

6 WORLD


- Rise in UK knife attacks leads to a crackdown and stokes public anxiety

8 NATION


- Saudi Prince Muhammad bin Salman's visit to Pak postponed: Reports
- Odisha to go to twin polls for 4 LS seats, 28 assembly segments today
- Hope there is resolution of remaining issues: Jaishankar

Voting for 96 LS seats in 10 states/UT; 175 assembly seats in Andhra today Fate of several top leaders to be sealed

AMRAVATI/LUCKNOW, May 12: The electoral fate of several prominent candidates like Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Union minister Giriraj Singh, TMC's firebrand leader Mohua Moitra and AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi will be decided on Monday when polling will be held in 96 Lok Sabha constituencies across 10 states and Union Territories in the fourth phase of the general elections.

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).

As many as 28 legislative assembly seats of Odisha are also going to polls in this phase.



A total of 1,717 candidates are in the fray in the Lok Sabha seats and more than 19 lakh polling officials have been deployed at 1.92 lakh polling stations for the over 17.70 crore eligible voters, including 8.73 women, in this round of the seven-phase polls.

Among the keenly watched con-

tests are those involving former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav (Kannauj, UP) and Union ministers Giriraj Singh (Begusarai, Bihar), Nityanand Rai (Ujjainpur, Bihar) and Raosaheb Danve (Jalna, Maharashtra).

Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and former cricketer

Yusuf Pathan of TMC (both from Baharampur, WB), BJP's Pankaja Munde (Beed, Maharashtra), AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi (Hyderabad,

Telangana) and Andhra Pradesh Congress president YS Sharmila (Kadapa) are among the prominent candidates.

Union minister Ajay Kumar Mishra Teni, whose son is an accused in the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence case, is eyeing a hat-trick from Kheri (UP), while TMC's Mahua Moitra, who was expelled from Lok Sabha in the wake of cash-for-query allegations, is seeking re-election from Krishnanagar in West Bengal.

Film star-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha is seeking re-election from Asansol where he is pitted against BJP's veteran leader S S Ahluwalia. BJP's former West Bengal (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

2,480 illegal immigrants detected in Manipur in 2023: CM Biren

IMPHAL, May 12: Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Sunday said 2,480 illegal immigrants were detected in the northeastern state in 2023 but the campaign was cut short after violence broke out on May 3 last year.

Addressing a press conference Singh said concerned with increasing deforestation and setting up of new villages by illegal immigrants, a Cabinet sub-committee was formed in February 2023 after a cabinet meeting attended by two Kuki ministers Letpao Haokip and Nemcha Kipgen. Haokip was made the head of the sub-committee to identify illegal immigrants.

"We are not biased against anybody but against illegal immigrants. It was a decision taken by the state cabinet," Singh said. "Biometrics were taken in ten villages of Chandel during which 1,165 illegal immigrants were found, 1,147 illegal immigrants were found in 13 villages of Tengnoupal district, 154 illegal immigrants in Churachandpur and rest were found in Kamjong district," Singh said.

These figures are not inclusive of the additional 5,457 illegal immigrants who entered Kamjong district, Singh said, adding biometrics of 5,173 people have been taken while 329 have returned back voluntarily after situation improved in the neighbouring country.

"The detection of illegal immigrants was not limited



to one community but was to cover the entire state of Manipur. They were found after visiting villages," Singh said. "The campaign for identifying illegal immigrants was, however, cut short just after a month it started and had to be stopped after violence broke out on May 3," Singh said.

Singh expressed strong disappointment with the Geneva-based International Court of Jurists (ICJ) which had recently ordered Indian authorities to stop deportation in Manipur. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEF

Moukonwari competition

DEMOW: An all Assam based prize money Moukonwari competition will be organised in AEROCITY resort Rajmai near Demow on May 14, 2024. To participate in the competition it will be free. The Farmers and the People associated with Handicrafts will be felicitated. In the Moukonwari Competition, there will be first, second, and third prizes, seven competitors will be given consolation prizes and all the participants will be given certificates. Interested participants can contact the following contact numbers- 9101012536, 8136069051.

Sonia Gandhi spent more than 70 pc of MP funds on minorities, says Shah

RAEBARELI/PRATAPGARH (UP), May 12: 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. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra addressed a rally in support of her brother Rahul Gandhi in Raebareli and accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of never visiting any village in his Varanasi constituency.

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; Pakistan-occupied Kashmir belongs to India and "we will take it". (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

KAAC assures financial support for CUET exam applicants

HT Bureau

DIPHU, May 12: Richard Tokbi, the education in-charge, stated on Sunday that the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) will provide all necessary support to students appearing for the Common University Entrance Test (CUET).

He informed that all expenses, including travel, food, and lodging, for students from both Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, who have already passed their HS final year examination and are seeking post-graduate courses, will be covered by the KAAC relief fund.

"We have received information about the difficulties facing students appearing for the CUET exam as there are no examination centres here in Karbi Anglong right now. Our CEM, Tuliram Ronghang Sir, has assured us that he will support all those students appearing for the CUET exam for their entire expenses, including travel,




food, and lodging," stated the EM during a press conference. The EM also shared that in Karbi Anglong district alone, there are 4,572 students in the Arts stream, 492 students in Commerce, and 770 in Science streams preparing to appear (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

8 police personnel fall ill after consuming wild mushrooms

NORTH LAKHIMPUR, May 12: At least eight Assam Police personnel fell ill after consuming wild mushrooms in Dhemaji district on Sunday, a senior officer said.

The personnel belonging to the 22nd battalion were posted at Panbari near Gogamukh along the interstate border with Arunachal Pradesh, he said. "The eight jawans consumed wild mushrooms for lunch on Sunday. After around 30 minutes of finishing their lunch, they fell ill and experienced dysentery and vomiting, following which they were (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)




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A JOINT VENTURE BY :

Global order witnessed re-balancing in recent decades, says Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, May 12: In the last few decades, the global order has witnessed a "re-balancing" that is shaping its new directions, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday.

Addressing a gathering here at the launch of the Arbitration Bar of India, Jaishankar also said the requirement to harmonise, mediate and settle differences and disputes will be even more "as we progress on that journey towards Viksit Bharat".

This is a "very significant step" in the emergence of India as an arbitration venue, he said.

"I know that all of you appreciate its significance more than I do. But let me, as a foreign minister, today really place it in a larger context and a context that I will borrow again from the AG's (attorney general's) reference to a triangle, a Greek triangle. The triangle I use here is really one of law, business and diplomacy," he added.

In his address, Jaishankar said, "In the last few decades, the global order has witnessed a re-balancing that is shaping its new directions."

"One facet of that is the democratisation of institutions and activities. As economic capabilities emerge or, in our case, re-emerge, it is natural that many of its accompanying dimensions also spread out much more in the world. In that sense, the event for which we have come is reflective of a larger redistribution of power, of influence and of capabilities in the world," the external affairs minister said.



Obviously, this does not happen by itself and it requires both the vision of a leadership as well as the commitment of the stakeholders to make it happen. And that is actually what is being witnessed in the country today, Jaishankar said.

India is currently the fifth-largest economy in terms of GDP and likely to become the third largest soon. It is only to be expected that a domain as crucial as arbitration to the international economy should also find adequate expression here, the minister added.

Not just that, like in other spheres, "we need to develop high-quality capabilities so that India too stands out in a competitive world", he said. Jaishankar later shared some photographs of the launch event on X.

"Glad to participate at the launch of the Arbitration Bar of India. 'Arbitrate in India!' should

be a natural accompaniment of @makeinindia as our economy grows and the nation globalises. The Modi government recognises the importance of high quality arbitration as it improves ease of doing business. #TeamMEA is doing its part," he said.

In his post on the microblogging platform, Jaishankar said he is "confident that today's inauguration is one among the legal community's many contributions towards a Viksit Bharat".

Earlier, in his address, the external affairs minister said in a world where time is of essence and certainty is of paramount importance, arbitration is recognised as the "cornerstone of modern dispute resolution".

This is particularly relevant to recognise in India at a time of rapid economic growth taking place in a globalised environment,

he said.

"If we are to get full mileage from our 3D dividend of democracy, demographics and demand, then high-quality arbitration is a notable factor in further attracting foreign direct investment (FDI)," the minister added.

He concluded that India is poised to make crucial decisions about its future. There is a foundation of a decade of transformation on which "we are seeking to build a pathway for the next 25 years", he said. "Our goal is Viksit Bharat, that is developed India. This will not only have an economic matrix but an all-round development that would include quality of life, ease of doing business, deep national strengths, technological capabilities, a larger role in the international economy, but not least, the institutions, the infrastructure and the talent that would actually define Viksit Bharat," Jaishankar said.

"It will certainly be a nation that will see more intensive and consequential economic activities at home and abroad. The requirement to harmonise, mediate and settle differences and disputes will be even more as we progress on that journey towards Viksit Bharat," the minister added.

"The legal world will also make its expected contribution to the evolution of Viksit Bharat. I believe that the inauguration of the Arbitration Bar of India is one noteworthy step in that direction," he said. (PTI)

State-owned retailers IOC, BPCL, HPCL post ₹ 81,000 cr profit in FY24

NEW DELHI, May 12: State-owned fuel retailers Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd reported bumper profits totalling about ₹ 81,000 crore in FY24, which far exceeded their annual earning in pre-oil crisis years.

The combined standalone net profit of IOC, BPCL and HPCL in April 2023 to March 2024 (FY24) was better than their annual earning of ₹ 39,356 crore in pre-oil crisis years, regulatory filings by them showed.

All the three companies posted the highest ever standalone as well as consolidated net profit in FY24. The retailers have resisted calls to revert to daily price revision and pass on softening in rates to consumers on grounds that prices continue to be extremely volatile - rising on one day and falling on the other - and that they needed to recoup losses incurred in the year when they kept rates lower than cost. IOC in 2023-24 posted a standalone net profit of ₹ 39,618.84 crore, according to the company's regulatory filing. This is compared with ₹ 8,241.82 crore annual net profit in 2022-23. While the company could argue that FY23 was impacted by the oil crisis, the FY24 earnings are higher than even the pre-crisis years - ₹ 24,184 crore net profit in 2021-22 and ₹ 21,836 crore in 2020-21.

BPCL posted a net profit of ₹ 26,673.50 crore in FY24, higher than ₹ 1,870.10 crore earning in 2022-23 and ₹ 8,788.73 crore in FY22. HPCL's 2023-24 profit of ₹ 14,693.83 crore is compared with a ₹ 8,974.03 crore loss in FY23 and a profit of ₹ 6,382.63 crore in 2021-22, according to the filings.

The losses in FY23 led to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announcing ₹ 30,000 crore for IOC, BPCL and HPCL to support their energy transition plans in her budget for 2023-24. Mid-way through the year, that support was halved to ₹ 15,000 crore. The support which was to happen by way of equity infusion via a rights issue, hasn't been given yet.

The three companies, which control roughly 90 per cent of India's fuel market, "voluntarily" have not changed petrol, diesel and cooking gas (LPG) prices for the past two years, resulting in losses when input cost was higher and profits when raw material prices were lower. They posted a combined net loss of ₹ 21,201.18 crore during April-September 2022 despite accounting for ₹ 22,000 crore announced but not paid LPG subsidy for the previous two years.

Subsequent softening of international prices and government giving out LPG subsidy helped IOC and BPCL post annualised profit for 2022-



23 (April 2022 to March 2023) but HPCL was in the red. In FY24, things have changed dramatically. The three firms posted record earnings in the first two quarters (April-June and July-September) when international oil prices - against which domestic rates are benchmarked - almost halved to USD 72 a barrel from a year ago.

International prices rose again in the subsequent quarter to USD 90, leading to moderation of their earnings. But, on a year as a whole they had rich profits. The fuel price freeze that began on April 6, 2022, had a loss as high as ₹ 17.4 a litre on petrol and ₹ 27.7 per litre on diesel for the week ended June 24, 2022. However, subsequent softening led to losses being eliminated. And in mid-March, they cut petrol and diesel prices by Rs 2 per litre each just before general elections were announced.

International oil prices have been turbulent in the last couple of years. It dipped into the negative zone at the start of the pandemic in 2020 and swung wildly in 2022 - climbing to a 14-year high of nearly USD 140 per barrel in March 2022 after Russia invaded Ukraine, before sliding on weaker demand from top importer China and worries of an economic contraction.

But for a nation that is 85 per cent dependent on imports, the spike meant adding to already elevated levels of inflation and derailing the economic recovery from the pandemic.

So the three fuel retailers froze petrol and diesel prices for the longest duration in the last two decades. They stopped daily price revision in early November 2021 when rates across the country hit an all-time high, prompting the government to roll back a part of the excise duty hike it had effected during the pandemic to take advantage of low oil prices.

The freeze continued into 2022 but the war-led spike in international oil prices prompted a Rs 10 a litre hike in petrol and diesel prices from mid-March 2022 before another round of excise duty cut rolled back all of the ₹ 13 a litre and ₹ 16 a litre increase in taxes on petrol and diesel done during the pandemic. (PTI)

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

NEW DELHI, May 12: 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 said.

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 on the US Producer Price 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 Investment Ltd. 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 due to election-led uncertainties.

"In the data-heavy week ahead, investors' attention will be focused on the release of India and US CPI data, Europe and Japan's GDP releases, and the 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 - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd. (PTI)

449 infra projects hit by cost overrun of ₹ 5.01 trillion in March: MoSPI

NEW DELHI, May 12: As many as 449 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of ₹ 150 crore or above, were hit by cost overrun of more than ₹ 5.01 trillion in March 2024, an official report stated.

According to Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), which monitors infrastructure projects worth ₹ 150 crore and above, out of 1,873 projects, 449 reported cost overrun and 779 projects were delayed.

"Total original cost of implementation of the 1,873 projects was ₹ 26,87,535.69 crore and their anti-

ipated completion cost is likely to be ₹ 31,88,859.02 crore, which reflects overall cost overrun of ₹ 5,01,323.33 crore (18.65 per cent of original cost)," the ministry's latest report for March 2024 said.

