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Muslim side moves SC against MP HC ruling on Bhojshala complex

New Delhi, May 20 (GNS) Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday held wide-ranging bilateral talks with his South Korean counterpart Ahn Gyu-back in Seoul, with the two sides agreeing to deepen cooperation in defence production, emerging technologies, cyber security, and Indo-Pacific security. The discussions focused on expanding the full spectrum of India-Republic of Korea defence ties, including industry collaboration, maritime security, logistics support, military exchanges, and regional security cooperation.

Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to a "free, open, inclusive and rule-based Indo-Pacific" while recognising the growing convergence between India's Act East Policy and South Korea's regional strategic vision. During the visit, India and South Korea signed a series of Memoranda



of Understanding (MoUs) aimed at strengthening defence cooperation in key domains. The agreements included cooperation in Defence Cyber, training exchanges between India's National Defence College and Korea National Defence University, and collaboration in United Nations Peacekeeping operations.

Singh also met Lee Yong-chul, with both leaders agreeing to explore avenues for joint development, joint production, and joint exports of defence systems. Discussions were also held on advancing the India-Korea Defence Innovation Accelerator Ecosystem (KIND-X), aimed at integrating the innovation ecosystems of

the two nations. Later, the Defence Minister chaired the India-Republic of Korea Defence Industry Business Round Table attended by senior government officials and leading defence companies from both countries. The interaction explored opportunities in defence manufacturing, co-development, co-production, and supply chain partnerships. Addressing industry leaders, the minister underlined India's expanding defence manufacturing ecosystem and invited Korean firms to partner with Indian companies under the government's push for indigenous defence production and global collaboration.

"The success of India-Korea industrial cooperation in the commercial sector demonstrates the enormous potential of long-term trusted partnerships between the two countries.

K'taka cabinet discusses SIR Vows to protect voting rights

Bengaluru, May 20 (GNS) Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Friday charged the SIR of electoral rolls was being rolled out to "cut" SC, BC and minorities votes, and said the ruling Congress in the state will ensure that they are "protected". Shivakumar, also the state Congress chief, said that the party is educating all its leaders regarding Special Intensive Revision of the electoral rolls.

The Election Commission of India on Thursday announced the rollout of phase-3 of the SIR in 16 states and three Union Territories involving 36.73 crore voters in a phased manner beginning May 30. Karnataka was also being covered.

"We know that (SIR being rolled out), we have got all information. We are educating all the party leaders. Across the party line let BJP and JD(S) also secure all their votes," Shivakumar said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, "it's (SIR) aim is to see to that Scheduled Caste, backward class and the minority votes are



cut. But we will see that it is protected. Every one born in India should have their right." "In Karnataka 88 to 90 per cent has been mapped (mapping of electors). But still we will try to educate all of them," he added. Punjab, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Telangana are the opposition-ruled among the states where the SIR exercise will be held. The final voters' roll of Karnataka will be out on October 7.

Parliamentary panel members grill top NTA officials over neet paper 'leak'

NEW DELHI, May 21 (GNS): Several members of Parliament grilled top NTA officials on Thursday, with the agency's director general telling them that the NEET-UG paper was not leaked through their system and the CBI is probing the matter, sources said.

During a meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports, several MPs questioned the National Testing Agency (NTA) officials on the steps taken by them to strengthen the exam system in order to prevent paper leaks in the future.

The panel had summoned top officials of the education ministry, including Education Secretary Vineet Joshi.



The NTA officials, including Chairperson Pradeep Kumar Joshi and Director General Abhishek Singh, gave a detailed presentation on the recommendations of the Radhakrishnan Report on reforms in the agency.

The sources said on queries from the

MPs on how the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) paper was leaked, Singh said it was not leaked through their system.

At this, several MPs asked him then how did the paper get leaked and what was the need to cancel the exam and hold a retest. The NTA DG had no answer to this and instead, said the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is looking into the matter. Some opposition MPs demanded that the probe report be presented before the panel, but some of their counterparts from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) objected to this, saying the CBI is an independent body and it should be allowed to do its work.

Nitin Gadkari urges Indian-US hi-tech JVS

NEW DELHI, May 21 (GNS): Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said that there was a strong need for Indian firms to forge joint ventures with US companies to gain access to the latest technologies. In his address at the annual leadership summit of the American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM), Gadkari said: "India is the fastest growing major economy while US companies develop lots of new technologies, so it is very important for Indian companies to have joint ventures with US companies."

The minister also highlighted that the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways is looking at consulting US companies in the preparation of detailed project reports (DPR) for high-



way projects. Noting that the supply chain is the most important part in logistics, Gadkari said logistics cost in India has come down to a single digit, helped by the rapid expansion of expressways and economic corridors.

Gadkari pointed out that the latest

study prepared by IIT Chennai, IIT Kanpur, and IIM Bangalore shows that India's construction of expressways and economic corridors has helped to cut the country's logistics cost to 10 per cent from 16 per cent earlier.

