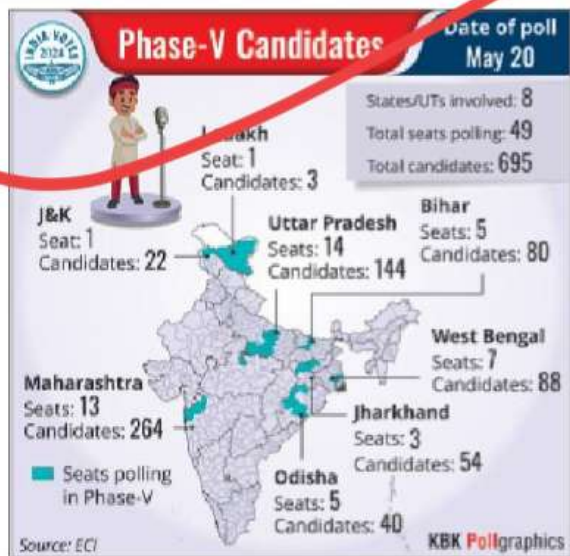


Nearly 67% voter turnout: EC



Rajiv Kumar said. A total of 379 seats across 23 States and Union Territories have voted in the first four phases of elections. A high voter turnout, Kumar felt, would be a message from Indian voters to the world about the strength of Indian democracy. He urged voters to cast their ballot in huge numbers, as voting day is not a holiday but a day of pride to participate in the festival of democracy. The poll panel also listed out outreach efforts undertaken by various private and public bodies to enhance voter participation in the elections. Banks, post offices, private entities and telecom platforms are using their public interface to encourage registered voters to turn up at the polling stations on various voting days and cast their vote.

programme. It's really heartening to see that on Commission's request, different institutions, influencers

and celebrities having significant reach are working enthusiastically on pro-bono basis," Chief Election Commissioner

COMMON THREAD IN M-E

BY JAMES M DORSEY

DIASPORA Jews, Palestinian Israelis, and Turkish Kurds have more in common than meets the eye. The similarities in how the three minority communities define themselves offer insights into what will make either a one- or two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict viable. To be sure, it's hard to see, amid the Gaza carnage and Israel's blinded and traumatised view of future relations with the Palestinians, how the two communities could live with each other or side by side.

Yet, neither has a choice. The alternative is continued violence, repression, and destruction that will only escalate. What is clear from a comparison of Diaspora Jewish, Israeli Palestinian, and Turkish Kurdish attitudes is that respect for national, religious, and communal identity coupled with equal rights and economic opportunity are prerequisites for peaceful coexistence.

The validity of that maxim is evidenced by the fact that a majority of Israeli Palestinians and Turkish Kurds would remain resident in either Israel or Turkey, even if a Palestinian or Kurdish state were to be established in Israeli-occupied territory or carved out of Iraq, despite discrimination and the limiting or repression of expressions of their national identity.

Similarly, a majority of Diaspora Jews, despite rising anti-Semitism and irrespective of whether they support or oppose Israeli policies and the Gaza war, want a Jewish state to exist but have no intention of uprooting their lives and moving to Israel.

Acknowledging the parameters of Diaspora support for Israel, Israelis have long joked

that "New York Jews will fight to the last Israeli." Opinion polls exploring identity among Palestinian Israelis and Turkish Kurds tell a similar story. A yet-to-be-published survey by Rawest, a research and polling outfit based in Turkey's majority Kurdish south-eastern province of Diyarbakir, found that only 22 per cent of the country's Kurds, who account for 20 per cent of the population, favoured breaking away from Turkey to create an independent Kurdish state.

Similarly, the survey, quoted in an email by Al-Monitor reporter Amberin Zaman, reported that only 9.7 per cent preferred exclusively Kurdish-language curricula in education as opposed to 44.1 per cent who advocated a bi-lingual Turkish and Kurdish language system. A majority identified themselves primarily as Muslims, while 67.4 per cent said their Kurdish identity was strong. Even so, only nine per cent defined themselves as Kurdish nationalists.

Counterintuitively, an Israel Democracy Institute poll in November concluded that the number of Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, who feel they are part of the State of Israel had risen dramatically since Hamas' October 7 attack and Israel's Gaza war. Palestinians account for about 20 per cent of Israel's population. In the poll, 70 per cent of Palestinian Israelis said they had a sense of solidarity with Israel, a 20-year high, compared to 48 per cent in a survey conducted six months earlier. A separate survey conducted by "The Center for a Shared Society at Givat Haviva" concluded that 55 per cent of Palestinian Israelis believed that a desire to live in peace or a feeling of shared destiny had prevented inter-communal vio-

lence from erupting since October as opposed to the violence during the 2021 Gaza war. A third survey conducted by Hebrew University researchers days after the October attack showed that 66 per cent of Palestinian Israelis supported Israel's right to defend itself. Fifty per cent said Hamas' attack that primarily targeted civilians was "contrary to the values of Islam." Like Palestinian Israelis, Jews feel less secure. Sixty-three per cent of American Jews said their place in American society had become less secure, a 22 per cent increase compared to a year earlier, according to a survey commissioned by the American Jewish Committee.

