the bridge and ultimately remove the Dali from the channel.

"We remain focused on restoring the Marine Transportation System, while ensuring the protection of the public and the environment," said Capt. David O'Connell, Key Bridge Response Federal On-Scene Coordinator. By using precision cuts, we reduce risks to our personnel and can safely and efficiently continue clearing the channel for the Port of Baltimore."

The Key Bridge Response Unified Command coordinated with Maryland Department of Emergency Management to issue a cellular notification ahead of the controlled demolition to maximize awareness to the communities near the bridge.The Unified Command has advised that hearing protection is not required outside of the 2,000-yard noise radius.

noise radius will be no louder than a standard fireworks show and will last 2-5 seconds.

Similar methods were previously used in the area for the controlled demolition of the Harry W. Nice Memorial Bridge in March 2023 in Charles County Maryland.

Last month, US authorities opened a criminal investigation into the Baltimore bridge collapse incident that is also looking into whether the ship's crew, which included Indians, left the port "knowing the vessel had serious systems problems." The Washington Post had reported that the FBI opened the criminal investigation "focusing on the massive container ship that brought down the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore last month — a probe that will look at least in part at whether the crew left the port knowing the vessel had serious systems problems."

Rise in UK knife attacks stokes public anxiety

AP ■ LONDON

familiar horror reached APooja 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 con-

"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 happened 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

"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 avail-

able, 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 fore-"It seems like every day some-

thing like this is reported in the press," Sanjoy O'Malley-Kumar, whose 19-year-old daughter Grace O'Malley-Kumar was among the Nottingham vic-tims, 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.

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 pation on Seturday On her sec. 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-open-

about my heritage."

now. And what has been ing to be able to know more echoed so much in the past day "Never in a million years would is, 'Oh, we are not so surprised I understand it as much as I do when we found out you are



Duchess of Sussex, speaks with

Nigerian," she said at the event on women in leadership co-hosted by Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a Nigerian economist

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,"

Thousands flee NE Ukraine as Russia renews border assault

Thousands more civilians have fled Russia's renewed ground offensive in Ukraine's northeast that has targeted towns and villages with a barrage of artillery and mortar fire, officials said on Sunday.

The intense battles have forced at least one Ukrainian unit to withdraw in the Kharkiv region, capitulating more land to Russian forces across less defended settlements in the socalled contested "gray zone" along the Russian border.

By Sunday afternoon, the town of Vovchansk, with a prewar population of 17,000, emerged as a focal point in the battle. Volodymyr Tymoshko, the head of the Kharkiv regional police, said Russian forces were in the outskirts of the town and approaching from three directions. A Russian tank was spotted along a major road leading to the town, Tymoshko said, illustrating Moscow's confidence to deploy heavy weapon-

Án Associated Press team, positioned in a nearby village, saw plumes of smoke rising from the town as Russian forces hurled shells. Evacuation teams worked non-stop throughout the day to take residents, most of whom were elderly, out of harm's way

At least 4,000 civilians have fled the Kharkiv region since Friday, when Moscow's forces launched the operation, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said in a social media statement. Heavy fighting raged Sunday along the northeast front line, where Russian forces attacked 27 settlements in the past 24 hours,

Analysts say the Russian push is designed to exploit ammunition shortages before promised Western supplies can reach the front line. Ukrainian soldiers said the Kremlin is using the usual Russian tactic by launching a disproportionate amount of fire and infantry assaults to exhaust their troops and firepower. By intensifying battles in what was previously a static patch of the front line, Russian forces threaten to pin Ukrainian forces in the northeast, while carrying out intense



emergency services work at the scene of a partially collapsed block of flats authorities said was hit during an attack by,

Moscow is also gaining ground. It comes after Russia stepped up attacks in March targeting energy infrastructure and settlements, which analysts pre-dicted were a concerted effort to shape conditions for an

Meanwhile, a 10-story apartment block collapsed in the Russian city of Belgorod, near the border, injuring at least 19 people. Russian authorities said the building collapsed following Ukrainian shelling. Ukraine has not commented on the

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that halting Kussia's offensive in the northeast was a priority, and that Kyiv's troops were continuing counteroffensive operations in seven villages around the Kharkiv region.

"Disrupting the Russian offensive intentions is our number one task now. Whether we succeed in that task depends on every soldier, every sergeant, every officer," Zelenskyy said. The Russian Defence Ministry

said Sunday that its forces had captured four villages on the border along Ukraine's Kharkiv region, in addition to five villages reported to have been seized on Saturday. These areas were likely poorly fortified due to the dynamic fighting and constant heavy shelling, easing

a Russian advance.

Ukraine's leadership has not confirmed Moscow's gains. A Ukrainian unit said that they had been forced to retreat in some areas and that Russian forces had captured at least one more village late Saturday. Tymoshko said Russian tactics in Vovchansk mirrored those used in the battles for Bakhmut and Avdiivka in the Donetsk region in which heavy aerial attacks were accompanied by droves of infantry assaults.

In a video Saturday evening, the Hostri Kartuzy unit, part of the special forces' detachment of Ukraine's national guard, said that they were fighting for control of the village of "Today, during heavy fighting,

our defenders were forced to withdraw from a few more of their positions, and today another settlement has come completely under Russian control. As of 20:00, fighting for the village of Hlyboke is ongoing," the fighters said in the clip. The US-based Institute for the Study of War said Saturday that it believed claims that Moscow had captured Strilecha, Pylna, Pletenivka and Borsivika were accurate, and that geolocated footage also appeared to show that Russian forces have seized Morokhovets and Oliinykove. It described the recent Russian gains as "tactically significant." In the war's early days, Russia made a botched attempt to quickly storm Kharkiv but retreated from its outskirts after about a month. In the fall of 2022, seven months later, Ukraine's army pushed them out of Kharkiv. The bold counter-attack helped persuade Western countries that Ukraine could defeat Russia on the bat-

IMF mission to meet Pak authorities next week

PTI ISLAMABAD

An IMF mission will meet authorities of cashstrapped Pakistan next week to hold discussions for laying the foundation for "better governance" and "stronger economic growth", an official said on Sunday. Last month Pakistan completed a short-term USD 3 billion programme with International Monetary Fund (IMF), which bailed the country out of any default.

On Friday, an advance team of the Washington-based global lender reached the cash-strapped country to hold talks after Islamabad requested a longer and larger bâilout package. "A mission team led by Nathan Porter, IMF's mission chief to Pakistan, will meet with authorities next week to discuss the next phase of engagement," said Esther Perez Ruiz, IMF's resident representative for Pakistan.

The aim is to lay the foundation for better governance and stronger, more inclusive, and resilient economic growth that will benefit all Pakistanis," the Dawn newspaper quoted her as saying. Pakistan has sought the next bailout package in the range of USD 6 and USD 8 billion for three years under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) with the possibility of aug-mentation through climate financing, The News International newspaper reported last month.

