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WORLD 10 ISRAEL BATTLES REGROUPING HAMAS IN NORTHERN GAZA

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# INDIAN ELECTIONS TOUCH HALFWAY

## Phase IV Voting Today

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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



in Madhya Pradesh, 11 in Maharashtra, four in Odisha, eight in West Bengal and one in Jammu and Kashmir. Additionally, this phase marks the commencement of polling in Jharkhand and Odisha. According to the EC, the heatwave conditions are one of the reasons for lower voter turnout in the last three phases as compared to the 2019 parliamentary polls. Citing an India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast, the poll authority on Sunday said that "there is no significant concern regarding hot weather conditions for the polling in Phase 4". Keeping in mind the hot weather conditions and people's reluctance to step out in the afternoon, the EC has increased poll timing in some Telangana seats. While the usual hours of voting are from 7 am to 6 pm, they are curtailed 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 Pawan Kalyan-led Jana Sena Party (JSP). The run up to the fourth phase polling saw the EC and Opposition INDIA Bloc entering into a spat over delay in release of voter turnout data.

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



The electoral fate of several prominent candidates like Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Union Minister Giriraj Singh, TMC's firebrand leader Mahua Moitra, AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi, former cricketers Yusuf Pathan, Kirti Azad, Bollywood actor Shatrughan Sinha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Ajay Kumar Mishra, Nityanand Rai, Madhvi Latha, 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

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## Delhi Voters on Vacation

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



As the Delhi Lok Sabha elections approach on May 25, residents and families face a tough choice between prioritising holiday getaways and fulfilling their civic responsibilities. With a long weekend on the horizon, starting from Buddha Purnima on May 23, until Sunday, May 26, residents might opt for travel over voting. People said keeping in mind the dynamic tariff in the hospitality industry they booked their travel and lodging plans much before the announcement of the Lok Sabha election schedule was announced and now they feel that to meet the obligation of voting they will have to incur a financial loss. The national Capital, however, has a history of low voter turnout. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the total voter turnout in Delhi was 65.1 per cent, which declined to 60.5 per cent in 2019. The most upscale areas consistently record the lowest voter turnout rates, especially in the New Delhi and South Delhi constituencies.

Conversations with parents, teenagers, adults, children, mothers, and college students reveal Delhiites' divided priorities. With school summer vacation excitement building up, many families have eagerly organised trips to visit relatives or explore other destinations, seeking a much-needed break from their daily routines, as summer vacation starts around May 20. The onset of summer vacations in Delhi's schools is likely to see a possibility of a dip in voter turnout for the Lok Sabha elections in the national Capital. People's pre-planned trips and travel arrangements due to children's vacations could potentially hamper the participation of many voters. Dharmendra Kumar, father of a boy who goes to Jaspal Kaur Public School, said, "Vacations will start from May 18, so me, my wife and children are travelling to Ujjain on May 23." When asked if he would miss the voting, he said he had already made plans and the dates of the elections were announced after booking the tickets. Another family head Parmod Garg, who has a daughter studying in Sachdeva Public School, where the vacations start on May 16, said he is also travelling outside of Delhi, but their train tickets are still waiting. He said if their tickets get confirmed, they will skip the voting. Many families said they would travel to different cities outside of Delhi as a tradition of visiting the nani's (maternal grandmother) house during summer vacations. Delhiites plan their trips during May and June to cooler regions of the country such as Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh to escape the hot weather.

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

PTI ■ RAEBARELI/PRATAPGARH (UP)

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

Raebareli, Shah said, "You gave the Gandhi family a chance for years, but no development work has been done... They (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 Modi's development journey." "The 'shahzada' (prince) has

"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 ago.

Addressing the rally, Shah said that this time, the people of Kausambi 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 Kausambi (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 seat.



Home Minister Amit Shah addressing a election rally in Rae Bareli on Sunday PTI

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

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 Gandhi 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."