Forty-six per cent said they took precautions or avoided posting content online, wearing clothing that would identify them as Jews, or going to certain places out of concern for their safety.

Even so, 62 per cent of American Jews polled on behalf of the Jewish Federations of North America said they "sometimes find it hard to support actions taken by Israel or its Government" and 45 per cent expressed an unfavourable view of the Israeli Government.

Yet, 72 per cent noted that "in general, Israel makes me proud to be Jewish." Questioned whether "the anti-Israel climate, on campus or elsewhere, has forced me to hide my Jewish identity," 62.2 per cent said this too did not describe their experience, and 10.9 per cent said they didn't think there is an anti-Israel climate. The poll elicited similar results when it asked respondents whether "the anti-Israel climate, on campuses or elsewhere, has damaged my relationships with friends." (IPA/By arrangement with the *Arabian Post*)

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Diaspora Jews, Palestinian Israelis, and Turkish Kurds have more in common than meets the eye. The similarities in how the three minority communities define themselves offer insights into what will make either a one- or two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict viable.

IAF expected to get first LCA Mark 1A fighter aircraft by July

NEW DELHI, May 16 (ANI)

IN A significant development, the first LCA Mark 1A fighter aircraft is expected to be delivered to the Indian Air Force by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited by July this year.

The aircraft was earlier expected to be delivered to the IAF in the February-March timeframe but a short delay happened due to technical reasons. "The Indian Air Force and the public sector HAL have recently reviewed the LCA fighter project and it is now expected to be delivered to the force by July this year," defence

officials told ANI.

The HAL carried out the first flight of the fighter last month and a number of other integration trials would be completed in the next few weeks before it is delivered to the IAF, they said. The indigenous fighter aircraft induction into the force will be a major step in realising self reliance in the military sector and the Prime Minister may also be invited on the occasion, the officials said. The LCA Mark 1A project was conceptualised after Prime Minister Narendra Modi took charge. One order worth Rs 48,000 crore for 83 planes has

already been placed and another one expected to be worth Rs 65,000 crore is going to be placed for 97 planes by the end of this financial year.

The Defence Ministry has already issued a tender to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), for the purchase of 97 made-in-India LCA Mark 1A fighter jets. This tender is the largest order for indigenous military hardware ever to be placed by the Indian Government. Recently issued by the Defence Ministry to HAL, the company has been given a three-month timeframe to respond.

Aid to flow into Gaza soon as Israel-Hamas war rages on

WASHINGTON, May 16 (AP)

THE US military finished installing a floating pier for the Gaza Strip on Thursday, with officials poised to begin ferrying badly needed humanitarian aid into the enclave besieged over seven months of intense fighting in the Israel-Hamas war.

The final, overnight construction sets up a complicated delivery process more than two months after US President Joe Biden ordered it to help Palestinians facing starvation as food and other supplies fail to make it in as Israel recently seized the key Rafah border

crossing in its push on that southern city on the Egyptian border. Fraught with logistical, weather and security challenges, the maritime route is designed to bolster the amount of aid getting into the Gaza Strip, but it is not considered a substitute for far cheaper land-based deliveries that aid agencies say are much more sustainable. The boatloads of aid will be deposited at a port facility built by the Israelis just southwest of Gaza City and then distributed by aid groups.

US troops will not set foot in Gaza, American officials insist, though they acknowledge the danger of operating near the

war zone. Heavy fighting between Israeli troops and Palestinian militants on the outskirts of Rafah has displaced some 600,000 people, a quarter of Gaza's population, UN officials say. Another 100,000 civilians have fled parts of northern Gaza now that the Israeli military has restarted combat operations there.

Pentagon officials said the fighting in Gaza wasn't threatening the new shoreline aid distribution area, but they have made it clear that security conditions will be monitored closely and could prompt a shutdown of the maritime route, even just temporarily.

No exception made in granting interim bail to Kejriwal: SC

NEW DELHI, May 16 (PTI)

THE Supreme Court on Thursday steered clear of the political talk about it having made an exception for Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in granting him interim bail for campaigning in the Lok Sabha polls but said "critical analysis of the judgement is welcome".