Meanwhile, the debt-struck country has decided to seek a rollover of around USD 12 billion debt from key allies like China in the 2024-25 fiscal year to meet a whopping USD 23 billion worth of gap in its external financing as the federal government aims to achieve budget targets before the expected arrival of the IMF team to the country. Pakistan narrowly averted

default last summer, and the economy has stabilised after the completion of the last IMF programme, with inflation coming down to around 17 per cent in April from a record high of 38 per cent last

clashes during PoK protest Bhimber and Bagh Towns, Geo News reported. In Mirpur, all the mobile networks and inter-

One police officer was killed and more than 100 people, mostly policemen, injured in violent clashes between security forces and protesters agitating against high prices of wheat flour and electricity in Pakistanoccupied Kashmir, media reports said on Sunday.

The disputed region witnessed clashes on Saturday between the police and activists of a rights movement amid a wheel-jam and shutter-down strike across the territory, the Dawn newspaper reported.

Mirpur Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Kamran Ali told Dawn.com that sub-inspector Adnan Qureshi succumbed to a gunshot wound in the chest in the town of Islamgarh, where he was deployed along with other police personnel to stop a rally for Muzaffarabad via Kotli and Poonch districts under the banner of the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC). The JAAC, which has traders at

the forefront in most parts of the state, has been seeking the provision of electricity as per hydropower generation cost in the region, subsidised wheat flour and an end to the privileges of the elite class.

The regional government called in the Rangers and a heavy contingent of policemen to stop the demonstrations. Mobile phone and internet services were suspended in different parts of the PoK on Sunday including net service have been suspended, it added.

Cop killed, over 100 injured in

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has called an emergency meeting related to the situation in the region at the President's House on Monday, said sources. They added that the president instructed stakeholders to bring proposals to resolve the issue. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said that he was "deeply concerned" about the situation in PoK.

"Unfortunately, in situations of chaos and dissent there are always some who rush in to score political points. While debate, discussion and peaceful protests are the beauties of democracy, there should be absolutely no tolerance for taking the law in one's own hands and damaging government properties," he said in a post on X. He said that he had spoken to PoK "prime minister" Chaudhry Anwarul Haq and directed his party's office bearers in the region to talk to the leaders of the action committee. "I urge all parties to resort to peaceful course of action for resolution of their demands. Despite best efforts of detrac-

tors, the matter will hopefully be settled soon," he added. On Wednesday and Thursday, around 70 JAAC activists were arrested by police during raids at their residences and those of their relatives in Muzaffarabad and Mirpur divisions, triggering

Thursday.

The committee had subsequently announced a shutter-down and wheel-jam strike on Friday, a day ahead of its planned long march towards Muzaffarabad Saturday. Amid a crippling strike on Friday, violent clashes took place between police and protesters in different areas of Muzaffarabad, the capital of

On Saturday, authorities placed mounds of earth on arteries leading to Muzaffarabad, apart from making more arrests, to prevent people from heading towards the city. Witnesses said that Muzaffarabad division and Poonch division observed complete strikes. SSP Yasin Baig said at least one police officer and a young boy were injured as police resorted to teargas shelling and aerial firing in some neighbourhoods after stones and bottles were pelted by protesters.

Kotli SSP Mir Muhammad Abid said that at least 78 policemen were injured in the district in "attacks of miscreants under the guise of protest". The SSP said 59 policemen, including Deputy Superintendent of Police Ilyas Janjua, and two revenue department officials were injured in Rehaan Galli while another 19 policemen were injured in Sehnsa Baroiyan. A press release from the District Headquarters Hospital Kotli said apart from the 59 wounded policemen, nine injured protesters were also brought for treatment.

Seven security personnel killed in twin attacks in North Waziristan

targeting a bomb disposal unit

t least seven security per-At least seven seem killed sonnel have been killed and two injured in two separate militant attacks on security forces in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, authorities said on Sunday

Local officials said five security personnel were killed and two injured during the first attack that took place in the Hassan Khel area of North Waziristan district, bordering Afghanistan, in when an improvised explosive device went off

on Saturday. Militants opened fire on the forces soon after the blast triggered off, Dawn News quoted the official as saying. In another incident, militants stormed a security post in the Seeman area of the same district, killing two security personnel on Saturday, local authorities said. They said the bodies of the security personnel and the injured were airlifted to Combined Milit-ary Hospital in Bannu. Security forces cordoned off the areas immediately after the attacks and launched search operations in the regions. The two attacks come after, a private girls' school was blown up by unidentified militants in Tehsil Shewa of North Waziristan district on the night of May 8, police said. The police said the militants first tortured the watchman and later blew up two rooms of the school Similar attacks took place in May last year when two government schools for girls in Mirali had been blown up. No loss of life was reported in the

37 die as flash floods, cold lava flow ravage Sumatra island

and mud flowing down a volcano's slopes on Indonesia's Sumatra island triggered flash floods that killed at least 37 people and more than a dozen others were missing, officials said on Sunday.

Monsoon rains and a major mudslide from a cold lava flow on Mount Marapi caused a river to breach its banks and tear through mountainside villages in four districts in West Sumatra province just before midnight on Saturday. The floods swept away people and submerged more than 100 houses and buildings, National Disaster Management spokesperson Abdul Muhari said. Cold lava, also known as

lahar, is a mixture of volcanic material and pebbles that flow down a volcano's slopes in the By Sunday afternoon, rescuers had pulled out 19 bodies in the

worst-hit village of Canduang in

Agam district and recovered

nine other bodies in the neigh-

Padang (Indonesia): Heavy rains and torrents of cold lava the National Search and Rescue climbers who were caught by a Agency said in a statement.

> The agency said that eight bodies were pulled from mud during deadly flash floods that also hit Padang Pariaman, and one body was found in the city of Padang Panjang. It said rescuers are searching for 18 people who are reportedly missing. Flash floods on Saturday night also caused main roads around the Anai Valley Waterfall area in Tanah Datar district to be blocked by mud, cutting off access to other cities, Padang Panjang Police Chief Kartyana Putra said Sunday

> Videos released by the National Search and Rescue Agency showed roads that were transformed into murky brown rivers. The disaster came just two months after heavy rains triggered flash floods and a landslide in West Sumatra's Pesisir Selatan and Padang Pariaman districts, killing at least 21 people and leaving five others missing. The 2,885-metre (9,465-foot) Mount Marapi

surprise weekend eruption. The volcano has stayed at the third highest of four alert levels since 2011, indicating above-normal volcanic activity under which climbers and villagers must stay more than 3 km (about 2 miles) from the peak, according to Indonesia's Centre for Volcanology and Geological

Disaster Mitigation. Marapi is known for sudden eruptions that are difficult to predict because the source is shallow and near the peak, and its eruptions aren't caused by a deep movement of magma, which sets off tremors that register on seismic monitors.