According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till March 2024 is ₹ 17,11,648.99 crore, which is 53.68 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects.

However, the number of delayed projects decreased to 567 if delay is calculated on the basis of the latest schedule of completion, it added. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Fate of several top leaders

president Dilip Ghosh and Trinamool Congress' Kirti Azad are contesting from Bardhaman-Durgapur. So far, till phase three of the Lok Sabha elections, polling has concluded in 283 seats out of 543. Polling will be held on Monday in all 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana, all 25 seats in Andhra Pradesh, 13 in Uttar Pradesh, five in Bihar, four in Jharkhand, eight in Madhya Pradesh, 11 in Maharashtra, four in Odisha, eight in West Bengal and one in Jammu and Kashmir.

Nearly 17.48 lakh electorate are eligible to vote in the election to the prestigious Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency and 24 candidates are in the fray. It is the first major election in Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. The National Conference has fielded influential Shia leader Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi while youth leader Waheed Para is contesting on the People's Democratic Party ticket. The Apni Party has fielded Ashraf Mir, while the BJP is not contesting. The BJP-led NDA has MPs from over 40 of these 96 seats that will go to polls on Monday.

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 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."

The weather forecast indicates that the parliamentary constituencies going to polls are likely to experience normal to below normal temperatures and there will be no heatwave-like conditions in these areas on polling day. Keeping in mind the hot weather conditions and people's reluctance to step out in the afternoon, the Election Commission 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. Issues like reservations, appeasement politics, corruption and jobs dominated the battle of narratives in the fourth phase of the Lok Sabha elections. Among the 13 poll-bound constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, a close contest is on between SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and sitting BJP MP Subrat Pathak in Kannauj, while in Unnao, incumbent BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj is up against SP's Annu Tandon.

In West Bengal, the EC has identified 3,647 polling stations as "critical" across the eight constituencies. A total of 152 companies (around 100 personnel each) of central forces would be deployed in Bardhaman Purba district, followed by Birbhum (131), Asansol Durgapur Police Commissionerate (88), Krishnanagar Police District (81), Murshidabad Police District (73) and Ranaghat Police District (54), an official said.

The voter turnout in the redrawn Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency, following the delimitation exercise in Jammu and Kashmir in 2022, will be keenly watched as most of the areas under the seat had previously witnessed low polling percentages due to boycott calls given by the separatists. To encourage people to exercise their franchise, district election officers in the constituency organised various outreach programmes, used audio, visual and print media and also held street plays and sports events. Officials said all arrangements have been put in place for Monday's polling. "A total of 17,47,810 voters have been enrolled in phase IV, including 8,75,938 men, 8,71,808 women and 64 third-gender voters. There are around 11,682 persons with disability and 705 voters above the age of 100 years," they said. As many as 2,135 polling stations have been set up across Srinagar, Ganderbal, Pulwama and parts of Budgam and Shopian districts where polling will be held. Twenty-six special polling stations have been set up for migrant voters of Kashmir Division with 21 in Jammu, four in Delhi and one in Udhampur District. (PTI)

2,480 illegal immigrants detected

Singh asked, "Does the organisation know the hardship faced by the indigenous population and issues of deforestation, demographic challenges and poppy cultivation caused by the illegal immigrants?"

"It is an irresponsible statement. Both the Centre and Manipur government are not under them. The deportations were not forcible and no laws were broken. Myanmar authorities came to receive them after completing paper works and formalities," Singh said, adding

"NGOs which are focussed on earning funds should not interfere in the state issue as these are matters of survival for the indigenous people." Singh lauded the acknowledgement made by the National Green Tribunal over the loss of forest areas in Manipur.

NGT's Principal Bench in Delhi taking note of the data released by the chief minister on forest cover loss in the north eastern state had said they raised "substantial issues relating to compliance of environmental norms." Singh said "We have received information about displaced persons who after getting training from self-help groups are selling their products on the streets. We will engage a team or an NGO to purchase the products and sell them on their behalf."

"We have also prepared to do something for the betterment of those staying in the relief camps once the election code of conduct concludes", Singh said. More than 219 people were killed and thousands displaced from homes after ethnic clashes broke out on May 3 last year, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley. Tribals - Nagas and Kukis - constitute little over 40 per cent and reside in the hill districts. (PTI)

Sonia Gandhi spent more

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 ... 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 Modiji's development journey." "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 Gandhi has spent more than 70 per cent of the MP funds on minorities," Shah claimed. MP fund refers to the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme under which MPs can recommend development programmes involving expenditure of ₹ 5 crore each year in their constituencies. Intensifying his attack, he said, "This Gandhi family is an expert in lying. They are now promising ₹ 1 lakh for every woman. In the Telangana (assembly) elections, they had said that they would give ₹ 15,000 to every woman. The women of the state elected them (Congress) ... Forget about ₹ 15,000, they did not even give ₹ 1,500." "Many people here told me that this is a family secret... 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 Pratnagar, Shah said, "Mani Shankar Aiyar of the Congress, and INDI Alliance leader Farooq Abdullah said Pakistan should be respected because they have the atom bomb and don't demand Pak Occupied Kashmir. Today, I want to ask... is POK not a part of India? Rahul baba, if you want to be scared of the atom bomb, 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 atom 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.

"Every child of Kaushambi is willing to lay down his life for Kashmir. The Congress, Samajwadi Party and the BSP were taking care of Article 370 as their 'illegitimate child'. You made Modi ji prime minister for the second time and he scrapped Article 370, worked to end terrorism in Kashmir and make it an integral part of India," Shah told the rally. (PTI)

KAAC assures financial

for the exam. Meanwhile, in West Karbi Anglong, there are 1,463 students in the Arts stream and 25 students in the Commerce stream slated to appear for the CUET exam. There are no students from the Science stream. In Assam, there are eight CUET examination centres, including Guwahati, Golaghat, Tezpur, Silchar, and Dhimaji. The nearest CUET examination centre for Karbi Anglong is in Dimapur, Nagaland.

The EM further mentioned that the KAAC authority has initiated the process of setting up a CUET examination centre in Karbi Anglong with New Delhi. Additionally, the EM informed that both HSLC and HS results have improved with increasing pass percentages. However, there is still room for improvement, and he urged all stakeholders, including social organizations, to extend their cooperation in cultivating an educational atmosphere in both Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong. Furthermore, APSC and UPSC free coaching centres have already been established in both Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, he noted.

The press meet was attended by EM, KAAC, and BJP MP candidate Amarsing Tisso; secretary, KAAC education, Dilip Terang; inspector of Schools, Karbi Anglong, Biresing Engti; and principal incharge, Diphu Government College, Mauzang Husain Barbhuiya.

CUET is the premier entrance test for admission to 249 universities, including 54 prestigious central universities. It is based on a mission - One India Entrance Exam - to unify all disparate education boards, marking schemes, difficulty levels, and various tests conducted by different universities. Instead of struggling to clear astronomical cutoffs for the best colleges, all students get to compete on a common platform with uniform scoring. CUET has streamlined the admission process for students to secure seats in their preferred colleges.

The CUET exam is scheduled from May 15 to 18 in various centres across the country, with 8 centres in Assam.

8 police personnel fall ill

taken to a health centre at Gogamukh," he said. The doctor attending to them said it was a case of food poisoning and referred them to Dhemaji Civil Hospital for better treatment, the officer. "They are presently undergoing treatment at Dhemaji and their condition is stated to be stable," he added. (PTI)

NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from MOHAMMED KOMRUL ISLAM to KAMRUL ISLAM.
My new name is KAMRUL ISLAM.
My old name was MOHAMMED KOMRUL ISLAM.
Vill+PO- Barhawar,
PS- Murajhar,
Dist.- Hojai (Assam)
PIN- 782439

NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from MOHAMMAD ANCHAR ALI to ANSAR ALI.
My new name is ANSAR ALI.
My old name was MOHAMMAD ANCHAR ALI.
Vill- Pub Dhaniram Pathar, P.O -Telibasti,
P.S.-Hojai,
Dist.- Hojai (Assam)
Pin-782435

NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from MOHAMMED ABDUL JOLIL to ABDUL JALIL.
My new name is ABDUL JALIL.
My old name was MOHAMMED ABDUL JOLIL.
Vill+ P.O.- Barhawar,
P.S.- Murajhar
Dist.- Hojai (Assam)
PIN- 782439

Body of woman found in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, May 12: The body of a woman was found in a house at Salna Simonabasti in Nagaon on the morning on Sunday.

The victim has been identified as Maiya Koruwa, who lived along with another woman in a house at Salna Simonabasti. Her companion, Babita Bhumiz was also rescued from the house with grievous injuries, sources said.

Senior police officials rushed to the spot and began investigations into the incident.

However, the police are yet to determine what had led to the death of the victim and how her companion sustained grievous injuries.

Cut marks were visible on the body of the deceased and her companion, police sources said.

According to some locals, both the women had been living together in the house for over years. But when the front door of the house remained closed till late in the morning, one neighbour entered into the house and found Maiya Koruwa lying dead, while the other inmate Babita Bhumiz was lying with severe wounds inside the house.

Meanwhile, the police have sent the body of the deceased to the hospital for autopsy, while the injured woman was immediately rushed to a local hospital for treatment.

Governor attends Narayan Seva Sansthan's artificial limb camp

Human service is the best religion: Kataria

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 12: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria on Sunday said that service is an expression of sacrifice and is the way to transform oneself from Nar to Narayan.

Kataria said this while attending the Narayana Artificial Limb Measurement Camp held in Paltan Bazar in the city on Sunday. The free camp was organized for the differently-abled individuals.

Kataria commended Narayan Seva Sansthan for its longstanding commitment to this cause and congratulated its founder, Kailash Manav and president, Prashant Agarwal for their humanitarian services.

Governor Kataria said, "Serving humans is one of the best services one can do. Narayan Seva Sansthan is a sacred institution of selfless service. With the basic mantra of Nar Seva Narayan Seva,



this institute has been working for the welfare of the poor, needy and disabled people. Since its establishment 39 years ago, this institute has been engaged in the dedicated service to humanity."

The Governor also said that one should not keep any thought of discrimination in one's mind while

rendering services. One should do service with a selfless spirit just to experience happiness. He also reiterated Swami Vivekananda's lines who had said that only those who are living for others are truly human beings. Therefore, there should be a feeling of service among the people.

In his speech, the Governor said that Narayan Seva Sansthan has been working tirelessly for the upliftment of the differently-abled individuals and hailed the Sansthan for its nationwide outreach programme. He also assured Raj Bhavan's support for expanding the organisation's services. He also extended his best wishes for the well-being of the differently-abled individuals and their families who attended the camp.

The camp saw the participation of over 1000 disabled individuals and representatives from more than 30 local organisations. The Governor distributed 11 wheelchairs and also inquired about the experiences of individuals with disabilities, who benefited from artificial limbs. Over 500 differently-abled individuals attended the camp, where a 20-member team from the Sansthan provided services. Measurements were

taken for fitting artificial limbs on 205 people and calipers on another 80. Additionally, over 130 patients were selected for free surgeries in Udaipur. Beneficiaries from states like Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram also attended the camp.

The programme was attended by the first Lady of Assam, Anita Kataria, director of Narayan Seva Sansthan, Vandana Aggarwal, former DGP Umesh Kumar, Vinod Lohia of Purbottar Pradeshia Marwari Sammelan, Mahaveer Prasad Jain of Digamber Panchayat Bhavan Trust, Ramesh Goenka of Marwari Hospital, Ratan Lal Sharma of Brahmin Sabha, director of Narayan Seva Sansthan Vandana Agarwal, Barjang Lal Surana of Shwetamber Jain Terapanth Sabha and Kailash Lohia of Guwahati Gaushala along with a host of other dignitaries.

Centenary celebration of Bibar Laisi held at Kokrajhar Govt College



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, May 12: The centenary celebration of 'Bibar Laisi', the first Bodo journal was organised at the Mahini Mahan Brahma Hall of the Kokrajhar Government College here on Sunday.

The event was organised by the Kokrajhar Government College to mark the 100 years of the Bodo journal.

The Bibar Laisi was published in 1924 with Satish Chandra Basumatary, the eminent writer and social thinker as its first editor. It was published by the then Bodo Students' Union, known as the Bodo Satro Sonmilan in 1924. It was published in eight volumes. The era from 1920 to 1937 is called Bibar Mooga in Bodo literature.

Assam cabinet minister, Urkha Gwra Brahma, Bodo Sahitya Sabha president, Surath Narzary, former secretary of Sahitya Akademi, Kolkata region, Ram Kumar Mukhopadhyay, Sahitya Akademi award winner, Gobinda Boro, Krishna Gopal Basumatary, director of UN Academy Kokrajhar, principal of Kokrajhar Government College, Dimacha Dwibrang Mwacharyar were present on the occasion.

Minister Brahma also unveiled a souvenir 'Thajjiri' on the occasion. He said that the Bibar Laisi is regarded as the first journal in the Bodo language, which is a torch bearer of the Bodo literature world. He has recalled contributions of leading persons who were prominently involved while its publication.

"Today, I am very much happy to be part of the centenary celebrations of the Bibar Laisi. The first Bodo journal has completed 100 years. I am happy to inaugurate the souvenir commemorating the day," Brahma added.

Cancellation, rescheduling of trains in hill section

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 12: In view of the ongoing track repairing works at KM - 110/6-7 between Jatinga Lampur and New Harangajao under Lumding division of the Northeast Frontier Railway, a few trains have been cancelled or rescheduled.

The Guwahati - Silchar - Guwahati) Express scheduled to depart on May 13 from their respective destinations will remain cancelled. The Silchar - Naharlagun - Silchar Special scheduled to depart on May 13 and 14 from Silchar and Naharlagun respectively will remain cancelled.