## Modi rallies around allies

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



## Ladakh stands alone in Lok Sabha roll call

PTI ■ LEH

What should have been a direct contest between the BJP and the Congress in the Ladakh Lok Sabha constituency is now a three-corner fight with an alliance of local groups fielding an Independent to challenge the national parties. The seat, the largest in terms of area (173,266 square kilometers), goes to polls on May 20 — the first major electoral battle in the region after it was carved out of Jammu and Kashmir and granted Union Territory status in 2019.

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



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

demands. However, now with the KDA fielding Jan, the challenges for the Congress as well as the BJP has increased in this seat that has more than 1.84 lakh voters -- a majority (95,926) in Muslim-dominated Kargil district and 88,877 in Leh district. The resentment against the BJP over its Government at the Centre not fulfilling the demands is palpable and the party, which is eyeing a third consecutive term from Ladakh, has rushed Union Minister Kiren Rijiju to handle the situation. He arrived in the Union Territory (UT) on Saturday.

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

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

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

Thupstan Chhewang won the seat for the BJP for the first time in 2014. However, he resigned from the party's basic membership in 2018 and is currently heading the LAB.

The BJP managed to retain the seat in 2019 with Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, who was denied the ticket by the party this time and who openly revolted against the decision. However, he joined the campaigning for Gyalsong after being persuaded by the BJP leadership. Trouble for the Congress candidate started when the KDA unanimously decided to field Jan as an Independent and also persuaded two others, who were contesting as Independents, to withdraw their candidature in his support.

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**Format C-1**

(As per the judgement dated 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Name and address of candidate: **Rahul Gandhi**, 10 Janpath, New Delhi 110001