Marapi has been active since an eruption in January 2023 that caused no casualties. It is among more than 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia. The country is prone to seismic upheaval because of its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of volcanoes and fault lines encircling the Pacific

Apartment block collapses | SL Freedom Party in Russian border city

Moscow (AP): An apartment dent later Sunday. Belgorod on Sunday, leaving at least 19 injured. Officials blamed Ukrainian shelling and said there were also like ly deaths.

tlefield and merited military

Online footage showed rescuers searching for survivors among the remnants of the building's stairwell, then fleeing the scene as part of the roof crashed to the ground. In a statement, Russia's Investigative Committee, the country's top law enforcement agency, said that the 10-story block had been hit by Ukrainian shelling. It said that there were dead and injured among the rubble, but provid-

ed no further details. The Russian Defense Ministry wrote on social media that the building had been damaged by fragments of a downed Tochka-U TRC missile. It also said that air defenses had shot down several more rockets over the Belgorod region, as well as two drones that were destroyed in a separate inci-

block partially collapsed in the At least 19 people were injured local Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov. Air raid alerts continued across Belgorod as rescuers

worked. The city previously came under fire Saturday evening, killing one person and injuring 29 more, Gladkov said on

social media. Cities across western Russia have come under regular attack from drones since May 2023, with Russian officials blaming Kyiv. Ukrainian officials never acknowledge responsibility for attacks on Russian territory or the Crimean Peninsula.

The Belgorod region, on Russia's western border, has been the target of a large number of strikes. Although most cross-border shelling is seen in rural areas, attacks have also been seen on the region's capital. In December 2023, shelling in the heart of Belgorod city killed 25 people, prompting authorities to start erecting public shelters.

elects Rajapakshe as chairman after Sirisena resigns

Colombo (PTI): Justice Minister Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe was elected as the chairman of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) on Sunday after former president Maithripala Sirisena formally resigned from the chairmanship amid reports of heightened tensions between rival factions. The Executive Committee of the Maithripala faction of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party met on Sunday and unanimously voted to appoint 65-year-old Rajapakshe as the new Chairman of the party. Nimal Siripala de Silva, an incumbent minister, is the acting

chair of the rival faction of the De Śilva faction's secretary in a letter to the Sirisena faction termed Sunday's purported executive committee meeting "illegal" as Sirisena's party chairmanship is still under a

court restraining order.

Floods in Af sweep Nazer Mohammad ran home as soon as he heard about flash

skirts of a provincial capital in northern Afghanistan. By the time he got there, there was nothing left, including his family of five. "Everything happened just all of a sudden. I came home, but there was no home there, instead I saw all the neighbourhood covered by mud and water," said Mohammad. 48. He said that he buried his wife and two sons aged 15 and 8 years, but he's still looking for two daughters, who are around 6 and 11 years old. The UN food agency estimat-

ed that unusually heavy seasonal rains in Afghanistan have left more than 300 people dead and thousands of houses destroyed, most of them in the northern province of Baghlan, which bore the brunt of the deluges on Friday. Mohammad said Sunday that he found the bodies of his wife

away livelihoods on the outskirt of Puli Khumri, the capital of Baghlan province. floods crashing into the out-

'I hope someone has found my daughters alive," he said, holding back tears. "Just in the blink of an eye, I lost everything: family, home, belongings, now nothing is left to me." Among at least 240 people dead are 51 children, according to UNICEF, one of several international aid groups that are sending relief teams, medicines, blankets and other supplies. The World Health Organization said it delivered 7 tons of medicines

> and emergency kits. Aid group Save the Children said about 600,000 people, half of them children, live in the five districts in Baghlan that have been severely impacted by the floods. The group said it sent a "clinic on wheels" with mobile health and child protection teams to support children and their

More United States parents than ever have paid leave this Mother's Day

AP ■ NEW YORK

M ore working US parents than ever are celebrating their first Mother's Day with hard-fought access to paid time off to care for newborns. But the majority still must forego pay to care for new babies or other loved ones, even as efforts to expand paid parental and family leave gain traction.

Bipartisan groups in the US Senate and House have revived efforts to expand paid family leave to more workers, with momentum building to introduce legislation this year. In the absence of a federal law, 13 states plus the District of Columbia have adopted paid family and medical leave laws, which entitle workers to paid time off to care for newborns or other loved ones who require care.

Still, just 27% of civilian workers in the US get paid family leave, according to the latest data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Workers who can least afford to take unpaid time off are also the least likely to have access to paid leave: According to the BLS, just 14% percent of workers in the lowest 25% wage category get that benefit, compared to 48% of those in the top 10%.

For families without paid leave, babies "are going to day care when they are two weeks old. They do not even have immunizations. They're not on regular feeding patterns. Moms are giving up breastfeeding far sooner than they would like to," Elizabeth Gedmark, vice president at nonprofit advocacy organization A Better Balance, said during a recent virtual conference to advocate for federal and it quickly became appar-

paid family leave organized by the WK Kellogg Foundation. The US is one of just of seven countries — and the only industrialized one — that does not have a national paid maternity leave policy, according to the World Policy Analysis Center at the University of California, Los Angeles. Caitlyn Householder has

become an advocate for a universal paid family leave law in Pennsylvania since she was forced to quit her job as a floor supervisor of a clothing company five ago when she

learned that she was pregnant shortly after being diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's B-Cell Lymphoma. Householder, of Ellwood City. Pennsylvania, could hardly drive herself to work because of agonizing pain in her leg,

ent that her employer wouldn't allow her to take enough time off for her medical needs. "They showed their true colors," said Householder, who shared her story through the Children First, a organization campaigning

Pennsylvania's proposed law. Householder's husband, an oil rig worker, also gets no paid parental or family leave to care for her and their kids. Most of the time, Householder took her baby and stepdaughter with her to the radiation treatments. When her husband did take off work, such as when Householder couldn't hold her baby for 24 hours after radiation, it meant foregoing hundreds of dollars in income. The family fell behind on mortgage payments during

the most difficult months. Pennsylvania's House and Senate are considering legislation that would provide up to 20 weeks of paid family leave through a payroll tax. The proposed measure has bipartisan sponsorship but some Republicans have vocally opposed it because of the cost to taxpayers.

Disagreements over how to fund family leave programs have been an obstacle in other states, and have long thwarted efforts to pass a federal law. Democrats generally favour funding such programs through payroll taxes, while many Republicans prefer tax incentives to encourage, but not require, employers to offer paid leave.

În January, a House bipartisan group led by Rep. Chrissy Houlahan, a Pennsylvania Democrat, and Rep. Stephanie Oklahoma an Republican, released a fourpart framework to extend paid by ballot measure following a

family leave to more workers, including funding for state programs or stronger tax breaks for small businesses to

In a statement, Bice said the group is "excited about the momentum and will continue working together to craft legislative text which can get across the finish line." In an interview with The Associated Press, Houlahan said she was optimistic that legislation could be introduced this year. While any measure would fall short of a federal paid leave law, Houlahan said it reflects a yearlong effort to find common ground for policies that would extend the benefit to as many workers as possible.