On the other hand, the Agartala - Anand Vihar Terminal Tejas Rajdhani Express commencing on its journey on May 13 is rescheduled to depart from Agartala at 23:10 hrs. The Silchar - New Delhi Poorvottar Sampark Kranti Express commencing on its journey on May 13 is rescheduled to depart from Silchar at 23:45 hrs.

Workshop on solid waste management held

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, May 12: The Assam Science Technology and Environment in collaboration with Eco Club of the Dhing College has organised a day-long workshop on solid waste management at the college premises here.

It was organised with special support of Union ministry of environment, forest and climate change.

The primary aim of the workshop was to educate students and provide them with holistic understanding on solid waste management (SWM) issues, ill effects of wrong practices of SWM, best practices of SWM, importance of proper sanitation, sowing awareness of good practices on solid waste management, wastewater treatment, livelihoods, and public-private partnerships to gain knowledge in sustainable waste and environmental management system.

It also focused on different types of waste, their handling, storage, disposal requirements and their potential effect on the environment.

The workshop was inaugurated by Biman Hazarika, principal of the college.

While addressing the occasion, Hazarika highlighted on solid waste and the need for its management.

A handbook on solid waste management penned by Sanjeeb Kumar Nath, was inaugurated by Hazarika too. Nath, co-ordinator of Eco Club, elucidated the workshop's objectives.

Following the inaugural session, technical sessions were initiated in which over 135 participants including students, faculty members and resource persons from 14 high schools, ME schools and Eco-Club participated in the workshop.

Pradeep Baishya, associate professor of the mechanical engineering department of the Assam Engineering College, Farista Yasmin, associate professor and head of the department of botany of the Nowgong College (Autonomous), Ajit Debnath, associate professor and head of the department of economics of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev Vishwavidyalaya, Binita Baishya and proprietor of the Eco Waste Management attended the event as the resource persons in the technical sessions of the workshop.

Dibrugarh University confers D Lit on Padmashree Imran Shah

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, May 12: The Dibrugarh University has formally conferred the Doctorate of Literature degree on Padma Shri Imran Shah in his residence at Dhai Ali in Sivasagar.

A group of professors led by the university's registrar, Paramananda Sonowal and former president of Asom Sahitya Sabha, Prahlad Tassa handed him the degree at his residence on Saturday. The certificate and citation was handed over to the literature professor and head of the department of sociology, Deva Kumar Chakravarty, deputy registrar, Arijit Hazarika, Rohini Borgohain and former secretary general of Sahitya Sabha, Jagadish Patgiri. The meeting held on the occasion was presided over by Jyoti Prasad Saikia, professor of the department of sociology.

Shah expressed his gratitude on receiving the highest degree from the university. He said that their generation had put in a lot of effort to produce literary works to enrich Assamese literature. The present generation, he said, has already an enriched environment and their job is to create more and scale higher on literary echelon.

Book on mental health released

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 12: 'BORNOFIT-Healthy Lifestyle is your Birth Right', a book on mental health and healthy lifestyle was released in Tezpur on Sunday. The book has been written by software engineer, Deba Jyoti Das, who is working as a programme manager in a software company in Bengaluru.

Das addresses the pressing issue of mental health and well-being among students and middle-aged individuals navigating the competitive landscape of self-reliance through his book.

The book serves as a guide to reverse one's biological age and stay young throughout their lifespan. It offers practical strategies for reclaiming control of one's life and healthy habits. It has also received acknowledgment from many renowned artists and celebrities. The book has also managed to become Amazon's no 1 best seller in recent times.

Das, who had been brought up



in Tezpur city and graduated from the Darrang College, pursued mechanical engineering from the Assam Engineering College. He then earned his M. Tech degree from the national Institute of Technology, Trichy having experience of working in various fields of different multi-national companies including Metafusion, Netkraft, software companies like MindTree, Wipro, CISCO etc.

Speaking to The Hills Times, Das said, "The recent statistics from India's education ministry in the Rajya Sabha underscored the severity of the issue with 77 students tragically losing their lives to suicide in higher education institutions between 2019 and 2023.

A significant number of such cases have been reported from prestigious institutions such as IITs, IIMs, AIIMS, and major en-

gineering institutions.

The ministry also reported a concerning number of dropouts (33,979 students) from these institutes during the same period, highlighting the urgency of addressing the underlying factors contributing to student distress.

The major causes of these distressing statistics are multifaceted and include academic pressure, career uncertainty, low self-esteem, relationship issues, perfectionism, and unrealistic expectations, among other deeply rooted social issues.

"It is essential that we collectively address these challenges for our students.

'BORNOFIT' aims to address these crucial problems among students and middle-aged individuals to build strong characters and improve emotional and physical health." Das said, adding this endeavour aims to raise awareness and initiate positive change in addressing mental health and well-being in our community.

SSB organises blood donation camp in Gossaigaon



HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, May 12: The 31st battalion of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) has organised a voluntary blood donation camp at its battalion headquarters in collaboration with RNB Civil Hospital.

A medical team led by Muklasur Rahman from RNB Civil Hospital conducted a check up of donor Sh. Ranjeet Singh, assistant commandant (communication) and 30 other officials thoroughly.

During the blood donation camp, approximately 30 units of blood were donated by the SSB personnel, which can be used for different life-saving purposes.

Sh. Parag Chaturvedi, second-in-command of the 31st battalion, after donating blood asserted that the donated blood will help to meet many medical needs, providing a critical transfusion to someone in need of blood or restoring the strength of a cancer patient.

He again said that sympathy alone cannot save people in chronic conditions, but blood can. He appealed to all the Jawans of the battalion to come forward and donate blood regularly. Regular blood donation is linked to lower blood pressure and a lower risk of heart attacks.

Consecration ceremony of Gautam Buddha statue held

50 Tamang Buddhist monks hailing from various parts of country participated



HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, May 12: A three-day-long consecration ceremony of a statue of Gautam Buddha at the newly inaugurated Gopma in Bargolai Bashbari playground in Margherita in Tinsukia district concluded successfully on Sunday.

Situated within the confines of the Bargolai

Bashbari playground this event marked a momentous occasion for devotees and participants alike. The final day of the unveiling programme commenced amidst great anticipation and spiritual fervour.

A grand religious procession was taken out on Sunday along the National Highway 315 in Bargolai, which saw the participation of a large

number of devotees from the Tamang Buddhist community, with more than 5000 individuals congregating to partake in the festivities.

Moreover, 50 esteemed Tamang Buddhist monks hailing from various regions across the country further enriched the cultural and spiritual significance of the occasion.

A notable highlight of the ceremony was the esteemed presence of the venerable Archarya Khem Rimborji Sangey Ludu, the highest-ranking Buddhist monk from Jaigaon in West Bengal to preside over the proceedings.

On Sunday, amidst an aura of reverence and solemnity, Sangey Ludu unveiled the newly constructed Gautam Buddha Gopma, symbolizing the culmination of meticulous planning and devout dedication.

The solemn observance spanned three consecutive days that began on May 10 and concluded Sunday with the final day of the festivities.

As devotees and participants bid farewell to this momentous event, the resounding echoes of spiritual chants and prayers reverberate throughout the Bargolai Banbhari playground, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of all those in attendance.

Padma Shri Jatin Goswami Gurudev honoured with 'Kushilaba Kala Nidhi' title



HT Correspondent

MORIGAOON, May 12: Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee, Padma Shri Jatin Goswami Gurudev on Sunday was honoured with the 'Kushilaba Kala Nidhi' (Treasure of Art) title for his immense con-

tribution to the field of Sattriya Sangeet during a function held at the District Library in Morigaon.

Gurudev has been presented the title 'Kushilaba Kala Nidhi' on the occasion of the annual function of the Sankari Sangeet

function of the organisation. Moreover a song 'Tejare Kamalapati' composed by Janardan Kalita was formally inaugurated by Padma Shri Jatin Goswami. Later Krishna Bora provided the vote of thanks in the programme.

Vidyalaya. The programme began with a prayer performed by the district president of Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha, Atul Chandra Das, who was accompanied by Sankari Sangeet Vidyalaya, Gyan Muhan Deka and the principal of the Vidyalaya, Prasanna Kr. Medhi.

Thereafter the exam secretary of the Vidyalaya, Mridul Kr. Bora lit the ceremonial. The students staged dances on the eve of the annual

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of little children.
-William Makepeace Thackeray

Short respite for Kejriwal

In granting interim relief to Kejriwal, the Supreme Court has shown the willingness to go beyond technicalities and take a 'political' stand against what has been widely seen as a political arrest by the Modi government. The decision by the bench comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta will be remembered for long as a landmark for a holistic approach and being guided by the spirit of the law rather than its letter. Kejriwal's arrest on March 21 last, by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with a money laundering case tied to the Delhi liquor policy, came at a critical juncture just ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. This timing raised eyebrows and led to allegations of political motivations behind his arrest. The Supreme Court's decision to grant him interim bail until June 1, is therefore seen as a befitting response from the court to a political move by the ruling party. The judiciary is expected to function independently of political influence, ensuring that justice is served without bias. However, the circumstances surrounding Kejriwal's arrest and the subsequent bail reveal that the Supreme Court's decision was influenced by the political context rather than purely legal considerations.

The court's decision to grant bail, despite strong opposition from the ED, which argued that the right to campaign was neither a fundamental nor a constitutional right, suggests a recognition of the political implications of Kejriwal's continued detention. The perception is further reinforced by the court's statement that while examining the question of grant of interim bail, the peculiarities associated with the person in question and the surrounding circumstances must be considered. Supporters of Kejriwal and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as well as the constituents of opposition INDIA Bloc have hailed the decision as a victory for democracy, suggesting that the judiciary had acted to correct a perceived political wrong. On the other hand, the ED's opposition to the bail, citing the continuous nature of elections in India and the potential precedent it would set, has failed to impress the court, despite an expressed concern that the judiciary must avoid stepping into the political arena.

The Supreme Court's decision can be analysed from multiple angles. Legally, it upholds the principle of bail being the norm and jail the exception, especially when the accused has not been convicted. Politically, it raises questions about the extent to which the political narrative can influence the court. The decision also has implications for the electoral process, as it allows a key political figure to participate in the elections, potentially affecting the outcome. Bail to Kejriwal has been seen as a morale booster for the opposition bloc, whose constituents had rallied round his arrest to put up joint resistance, despite the political differences that persisted among themselves over electoral adjustments in individual states. Just as the arrest served as a rallying point, the bail is expected to provide new impetus to the fight against blatantly authoritarian traits of the Modi government.

Low voter turnout a systemic issue globally, needs targeted corrective action

By: K Raveendran

The role of State Bank of India in suppressing information about the Supreme Court-struck down electoral bonds has been well-exposed. Now more evidence of SBI's 'political mandate' is emerging. For no rhyme or reason, an inhouse economist has debunked what he describes as the myth of voter apathy in the current elections. His study covered only the first two phases of polling, but the turnout in the just-concluded third phase also indicates a decline, compared to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

SBI chief economic advisor Samya Kanti Ghosh argues that comparing the absolute number of votes cast is a better way to analyse the turnout, rather than comparing past and present and future in terms of percentages. According to him, while the voting is about 3.1 percentage points below the trend observed in 2019, the numbers can swell in the remaining phases of polls and there will be a 'J-shaped' increase. He also notes that the first two phases of polls witnessed salutary changes like higher women's participation on an incremental basis, and those in reserved seats.

In Phase 1, 66.14 percent voted, and in Phase 2, 66.71 turned up at the polling stations, marking a drop from the 2019 figures of 69.43 percent and 69.17 percent, respectively. The turnout in the third phase has been reported at 64.4 percent, nearly 3 percent lower than 2019.

It was widely reported that the lower turnout in the early phases of polling had the BJP leadership worried over its implications. There have even been suggestions that Modi shifted his campaign thrust to causing religious divide by raising Muslim-sensitive issues due to the feared setback on account of the poor voter response in the early phases. Of late he has been telling his election rallies the primary need to go for voting. The SBI assessment thus appears to be an economist's reassurance to the politician.

Voter turnout, simply put, is the percentage of eligible voters who cast their ballots during an election. It transcends mere numbers; it reflects citizens' engagement with the democratic process. When citizens exercise their right to vote, they contribute to the vibrancy of democracy. Conversely, low voter turnout can have far-reaching consequences

for democracy itself. When citizens turn up at polling booths, they validate the democratic process, reinforcing its legitimacy. Conversely, low turnout can distort the representation of people's will, potentially altering electoral outcomes. Two landmark elections—2014 and 2019—highlight the correlation between voter turnout and electoral outcomes. In both instances, there was higher voter participation and the BJP, riding on this wave of engagement, secured a clear majority. The increased voter turnout bolstered the BJP's mandate, allowing it to form a stable government.

The surge in the voter turnout in 2014 and 2019 also coincided with an increase in young voters. However, empirical evidence from India's 61st Amendment, which lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 in 1988, reveals a nuanced picture. It turns out that the franchise extension has had minimal electoral effects. While youth participation remains a critical concern, there is also need to examine the role of older voters as voter fatigue is often attributed to the elderly. Also requiring examination is whether the prolonged election periods is adding to voter fatigue. There is widespread criticism that the extended election period has been unduly long, putting pressure on resources of political parties. There have even been suggestions that the longer period works in favour of the BJP, which has no dearth of resources. An unexplored area in voter behaviour or fatigue relates to the increasing urban migration of rural youth. According to available statistics, approximately 35 percent of India's population are migrants, primarily residing in cities. Many fail to re-register to vote, despite provisions allowing it. The loss of trust in political institutions has been a global phenomenon as the 21st century witnesses rising skepticism among large sections of people and India is no exception. Corruption scandals, inadequate representation, and the perception that individual votes hardly matter contribute to disillusionment. It will take a mammoth effort to restore the lost confidence and this has to be seen in the context of the need for reforms the political processes. Trust-building, streamlined processes, and targeted campaigns can bridge gaps and as India's democracy evolves, understanding these dynamics is essential. (IPA Service)

Is Russia mulling to experiment with using nuclear weapons in space

Russia recently rejected a UN resolution proposed by the US and Japan, which aimed to prevent the development and use of nuclear weapons in space. This action by Russia indicates that they are moving closer to making the idea of using nuclear weapons in space a possibility.