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta refused to consider claims and counter claims by advocates for the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Kejriwal on statements related to grant of interim bail to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor.

"We have not made any exception for anybody. We said in our order what we felt was justified," the bench said.

Appearing for the ED, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta objected to Kejriwal's speeches in poll rallies that if people voted for AAP, he would not have to go back to prison on June 2. "It is his assumption, we cannot say anything," the bench told Mehta.

It added, "Our order is very clear about when he has to surrender. It is the order of the Supreme Court. The rule of law shall be governed by this order."

Mehta alleged that Kejriwal had violated the bail condition by his assertion.

"What is he trying to imply? It is like a slap on the institution," the Solicitor General said.

Justice Khanna said the court's order is clear that he has to surrender on June 2.

"We have not said anything



Kejriwal, AAP to be named in supplementary chargesheet: ED

NEW DELHI, May 16 (IANS)

ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) will soon file a supplementary chargesheet in a money laundering case linked to the alleged Excise Policy scam arraying Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and AAP as an accused, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) S V Raju informed the Supreme Court on Thursday.

Opposing the plea filed by Kejriwal against arrest, ASG Raju apprised a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta that a prosecution complaint against AAP and its National Convenor is in the pipeline and will be soon lodged before the special court.

in the order that he cannot speak about the case," the bench said.

Without naming Home Minister Amit Shah, senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, who was appearing for Kejriwal, referred to an interview where he said many believe the court accorded "special treatment" to the AAP leader.

The bench told Singhvi it will not go into that.

The senior lawyer denied that Kejriwal had made any statement about having to go back to jail if people did not vote for his party. Singhvi said he can swear an affidavit to that effect.

The top court was hearing Kejriwal's plea against his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case stemming from the alleged excise scam.

On May 10, the apex court had granted Kejriwal interim bail till June 1, the last day of the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections, and directed him to surrender and go back to jail on June 2.

The Delhi Chief Minister was arrested on March 21.

The court had, however, barred Kejriwal from visiting his office or the Delhi secretariat, and signing official files unless absolutely necessary for obtaining the lieutenant Governor's approval.

The matter relates to alleged corruption and money laundering in the formulation and execution of the Delhi government's now-scraped excise policy for 2021-22.

PoK an inseparable part of India, it will come back to India: Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, May 16 (IANS)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar on Thursday said that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) is an inseparable part of the country that will eventually come back to India.

Reacting to the growing unrest and continued violence that is taking place in PoK, he said that there is no doubt that people in PoK have been watching and getting affected with the massive development that has been taking place in Jammu and Kashmir over the last few years. "People in PoK

are seeing the positive changes across the Line of Control and they are asking themselves that if things are like that, then why are we suffering and why are we accepting this kind of mistreatment? So, they are undoubtedly getting affected by all this. We would love to see where this goes," said EAM Jaishankar while speaking at 'Vishwabandhu Bharat' interaction in Nashik, Maharashtra.

Complete chaos prevails in PoK's Muzaffarabad which has been rocked by violent protests as the locals, fed up with the rising inflation and high electricity bills, continue to clash

with police over the past many days. "PoK is a different category because eventually, PoK is India and it will come back to India, I don't think we should ever have any doubt about it. Pakistan has a lot of other problems, including in Balochistan and various other parts as well," commented the EAM. Pakistan's economic woes too continue to dampen its credibility amid fears of a complete meltdown, he said.

"Because, this policy of continuously going against India, today has brought Pakistan down to where it is," stated Jaishankar.

PEACE, STABILITY TO RETURN

During Putin's visit, Xi hints at political settlement to **END UKRAINE WAR**

BEIJING, May 16 (PTI)

CHINESE President Xi Jinping on Thursday hinted at a political settlement to end the Ukraine war, saying he expects peace and stability will return to the European continent, shortly after his talks with Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin as the two leaders vowed to counter any attempt by the US to hinder their strategic ties.

A joint statement issued after Putin-Xi talks said that both sides believe that for "a sustainable settlement of the Ukrainian crisis, it is necessary to eliminate its root causes." Putin received a grand welcome upon his arrival here earlier in the day on his first foreign visit after winning the fifth term in office in March for wide ranging talks with Xi to reset the burgeoning China-Russia strategic ties for future.

"China hopes that peace



(R) Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin attend a signing ceremony in Beijing, China on Thursday. (AP/PTI)

and stability will return to the European continent at an early date, and stands ready to play a constructive role to this end," Xi said at a joint press conference with Putin after their talks.

In a veiled criticism of the

US, which is pressuring Beijing to end its strategic ties with Russia, the joint statement said relations between China and Russia do not target any third countries, therefore they will

(Contd on page 5)