Colorado's benefits kicked in on January 1, four years after the state's paid family and medical leave program passed

failed effort to move a bill through the legislature. The law gives most Colorado workers the right to take up to 12 week of paid leave to bond with a new baby and other family needs. The new bene-

fits came too late for Carrie Martin-Haley's family. Neither Martin-Haley, a small business owner in Denver who gave birth to her son in September 2023, nor her husband had any paid time off, so Martin-Haley had to put aside her dreams of opening a brick-and-mortar storefront for her business, Summit Sustainable Goods. "That's been hard to sit with," said Martin-Haley, who shared her story through Small

Business Majority, an advocacy group that is campaigning for federal paid family leave. "With the lack of sleep and everything else that comes along with new parenthood,

finances should be the last thing on the totem pole." Women's participation in the US labor force has reached historic highs, but changes such as paid parental leave often come after long-fought campaigns by mothers.

and all of the uncertainties.

Keenan Manzo of Dallas, a mother of three who has worked as a Southwest flight attendant for 18 years, said she launched a Facebook page for mothers at the company after having her first child 11 years ago to galvanize support for paid leave and other policies. She said paid leave often took a backseat to other priorities such as higher pay, but support grew as women shared stories of returning to work too early and struggling to pump during flights, sometimes as impatient passengers knocked on the bathroom stalls.

China largest trading partner of India in FY24 with USD 118.4 billion

hina has emerged as the Clargest trading partner of India with USD 118.4 billion two-way commerce in 2023-24, slightly edging past the US, according to the data of economic think tank GTRI. The bilateral trade between

India and the US stood at USD 118.3 billion in 2023-24. Washington was the top trading partner of New Delhi during 2021-22 and 2022-23. The data showed that India's exports to China rose by 8.7 per cent to USD 16.67 billion in the last fiscal.

The main sectors which recorded healthy growth in exports to that country include iron ore, cotton yarn/fabrics/madeups, handloom, spices, fruits and vegetables, plastic

from neighbouring country increased by 3.24 per cent to USD 101.7 billion

On the other hand, exports to the US dipped by 1.32 per cent to USD 77.5 billion in 2023-24 as against USD 78.54



billion in 2022-23, while imports dipped by about 20 per cent to USD 40.8 billion, the data showed.

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that from fiscal year 2019 to FY2024, India's trade dynamics with its top 15 trading partners underwent significant transformations, impacting both exports and imports along with the status of trade surplus or deficit across various sectors.

It added that China witnessed a marginal decline in exports by 0.6 per cent, from USD 16.75 billion to USD 16.66 billion, while imports from China surged by 44.7 per cent, from USD 70.32 billion to USD 101.75 billion.

"This growth in imports led to an expanding trade deficit, rising from USD 53.57 billion in FY2019 to USD 85.09 FY2024, stagnant exports amidst rising imports," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

Conversely, it said, trade with the US showed growth, with increasing significantly by 47.9 per cent from USD 52.41 billion to USD 77.52 billion.

Imports from the US also grew by 14.7 per cent, from USD 35.55 billion to USD 40.78 billion. This resulted in an expanded trade surplus for India, which grew from USD 16.86 billion to USD 36.74

According to the commerce ministry data, China was India's top trading partner from 2013-14 till 2017-18 and also in 2020-21. Before China, the UAE was the country's largest trading partner. The US was the largest partner in 2021-22 and 2022-23.

In 2023-24, the UAE with USD 83.6 billion, was the third largest trading partner of India. It was followed by Russia (USD 65.7 billion) Saudi Arabia (USD 43.4 billion), and Singapore (USD

Next round of talks for India, Asean trade pact review in July

PTI NEW DELHI

Senior officials of India and the 10-nation bloc of Southeast Asian nations — ASEAN — will hold the next round of talks in July to review the existing free trade agreement in Jakarta, Indonesia, an official statement said on Sunday.

The last round of the threeday negotiations concluded on May 9 in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

The discussions for review of AITIGA (Asean-India Trade in Goods Agreement) started in May 2023 to make it more trade-facilitative beneficial for businesses across the region, the

commerce ministry said. A joint committee, which is undertaking the review work, has so far met four times.

It has finalised its terms of reference and the negotiating structure for the review in its first two meetings and initiated talks for the review from its third meeting, which was held on February 18-19

'The fourth Joint Committee meeting for the review of was held in



May," the statement said. The committee was co chaired by Rajesh Agrawal,

Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce, and Mastura Ahmad Mustafa, Deputy Secretary General (Trade), Ministry Investment, Trade Industry, Malaysia.

India and the 10-nation bloc ASEAN have agreed to conclude talks in 2025.

The delegates from India and all 10 ASEAN countries participated discussions.

The ministry said that 8 subcommittees have constituted to deal with different policy areas of the agreement in the review, and out of these, five have started their discussions.

The issues being negotiated Putrajaya, Malaysia from 7-9 by these committees include national treatment market access, rules of origin standards, technical regulations, conformity assessment procedures and legal and institutional.

ASEAN (Association Southeast Asian Nations) is one of the major trade partners of the country, with a share of 11 per cent in India's global trade.

The bilateral trade stood at USD 122.67 billion in 2023-

"The upgradation of AITIGA will further boost bilateral trade. Both sides would next meet for the fifth joint committee meeting from 29-31 July 2024 in Jakarta, Indonesia," the statement said

The review of the AITIGA was a long-standing demand of Indian businesses

Large PSUs spend ₹50,200 crore in capex in April

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

public Lcompanies have spent a little over Rs 50,200 crore towards capital expenditure in April FŶ25 alone, which is 6.46 per cent of their full fiscal target of Rs 7.77 lakh crore, an official said.

The pace albeit is slower than Rs 54,177 crore capex spent in April FY24, about 7.3 per cent of the full year budget target of Rs 7.42 lakh

'The capex spending will pick up going forward. Also, the numbers for April are still provisional and will go up in the revised final numbers," the official told

crore in April, followed by National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)

Among oil and gas sector PSUs, ONGC incurred capex of Rs 2,318 crore, Indian Oil the current financial year.

100 crore.

The Interim Budget for 2024-25 set a cumulative annual

Inflation data, Q4 earnings, global trends to drive stock markets this week: Analysts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Stock markets will be driven by domestic inflation data, ongoing quarterly earnings from corporates and global trends this week, analysts said News flows around the general election would also be tracked by investors, market experts

Besides, investors would also take cues from the trading activity of foreign investors the movement of global oil benchmark Brent crude and the rupee-dollar trend. "Investors will be bombarded

with economic data on both domestic and global fronts. Domestically, watch for Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Wholesale Price Index (WPI). Globally, focus will be



Index (PPI) and Consumer Price Index (CPI) figures.

"Additionally, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's speech will be a key event to watch. China's industrial production data and Japan's GDP figures round out the important releases for the week," said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said that the current trend in the domestic markets is likely to continue in the short-term election-led uncertainties.

"In the data-hectic week ahead, investors' attention will be focused on the release of India and US CPI data, Europe

FED chair speech. Furthermore, the next set of Q4 results will also attract market sentiment," he added. DLF, Zomato, Bharti Airtel and Mahindra & Mahindra are among the major companies scheduled to announce their earnings during the week.

'The outlook for the market will be guided by major global and domestic economic data, India's WPI inflation data, US PPI data, Core CPI data, initial jobless claims, Japan's GDP data, India Q4 company results and speech by Fed Chairman Jerome Powell," Arvinder Singh Nanda, Senior Vice President, Master Capital Services Ltd, said.