Name of political party: **Indian National Congress**

Name of Election: **Lok Sabha General Election- 2024**

Name of Constituency: **36- Rae Bareilly Parliamentary Constituency**

I, **Rahul Gandhi**, a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

S. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated	Status of case(s)	Section(s) of/Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)
1	Not Available	FIR No. 240/2021 dated 09.09.2021 Delhi.	The Hon'ble High Court of Delhi in W.P.(C) 8210/2021 its order dated 24.01.2024 referred to the existence of the aforementioned FIR. The FIR per direction of the Hon'ble High Court is in sealed cover. I am therefore, not aware of the details of the FIR. I am also not aware of whether I am arraigned as an accused in this FIR. I am, however, disclosing its existence out of abundant caution.	<b>SS. 228A IPC SS. 23(4) POCSO SS. 74 Juvenile Justice Act</b>  Alleged disclosure of identity of parents of minor rape victim girl on the Twitter handle of the candidate.
2	9 <sup>th</sup> Addl. Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court, Nrupatunga Road, Bangalore City	FIR No. 0362/2022 dated 4.11.2022 Yeshwanthapura Police Station, Bengaluru City, Karnataka	Investigation was stayed in terms of order dated 16.12.2022 in Writ Petition No. 25123/2022 by Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka. On 28.6.2023 the Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka was pleased to dismiss the above writ petition.	<b>Copyright Act u/s 63 IT Act u/s 66 and SS 34, 120B, 403, 465 IPC</b>  It is alleged against the accused that they have used song(s) that the Complainant had copyrights over in the social media/Twitter handle of Indian National Congress while covering a video of the Bharat Jodo Yatra.
3	Court of Metropolitan Magistrate 9th Court Bandra, Mumbai, Maharashtra	Complaint Case No. 311/SS/2023	WP/3011/2023 filed before the Hon'ble Bombay High Court challenging order dated 23.11.2019 rejecting the application for dismissal of Complaint on the ground that two separate offences cannot be tried together is pending.	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  Alleged defamation against RSS with reference to the murder of journalist Gauri Lankesh.
4	Special Court MP/MLA, Ranchi, Jharkhand	Complaint Case No. 1698/2018 (MP/MLA Case No. 16/2021)	The order dated 15.09.2018 passed in Cr. Revision No. 281/2018 by which the Magistrate was directed to take a fresh look on the materials available on record, after he had dismissed the complaint, was challenged in Cr. M.P. No. 4241/2018 before the Hon'ble High Court of Jharkhand at Ranchi and vide order dated 16.02.2024 the WP was dismissed.	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  Alleged defamation against Bhartiya Janata Party, its leaders, supporters and workers with reference to criminal antecedents of the President of the Party.
5	Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Kamrup (Metropolitan), Guwahati, Assam	Complaint Case C.R. 559/2016	Criminal Revision Petition No. 26/2023 was filed before the Additional District and Sessions Judge by Complainant challenging order dated 18.3.2023 passed by the learned Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Kamrup in C.R. Case No. 559/2016. The Criminal Revision Petition was allowed vide order dated 22.09.2023. The ACJM, Kamrup, Guwahati was directed to hear both parties afresh and pass fresh order.	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  Alleged defamation against RSS with reference to persons belonging to RSS not allowing the Accused to visit Barpeta Satra.
6	Court of the 3rd Jt Civil Judge, JD, JMFC, Bhiwandi, Maharashtra	Complaint Case SCC 2425/2014	1. WP ST/14290/2023 filed by the Accused challenging the admissibility of documents is pending before Hon'ble High Court of Bombay. 2. WP/799/2022 filed by the Complainant challenging order rejecting application for issuance of witness summons was rejected on 22.6.2022 by Hon'ble High Court of Bombay. 3. WP/376/2019 filed by the Complainant challenging application rejecting to mark the transcript copy as an Exhibit. Rejected vide Order dated 20/9/2021 by Hon'ble High Court of Bombay. 4. The summoning order dated 11.07.2014 passed by the Ld. J.M.F.C., Bhiwandi was challenged before the Hon'ble High Court of Bombay vide Criminal Writ Petition No. 4960 of 2014. Hon'ble High Court was pleased to dismiss the petition vide order dated 10.03.2015. Against the order dated 15.12.2014 an SLP Cr. No. 3749/2015 was filed before the Hon'ble Supreme Court, which was dismissed as withdrawn vide order dated 01.09.2016.	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  Alleged defamation against RSS with reference to association of members of RSS with the murder of Mahatma Gandhi.
7	Court of Ms. Taniya Bamniyal, ACMM-III, Rouse Avenue Courts, New Delhi	Complaint Case No. 18/2019	The summoning order dated 26.06.2014 was challenged before the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi vide Cr. M.C. No. 3333 of 2014. The Hon'ble High Court was pleased to dismiss the petition vide order dated 7.12.2015. Against the order dated 07.12.2015 a SLP Cr. No.1024 of 2016 was filed before the Hon'ble Supreme Court, which was disposed off vide order dated 12.02.2016, whereby all inferences and conclusions drawn by the High Court, on the various factual aspects in the matter were expunged and liberty was granted to raise all the issues before the trial court. Moreover, trial court proceedings have been stayed on 22.02.2021 by the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi on a 482 petition (Cr.M.C. No. 578/2021) filed by the Complainant. These is no charge and no conviction.	<b>SS. 403, 406, 420 r/w 120-B IPC</b>  Private Complaint by Dr. Subramanian Swamy, former MP Rajya Sabha (former Member of BJP National Executive) regarding alleged conspiracy to criminally misappropriate and cheat the shareholders of M/s The Associated Journals Ltd. by M/s Young Indian and its Directors.