Thankfully, Russia did not express any intention to deploy a nuclear weapon in space, which would be a violation of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. However, the Russian UN representative criticized the new resolution, referring to it as a deceptive tactic and claiming that they were being manipulated.

If Russia or any other country were to detonate a nuclear weapon above Earth, the consequences would be alarming. Such an explosion could be just as destructive as a ground-level detonation, posing a significant threat.

Detonating a nuclear bomb on the ground versus in orbit shows some significant differences. Dr. Michael Mulvihill, a research fellow at Teesside University, explains to BBC Science Focus that when nuclear weapons are detonated on the ground, they primarily emit a large amount of energy in the form of X-rays.

The X-rays released by a nuclear explosion in the atmosphere can heat the air to extremely high temperatures, resulting in a blazing inferno (destructive fire or intense heat). This intense firestorm generates the powerful shockwave and iconic mushroom cloud that engulfs debris and gives rise to fallout.

Fallout refers to the radioactive particles and debris that are dispersed into the atmosphere after a nuclear detonation. When a nuclear weapon is detonated in space, since there is no atmosphere, it does not produce mushroom clouds or shockwaves like it does on Earth. However, this doesn't mean that the effects are any less frightening. The consequences can still be quite alarm-



ing in their own way.

According to Mulvihill, in the vacuum of space, a nuclear explosion releases an immense amount of energy in the form of X-rays, gamma rays, intense streams of neutrons, and charged particles at the subatomic level (means lesser than atom). Additionally, it generates a phenomenon called an electromagnetic pulse, or EMP.

An electromagnetic pulse (EMP) is a sudden surge of electromagnetic energy. When an EMP interacts with the upper atmosphere, it has the ability to remove electrons from it. This can result in the disruption of radar systems, communication failures, and the disabling of power systems.

Following the initial explosion, a band of radiation envelops the Earth, which can endure for months, or even years, without certainty. This radiation has the potential to harm satellites and, as Mulvihill highlights, it poses a significant danger to individuals in space during that period, including astronauts aboard the ISS.

According to Mulvihill, the EMP would disrupt the power systems on the ISS, causing severe damage to the life support systems and other critical components responsible for maintaining the station's atmosphere. Additionally, Mulvihill suggests that the astronauts onboard

would likely be exposed to dangerous levels of radiation. The conditions in orbit would be extremely inhospitable to life.

As the number of satellites in space continues to increase, with around 10,000 currently in low Earth orbit and tens of thousands more planned for future launches, the implications of detonating nuclear weapons in space become increasingly significant. This is due to our growing dependence on the systems we deploy in orbit.

When viewed from the Earth's surface, aside from causing power grid failures and communication disruptions, the effects of a nuclear explosion in space could have a certain mesmerizing beauty. As the charged particles resulting from the explosion interact with the Earth's magnetic field and atmosphere, they would create stunning auroras that span vast distances and could persist for several days. So, at least in that aspect, there would be a captivating spectacle to witness.

During the Cold War, the United States and Russia, as global superpowers, conducted nuclear tests in various environments, including on land, underwater, and even inside mountains. They explored almost every possible scenario for detonating nuclear weapons.

Therefore, it is not unexpected that nuclear weapons have been detonated in space before. The

United States carried out a total of five space nuclear tests, with the most well-known one, as mentioned by Mulvihill, taking place on July 9, 1962, in the vicinity of the beautiful Pacific island of Hawaii.

Starfish Prime, a nuclear test, was conducted at an altitude of 400km (250 miles) above Johnston Island. It had an explosive yield of 1.4 megatons, approximately 100 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

The EMP from the Starfish Prime test affected electrical systems, such as streetlights and phones, even in Hawaii, located 1,450 km (900 miles) away from the detonation. This unexpected impact revealed details about the test that were meant to be kept secret. The resulting red auroras extended over the Pacific Ocean and persisted for a substantial duration of time.

According to Mulvihill, during that period, there were approximately 22 satellites in space, and about one-third of them were rendered inoperable. Among the affected satellites was Telstar 1, the pioneering television communication satellite. Telstar 1, which represented advancements in technology in the United States, experienced an early failure in orbit, lasting only seven months, due to the impact of the Starfish Prime test.

Subsequently, there was a collective realization that conducting nuclear warhead tests in space was an unwise course of action. As a result, the Outer Space Treaty (OST) was established. Signed in 1967 by the United States, United Kingdom, and Soviet Union, the Outer Space Treaty (OST) has garnered more than 100 signatories. It designates space as a domain available for peaceful activities exclusively. This brought a sense of reassurance to the global community, enabling the utilization of space for beneficial endeavors such as astronomy, space stations, and wireless communica-

tion for the following six decades (60 years). So, what factors have since evolved?

Speculation regarding a shift in the state of orbital security emerged when, earlier this year, the chairman of the US House Intelligence Committee, Mike Turner, issued an ambiguous alert regarding a "significant national security risk" posed by Russia. Subsequently, media sources started disseminating information suggesting that the perceived danger revolved around the potential presence of a "nuclear weapon in space."

While the situation is undoubtedly worrisome, Mulvihill emphasizes that there is no need to lose sleep over it. He reassures that as Russia remains a party to the Outer Space Treaty (OST), the deployment of any form of weaponry in space would be unequivocally prohibited and deemed illegal. Additionally, he highlights that, as evidenced by Starfish Prime, nuclear weapons deployed in space do not discriminate their targets. Therefore, any detonation would result in equal harm to Russia, its allies, and other nations.

It would not solely impact systems like Starlink, which provides internet access to numerous countries (presently 75 countries), but also Chinese satellites and those of other nations.

Another potential scenario is the development of nuclear-powered "jammers" by countries. These jammers would utilize nuclear energy to generate signals capable of interfering with, rather than destroying, other satellites.

However, in the grand scheme of things, these actions might simply be a form of geopolitical posturing. Mulvihill suggests that the concept of deterrence revolves around sending messages and attempting to persuade others that one is willing to take such actions, without actually reaching that point. He believes that this psychological perspective likely underlies the current situation. (IPA Service)

There is no version of liberalism that can take economies out of present stagnation

By: Prabhat Patnaik

Each strand of political praxis is informed by a political philosophy which analyses the world around us, especially, in modern times, its economic characteristics. On the basis of this analysis, the particular political philosophy sets out the objectives which have to be struggled for, and the political praxis informed by it carries out this struggle. The objective may be difficult to achieve, more difficult in certain contexts than in others, and this difficulty may act as a hurdle for political praxis; but this does not constitute a crisis for that political philosophy. The sheer difficulty of achieving an objective does not constitute a crisis. A crisis of a political philosophy arises when it has an internal contradiction, when the objective it puts forward is logically in conflict with some other feature in which it believes.

Many would argue that the objective of socialism that the political philosophy, Marxism, puts forward has in the present context become somewhat more difficult to achieve; but this, while explaining the present weakening of the Left, does not constitute any crisis for Marxism. The political philosophy called liberalism however is facing a crisis in the sense that the objective it puts forward for the achievement of what it perceives as human freedom is logically impossible to achieve in a world which liberalism itself holds dear; in other words there is a logical contradiction within itself which has arisen in the course of the development of the economy and to which it has no answer. The crisis that liberalism faces is of this nature.

Modern liberalism was developed in response to the Bolshevik Revolution during the capitalist crisis of the inter-war period, as a way of resolving that crisis, and other similar crises that could arise in future, without transcending capitalism. It believed that the combination of western-style liberal democracy and capitalism tempered by State intervention, provided the best framework for achieving human freedom. It believed that under the institutions of western-style liberal democracy, the State, far from being a class State, would express social "rationality", and would do so better than under any other institutional framework. Hence such a liberal democratic State can intervene in the economy both to rectify any malfunctioning that may arise because of the spontaneous working of capitalism, and also to make this spontaneous working, even when it is not a case of malfunctioning, conform to the demands of social rationality. This version of liberalism, in whose formation the English economist John Maynard Keynes had played a major role and which



Keynes had called "new liberalism", differed from earlier versions of liberalism in so far as those earlier versions had wanted State intervention to be kept to a minimum, in the erroneous belief, that had prevailed earlier, that the capitalist economy always operated at "full employment".

This new version of liberalism, even if we do not go into its validity within the institutional framework it envisages (and it is utterly invalid, among other things, because of the phenomenon of imperialism which it does not even cognize), certainly ceases to be valid when capital, including finance, gets globalised. This is because we do not in this case have a nation-State presiding over capital that is essentially national, but a nation-State confronting globalised capital; and in any such confrontation the nation-State must yield to the demands of globalised capital for fear of triggering a capital flight, which means, as even the most ardent "new liberal" would admit, that the State cannot possibly act as the embodiment of social rationality.

Put differently, the presumption behind "new liberalism" was that the domain over which the writ of the State ran and the domain over which the capital originating in that country operated, more or less coincided. This was in fact the case when Keynes was writing and even later. But with increasing globalisation of capital, this presumption loses its validity. And when this happens, then it is unreal even to pretend that the executive of the State would be goaded by public opinion to act in ways that it thinks are socially rational, irrespective of whether globalised capital concurs with such action.

The roots of the crisis of liberalism therefore lie in the phenomenon of globalisation; but this crisis clearly manifests itself in the period of crisis of neo-liberalism when large-scale mass unemployment appears on the scene, which was exactly what Keynes thought was the Achilles heel of capitalism that, unless overcome through State intervention, would make the system vulnerable to

Bolshevik-style revolution.

The pursuit of Keynesian "demand management" that was supposed to overcome the crises of overproduction that plagued capitalism, requires that larger State expenditure, the panacea for the crisis, should be financed either by raising more taxes at the expense of the rich or by raising no extra taxes at all, that is, through a larger fiscal deficit: larger State expenditure financed by raising more tax revenue at the expense of the working people who consume much of their incomes anyway, would not add to aggregate demand and hence would not alleviate the crisis. But these two ways of financing additional State expenditure, taxing the rich and increasing the fiscal deficit, are both opposed by globalised finance capital which therefore eliminates the scope for any fiscal intervention by the State against the crisis. It can of course intervene through monetary instruments but these, as is well-known, are extremely blunt, often encouraging inflation that compounds the crisis, rather than stimulating larger private spending. Within neo-liberalism therefore there is no way of overcoming the crisis; Keynes's "new liberalism" comes a cropper. The cul-de-sac or dead end of the neo-liberal economic regime therefore becomes a crisis for the political philosophy of liberalism.

This entry into the economic cul-de-sac can be illustrated with the example of Europe. Until the mid-seventies the unemployment rate in EU countries (15 at the time) had been less than 3 per cent for a long period. It started climbing in the late seventies and the eighties as globalisation proceeded, and has remained roughly above 7 per cent on average since then, though with variations between countries; and State intervention has been unable to bring it down.

Since a single nation-State cannot intervene to boost aggregate demand and reduce unemployment when confronted with globalised capital, the country can either impose capital controls to get out of the vortex of globalised finance alto-

gether, or have a co-ordinated fiscal stimulus along with other countries in which case capital's tendency to fly out of any country that expands demand can be checked (since all countries would be following a similar policy of expanding State expenditure). The first of these entails getting out of the neo-liberal regime: capital controls would also necessitate, sooner or later, trade controls, and this means that the basic character of a neo-liberal regime, namely relatively unrestricted flows of capital and goods and services, would be infringed. International finance capital will oppose this tooth and nail, so that such a course would require an alternative class mobilisation that cannot remain confined to a programme of preserving monopoly capitalism.

The second of these routes, if it is to be a genuinely coordinated fiscal stimulus across all countries, requires a degree of internationalism that capitalism, with its in-built tendency for dominating the periphery, is incapable of demonstrating. It can therefore at best introduce a coordinated fiscal stimulus within the metropolis even while imposing fiscal austerity on the periphery, which would mean a tightening of imperialism. Capitalism may well try this, but such a tightening of imperialism cannot be acknowledged by liberalism as a feather in its cap; on the contrary it would mean a defeat of liberalism as it presents itself, namely, as an alternative non-socialist path to human freedom. It is this predicament of liberalism that constitutes its crisis. It cannot claim that freedom is possible within capitalism when there is large-scale unemployment which also keeps down wages, causing a general stagnation or worsening in the condition of labour. It cannot overcome this material reality without transcending neo-liberal capitalism, the requisite class alliance for which would carry the economy beyond capitalism itself. (The talk of retreating to a pre-neoliberal capitalism is analogous to the talk of returning to an always mythical 'free competition capitalism' as a means of doing away with the ills of monopoly capitalism, that Lenin had pilloried in his book Imperialism). Any acquiescence in a coordinated fiscal stimulus among metropolitan countries alone for reducing unemployment that leaves out the periphery from its ambit, amounts to a betrayal of what liberalism claims it stands for.

Classical liberalism had come to grief during the Great Depression. Keynesian, or new liberalism, has come to grief with the crisis of neo-liberalism. And there are no other versions of liberalism that are available, or even possible, which can take economies out of their current stagnation while keeping them confined to their capitalist integument. (IPA Service)

Colorectal cancer is rising in children, teens, and young adults, study finds



By: Corrie Pelc

Researchers also found increases among children ages 10 to 14 and young adults ages 20 to 24.

The majority of colorectal cancer cases occur in adults over the age of 50, but new research shows this form of cancer is on the rise in young adults and teenagers. Now, a new study reports from 1999 to 2020, rates of colorectal cancers grew 500% among children ages 10 to 14, 333% among teens ages 15 to 19, and 185% among young adults ages 20 to 24. The research is being presented on May 20 at Digestive Disease Week 2024 in Washington, DC.