"Overall, we expect the market to consolidate in a broader

range and take cues from Q4 results, global factors and news flows around the general election," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head Motilal Research, Financial Services Ltd. Last week, the BSE benchmark

tanked 1,213.68 points or 1.64 per cent, and the Nifty declined 420.65 points or 1.87 per cent. Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research,

Religare Broking Ltd, said, "Despite the negative local sentiment, the strength observed in global markets, particularly in the US, has been instrumental in curbing the pace of decline. It's essential for investors to closely monitor both global market performance and local factors for market cues.

The capital expenditure during the first month of 2024-25 fiscal was driven by railways, road, and oil and gas sectors. The Indian Railways and sector PSUs spent Rs 26,641

at Rs 6,645 crore.

Corporation (IOC) Rs 2,423 crore in the first month of Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd and Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd spent Rs 1,155 crore and Rs 417 crore, respectively in April. Power sector PSU NTPC

spent Rs 2,083 crore. The finance ministry tracks

capital expenditure of public sector undertakings (PSUs) that have an annual investment target of over Rs

capital expenditure target of Rs 9.01 lakh crore for all public sector undertakings. Of this, Rs 7.77 lakh crore worth capex is to be spent by PSUs with over Rs 100 crore expenditure target. In 2023-24, large PSUs spent Rs 8.05 lakh crore towards capex, exceeding the budget target of Rs 7.42 lakh crore.

Maruti Suzuki expects over 30 per cent jump in CNG vehicle sales at six lakh units in FY25

IVLexpects its CNG car sales to rise over 30 per cent to around 6 lakh units this fiscal, according to a senior company official.

largest The country's carmaker also aims to export around 3 lakh units in the ongoing financial year. "So CNG, this year, we did about 4,50,000 (units) in

passenger vehicles. We are hoping to do something like 6,00,000 vehicles in FY24-25," Maruti Suzuki India Executive Director Corporate Affairs Rahul Bharti said in an analyst call. The company sells CNG trims across various models like WagonR, Brezza, Dzire, and Ertiga, among others in the domestic market.

Bharti said the company's expansion around 1 lakh units per



annum at its Manesar plant, in Haryana largely addresses the Ertiga supply issues. Ertiga ČNG demand is huge in the market leading to supply issues, he noted. overseas shipments, Bharti said the company

aims to export about 3 lakh 'We did about 2,83,000 units in FY24. Despite the fact that we've increased substantially over the usual 1,00,000 units

per year that we used to do

just about 4 years ago. We wish to take it further in the

"And this year, we should be doing about 3,00,000 units diversified across markets, across products," he noted. Replying to a separate query on the company's upcoming plant at Kharkhoda in Haryana, Bharti said the project is part of the automaker's ambitious

growth plan. "Construction is already in progress at Kharkhoda and the first plant with an annual production capacity of 2,50,000 units is on course to be operational in 2025," he said. The company has space to set up four such plants with a total capacity of 10 lakh units in Kharkhoda, he added. Maruti Suzuki aims to produce 40 lakh vehicles per year by FY2030-31, almost double from current

India's coal import rises eight per cent to 268 MT in FY24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's coal import rose by 7.7 per cent to 268.24 million tonne (MT) in FY24 driven by softness in seaborne prices and likelihood of increase in power demand during summer. The country's coal import was 249.06 MT in FY23, according to data compiled by B2B e-commerce company mjunction services. Coal import in March FY24 also rose to 23.96 MT, over 21.12 MT corresponding month of the

previous fiscal. Of the total volume recorded in March 2024, non-coking coal import stood at 15.33 MT, against 13.88 MT in March FY23. Coking coal import in March 2024 was 5.34 MT against 3.96 MT a year ago

secure investment option.

has

Gold, with its superlative

performance over the last few

substantial investor interest

and the consistent increase in

folio numbers serves as a

testament to its attractiveness.

The folio numbers in gold

ETFs rose by over 1 lakh to

51.84 lakh in the month

2020 when the world was

garnered

Anarock FY24 revenue rises 36 per cent to ₹566 crore on higher earnings

Anarock Group posted a 36 per cent increase in its revenue to Rs 566 crore in the last fiscal, helped by better earnings from housing brokerage and other services. During 2022-23, the company posted a revenue of Rs 416

Homegrown Anarock was established by Anuj Puri in April 2017 after serving as country head for 10 years in an international property consultancy firm. In an interview with PTI

Anarock Chairman Puri said, estate markets, particularly residential, across cities, are doing well with sales and launches at a 15year high.'

Inherently, he said, this is being driven by a younger working population wanting to buy their first home rather

housing sales, having established our tech and digital platform," Puri said. All major business verticals contributed to the revenue growth last fiscal, he said. These include housing

brokerage, retail, land, capital markets, strategic consulting, hospitality wing Anarock, and society management brand ANACITY.

The chairman said the company would continue to invest for higher growth through organic inorganic routes, having raised private equity to consolidate players in a similar domain as Anarock. To sustain growth, Anarock said it would significantly increase its headcount in FY 2024-25, especially in the recently launched office

leasing in advisory services. and will certainly support our ..We are benefiting from this Anarock Group currently has targeted growth. However, we operating across key tier 1 and 2 markets in India and

the Middle East.

"FY24 has phenomenal year for the Indian residential segment, with record sales and new launches across the top 7 cities," Santhosh Kumar, Vice Chairman Anarock, said. He said the company has

exceeded its revenue target by 6 per cent "but see that merely as an apt launch-pad for bigger and better things." The company is confident of

almost tripling its current revenue to Rs 1,500 crore by 2026-27, he added. "We will penetrate more key

markets this year with a vastly amplified services bouquet, Kumar said while outlining future plans.

Indian continues to exhibit strength

Evaluation of infrastructure requirements for achieving

our constantly improving technology suite and, of course, the best real estate teams in the business," Kumar said. The company recently raised Rs 200 crore funds from 360 One Asset Management Ltd for Management deployment into its overall business growth and industrydefining proptech platform. Over the last six years, Anarock has expanded from being a residential-focused organisation to segments,

complementary including retail, office, hospitality, logistics, data centres, industrial and land. It also provides strategic advisory, investment banking, research & valuation services. besides offering app-based flexible workspaces and management society platform.

Gold ETFs see first outflow after March 2023 at ₹396 crore on profit booking

Gold Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) witness a net outflow of Rs 396 crore last month, making it the first withdrawal after March 2023. owing to profit booking.

Despite the decline, the asset under management (AUM) of gold funds rose 5 per cent to Rs 32,789 crore at April-end from Rs 31,224 crore in the preceding month, according to the data with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi).

As per the data, Gold ETFs saw a net withdrawal of Rs 396 crore in April as compared to an inflow of Rs 373 crore in the preceding month. The last time this asset class

witnessed net outflow was in March 2023, withdrawing Rs "In INR terms, gold has done

fairly well over the last year but dwarfs in comparison to

how equities have fared.