**(A) Pending criminal cases**

S. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated	Status of case(s)	Section(s) of/Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)
8	Court of Addl. Chief Metropolitan Magistrate 13, Ahmedabad, Gujarat	Criminal Case No. 29989/2019	Trial was stayed by the Hon'ble Gujarat High Court in terms of order dated 10.02.2021 in Special Criminal Application No. 1744/2021 filed by the complainant.	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  Alleged defamation case against Ahmedabad District Co-operative Bank and its Chairman on deposit of 750 crores during demonetization.
9	Court of Additional District & Sessions Judge 8th, Surat, Gujarat	Criminal Appeal No. 254/2023	A private criminal complaint was filed with regard to an alleged defamatory statement made by the Accused against the so-called Modi Samaj under SS. 499, 500 IPC.  Candidate-Accused was convicted and sentenced to Simple Imprisonment for 2 years on 23.03.2023. As it was a 2 year sentence hence sentence was suspended for 30 days by Chief Judicial Magistrate, Surat on 23 March 2023. 8th Additional Sessions Judge, Surat granted bail to the Accused on 3 April 2023 and suspended the sentence of the Accused pending appeal vide order dated 3 April 2023. The order of conviction has been stayed vide order dated 4 August 2023 by Hon'ble Supreme Court in SLP (Cri.) No. 8644/2023 which is pending.  Pursuant to the Supreme Court order on 4 August 2023 the Lok Sabha issued a notification dated 7 August 2023 canceling the "disqualification".	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  Alleged defamatory statement made by the accused against allegedly the so called Modi Samaj.
10	Court of Metropolitan Magistrate 16, Ahmedabad, Gujarat	Criminal Enquiry Case No. 36580/2019	Trial was stayed by the Hon'ble Gujarat High Court in terms of order dated 24.02.2021 in Special Criminal Application No. 2010/2021 filed by the complainant.	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  Alleged defamation against Bharatiya Janata Party, its leaders, supporters and workers with reference to criminal antecedents of the President of the Party.
11	Special Judicial Magistrate MP/MLA Court, Patna, Bihar	Criminal Case Complaint (P) 1551/2019	Trial was stayed by the Hon'ble Patna High Court in terms of order dated 24.04.2023 in Special Criminal Misc No. 73323/2019.	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  Alleged defamatory statement made by the accused against allegedly all persons with surname Modi.
12	Special Court MP/MLA, Ranchi, Jharkhand	Complaint Case 1993/2019 (MP/MLA Case No. 17/2021)	1. Cr. M.P. No. 152/2020 u/s 482 of Cr.P.C. against summoning order before Hon'ble Jharkhand High Court. The petition was dismissed vide order dated 5.7.2022.  2. WP Cr. No. 302/2023 was allowed vide order dated 16.08.2023 exempting personal appearance by the Hon'ble High Court at Ranchi.	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  Alleged defamatory statement made by the accused against so called Modi clan.
13	Court of 40th Metropolitan Magistrate Girgaon, Mumbai, Maharashtra	Complaint Case CC No. 6200/SS/2021	Trial was stayed by the Hon'ble Bombay High Court in terms of order dated 22.11.2021 in Writ Petition No. 4391/2021.	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  Alleged defamation against Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.
14	Special MP/MLA Court, Chaibasa, Jharkhand	Complaint Case 229/2021	1. Cr.M.P. No. 1368/2022 u/s 482 of Cr.P.C. in Jharkhand High Court against summoning order is pending.  2. W.P. Cr. No. 230/2024 was filed challenging order dated 27.02.2024 passed by learned Magistrate, Chaibasa issuing NBW. Hon'ble High Court vide order dated 20.03.2024 stayed NBW for one month.  3. W.P.(Cr.) No. 276 of 2024 filed before the Hon'ble Jharkhand High Court and vide order dated 25.04.2024 it has been directed that further proceedings shall remain stayed.	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  Alleged defamation against Bharatiya Janata Party, its leaders, supporters and workers with reference to criminal antecedents of the President of the Party.
15	ACJM (Custom), Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh	Complaint Case No. 628/2018	The Hon'ble Court was pleased to dismiss the aforementioned private complaint vide order dated 26.09.2019.  Criminal Revision 283/2022 was filed by the complainant and same is pending before Hon'ble ADJ, Court No. 14, Lucknow.	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  Alleged defamation of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Bhartiya Janata Party, its leaders and workers.
16	ACJM COURT NO.27, Lucknow Uttar Pradesh	Criminal Misc. Case No. 126818/2022	The Hon'ble Court was pleased to dismiss the aforementioned private complaint vide order dated 14.6.2023. Criminal Revision 547/2023 was filed by the complainant and same is pending before Hon'ble Special Court, MP/MLA Court No. 19, Lucknow.	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  Alleged defamation of Shri Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.
17	Special Court MP/MLA, Sultanpur Uttar Pradesh	Criminal Misc. Case No. 1943/2018	The matter is currently pending in the Special Court MP/MLA, Sultanpur where process was issued on 08.01.2024 and the accused was admitted to bail on 20.02.2024. A plea is yet to be recorded and the trial is pending.	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  Alleged defamation against Bharatiya Janata Party, its office bearers with reference to criminal antecedents of the President of the Party.
18	Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Bengaluru, Karnataka	Complaint Case 7399/2024	Matter is currently pending before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Bengaluru for service of other accused parties.	<b>SS. 499, 500 IPC</b>  It is alleged that the accused have made false imputations against the ministers and office bearers of the Bhartiya Janta Party for having a rate card for appointment and transfer in important government posts.