Rising colon cancer rates in young people

For this study, researchers used data from the Centers for Disease Control Wonder Database to analyze trends in colorectal cancer rates for people ages 10 to 44 from 1999 to 2020. When examining the data, researchers found changes in colorectal rates, including:

- Children aged 10 to 14 — from 0.1 per 100,000 in 1999

increased to 0.6 per 100,000 in 2020

- Teens aged 15 to 10 — from 0.3 per 100,000 in 1999 increased to 1.3 per 100,000 in 2020

- Young adults aged 20 to 24 — from 0.7 per 100,000 in 1999 increased to 2 per 100,000 in 2020

Scientists also observed a 71% increase in colorectal cancer cases in adults ages 30 to 34 and a 58% increase in adults ages 35 to 39 from 1999 to 2020. "Colorectal cancer is no longer considered just a disease of the elderly population," said lead researcher Islam Mohamed, MD, an internal medicine resident physician at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, in a news release.

"It's important that the public is aware of signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer."

Why is colorectal cancer rising in young people?

While a family history of colorectal cancer is an unmodifiable risk factor, past studies show there are several modifiable risk factors, including:

- Diet
- physical activity
- obesity

- poor sleep
- alcohol use
- tobacco use

"The fact that people are being diagnosed with colon cancer at a younger age provides us a lot of insight that the clock starts ticking at a young age," Anton Bilchik, MD, PhD, surgical oncologist, chief of medicine and director of the Gastrointestinal and Hepatobiliary Program at Providence Saint John's Cancer Institute in Santa Monica, CA — who was not involved in this study — explained to Medical News Today. "We need to be very aware of things that can be done to prevent the development of colon cancer," Bilchik said, noting preventive strategies like regular physical activity and eating less processed food and red meat.

Jacqueline Casillas, MD, board certified pediatric hematologist/oncologist and medical director of the Jonathan Jaques Children's Cancer Institute at MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach in California, not involved in this study, told MNT: "While we don't know all of the etiologies, I think it (the study) does highlight some of the possible risk factors, like we know that we have increasing rates of obesity within the United States — is that a risk factor? We do eat a lot of processed foods and so is it that we're not eating the healthy diet recommendations with fruits, vegetables, and a high fiber diet versus our processed foods and a high-fat diet."

Other possible causes of colon cancer
Bilchik said another possible

cause for increased colorectal cancer cases in younger people may be related to antibiotic use. "It's well known that our body has trillions of bacteria known as the microbiome and that these bacteria play an important role in the immune system and in preventing the development of colorectal cancer, as well as cardiovascular illness," he explained.

"And it's certainly possible that the indiscriminate use of antibiotics at a young age may be neutralizing some of these important bacteria, predisposing younger people to the development of colon cancer down the road."

Bilchik added everyone should pay more attention to doing things that are anti-inflammatory rather than pro-inflammatory, which have been shown to promote cancer.

"Inflammation has been associated with the development of colorectal cancer and all of the factors and all of the risk factors and lifestyle and what we eat can be considered pro-inflammatory," he detailed.

"We should pay attention at a young age to what is anti-inflammatory, such as eating the right foods, eating a balanced diet, eating fresh food, and most importantly exercising and avoiding a sedentary lifestyle."

Casillas said that people should not forget about other risk factors for cancer that have been shown in older adults, noting the following:

"While children might not be drinking alcohol, teens are exposing themselves to alcohol," she explained.

"It's really important to

focus that in terms of our cancer prevention and control efforts about the risks associated with alcohol, tobacco use, obesity, as well as just the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle so we're not sedentary."

Should young people be worried about colon cancer?

Bilchik said while he found the study provocative, we must be somewhat cautious when interpreting the findings. "They use percentages, which are very high, to suggest that there is a 400% or 500% increase in very young people being diagnosed with colon cancer," he continued. "But if you translate that to absolute numbers, we're talking about the difference between 1 or 2 out of a million versus 6 out of a million," Bilchik explained.

"So I think when we talk about these absolute numbers versus the percentages, the percentages sound very alarming, but the actual numbers suggest that it still is not very common among really young people," Bilchik added.

Casillas said this study is important to what will help future studies as we do not want to continue to see this incident pattern continue to increase.

"It's an important foundational study so we can see what we have to do for defining (the) next steps for hopefully early diagnosis or mitigating any risk for developing (colorectal cancer)," Casillas added.

"I think it's going to be important for the research community (to continue) to explore these different factors to try to understand the why," (Courtesy: *Medical News Today*)

Euthanasia for mental disorders: In a warming world, will eco-anxiety lead to more such appeals?



By: Preetha Banerjee

As organisms genetically wired to strive to survive, the concept of wishing for death despite being physically healthy can be confounding, even for the most pro-choice individuals, although the euthanasia debate has been around since the 1870s.

Next month, 28-year-old Dutch woman Zoraya ter Beek will be administered a sedative by a doctor at her home. Moments later, she will be given a medication to stop her heart from functioning. Although the process is entirely legal, the news naturally created a stir.

Her boyfriend, who she lives with along with their two cats, will bury her ashes in a spot she chose inside a forest near their home, the media reported.

Ter Beek is physically healthy, according to doctors. She has lived with autism her entire life and has been suffering from debilitating depression and borderline personality disorder. When doctors confirmed that there is no further line of treatment that can ease her suffering, she applied for euthanasia on grounds of crippling mental ailments.

Despite the decades-long moral battle on the topic, applications for euthanasia / assisted dying have been on the rise in the countries that have legal provisions for it — in 2022, euthanasia cases in the Netherlands (total over 8,500) grew by 1,000 since the previous year. In Canada, cases jumped 31.2 per cent to 13,241, compared to 2021.

Also, more countries are considering policies that respect people's will to end their lives, albeit with strict conditions and medical review. After Netherlands and Belgium legalised voluntary euthanasia / assisted dying in 2002, as many as five countries followed suit and some others are negotiating the bill in the parliament.

The role of climate change cannot be ruled out in this trend of more people seeking medical assistance to end their lives. In 2017, a 68-year-old Howard Breen in Canada appealed for 'Medical Aid in Dying' citing unbearable mental suffering stemming from concerns over climate change and its impact on the planet and future generations. Though his request was declined as one of the assessing doctors did not consider 'eco-anxiety' an eligible condition, his case brought the mental agony wrought by climate change into the main discourse.

Apart from his case, establishing a direct link of euthanasia appeals and climate change has been difficult. But a closer look at the main reasons cited by people applying for euthanasia / assisted dying shows how many of them are proven to be influenced by environmental reasons.

Most patients seeking euthanasia suffer from terminal cancers, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, multiple sclerosis and severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and some report mental health disorders.

All of these health conditions have been observed to have been worsened by exposure to pollution, fluctuations in temperatures and humidity, extreme weather events triggered by climate change, among other environmental factors.

But, like the latest case, most euthanasia seekers reported that it is the psychological suffering, rather than physical pain of their disease, that motivated them, according to a report.

There have been instances in Belgium and the Netherlands, where individuals suffering from severe, untreatable depression and anxiety have applied for euthanasia / assisted dying and have been allowed. These cases often involve patients who have undergone extensive treatment for their psychiatric conditions without relief, leading to a determination that their suffering is unbearable and without prospect of improvement, a scientific study established.

A study in the Netherlands examined 1,122 patients with psychiatric disorders who requested euthanasia or assisted suicide between 2012 and 2018. It found that requests were often made by patients with depressive disorders.

Across the world, a link has been established between climate change and higher suicide rates. A 2018

Stanford study showed that by 2050, climate change could lead to 21,000 additional suicides in the United States and Mexico if current warming trends continue.

Air pollution and ambient temperature are potential environmental factors affecting suicide, according to a 2021 study published in the *International Journal for Environmental Research and Public Health*. The report noted:

Exposure to traffic-related air pollution may cause defects in neural maintenance / regeneration and structural abnormalities in the brain through decreases in brain-derived neurotrophic factors. Particulate matter and ozone (O3) were reported to activate hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal stress response axis and overactivation or dysfunction of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis can lead to depressive behaviors. High air pollution levels are associated with inflammatory effects on the brain involved in the pathogenesis of neurotoxicity. Diesel exhaust particles and O3 may decrease serotonin levels leading to aggressive and depressive behaviors.

High temperature might be associated with higher levels of aggression, which is associated with elevated suicidal behaviors, it added. "The experience of sudden warmth in the daytime after cold nights can trigger temperature-related overreaction in brown adipose tissue, intensify anxiety, leading to suicidal behaviors."

Climate change and air pollution feed into each other. Thus, incidence of all mental health conditions like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression and personality disorder that are significantly more likely to occur in people exposed to toxic air, is further heightened because of climate change.

Moreover, eco-anxiety is a serious threat and is being scientifically studied worldwide. Large-scale studies showed at least half the respondents, mostly young people, were severely worried about climate change.

The American Psychological Association described eco-anxiety as 'a chronic fear of environmental doom', ranging from mild stress to clinical disorders like depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide, and maladaptive coping strategies such as intimate partner violence and substance misuse.

Studies have also established that climate anxiety and trauma may even have intergenerational effects, especially where environmental damage involves loss of a way of life or culture. The rising figures of climate migration adds to this concern.

Emotions such as fear, anger, powerlessness and exhaustion can shore up with gradual, long-term changes in climate, noted a 2019 study by the American Psychological Association. It mentioned cases "in which fear of extreme weather approaches the level of phobia and the 'unrelenting day-by-day despair' that can be experienced during a drought".

The report also cited research that showed some people are "deeply affected by feelings of loss, helplessness, and frustration due to their inability to feel like they are making a difference in stopping climate change".

The scientists also described a psychological phenomenon called 'solastalgia' — the stinging feeling of loss people experience when their home environment is irrevocably altered. The authors compared it to the sense of desolation experienced by people forced to migrate out of their home. "Solastalgia may have a more gradual beginning due to the slow onset of changes in one's local environment."

They referred to a 2013 paper that recorded the emotional experience among residents of Ghana who were forced to move from the northern region of the country to the capital, Accra, because local conditions no longer supported their farming practices. The "respondents expressed nostalgia and sadness for the home left behind and helplessness due to changes in their environments, such as deforestation, that were described as sad and scary", the authors noted. (Courtesy: *Down To Earth*)

Understanding Electrophysiology and Arrhythmia: Causes, symptoms, types, and treatment

By: Dr T.S. Kler

Electrophysiology is a branch of cardiology that focuses on the electrical activity of the heart and its relationship with heart rhythm disorders, known as arrhythmias. Arrhythmias are abnormalities in the rhythm of the heart, which can manifest as irregular heartbeats or abnormal heart rates. These disturbances can range from harmless to life-threatening, and they affect millions of people worldwide.

What is Arrhythmia?

Arrhythmia refers to any irregularity in the heartbeat. Normally, the heart contracts and relaxes in a steady rhythm, pumping blood throughout the body. However, in individuals with arrhythmias, this rhythm is disrupted. Arrhythmias can occur when the electrical impulses that coordinate heartbeats are delayed, blocked, or travel along abnormal pathways. This disruption can lead to the heart beating too fast (tachycardia), too slow (bradycardia), or irregularly.

Symptoms of Arrhythmia:

Symptoms of arrhythmia can vary depending on the type and severity of the condition. Common symptoms include:

1. Palpitations (a feeling of flutter-

- ing or pounding in the chest)
2. Dizziness or lightheadedness
3. Fainting or near-fainting spells (syncope)
4. Shortness of breath
5. Chest pain or discomfort
6. Fatigue
7. Weakness

Types of Arrhythmias:

There are several types of arrhythmias, including:

- **Atrial Fibrillation (AFib):** The most common type, characterized by rapid and irregular beating of the upper chambers of the heart (atria).
 - **Bradycardia:** When the heart beats too slowly, usually defined as a resting heart rate below 60 beats per minute.
 - **Tachycardia:** When the heart beats too quickly, often defined as a resting heart rate above 100 beats per minute.
 - **Supraventricular Tachycardia (SVT):** Episodes of rapid heart rate originating above the ventricles.
 - **Ventricular Tachycardia (VT):** Rapid heart rate originating in the lower chambers of the heart (ventricles), which can be life-threatening.
- Treatment of Arrhythmia:**
Treatment for arrhythmias aims to restore normal heart rhythm, control symptoms, and prevent complications. Options include:

- **Medications:** Antiarrhythmic drugs to regulate heart rhythm and rate.
 - **Cardioversion:** Electrical shock to restore normal heart rhythm.
 - **Catheter Ablation:** A procedure to destroy small areas of heart tissue that are causing the arrhythmia.
 - **Implantable Devices:** Pacemakers to regulate heart rate or implantable cardioverter-defibrillators (ICDs) to monitor and correct abnormal heart rhythms.
 - **Lifestyle Changes:** Quitting smoking, reducing alcohol and caffeine intake, managing stress, and maintaining a healthy diet and weight can help control arrhythmias.
- Age Groups Affected:**
Arrhythmias can affect individuals of all ages, from infants to the elderly. However, the risk of developing arrhythmias increases with age, as structural changes and other heart conditions become more common. Certain types of arrhythmias, such as atrial fibrillation, are more prevalent in older adults.
- Other Points to Consider:**
1. **Risk Factors:** Factors that increase the risk of developing arrhythmias include high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, heart failure, diabetes, obesity, excessive alcohol or caffeine consumption,

smoking, and certain medications or recreational drugs.

2. **Complications:** Untreated arrhythmias can lead to serious complications, including stroke, heart failure, and sudden cardiac arrest.

3. **Diagnosis:** Arrhythmias are diagnosed through a combination of medical history, physical examination, and diagnostic tests such as electrocardiogram (ECG), Holter monitor, event recorder, echocardiogram, and electrophysiology studies.

4. **Prevention:** Adopting a heart-healthy lifestyle, managing underlying medical conditions, and following treatment recommendations can help prevent or minimize the occurrence of arrhythmias.