Research India, said. Recently gold prices in US dollar terms as well as INR terms have scaled new highs. With ongoing geopolitical tensions, US inflation still Given this backdrop, flows in higher than the desired

Melvyn Santarita, Analyst,

Investment

Morningstar

number, the appeal of gold as a safe haven and hedge against inflation is expected to continue, he added In 2023, Gold ETFs witnessed

an inflow of Rs 2,920 crore, which was way higher than the Rs 459 crore inflow seen in 2022. The attractiveness of gold as a safe haven and a hedge against inflation enhanced significantly during the year.

under review from 50.61 lakh in March 2024. This indicates a growing inclination among investors towards funds related to gold. "Investing in gold ETFs offers unparalleled

Investors turned to this

advantages including liquidity, costeffectiveness, and security," Vishal Jain, CEO, Zerodha Fund House said. Preference for gold during the time of adversity is also notable from the investment inflow into Gold ETFs during

engulfed with the COVID-19 traditional safe haven owing pandemic. An analysis for the period to rising inflation, subsequent interest rate hikes, and between 2019 to 2023 shows geopolitical events, seeking a that yearly growth in AUM of

Gold ETFs has been on the rise. The AUM increased significantly from Rs 5,528 crore in December 2019 to Rs 13,819 crore in December 2020 during the pandemic period.

As of December 2023, the AUM was valued at Rs 25,959 crore, marking a substantial increase of 27 per cent from December 2022, 88 per cent from December 2020 and 41 per cent from 2021.

Gold ETFs, which aim to track the domestic physical gold price, are passive investment instruments that are based on gold prices and invest in gold bullion. In short, Gold ETFs are units representing physical gold

which may be in paper or dematerialised form. One gold ETF unit is equal to 1 gram of gold and is backed by physical gold of very high purity. They combine the flexibility of

investments

simplicity

and

of

to more than double the of goods. stock behind the exercise, the official said that to take the exports to

import of about USD 1.5 trillion, so to handle USD 2.5 study to assess required trillion worth of trade "we

USD one trillion exports by September, says official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Astudy to assess 12. main industry clusters for achieving the USD 1 trillion merchandise exports target by 2030 may be submitted by August-September to the commerce ministry, an official

The official said that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is doing that study for the ministry. 2023-24, India's

merchandise exports dipped by over 3 per cent to USD 437 billion. Imports during the last fiscal dipped by 5.7 per cent to USD 675.4 billion. By 2030, the ministry is aiming

country's outbound shipments Explaining the rationale

USD 1 trillion, there will be an

need" additional infrastructure and logistics capacity at roads, ports, airports and railways.

"If exports will increase, imports will also increase. There is a correlation between higher exports and imports. So we have to create an infrastructure to handle about USD 2.5 trillion worth of merchandise goods," official added.

Besides infrastructure requirements, there is also a need to identify the industry clusters from where there will be a large movement of goods. To query when the ministry is expected to get the report, the official said "by around August-September". After that, the commerce

ministry will share the details with ministries concerned, including shipping, aviation, roads and national highways,

additional development and where all that investment will go. As per rough calculations and

The ministries would see if

they need investments for

and railways.

estimates, another official said that India may need to create an infrastructure which will support an additional 2,000 million tonne of goods movement in the ports. Similarly in the railways, there could be a need to create an

infrastructure which will allow railways to carry on an additional 338 million tonne of goods by 2030. Airports also need to create an additional 5 million tonne of facilities for movement of goods. 'The study is trying to identify

what kind of infrastructure is required at the exit points and which are the clusters from where there will be the larger movement of goods," the government official added.

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

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

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.

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 begins producing more insulin regarding our children's skin than usual. Therefore, addressing health. I've noticed quite a few MN is not merely a cosmetic mothers approaching me, mistaking their kids' darkened approaching me, concern but a significant health issue that warrants attention. neck regions for sun tan and "It's essential to understand that seeking creams to alleviate the there are no cosmetic treatments darkening. AN manifests as for AN. Treatment lies in darkening of the skin and the addressing the root cause, which appearance of blackish, velvety primarily involves weight loss.



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



DR SUNITA SAYAMMAGARU Endocrinologist

Given the alarming progression of

diabetes in India, focusing on

weight loss is imperative for the

"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

chronic conditions like diabetes.

well-being of these children.



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



DR ATULA GUPTA Dermatologist, Skin Aid Clinic, Gurugram



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 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 prediabetic pigmentation,"

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

International Nurses

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

Day celebrated



hospital. A comprehensive

discussion was also held on

palliative care, pain management, and psychological

aspects of severely ill patients.

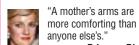


palliative

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

—Jamie McGuire



anyone else's.' -Princess Diana

"A mother's arms are

"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

—Agatha Christie

Nursing in India: Insights from a Male Nurse

producing more insulin than is

"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

Dr Naval Vikram, a well-known

endocrinologist at All India

Institute of Medical Sciences

(AIIMS), Delhi said that insulin

manifests as AN can lead to type

Resistance. Insulin Resistance is a effectively to insulin, a hormone disorders with special emphasis

precursor to developing that helps regulate blood sugar on insulin resistance and obesity prediabetes and Diabetes and levels. To compensate, the and his work explained insulin

occurs when the child starts pancreas produces more insulin, resistance also plays a significant

usually seen.

mitigate the risk of developing resistance, which physically

"It is usually seen in Obesity and 2 diabetes. He explained insulin

Metabolic syndrome and the resistance occurs when the

underlying disturbance is Insulin body's cells do not respond

a must for these kids.

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 various blood-related treatments across hospitals and departments.

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

□ Do you feel your gender influences your career advancement opportunities in nursing?

patients over time.

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.

patches around the neck, armpits,

"Sometimes, skin tags may also be

present. Importantly, this condition

is frequently associated with

obesity and metabolic syndrome,

with insulin resistance being a

"Insulin resistance is a precursor to

developing prediabetes and

diabetes, occurring when the child

common underlying disturbance.

☐ How do you navigate genderspecific 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 enhance the to representation and inclusion of

male nurses in Indian healthcare settings? is most feedback Patients' important to make our presentation stronger. They all work as ambassadors for us. If they are satisfied with our work then 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.

to all team members to represent

leading to higher levels in the

bloodstream. This excess insulin

stimulates the growth and multiplication of skin cells,

resulting in the appearance

He said AN can be found in

conditions such as obesity, type 2

syndrome, and certain drugs or

underlying causes must be

identified and treated, as AN itself

can be considered a marker for

Dr Naval has conducted several

studies in the field of metabolic

polycystic

disorders.

of AN.

diabetes,

endocrine

these conditions.

☐ 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 genderspecific 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 collaborative environment.

aspirations within the nursing

profession?

Î 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 depute 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

I encourage aspiring male nurses to master their craft, and work with dedication, compassion, and passion, embracing challenges as opportunities for growth.

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

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 imperative for profession's advancement.

GT FACE FORMIDABLE KKR IN MUST WIN IPL GAME

hubman Gill's return to form will provide a big boost to Gujarat Titans as they square off against tabletoppers Kolkata Knight Riders in their must-win IPL game here on Monday.