The logistics cost is 12 per cent in the US, 12 per cent in European countries and 8-10 per cent in China, he added. Gadkari also said that the government was aiming to make India's automobile industry the number 1 in the world in another five years. "When I took charge as Transport Minister, the size of the Indian automobile industry was Rs 14 lakh crore. It is now Rs 22 lakh crore," he noted. He said the automobile sector provides jobs to 4 lakh youths and the highest GST to the Centre and states.

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BUS FACILITY AVAILABLE

58,500+ Png users surrender lpg connections; fuel stocks adequate: centre

NEW DELHI, May 21 (GNS): More than 58,500 PNG consumers have surrendered their LPG connections till May 20, the government said on Thursday, adding that there are adequate stocks of petrol and diesel available at all petrol pumps in the country. The government advised citizens to avoid panic purchase of petrol, diesel and LPG as it is making all efforts to ensure availability of petrol, diesel and LPG. "Beware of rumours and rely on official sources for correct information," said the government during the regular briefing. Online LPG cylinder bookings increased to about 99 per cent on an industry basis on May 20.

"The Delivery Authentication Code (DAC) based deliveries have increased to about 96 per cent to prevent diversion. DAC is received on the registered mobile number of the consumer. During the last three days, about 1.34 crore LPG cylinders were delivered against bookings of around 1.32 crore LPG cylinders," said Petroleum Ministry.

On Wednesday, about 47.51 lakh LPG cylinders were delivered against bookings of around 45.36 lakh LPG cylinders.

The ministry further stated that during the last three days, about 1.87 lakh 5-kg FTL cylinders were sold. Moreover, since March, about 7.64 lakh PNG connections have been gasified and infrastructure has been created for additional 2.81 lakh connections, taking the total to 10.45 lakh connections.

Trump Calls Cuba 'Failing Nation', Signals Policy Shift

Washington, May 21 (GNS): US President Donald Trump has signalled a possible shift in American policy towards Cuba, while also claiming progress in negotiations with Iran and defending his administration's handling of regional conflicts and domestic investigations.

This came as US federal prosecutors indicted Cuban Revolution leader Raul Castro. These remarks also came against the backdrop of the US Southern Command announcing that the Nimitz Carrier Strike Group, which includes the aircraft carrier, its carrier air wing, and at least



one guided-missile destroyer, has arrived in the Caribbean.

Speaking to reporters during an extended media interaction on Wednesday (local time), Trump described Cuba as "a fail-

ing nation" and suggested that a major announcement related to the island nation could come soon. "They've been looking for this moment for 65 years," Trump said, referring to Cuban Americans and Cuban families affected by decades of political tensions between Washington and Havana. Trump said Cuban Americans had supported him "at a 94 per cent level" and called the issue deeply personal for many families in Florida.

"They have no food, they have no electricity, they have no energy at all. But they do have great people," he said.

Iran says reviewing us views as exchange of messages continues

Tehran, May 21 (GNS): Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei has said that the exchange of messages between Iran and the United States is continuing through the Pakistani mediator, and Tehran is reviewing the latest US views. In an interview with state-run IRIB TV, Baghaei said messages have been exchanged on several occasions. Baghaei said that Iran is focused on ending the war on all fronts, including Lebanon, with clear demands, including releasing Iranian frozen assets and ending the US "maritime piracy" and hostile actions against Iran's shipping.

He added that Iran has entered the diplomatic process with good-



will and seriousness, but views Washington with deep distrust due to its "very bad" track record over the past 18 months. Baghaei said that Iran, in cooperation with Oman, seeks to create a mechanism to guarantee "lasting security" in the Strait of Hormuz and is ready to develop protocols for safe

maritime traffic in the waterway in coordination with other coastal states. Citing a source close to Iran's negotiation team, the semi-official Tasnim news agency reported that Washington has sent a new draft proposal to Tehran after Iran submitted its 14-point proposed plan three days ago, reports Xinhua news agency. The mediator is currently in Tehran seeking to bring the two sides' drafts closer, though nothing has been finalised, according to the source. Also on Wednesday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on social media platform X that Iran has consistently honoured its commitments and sought to avert war.

EAM Jaishankar Conducts Computerised Draw For Kailash Mansarovar Yatra

New Delhi, May 21 (GNS): External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar conducted the computerised draw for selection of Yatris for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra (KMY) 2026, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced Thursday.

The 2026 edition of the KMY will commence in June and conclude in August. A total of 1000 Yatris have been selected through a fair, computer-generated, random, gender-balanced selection process, according to the ministry.

"The selected Yatris will travel in 20 batches, each consisting of 50 Yatris, through the Lipulekh and Nathu La passes. Both routes are now fully motorable and involve very little trekking," the MEA stated. The entire process for KMY, organised by the MEA in coordination



with the Government of the People's Republic of China, commencing from on-line application till selection of Yatris is a fully computerised process. Earlier this month, while responding to media queries regarding comments made by Foreign Ministry of Nepal on border issue in the context of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, the MEA had

stated that Lipulekh Pass has been a long-standing route for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra since 1954.