In conclusion, electrophysiology plays a crucial role in understanding and managing arrhythmias, which are common heart rhythm disorders with various causes, symptoms, types, and treatment options. Early detection, accurate diagnosis, and appropriate management are essential for improving outcomes and quality of life for individuals with arrhythmias. (The author is a Padma Bhushan Awardee, a Chairman & HOD - BLK-Max Heart & Vascular Institute, Chairman Pan Max - Electrophysiology, BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital, Delhi)

Mid-life running works wonders for the knees, hips and spine

By: Alister Hart

As someone who started marathon running in mid-life, I know how many aches and pains (and doubts) you can have if you take on the challenge to start running at an older age. But as an orthopaedic surgeon who has replaced thousands of worn-out hips and knees throughout my career, I also know just how much exercise actually helps the joints.

Hobbling around my orthopaedic hospital after my first marathon actually led me to do research on runners.

After conducting 1,000 MRI scans of the joints of mid-life exercisers (both runners and cyclists) and "couch potatoes", I now better understand just how beneficial mid-life running is for the knees, hips and spine.

The findings were very surprising to me, particularly in the knee study. The high-resolution MRI scans found most of the 115 middle-aged participants had abnormalities in their knees before starting marathon training. Half of these abnormalities would typically have required keyhole surgery in the past.

But none of the knee abnormalities stopped them from finishing the marathon. And, in the MRI scans conducted after the marathon, they had no signs of deterioration in their joints. This totally changes how we can advise would-be runners who are found to have an abnormality on MRI scan of their knee.

Amazingly, we also found that the bones of some runners improved after the marathon. In 10 volunteers who had changes in their bone marrow that would normally have signalled pre-arthritis (which occurs before even other early signs of arthritis do), these signs vanished on the MRI after the marathon.

A commonly held belief is that exercise damages joints and may lead to osteoarthritis (some-

times referred to as "wear-and-tear arthritis") later in life. But while osteoarthritis is more common after middle age, it may actually be a lack of activity that leads to osteoarthritis. The more a joint is used, the stronger it makes the bone and muscle around it.

Studies on inactivity have shown that for bones to remain healthy, our skeleton needs to be stimulated by mechanical load (physical stress) — such as the impact of walking or running. Both bed rest or zero gravity in outer space result in reduced quality and strength of bone (osteopenia and the more severe osteoporosis).

This is because our bones are alive, with cells constantly building and removing bone. Mechanical force is necessary to stimulate the cells that build bone and inhibit the cells that take away bone.

Running provides a very good stimulus for the bone building cells. Having healthy bone underneath the joint surface is particularly important for avoiding osteoarthritis.

Inactivity also causes muscle wasting (sarcopenia), which affects how the joints move. Reduced muscle use, whether it is through inactivity or sarcopenia or both, also reduces the production of anti-inflammatory myokines from the muscles.

These chemicals are released when we exercise, and help reduce joint swelling and calm irritated joint linings. This effect is pronounced in runners because running uses some of the largest muscles in the body — such as the glutes, quadriceps and hamstrings.

Another benefit of exercise is it improves the way our cartilage surfaces move over each other. This keeps the joint stable when we move and ensures any pressure is placed evenly on the joint's surface.

Strength and conditioning exercises (such as using resistance bands or doing reformer pilates) can improve muscle function and therefore carti-

lage function even further — especially for the cartilage in our main limb joints.

Where to begin

In general, the best way to support our joints involves a combination of different exercises, including muscle resistance (such as strength training), bone impact (such as running) and stable joint movement (such as cycling).

If you want to start running, the main message is to ease into it to reduce the risk of injury. This should help reduce your risk of injury.

One of the best ways to ease into running in mid-life is the NHS Couch to 5K running programme. It's a free guide that will help you gradually work up towards running 5km in just nine weeks. It's also designed for everyone — including absolute beginners.

The plan involves three runs a week, with a day of rest in between, and a different schedule for each of the nine weeks. It also uses a mix of running and walking to build your fitness and stamina. This helps avoid overdoing it and giving up.

Of course, there are some instances where running may damage our joints. These are usually because of past injury — such as when there's a broken bone extending into the joint, causing uneven cartilage surface.

Another example is when a ligament has ruptured, and the joint becomes unstable. An unstable joint will move abnormally and may damage the cartilage. An unstable joint may also be caused by abnormal muscles around the joint.

If you've experienced any of these problems, you'll want to be careful when exercising to avoid further damage. It's best to speak with your doctor to come up with an exercise plan that works for you.

Running is a great way to keep bones and muscles healthy, helping prevent damage and even osteoarthritis. Just make sure to take it slow at first. (Courtesy: *Scroll.in*)

A new law will take effect in September banning the sale of machetes

Rise in UK knife attacks leads to a crackdown and stokes public anxiety

LONDON, May 12: A familiar horror reached Pooja Kanda first on social media: There had been a sword attack in London. And then Kanda, who was home alone at the time, saw a detail she dreaded and knew all too well.

A man with a sword had killed a 14-year-old boy who was walking to school. Two years ago, her 16-year-old son, Ronan, was killed by two sword-wielding schoolmates while walking to a neighbour's to borrow a PlayStation controller.

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

"Knife-enabled" crime — in which knives were used to commit crimes or someone was caught illegally possessing one — rose 7

per cent in England and Wales last year," the government said last month, noting some localities were not included.

In London, such crimes jumped 20 per cent. The other two UK countries, Scotland and Northern Ireland, keep their own statistics.

With knives so readily available, there's only so much that can be done. Of the 244 fatal stabbings in England and Wales in the 12 months ending with March 2023 — the most recent figures available — 101 were committed with kitchen knives, far surpassing any other type of blade, according to the Office of National Statistics.

But the uptick in knife crime and a steady drumbeat of shocking attacks, including those that killed Ronan Kanda, Daniel Anjorin and three people in Nottingham last year, has pushed the issue to the forefront.

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

In last week's local elections, candidates debated policies such as stop-and-search.

Even movie star Idris Elba has weighed in. "I can pick up a phone right now, type in knives and I'll get inundated with adverts for them," the London-born star of



"The Wire" and "Luther" said during a protest in January.

Guns are heavily restricted in the UK and there's not much debate about it. That's partly because the 1996 massacre of 16 elementary students in Dunblane, Scotland, led to a ban on owning handguns. Firearms used for hunting are tightly regulated.

Restricting knives is trickier, but the government is trying. It's already illegal to sell a knife to someone younger than 18 or to carry one in public without a good reason, such as for work or religious purposes.

And certain types of blades are already illegal, including switchblades and so-called zombie knives, which come in various sizes, have cutting and serrated edges, and feature text or images suggesting they should be used to

commit violence, according to the 2016 law banning them.

A new law will take effect in September banning the sale of machetes and closing a loophole that companies have exploited to get around the zombie knife ban. It remains to be seen whether the new law will have much effect, though, as machetes accounted for only 14 of the 244 stabbing deaths in the 12 months that ended in March 2023 and zombie-style knives accounted for seven.

"Knives are harder than guns to regulate and there are already large numbers out there even if they were banned," said Tony Travers, a professor of government at the London School of Economics.

History and statistics point to an enduring problem in a country where memories are still fresh of the 2017 vehicle-and-knife attack

in London that killed eight people and injured almost 50. Three extremists inspired by the Islamic State group drove into pedestrians on London Bridge and then stabbed people in nearby Borough Market.

Homicides committed with sharp instruments, including knives, machetes and swords, have exceeded 200 since the 12 months that ended with March 2016, when 210 people were killed that way, according to the Office of National Statistics.

They reached a record high of 282 two years later and have held roughly steady ever since, dipping slightly during the pandemic lockdown.

Whereas guns are used in about 80 per cent of American homicides, according to US government figures, blades are used in most London killings. But brazen and seemingly random attacks like the one this month in east London are unusual.

"Sporadic acts of violence are a bit like shark attacks. They're actually very, very rare, but they get lots of traction," said Iain Overton, executive director of Action on Armed Violence, a London-based charity. "I don't think randomized public homicides are particularly commonplace in the UK."

The frequency of slashing attacks has amplified a sense of dread and distrust in cities, where most happen. (AP)

One police officer killed, over 100 injured in clashes during protest in Pok



ISLAMABAD, May 12: 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 Pakistan-occupied 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 horsepower generation cost in the region, subsidised wheat flour and an end to the privileges of the elite class. The regional government has called in the Rangers and a heavy contingent of policemen to stop the massive protests.

Mobile phone and internet services were suspended in different parts of the PoK on Sunday including Bimber and Bagh Towns, Geo News reported. In Mirpur, all the mobile networks and internet service have been suspended, it added.

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.

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 serious clashes in Dadyal on 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 PoK. On Saturday, authorities placed mounds of earth on arteries leading to Muzaffarabad, apart from making more arrests, to prevent people from heading towards the state capital. 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 Bariyuan.

A press release from the District Headquarters Hospital Kotli said apart from the 59 wounded policemen, nine injured protesters were also brought for treatment. SSP Abid said some police officials were also reportedly injured in Doliya Jattan.

A total of 29 protesters were injured in the clashes, according to Geo News. JAAC spokesperson Hafeez Hamdani said that the action committee had nothing to do with violence. "It seems that such elements have been purposely planted in the ranks of protesters to bring a bad name to a struggle that aims nothing but the legitimate rights of the people," he said.

Addressing a press conference on Saturday, Finance Minister of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir Abdul Majid Khan said that the government had exercised maximum restraint and is ready for talks to peacefully address all contentious issues. (PTI)

Nepal's mountaineer Kami Rita Sherpa climbs Mt Everest for 29th time, beats own record

KATHMANDU, May 12: Nepal's legendary mountaineer Kami Rita Sherpa made history on Sunday by breaking his record for the highest number of ascents of Mt. Everest as he scaled the world's highest peak for the 29th time.

The 54-year-old veteran climber reached the 8,849-metre peak at 7:25 am local time on Sunday, according to Rakesh Gurung, director at the Tourism Department in the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation.

The expedition was organised by the Seven Summit Treks and had 20 climbers. They scaled Everest on Sunday morning, said Thani Guragain, a senior staff at the Seven Summit Treks.

"At least 20 climbers from Seven Summit Treks including Kami made a successful ascent of Mt. Everest Sunday morning," Seven Summit Treks said, issuing a statement.

The climbing members were from countries including the USA, Canada and Kazakhstan besides thirteen climbers from Nepal.

Kami had climbed Everest for the first time in 1994.

Last year, he made two successful attempts to scale Everest for the 27th and 28th times in the same season.

This way, he became the person who climbed



Everest for the highest number of times.

Last year, Pasand Dawa Sherpa of Solukhumbu completed his 27th summit of Everest, but he remains uncertain about attempting the climb this season, according to Republica newspaper.

Kami, a senior mountain guide at Seven Summit Treks, was born on January 17, 1970.

Kami's mountaineering journey began in 1992 when he joined an expedition to Everest as a supporting staff.

Since then, Kami has fearlessly embarked on

several expeditions. Besides the Everest, he has also conquered Mt. K2, Cho Oyu, Lhotse, and Manaslu.

Meanwhile, a renowned British climber scaled the world's highest mountain for the 18th time breaking his own record for the most Mt Everest summits by any foreign climber.

According to base camp officials, Kenton Cool from Gloucestershire, South West England, also broke his own British record for the most summits of the world's highest peak, The Himalayan Times reported.

On Friday, ten mountain guides from Nepal successfully scaled the world's highest peak after they fixed the ropes in the mountain clearing the route for other climbers.

As the rope fixing job has been completed, Mt. Everest is now open for mountaineers from both Nepal and foreign countries to climb, said Chun Bahadur Tamang, an official at the Mountaineering Section of the Department of Tourism, issuing a notice Friday night.

The rope-fixing work started Friday morning and concluded at night.

Altogether 414 climbers from 41 expeditions have acquired permission to scale Everest in this season. (PTI)

Thousands of civilians evacuated from northeast Ukraine as Russia presses renewed border assault

KYIV, May 12: 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 Sunday.

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

Meanwhile, a 10-story apartment block collapsed in the Russian city of Belgorod, near the border, with several deaths and injuries reported. Russian authorities said the building collapsed follow-

ing Ukrainian shelling. Ukraine did not comment on the incident.

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, he said.

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 as-

saults to exhaust their troops and firepower.

It comes after Russia stepped up attacks in March targeting energy infrastructure and settlements, which analysts predicted were a concerted effort by Moscow to shape conditions for an offensive.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that disrupting Russia's offensive in the area 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. (AP)

As Israel pushes deeper into Rafah, Hamas regroups elsewhere in ungoverned Gaza

RAFAH, May 12: Israeli forces were battling Palestinian militants across the Gaza Strip on Sunday, including in parts of the devastated north that the military said it had cleared months ago, where Hamas has exploited a security vacuum to regroup.

Israel has portrayed the southern Gaza city of Rafah as Hamas' last stronghold, saying it must invade in order to succeed in its goals of dismantling the group and returning scores of hostages.

A limited operation there has expanded in recent days, forcing some 300,000 people to flee and drawing warnings from Egypt, where an official said it is putting the country's decades-old peace treaty with Israel at risk. But the rest of the war-ravaged territory seems to provide ample opportunities for Hamas. Israel has yet to offer a detailed plan for postwar governance in Gaza, saying only that it will maintain open-ended security control over the coastal enclave, which is home to some 2.3 million Palestinians.

Prime Minister Benjamin 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, something to which Netanyahu's government is deeply opposed.

With the two close allies divided, Gaza has been left without a functioning government, leading to a breakdown in public order and allowing Hamas to reconstitute itself in even the hardest-hit areas.

The war began when Hamas and other militants attacked southern Israel on October 7, killing around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking another 250 hostages. They still hold about 100 captives and the remains of more than 30, and internationally mediated talks over a cease-fire and hostage release appear to be at a standstill. 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 evidence.