Gill roared back into form with his fourth IPL hundred to keep GT's slim playoff hopes alive with a comfortable win against Chennai Super Kings at home in their last outing.

Gill and Sai Sudharsan's twin centuries were cornerstone of the hosts' huge total and their role will be crucial once again as they face KKR, which has become the first team to qualify for the playoffs.

As many as seven teams are still in the race for the playoffs. While Rajasthan Royals (16) and Sunrisers Hyderabad (14) are wellplaced at second and third position, three teams -- CSK, Delhi Capitals and Lucknow Super Giants -- are at 12 points each.

GT and Royal Challengers Bengaluru are at 10 points and can reach a maximum of 14 points.

With a negative net run-rate, GT's chance are the least and it will take a miracle for the



GT will once again have to play out of their skin and register big wins to keep their mathematical chances alive.

GT's bowling has lacked teeth this season with the pacers inconsistent and spinners leaking runs. But the bowlers did manage to snap three CSK wickets in the first three overs in their last outing.

former champions to sneak into the top four.

However, one thing is clear,

Mohit Sharma's variations just one win in their remaining two games to seal a top-two finish after they

guile also stood out and thev would hope for another good

outing. But it will again boil down to the top-order batting, which has failed to fire in the last few games before Gill and Sudharsan came up with sensational tons en route a record 210 opening stand. KKR, on the other hand, need

with 222 runs and 15 wickets this season. Varun spinner Chakravarthy with 18 wickets in his kitty has been in a good

qualified for the playoffs with

an 18-run win over Mumbai

Indians in a rain-hit game last

night. Sunil Narine (461 runs

& 15 wickets) has carried the

team with his all-round

brilliance, while fellow West

Indian Andre Russell has

been another impactful player

rhythm. Phil Salt too has given the team sensational starts but has been off the boil a bit in the last three innings. Others such as Angkrish Raghuvanshi and Ramandeep Singh have also stepped up when needed as the two-time champions emerged as the most consistent team this season.

The venue has proved to be batter-friendly and has Johnson, Sande witnessed some high-scoring and BR Sharath.

GT has beaten KKR twice in the last three meetings but the hosts can't lower their guard as it was here where Rinku Singh had given them a nightmare when he slammed Yash Dayal for five successive sixes in the final over last year. Teams (from):

Kolkata Knight Riders: Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Árora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Chetan Dushmantha Starc, Chameera, Sakib Hussain, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Gus Atkinson, Allah Ghazanfar and Phil Salt.

Gujarat Titans: Shubman Gill (c), David Miller, Matthew Wade, Wriddhiman Saha, Kane Williamson, Abhinav Manohar, B. Sai Sudharsan, Darshan Nalkande, Vijay Shankar, Jayant Yadav, Rahul Tewatia, Noor Ahmad, Sai Kishore, Rashid Khan, Joshua Mohit Sharma, Little, Azmatullah Omarzai, Umesh Yadav, Shahrukh Khan, Sushant Mishra, Kartik Tyagi, Manav Suthar, Spencer Johnson, Sandeep Warrier



KKR's Varun Chakaravarthy made things difficult for MI batters: Brett Lee

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Varun Chakaravarthy's ability to be consistently among wickets for Kolkata Knight Riders drew praise from former Australian tearaway bowler Brett Lee, who said he made life difficult for Mumbai Indians batters in a rain-shortened low-scoring game.

Chakaravarthy bowled miserly and took two wickets for 17 runs as KKR won by 18 runs to become the first team to seal an IPL playoff berth on Saturday.

Chakaravarthy (18 scalps) is the third-highest wicket-taker so far this season behind MI's Jasprit Bumrah and PBKS's Harshal Patel, both of whom are on 20 wickets.

"He bowled beautifully. He made efforts to pick the hard length, he banged the ball short in the wicket which did not allow the batsmen to get match-wunderneath the ball and Hesson.

made the cross-bat shots difficult," Lee told JioCinema

on Sunday. Former Royal Challengers Bengaluru performance director Mike Hesson said KKR batter Venkatesh Iyer seems to be relishing punishing the Mumbai Indians bowlers.

Venkatesh has struck two half centuries this season and came close to striking a third before he was dismissed on 42 (21 balls) as he emerged the highest run-getter on both sides at the Eden Gardens on Saturday.

"He seems to love playing against Mumbai Indians. He got hit on the knee earlier but that did not seem to stop him. He timed everything beautifully, batted with a strike rate of over 200 and when everybody else was struggling because of the seaming ball, he played a match-winning hand," said

We win together, we lose together: Rana reveals KKR winning mantra

PTI KOLKATA

The key to Kolkata Knight Riders' success this season lies in their players' newfound ability to support each other through highs and lows, something that was "missing" over the past two years, feels the team's vice-captain Nitish Rana.

The two-time former champions became the first team to seal the playoff berth with a facile 18-run win over Mumbai Indians in a 16over rain-interrupted IPL match at Eden Gardens on Saturday.

This was the first time since 2021 that KKR made the last four stages. "We win together and we lose together; that's the dressing room environment we have. It's very

important to place hands on each other's shoulders, and I feel it was missing for the last one to two years," Rana said in the post-match

media interaction here. With this win, they have consolidated their position atop the standings with 18 points. With two games to go, KKR are now well-placed for a top-two finish. The big reality check for KKR had

come against Punjab Kings who smashed South Africa's record of the highest successful run-chase by gunning down 262 with eight balls to spare in an IPL fixture at Eden Gardens on April 26.

'We felt really bad that day. I was witness to the dressing room, only three-four ate dinner that night, he recalled.



Rana, who led the side the hunger to do well. Luckily I had previous season in regular skipper that thing in me," he said. Shreyas Iyer's absence, made a comeback from a finger injury after missing their last 10 matches. Having scored a crucial 23-ball 33 on his return, the lefthander said he had anxiety pangs and had a sleepless night. "To be honest I was not able to

touch the bat for 20-22 days because of the injury. Then slowly it started falling into place. I used to play innings in my mind.
"I couldn't sleep the whole night yesterday. It seemed I'm playing

the first IPL match of my life. I slept only around 7.30-8 am such was the anxiety. "It seemed I was playing my first

match, you have to increase your

that thing in me," he said. momentum: Piyush Lacked Chawla

For Mumbai Indians, who are already out of the playoff race, this was their ninth loss as they end their forgettable season facing Lucknow Super Giants on May 17. Veteran leg-spinner Piyush Veteran leg-spinner Piyush Chawla blamed it on their lack of momentum this season.

T20 is about momentum, and we didn't get that momentum right from the beginning. Some days we bowled well, but our batting didn't click, and sometimes our batters did well, but the bowlers ended up leaking runs," Chawla said.

"As a unit, we have failed in a few games, and we have to accept that

as a team. We have a brilliant lineup, but things didn't fall into

"Today also, we started off brilliantly, but that spell of (Sunil) Narine and Varun (Chakravarthy) actually made the difference. You have to give credit to their bowlers," he added.

The 35-year-old, who has played 191 matches in the IPL in four different franchises including KKR, feels it's not over for him yet. To a query if he would be back in action next season, Chawla gave a cheeky reply.