**(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences**

S.No.	Name of Court & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed
1	Complaint Case No. 18712/2019, Metropolitan Magistrate, Surat  Order of conviction dated 23.03.2023	A private criminal complaint was filed with regard to an alleged defamatory statement made by the Accused against the so-called Modi Samaj under SS. 499, 500 IPC.  I was convicted and sentenced to Simple Imprisonment for 2 years on 23.03.2023. As it was a 2 years sentence hence sentence was suspended for 30 days by Chief Judicial Magistrate, Surat on 23 March 2023. 8th Additional Sessions Judge, Surat granted bail to me on 3 April 2023 and suspended the sentence to me pending appealvide order dated 3 April 2023. The order of conviction has finally been stayed by Hon'ble Supreme Court in SLP (Cri.) No. 8644/2023 vide order dated 4 August 2023  Pursuant to the Hon'ble Supreme Court order on 4 August 2023, the Lok Sabha issued a notification dated 7 August 2023canceling the "disqualification". And restored my Membership as Member of Parliament.	<b>2 years</b>





## FIRST COLUMN

## POLL RHETORIC: ETHICS TAKE A BACKSEAT

Politicians' spiritual claims and secular pledges belie their true motives



VINOD BEHL

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

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

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



ness, cheating, corruption and criminality for material gains and to fulfil ulterior motives. Our intoxication of wealth and power leads to moral bankruptcy, robbing us of happiness and peace.

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

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

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

## AMU breaks the gender barrier

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



AKHTARUL WASEY



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

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

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

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

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

various schools of thought. 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 impeccable academic credentials and a commitment to faith. Her success will undoubtedly bring honour to AMU and our nation. The appointment of the first female Vice Chancellors at both AMU and JMI reflects the evolving landscape of our country. Asrarul Haq Majaz, the author of the AMU Tarana (Anthem), an eminent Urdu poet, had expressed the hope that women would one day be the catalysts for social transformation. This hope is gradually being realised. It is heartening to note that Professor Khatoon, in addition to her academic achievements, embodies this spirit as a practising Muslim woman. We extend our best wishes to Professor Khatoon and fervently pray for her remarkable progress.

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

## Indian troop withdrawal marks regional paradigm shift

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

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



SANTOSH MATHEW

The name "Maldives" is believed to have originated from the Sanskrit words "Mala" (meaning "garland") and "dvipa" (meaning "island"). Together, they form "Maladvipa", which translates to "garland of islands." This name reflects the unique geography of the Maldives, which is an archipelago consisting of numerous coral islands grouped in a chain formation in the Indian Ocean. Over time, the name evolved into "Maldives" in English. The Maldives, a nation comprising 1,192 coral islets strategically positioned across key east-west international shipping routes, has historically been a significant partner for India in its maritime

security endeavours. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Neighbourhood First Policy" and the broader framework of "Security and Growth for All in the Region" (SAGAR), India has sought to deepen its engagement with its maritime neighbours, including the Maldives.