Palestinians reported heavy Israeli bombardment overnight in the urban Jabaliya refugee camp and other areas in the northern Gaza Strip, 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 been battling Palestinian 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 Palestinian from Jabaliya. He said they could hear intense and constant bombing since midday Saturday. This is madness.

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

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the top Israeli military spokesman, said that in addition to Jabaliya and Zeitoun, forces were also operating in Beit Lahiyah and Beit Hanoun. The two towns near Gaza's northern border with Israel were heavily bombed in the opening days of the war. The military is now going into Jabaliya for the second time and into Zeitoun for the third time, and it will continue to go in and out, columnist Ben Caspit wrote in Israel's Maariv daily, channelling the growing frustration felt by many Israelis more than seven months into the war.

Hamas' regime cannot be toppled without preparing an alternative to that regime, he wrote, drawing comparisons with the American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The only people who can govern Gaza after the war are Gazans, with a lot of support and help from the outside. 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 crowded 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 in the territory. 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 warned that a planned full-scale Rafah invasion would further cripple humanitarian operations and cause a surge in civilian deaths. (AP)

With the shock of October 7 still raw, profound sadness and anger grip Israel on its Memorial Day

TEL AVIV (Israel), May 12: 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 76-year history. But Chen's torment underscores how this year it has taken on a profound and raw sadness coupled 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 the prime minister down."

Israel marks its Memorial Day for fallen soldiers and victims of attacks beginning at sundown Sunday with an official ceremony and smaller events the following day at military cemeteries across the country. The solemnity is

then abruptly interrupted by the fanfare of Independence Day, which begins Monday evening.

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

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

Odisha to go to twin polls for 4 LS seats, 28 assembly segments today

'Voting will begin at 7 AM on Monday in 7,303 polling stations across the four Lok Sabha seats and their assembly segments and will continue till 6 pm'

BHUBANESWAR, May 12: The stage is set for simultaneous elections to four Lok Sabha constituencies and 28 assembly segments in Odisha on Monday, with the EC making elaborate arrangements to ensure free and fair polling, officials said.

Voting will be held in Berhampur, Koraput, Nabarangpur and Kalahandi Lok Sabha constituencies and 28 assembly segments under the jurisdiction of these parliamentary seats, Odisha's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) N B Dhal said. There are 37 candidates for the Lok Sabha polls, while 243 nominees are in the fray for the 28 assembly seats.

The BJD, Congress and the BJP are contesting in all the constituencies, while nominees of some small and regional parties along with independent candidates are in the fray.

Voting will begin at 7 AM on Monday in 7,303 polling stations across the four Lok Sabha seats and their assembly segments and will continue till 6 pm, the CEO



said, adding that polling personnel reached their respective booths. Voting is scheduled to end at 4 PM and 5 PM in some remote places where Maoist activities are a factor, he said.

Altogether 62.87 lakh electors, including 31.89 lakh women, are eligible to exercise their franchise in the first round of the twin polls.

The number of women voters is more than 30.97 lakh men electors in the first phase of polls in the state, he said.

The four Lok Sabha seats are spread over six Maoist-affected police districts - Malkangiri, Ko-

raput, Rayagada, Nabarangpur, Nuapada and Kalahandi - and three other police districts of Ganjam, Berhampur and Gajapati, Odisha DGP Arun Kumar Sarangi said.

Arrangements for webcasting have been made in 60 per cent of the 7,303 polling stations.

Over 1,264 polling stations, including all booths in Maoist-affected areas, have been identified as critical ones, the CEO said.

The voting process will involve 53,000 polling personnel, with 715 all-women booths and 39 booths to be run by persons with disability, he said.

Sitting MP Saptagiri Ulaka of Congress from Koraput seat, former MPs Pradeep Majhi of the BJD and Balabhadra Majhi of the BJP in Nabarangpur, Pradeep Panigrahi of the BJP and BJD's Bhruhu Baxipatra in Berhampur are among prominent leaders who are contesting the Lok Sabha polls.

State ministers Jagannath Saraka, Rajendra Dholkia,

Odisha Congress chief Sarat Patnaik, and Congress leader Bhakta Charan Das are in the fray in assembly polls.

Congress MLAs Taraprasad Bahinipati and Adhiraj Panigrahi, former chief secretary Bijay Patnaik, ex-minister DS Mishra, former leader of opposition Pradipta Naik, former MLA Ramesh Chandra Chayupattanaik are trying their luck in the assembly elections.

Odisha has witnessed Prime Minister Narendra Modi, union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, BJP president JP Nadda, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Dev Sai campaigning for BJP candidates in the first round of twin polls.

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and senior leader VK Pandian have also campaigned for the BJD. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has addressed a rally at Rayagada under the Koraput Lok Sabha seat through virtual mode. (PTI)

EASTERN LADAKH BORDER ROW

Hope there is resolution of remaining issues: EAM Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, May 12: As the eastern Ladakh military standoff entered its fifth year, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said India hopes for a resolution of the remaining issues with China and asserted that a return to normal bilateral ties hinges on peace and tranquility at the border.

In an exclusive interview to PTI, Jaishankar said the remaining issues mainly pertained to "patrolling rights and patrolling abilities".

Specifically asked when a resolution to the dragging row can be expected in the backdrop of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks to Newsweek magazine last month, Jaishankar said that he only provided a "big-picture" viewpoint on the matter.

"We would hope that there is a resolution of the remaining issues out there. These issues mainly pertain to patrolling rights and patrolling abilities there," he said.

"I would not link it to the prime minister's interview per se. I think the prime minister was giving a big-picture viewpoint and his big-picture viewpoint was a very reasonable viewpoint which is -- after all as neighbours, every country wants good relations with its neighbours," he said.

"But today, our relations with China are not normal because the peace and tranquility in the border areas has been disturbed. So he (PM) was expressing the hope that the Chinese side should realise that the present situation is not in its own interest," Jaishankar said.

Modi had said that the border situation needs to be addressed urgently and that stable and peaceful ties between India and China are important for not just the two countries but for the entire region and world. Jaishankar said diplomacy is a work of patience and India continues to discuss the issues with the Chinese side.

"I would say that we need to resolve those issues if the relationship is to come back to normal," he said during the interview on Thursday. The Indian and Chinese mili-

taries have been locked in the standoff since May 2020 and a full resolution of the border row has not yet been achieved though the two sides have disengaged from a number of friction points.

India has been consistently maintaining that peace and tranquility along the LAC were key for the normalisation of overall ties.

Asked why bilateral trade volume with China is going up when New Delhi has been insisting that the ties cannot be normal when the border situation is abnormal, Jaishankar suggested that such a scenario has arisen as adequate attention to the manufacturing sector was not given before 2014.

"I think it is common sense that if there is no peace and tranquility in the border, how can you have a normal relationship," he said. "After all if somebody is at your front door in an unfriendly manner, you are not going to go out there and act as though everything is normal. That to me is a straightforward proposition," Jaishankar added. The ties between the two countries nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades.

In the diplomatic and military talks with China, the Indian negotiators have been insisting on restoring the status quo ante of April 2020 along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh told PTI over a week back that the talks between the two sides are going on well and hoped for a resolution of the lingering row.

Following the Galwan Valley clashes, India has been majorly focusing on boosting its overall military capability along the frontier with China. The Army has significantly bolstered the deployment of troops and weaponry along the nearly 3,500 km-long LAC, including in the Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh sectors following the clashes. (PTI)



Cong and INDIA bloc will come to power and govern country: D K Shivakumar

BENGALURU, May 12: Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Sunday asserted that his party along with the INDIA bloc will come to power and govern the country in the days ahead, after the ongoing Lok Sabha polls.

The state Congress chief also said that he and his party are not bothered by the BJP-JD(S) alliance continuing for the biennial election to six seats (three each from graduates and teachers' constituencies) of the Karnataka Legislative Council on June 3.

"In my opinion, Congress party and the INDI Alliance will come to power. There is no chance for a BJP person to become the prime minister. This country will be governed under the leadership of the Congress party and the INDI Alliance hereon, we have that much confidence," Shivakumar said after a party meeting here.

He was responding to a question on AAP chief and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's comments asking the BJP as to who will be its next prime minister as Narendra Modi will have to retire next year as he attains 75 years of age.

Meeting of party leaders and office bearers were held today regarding Legislative Council polls to elect members from graduates and teachers constituencies. Directions have been given to everyone to actively participate in this election without leaving it on the candidates, and responsibilities have been fixed, Shivakumar said.

Instructions have been given to hold the MLC polls too unitedly, like it was done in the case of Assembly and Parliament polls, he said.

Asked about the JD(S) and BJP alliance continuing in the MLC polls too, the KPCC chief said, "Let them be together permanently, we don't have any objections. Let them do anything, we are not bothered."

The party today announced former MLC Marithibbe Gowda, who quit JD(S) recently, as the party's candidate from the South Teachers' Constituency.

The Congress had already announced candidates to other five segments: Ramoji Gowda (Bengaluru Graduates), Chandrashekara B Patil (North East Graduates), Ayanur Manjunath (South-West Graduates), K K Manjunath (South West Teachers), and D T Srinivas (South East Teachers). (PTI)

Odisha ahead of Gujarat in various parameters: Pandian

BHUBANESWAR, May 12: BJD leader V K Pandian on Sunday claimed that Odisha is "much ahead" of Gujarat in various parameters, in a rebuttal to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's promise that the BJP would make the eastern state "number one" in the country if voted to power after the assembly polls.

Pandian, a bureaucrat-turned-politician, shared statistics, comparing various indices of Gujarat and Odisha, with a comment, "Look who wants to make Odisha number one."

"It is ironic that even after two-and-half decades of BJP rule in Gujarat, the situation as compared to Odisha is quite dismal. In terms of malnutrition (children under 5 years who are underweight), the rate is 30 per cent in Odisha whereas it is 40 per cent in Gujarat," he said in a statement.

Quoting NHFS-5 (National Health Family Survey) data, Pandian said the prevalence of anaemia among women was 65 per cent in Odisha, while it was 69 per cent in Gujarat, whereas 64 per cent of children in Odisha were anaemic, but the percentage was 80 in Gujarat.

The BJD leader said Odisha fared much better than Gujarat in terms of immunisation, with 90 per cent of children having

Bihar: Five Lok Sabha seats to go to polls in fourth phase, two Union ministers in fray

PATNA, May 12: Five Lok Sabha seats in Bihar 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, Ujiyarpur, 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 years ago.

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 is 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 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 Anita, 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 a criminal case has disqualified him from contesting polls.

BJP, PM Modi not giving free ration from their pockets, says Mayawati in Haryana

CHANDIGARH, May 12: Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Sunday said the Centre was not giving free ration to the underprivileged from its pocket and asked poor people not to feel obliged to vote for the BJP because of this.

She said for the past some time, the BJP-led Centre has been providing small amounts of ration to the poor families.

"During elections, BJP and RSS people visit every village and tell those poor people who are getting this free ration that BJP and the Narendra Modi government is providing them free ration," she said addressing an election rally in Haryana's Karnal.

"They ask them to repay the debt by giving their votes to the BJP," Mayawati alleged.

She stressed that the poor people should not get misguided by this "as the free ration being provided is not coming from the pockets of Prime Minister Narendra Modi or BJP, but from the taxpayers' money".

"I want to tell those poor people who are getting free ration, that BJP or Modi is not giving it out from their pockets, but from the taxpayers' money you are getting free ration," Mayawati said while addressing the rally in support of her party's LS polls nominees from the state.

BSP leader Inder Singh is contesting from Karnal LS seat.

She also stressed that the problems of the poor people will end only by providing them employment, and said that if given a chance her party's government will pay attention to it.

In November last year, the Centre extended the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana scheme to provide 5 kg of free food grains per month to 81.35 crore poor for another five years.

Attacking her political opponents, the BSP president alleged that like the Congress, the BJP too has politicised the central probec agencies.

Calling the voters to stop supporting the Congress, BJP and their allies, she said that these parties will try every means to come to power.

She alleged that opponents are using media, opinion polls and surveys for it and said the same is the case of election manifesto with hollow promises which are mostly not implemented fully by these parties after polls.

"BJP has become a party of the wealthy but has done nothing for the poor, Dalits and backward classes," Mayawati said.

"BJP has given hollow guarantees and it would be difficult for it to retain power at the Centre if the elections are held in a free and fair manner..." she added.

The BSP supremo also claimed that in the country, quota in government jobs for Dalits, tribals and other backward classes has not been filled and that quota in promotions for SCs and STs has almost been made ineffective.

Mayawati, a four-time former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, claimed that the majority of work is being "handed over to the private sector", and given there is no provision of reservation in the private sector, very little benefit of quotas is reaching these sections in the country.

Seeking support for her party in the elections, she said if BSP gets a chance to form its government at the centre, "unlike the governments of rival parties, we will not do hollow work or push papers but solid work on the ground like what was done when BSP was in power in Uttar Pradesh. (PTI)

Sandeshkhali: TMC files complaint with EC against NCW chief, BJP leaders

NEW DELHI, May 12: The TMC on Sunday filed a complaint with the Election Commission against National Commission for Women Chairperson Rekha Sharma and BJP leaders including Piyali Das, alleging that they committed "criminal conspiracy by exploiting" innocent women of West Bengal's Sandeshkhali for political gains. In a letter to the EC, the TMC said they are filing a complaint against Sharma and Das for "commission of serious offences of forgery, cheating, fraud, criminal intimidation and criminal conspiracy upon innocent women of Sandeshkhali and the entire electorate in general".