'You tell me, if I should be playing with the way I'm bowling? If you have given your permission, of course I will see you somewhere next time," he signed off.

OTHER SPORTS

We are working to be in best shape possible for Paris: India men hockey captain

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The Indian men's hockey I team has identified areas "needed attention" following its whitewash by Australia in the five-Test series and is ready for the tough European leg of the Pro League, said skipper Harmanpreet Singh on Sunday. Last month, India, the Tokyo

Olympics bronze medallists, lost all their matches to the Kookaburras, raising doubts about their preparations for the Paris Games later this

But drag-flicker Harmanpreet said the squad has done a lot of high-intensity training and the confidence in the side

continues to grow.
"We are in the last stages of an intense training block right now. The team has worked on the areas we felt needed attention after the tour of Australia," said Harmanpreet in a Hockey India release

"Soon, we will head to Europe to play some essential matches in the Pro League 2023/24 to test ourselves against some tough opponents like Argentina, Belgium, Germany, and Great Britain.

"The chemistry in the squad continues to grow and with only 75 days left for the Paris Olympics we are working to be in the best shape possible,"



he added. India will begin their Olympic campaign against New Zealand on July 27. The other teams in Pool B are Belgium, Australia, Argentina, and Ireland.

Pool A comprises the Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain, Spain, South Africa, and hosts France.

India vice-captain Hardik Singh said the experience of stalwarts like goalkeeper PR Sreejesh and former captain Manpreet Singh has come in handy while preparing youngsters for the Summer Games.

"The team is leaving no stone unturned in our endeavour to change the colour of our previous medal and clinch gold at the Olympics this time. We have players like PR Sreejesh and Manpreet Singh who could be playing their fourth Olympics along with quite a few players who could be playing their third Olympics, including our



Praggnanandhaa beats Carlsen but remains third in Superbet chess

PTI WARSAW

Tndia's R Praggnanandhaa Ascored yet another victory over world number one Magnus Carlsen of Norway to keep himself afloat even as Wei Yi of China stretched his lead to a massive 2.5 points in the Superbet rapid and blitz chess tournament, a part of the Grand Chess Tour.

With nine rounds still to come in the blitz event, Wei Yi has amassed 20.5 points with seven wins on the first day of blitz. Ending the day with 7.5 out of a possible nine, Yi, seems like a man possessed and unless a hurricane hits him, is poised to win the first leg of the Grand Chess Tour. Carlsen, on 18, is a distant second at this point and the main reason behind that is Praggnanandhaa, who has been beating the world number one often these days

in the faster version of the

Praggnanandhaa, however is far behind the leaders with 14.5 points which makes it literally a two-horse race for the title.

In fourth spot is Arjun Erigaisi on 14 points while Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland is right behind him on 13. Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan stands sixth on 12.5, a full point clear of Vincent Keymer of Germany



and the eighth spot is now taken by early leader Kirill Shevchenko of Romania with 11 points.

Anish Giri of Holland improved a little to be ninth on 10.5 while the blitz

remained a cause for worry for world championship challenger D. Gukesh who is languishing at the last spot with 9.5 points in the USD 1,75,000 prize tournament. money

Carlsen notably mentioned that his nervous system had collapsed following his second-round loss against Praggnanandhaa. The world number one ended with six points out of nine, which is by all standards a decent result but following his loss to the Indian he blundered again and went down to Abdusattorov from a winning position.

Wei Yi started the day with a loss against Gukesh but recovered in quick time to only concede a draw to Carlsen while winning the rest of the seven games. For Gukesh, it was a tough day despite a great start against the tournament

podium finish. Losing to Wei Yi and Carlsen, Arjun scored five wins and two draws in his other games and will be optimistic on the final day of the event. Final results rapid: 1. Wei Yi

leader as the Indian could

victories

Gukesh, Arjun ensured he

remained in contention for a

only score 2.5 points in all.

Praggnanandhaa

With

20.5; 2. Magnus Carlsen 18; 3. R. Praggnanandhaa 14.5; 4. Arjun Erigaisi 14; 5. Duda Jan-Krzysztof 13; 6. Nodirbek Abdusattorov 12.5; 7. Vincent Keymer 11.5; 8. Kirill Shevchenko 11; 9. Giri 10.5; 10. Anish

Deeksha sets new Indian record

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tndian track athlete K M Deeksha set a new national record in the women's 1500m while Avinash Sable finished second in men's 5000m event at the Sound Running Track

Fest in Los Angeles. The 25-year-old Deeksha finished third in the final on Saturday after running the distance in 4:04.78, bettering the previous record of 4:05.39 set by Harmilan Bains in 2021 at the National Open Athletics Championships in

Warangal. Deeksha's previous personal best was a 4:06.07 set in the final of the National Inter-Athletics State Championships at the Kalinga



Stadium in Bhubaneswar in 2023, where she upstaged Bains to win gold. Deeksha who is from Amroha, UP has been part of the MP Athletics academy for the last five years training under coach S K Prasad.

Chaudhary

Parul

15:10.69s in the women's 5000m to finish fifth. Parul narrowly missed out on improving her national record while compatriot Ankita ended 10th with a time of 15:28.88.

Sable finished second in the men's 5000m with a time of 13:20.37 and not his pet 3000m steeplechase event, and in the same event, Gulveer Singh ran a 13:31.95. Sable's 5000m national record time is 13:19.30.

Kartik Kumar ran the last lap in 62sec in the men's 10000m but that could only fetch him a second-place finish. He clocked 28:07.66s

This is a World Athletics Continental Tour bronze level

Messi plays through a scare, Inter Miami rallies past Montreal 3-2 for fifth straight win

AP ■ MONTREAL, (AP)

Lionel Messi played the entire game despite a first-half injury scare, Benjamin Cremaschi broke a tie in the 59th minute and Inter Miami overcame an early two-goal deficit to beat Montreal 3-2 on Saturday night for its fifth consecutive Major League Soccer victory. Luis Suarez got his 11th goal of the season for Inter Miami, and Matías Rojas scored off a free kick. Jules-Anthony Vilsaint and Bryce Duke scored for Montreal (3-5-3). Inter Miami (8-2-3) extended its unbeaten streak to seven matches (5-0-2) despite Messi

being held without a goal or an assist for the first time in his nine MLS appearances this season. Inter Miami is 7-0-2 in those nine games; one of its losses came against Montreal in March, a game where Messi

didn't play. Playing in Canada for the first time, Messi briefly left late in the first half after some sort of issue with his left knee after being fouled by defender George Campbell. The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner as the world's best player went down immediately, holding his knee and writhing in pain.

Inter Miami's medical staff went onto the field to treat Messi, who got up after about two minutes and walked to the Miami sideline. He was not subbed out, which allowed him a chance to return moments later. And for whatever reason, the match changed in that

moment. Inter Miami was down 2-0 when Messi got hurt; it was 2-1 when he returned and tied moments after he got back onto the field. Rojas scored off a free kick - one that Messi would have ordinarily taken - to get Inter Miami on the board, and Suarez tapped in a goal off a corner kick late in first-half stoppage time.

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