However, the tenure of President Mohamed Muizzu has witnessed a series of policy shifts, with the Maldives increasingly gravitating towards China while seeking to reduce dependence on India across various sectors, including healthcare, food security and defence cooperation. President Muizzu's "India Out" campaign during the presidential election last year signalled a departure from the traditionally close

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

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

From India's perspective, the withdrawal of military personnel from the Maldives

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

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

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

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











# AN: PRE-DIABETES ALERT

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

## CASE 1

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



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



**DR SUNITA SAYAMMAGARU**  
Endocrinologist



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



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

## CASE 2

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

## CASE 3

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

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

Endocrinologist **Dr Lakshmi Nagendra**, Associate Professor, Department of Endocrinology, JSS Medical College, Mysore recently tweeted, "This patient with velvety patches on neck came with cosmetic concerns and was diagnosed with diabetes. This is known as AN and could be a harbinger for underlying diabetes and metabolic disorders. Get yourself tested!"

**Dr Sunita Sayammagaru**, a renowned Diabetologist and Endocrinologist too highlighted the issue as she posted, "As we navigate through the scorching heat wave in Telangana, it's essential to address concerns regarding our children's skin health. I've noticed quite a few mothers approaching me, mistaking their kids' darkened neck regions for sun tan and seeking creams to alleviate the darkening. AN manifests as darkening of the skin and the appearance of blackish, velvety



patches around the neck, armpits, and groin.

"Sometimes, skin tags may also be present. Importantly, this condition is frequently associated with obesity and metabolic syndrome, with insulin resistance being a common underlying disturbance.

"Insulin resistance is a precursor to developing prediabetes and diabetes, occurring when the child begins producing more insulin than usual. Therefore, addressing AN is not merely a cosmetic concern but a significant health issue that warrants attention. "It's essential to understand that there are no cosmetic treatments for AN. Treatment lies in addressing the root cause, which primarily involves weight loss.

Given the alarming progression of diabetes in India, focusing on weight loss is imperative for the well-being of these children. "I urge all parents to prioritize their children's health by seeking appropriate medical guidance and adopting lifestyle changes aimed at promoting weight loss and improving metabolic health.

Together, we can safeguard the future health of our children and mitigate the risk of developing chronic conditions like diabetes. "It is usually seen in Obesity and Metabolic syndrome and the underlying disturbance is Insulin Resistance. Insulin Resistance is a precursor to developing prediabetes and Diabetes and occurs when the child starts

producing more insulin than is usually seen. "The only definitive treatment is lifestyle modification which ensures weight loss. And given the rate at which Diabetes is progressing in India, weight loss is a must for these kids.

Dr Naval Vikram, a well-known endocrinologist at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi said that insulin resistance, which physically manifests as AN can lead to type 2 diabetes. He explained insulin resistance occurs when the body's cells do not respond effectively to insulin, a hormone that helps regulate blood sugar levels. To compensate, the pancreas produces more insulin,

leading to higher levels in the bloodstream. This excess insulin stimulates the growth and multiplication of skin cells, resulting in the appearance of AN.

He said AN can be found in conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, polycystic ovary syndrome, and certain drugs or endocrine disorders. The underlying causes must be identified and treated, as AN itself can be considered a marker for these conditions.

Dr Naval has conducted several studies in the field of metabolic disorders with special emphasis on insulin resistance and obesity and his work explained insulin resistance also plays a significant

role in the development of type 2 diabetes. Over time, the pancreas becomes unable to maintain sufficient insulin production, leading to consistently high blood sugar levels.