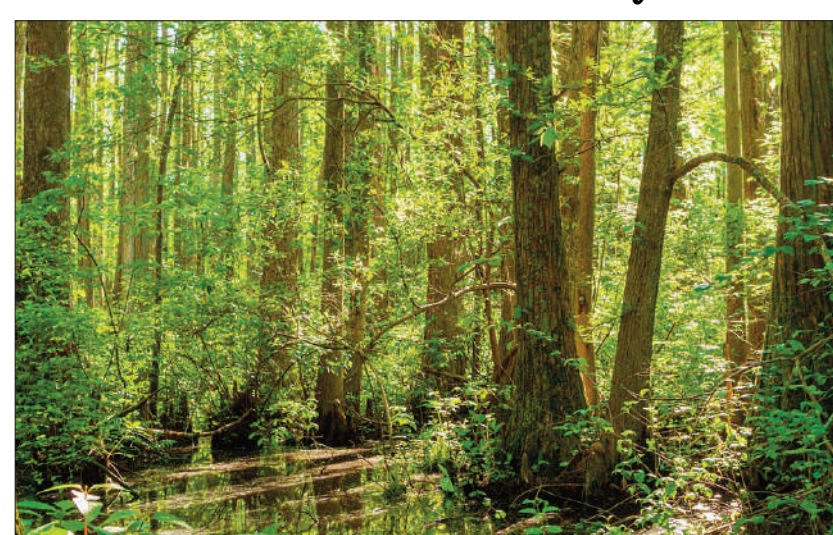
"This is to draw your urgent attention to a deeply distressing turn of events, wherein, BJP leaders along with member(s) of the NCW have criminally conspired against the entire electorate and hence, warrants your immediate intervention," the TMC said.

The complaint referred to an interview of a woman from Sandeshkhali which was shared on 'X' 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.

The TMC said during the interview, a woman from Sandeshkhali alleged she was coerced through threats of violence by Sharma and Das, to sign a blank paper without knowing its purpose.

Forest conservation, management in country saw advancement over last 15 years: India informs UNFF



NEW DELHI, May 12: India informed the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) that it has made significant advancements in forest conservation and management, leading to a consistent increase in forest cover over the past 15 years.

The country participated in the 19th Session of the UNFF held at the UN headquarters in New York from May 6 to 10.

Globally, India ranks third in the net gain in average annual forest area between 2010 and 2020.

During the session, 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 environment ministry said in a statement.

India also highlighted the creation of

the International Big Cat Alliance, a global initiative aimed at protecting and conserving the seven big cat species worldwide through collaborative efforts.

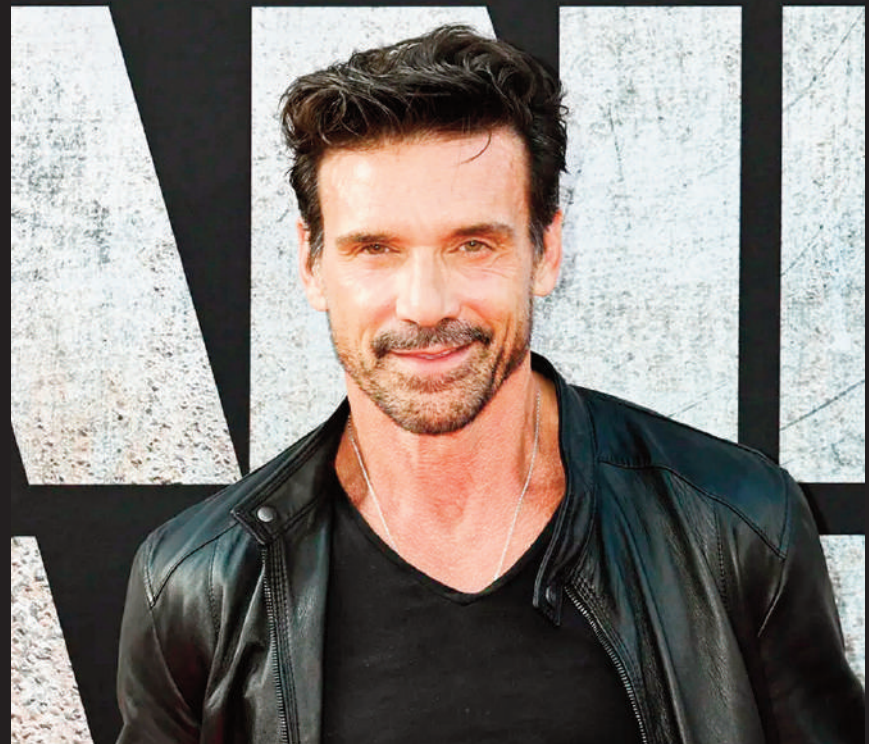
The country also informed the UNFF about the introduction of the 'Green Credit Program', a market-based mechanism rewarding voluntary environmental actions by individuals, communities, and the private sector.

Previously, in October 2023, India hosted the Country Led Initiative under UNFF in Dehradun, attended by representatives from 40 countries and 20 international organisations, focusing on forest fire management and forest certification. The recommendations from this initiative were presented during UNFF 19.

The ministry also organised a side event on 'Principles and Strategies for Landscape Integrated Fire Management through Collaborative Governance', in partnership with the Agency for Integrated Rural Fire Management, Portugal, Korea Forest Service, and International Tropical Timber Organization at UNFF 19.

UNFF 19 culminated in a declaration to take urgent and accelerated actions to halt deforestation and forest degradation and to prevent land degradation, including the implementation of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests and the achievement of the Global Forest Goals. (PTI)

Frank Grillo To Portray Rick Flag Sr In 'Peacemaker 2'



LOS ANGELES, May 12: Actor Frank Grillo has joined the upcoming season two of the DC series "Peacemaker", creator James Gunn has announced. In the HBO Max show, Grillo will portray the role of Rick Flag Sr, the father of Suicide Squad member Rick Flag Jr. (Joel Kinnaman). He will also voice the character in the animated series "Creature Commandos".

Gunn confirmed the news in a post on Threads on Friday.

"Pleased to announce the great Frank Grillo will be reprising the role of Rick Flag, Sr — the role he'll first play in animated form in 'Creature Commandos' — throughout season 2 of 'Peacemaker'. Christopher Smith and Rick Sr have a little unfinished business to take care of," the filmmaker captioned a series of pictures.

"Peacemaker" is a spin-off to Gunn's 2021 movie "The Suicide Squad", in which John Cena played the title role. The series is fronted by Cena, who will reprise his role of the jingoistic mercenary Christopher Smith aka Peacemaker.

The production for the upcoming season of "Peacemaker" began last month, with Gunn directing some of the episodes alongside other three directors.

The first season released in 2022 and also starred Jennifer Holland, Alison Araya, Danielle Brooks and Lochlyn Munro. (PTI)

Never imagined life would flower into this phase: Manisha Koirala on cancer recovery, turning 50



MUMBAI, May 12: Actor Manisha Koirala says she was still recovering from cancer when she was about to start shooting for Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar, in which she plays one of the lead characters, an opportunity seldom offered to female artistes in their 50s.

The 53-year-old actor is receiving good reviews for her role as the mercurial matriarch Mallikajaan in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's debut web series Heeramandi, currently streaming on Netflix.

In a lengthy note on Instagram, Koirala on Sunday chronicled her journey of resuming work after battling ovarian cancer, portraying an important character in the lavish period drama, and getting her due as a female actor thanks to streamers and evolving taste of the audience.

"I could never have imagined that after cancer and turning 50, my life would flower into this other phase," she wrote, as she went on to enumerate the two reasons.

Calling Heeramandi a significant milestone, Koirala said: "As a 53-year-old actor who has bagged an important role in a high-profile web series, I am overjoyed that I'm not stuck playing insignificant peripheral roles, thanks to OTT platforms and changing audience profiles."

"Finally, female actors, technicians, and other professionals have started getting the long overdue and well-deserved good quality of work and respect in a professional environment. I am fortunate to be a part of this evolving era," she added.

Secondly, she recalled feeling plagued with "doubts and anxiety" ahead of beginning shooting for the series amid recovery from cancer. She was diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2012 and was deemed 'cancer-free' in 2014.

Since her return, the actor has starred in films such as Dear Maya (2017), Sanju, Lust Stories (both 2018), and last year's Shehzada.

"Would my body be strong enough to deal with the intense shooting schedules, heavy costumes, and jewelry, and perform a role requiring so much nuance and effortless effort?" she wrote.

Koirala said a key scene in Heeramandi, which required her to be immersed in a water fountain for over 12 hours, tested her resilience.

"The fountain sequence proved the most physically challenging... Even though Sanjay had thoughtfully ensured that the water was warm and clean, over the hours, the water turned muddy, (because my team members, the cinematographer, and the art director's team were getting into the water to work around the scene.)" Every single pore of her body was soaked in muddy water, she wrote.

"Even though I was beyond exhaustion by the end of the shoot, I felt a deep happiness within my heart. My body had taken the stress and remained resilient. I knew I had passed a critical physical test," she said. (PTI)

Feel like an actor on film sets, not heroine: Madhoo

MUMBAI, May 12: Actor Madhoo says she has moved on from the age-old thought process of being a heroine on film sets and embraced her role as a collaborator in the process of filmmaking. Known for hit 1990s films such as "Roja", "Phool Aur Kaante", "Yodha" and "Gentleman", the actor recently starred in the ZEE5 series "Fireflies: Parth Aur Jugnu" and "Sweet Kaaram Coffee", a Prime Video show.

This is an amazing time to be an actor, said Madhoo, who will next be seen in psychological thriller film "Kartam Bhugtam".

"Back in the day, I was a part of a culture where it was like 'I'm the hero, I'm the heroine'. But now, it doesn't feel like that... "I have moved on from that thought process and that's something the (OTT) content has done for me. It feels like I'm an actor on the movie set... You just feel that we are all collaborative and making one story..." she told PTI.

The 55-year-old actor said, unlike the '90s, she no longer cares about being typecast in a certain role as she believes it's difficult to be stereotyped in the era of content boom.

"I used to think I would be typecast. But now I don't care because there is so much content. So, how many times will you cast me as a mother or grandmother of one type? Back in the day, when actors played the role of a mother, it used to be a (big deal) thing. (PTI)



Vicky wraps shooting of 'Chhava', calls working on film a 'dramatic journey'

MUMBAI, May 12: Actor Vicky Kaushal announced the wrap of the shoot on his upcoming film "Chhava", directed by Laxman Utekar of "Mimi" fame.

"Chhava" is reportedly a periodic drama based on the life of Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj and is produced by Dinesh Vijan of Maddock Films.

Kaushal, who headlines the film alongside Rashmika Mandanna, shared the movie update on his Instagram Stories on Saturday.

In his post, the National Award winner described working on the movie as an "incredibly passionate and dramatic journey".



"... 'Chhava' couldn't have ended without some drama. The rain Gods really put up a show today immediately after we rolled our final shot," he captioned a video of the film set as it poured.

"There's so much I wish to say, there's so little I'm able to convey about this journey right now... May be in a few days when it all sinks in. All I can say now with a heart full of gratitude, love and contentment is that. It's a wrap," he added.

"Chhava" marks the second project for Kaushal and Utekar, who previously collaborated on 2023's hit family comedy "Zara Hatke Zara Bachke". Mandanna's upcoming films include "Pushpa: The Rule" and "The Girlfriend". (PTI)

Took inspiration from Amitabh, Shatrughan Sinha for 'Bhaiyya Ji': Manoj Bajpayee

MUMBAI, May 12: Actor Manoj Bajpayee says he drew inspiration from the mega star Amitabh Bachchan as well as his contemporaries Shatrughan Sinha and Vinod Khanna to play a massy hero in his upcoming film "Bhaiyya Ji".

The revenge action film is directed by Apoorva Singh Karki, who earlier directed the actor in the critically-acclaimed movie "Sirf Ek Banda Kaafi Hai". In the movie, the actor is playing the titular role, a man out to avenge his brother's death.

"I grew up watching commercial films and all the big stars of that time, they were all my inspiration, be it Shatrughan Sinha, Vinod Khanna ji, Amit ji (Amitabh Bachchan) or Jeetendra Sahab and all of them. It happened subconsciously. I knew that I had to do certain things to make him look attractive on screen. So that

everyone would like to be a figure like Bhaiyya Ji. "He is an inspirational force. The audience should look up to him. So that is why I got all of those mannerisms in playing Bhaiyya ji," Bajpayee told PTI in an interview.

As a child, the actor said, whenever he watched a mainstream action film, he used to feel like a hero. "This is what a commercial film does to the audience. The adrenaline rush, the excitement, the energy flow. Everyone starts feeling like a hero when they come out (of a theatre). This is the purpose of a good commercial film," he said.

When it comes to labels like superstar or action star, Bajpayee said he considers himself a "desi actor". "I am definitely a desi actor... I desire our culture, villages and the story of our soil should come in the mainstream cinema. Our heroes should look like us, not from some western country. We need to

make good films with good stories and that need to be rooted in our culture," he added. Bajpayee said he has done majority of the action sequences and credited action choreographer Fefsi Vijayan for pushing him as an artiste.

"It has been a very difficult film to shoot because most of the action scenes are done by me. Fefsi Vijayan, who is such a legend from the Tamil industry, is the one who was a tough taskmaster. He wanted Manoj Bajpayee to do all the actions and he was not ready to compromise at all... I'm so happy that he pushed me hard because everything is looking so amazing on the screen."

"Bhaiyya Ji" is the 100th film of Bajpayee's career, which is filled with some of the most critically-acclaimed movies of the last two decades -- "Satya", "Shool", "Raajneeti", "Gangs of Wasseypur", "Aligarh", "Gali Guleyan", "Bhonsle", "Sonchiriya" and

"Joram". An "item song" is often considered an important ingredient of a commercial movie but Karki was against the idea of having one in "Bhaiyya Ji", the actor revealed.

"We don't have any item songs. There are many stereotypes that we are breaking. Most of the commercial films and mainstream films, women don't have much to contribute. The women of this film are as strong as Bhaiyya ji. They are not your usual heroes and heroines. And the mothers on the screen, they are very different," he added.

Reaching the 100 film milestone is nothing short of a miracle for Bajpayee, the 55-year-old actor said.

"I never counted as I don't believe in it. But somehow Apoorva found out and the producers tried to make it an occasion. 30 years and 100 films, that too in the lead roles or as second lead, it has been quite a feat for me. (PTI)