Dr Sunita added that weight loss mainly happens with diet control. Weight loss doesn't happen much with exercise. There is no point in a child cycling for 45 minutes and eating biscuits and cakes.

Food control alone is the mantra. "The easiest way for a child to lose weight is to restrict processed foods and junk foods. Anything that comes out of a packet like chips, crisps, instant noodles, or biscuits to be avoided. Anything made out of maida like bread, burgers, buns, pizza, etc to be avoided. Anything sugary to be avoided like soft drinks, carbonated drinks, sweets, chocolates etc. Anything deep fried, especially deep fried items from outside to be avoided."

According to **Dr Atula Gupta**, Dermatologist, Skin Aid Clinic at Gurugram, AN appearance can cause distress and self-consciousness. There is no single "cure" for prediabetic pigmentation or AN, she said, noting that the most effective treatment approach is multifaceted, combining targeted therapies like topical medications or lasers with management of the underlying cause. "While treatments for AN can help improve the appearance of darkened skin patches, they may not eliminate them. "It is essential to have realistic expectations and understand that results may vary depending on the severity of the condition and individual response to treatment."

Fortunately, there are several treatment options available, including creams and laser therapies, that can help improve this pigmentation.

She said that Retinoids, derived from vitamin A, are commonly used to treat AN by promoting cell turnover and exfoliation of the affected skin. Topical retinoids help to lighten pigmentation and improve the texture of the skin over time. Tretinoin, a topical retinoid, has shown some success in reducing hyperpigmentation and thickening associated with pre-diabetic pigmentation.

Similarly, agents like ammonium lactate can help remove excess keratin buildup, a hallmark feature of pre-diabetic pigmentation.

"Then we have laser treatments which offer a more targeted approach for managing pre-diabetic pigmentation," she added.

## 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 this selfless act that can make a significant difference in the lives



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



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

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

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

# Nursing in India: Insights from a Male Nurse

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

**Q 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.

**Q Could you describe your typical workday as a male nurse?**

Working in a high-dependency unit, I care for critically ill patients and assist over 50 patients daily with various blood-related treatments across hospitals and departments.

**Q Have you faced any specific challenges or prejudices as a male nurse in a predominantly female-dominated profession in India?**

Despite nursing being female-dominated, I've experienced acceptance and support from colleagues. The increasing presence of male nurses globally has positively influenced acceptance by patients over time.

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

Once one becomes a professional nurse, opportunities are equal for all, irrespective of gender.

**Q 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.

**Q How do you navigate gender-specific cultural sensitivities while providing care to patients of different genders?**

We explain procedures to patients and relatives, offering assistance from female colleagues if needed, ensuring compliance with ethical standards during all medical procedures.

**Q 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.

**Q What support systems or**



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

**resources do you feel are necessary to enhance the representation and inclusion of male nurses in Indian healthcare settings?**

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

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

**Q 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.

**Q Have you observed any gender-specific differences in roles or responsibilities among male and female nurses in your workplace?**

Roles in the medical field are gender-neutral, but as a male nurse, I may have certain responsibilities towards female patients, such as during CPR procedures. During CPR, I am supposed to take charge of giving compressions and a female colleague can be given the responsibility of medication, calling other team members, activating the alarm, etc.

**Q What strategies do you employ to foster collaboration and teamwork among colleagues, irrespective of gender differences?**

We attend training sessions, workshops, and seminars, participate in clinical case discussions, and engage in regular communication to foster a collaborative environment.

**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.

**Q How do you envision the role of male nurses evolving in Indian healthcare in the coming years?**

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

**Q 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.

**Q Do you foresee any specific trends or challenges that might impact the nursing profession, particularly for male nurses, in India?**

Gender-specific reservations in nursing vacancies and the need for specialization present challenges. However, initiatives to address these issues and meet the growing healthcare demand are imperative for the profession's advancement.