"Lipulekh Pass has been a long-standing route for the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra since 1954, and the Yatra through this route has been going on for decades. This is not a new development," stated MEA spokesperson Randhir

Jaiswal. The Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra, being significant to Hindus as the abode of Lord Shiva, also holds religious importance for the Jains and the Buddhists. It was suspended from 2020 till the summer of 2025 following the Covid-19 outbreak and the subsequent non-renewal of Yatra arrangements by the Chinese side.

Probe into Abhishek Banerjee's alleged property tests trinamool leadership

New Delhi, May 21 (GNS): A Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) probe, reportedly over properties allegedly owned by Trinamool Congress General Secretary and Lok Sabha member, Abhishek Banerjee, his family, or company, has created a political and organisational test for the party.

The notices were reportedly served under provisions of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation Act, where officials have also visited several premises, including "Shantiniketan" in Kolkata. One report mentioned a notice pasted on that property later being found torn, which became a small but symbolically



important episode of the political slugfest.

Even when the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool government was in power, critics have been voicing allegations on a "large number

of properties" being registered in the names of the younger leader Abhishek Banerjee and a company called "Leaps and Bounds" said to be owned by him.

The Trinamool Congress has repeatedly rubbished such allegations as a 'mud-slinging' exercise by the Opposition.

According to the reports now, KMC officials issued notices over a set of properties linked to Abhishek Banerjee, asking for approved building plans and related documents. The stated aim is to check whether the constructions conform to sanctioned plans and whether taxes are pending.

Maharashtra farm loan waiver to be completed by june 30, says CM Fadnavis

Mumbai, May 21 (GNS): Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday announced the definitive timeline for the implementation of the state government's farm loan waiver scheme, officials said. Addressing a press conference after the meetings to review the preparations for the Kharif season and State Level Bankers' Committee, the Chief Minister declared that all eligible farmers will receive their loan waivers before June 30. This timely implementation will clear the path for farmers to secure fresh credit for the upcoming agricultural season, he added. The Chief Minister directed nationalised banks to strictly achieve at least 80 per cent of their designated agricultural loan distribution targets. While the state government had previously announced the loan waiver scheme, the lack of a specific execution date had caused significant confusion among both farmers and



banking institutions. The Opposition had also capitalised on the delay to criticise the state administration. Putting an end to the uncertainty, the Chief Minister made this major announcement to execute the waiver well before the crucial June 30 deadline. Statistical data indicates that District Cooperative Banks and Rural banks currently account for 67

per cent. Noting that nationalised banks frequently fall short of their agricultural credit goals, the Chief Minister emphasised that they must fulfil their 80 per cent distribution targets. Chief Minister Fadnavis said that the state government has issued absolute directives to banking institutions prohibiting them from demanding CIBIL scores from farmers seeking crop loans. "We have informed nationalised banks in very strict terms that no farmer should be inconvenienced by CIBIL requirements," he added. He said that banking headquarters must issue explicit notification letters to every local branch clarifying that CIBIL scores are not mandatory for crop loans.

Officials from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) attended the meeting and confirmed this regulatory stance, ensuring that no farmer's crop loan process will be obstructed.

Delhi HC Disposes Of PIL Seeking Cow Dung Logs As Alternative To Firewood In Cremation Grounds

New Delhi, May 21 (GNS): The Delhi High Court has disposed of a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking directions to promote the use of Gaukash (cow dung logs) as the primary fuel in cremation grounds across the national capital in place of conventional firewood. A Division Bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia granted liberty to the petitioner to approach the concerned authorities by way of a representation raising the issues flagged in the plea.

"Having regard to the issues raised in the present Petition, we dispose of the same with a liberty to the Petitioner to approach the various authorities... by way of making a representation for redressal of the grievance and issues raised in the present Petition," the Delhi High Court said in its order passed on Wednesday. The CJ Upadhyaya-led Bench directed that the representation



be submitted within two weeks along with all supporting documents relied upon by the petitioner. It further ordered that the concerned authorities take a "workable decision as per law" and communicate the same to the petitioner. Filed by Ajay Kumar Ghakar, trustee of Gaudaan Foundation, the PIL sought directions to the Centre, Delhi government, Municipal Corporation of

Delhi (MCD), Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), and Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) to establish a dedicated 100 per cent biomass fuel-based cremation system using Gaukash. The plea also sought guidelines for better management of gaushalas, including ensuring adequate fodder, veterinary care and welfare measures for animals housed in cow shelters.

The petition claimed that cremation grounds in Delhi presently use around 45,600 tonnes of firewood annually, with each traditional cremation consuming nearly 400-500 kg of wood, contributing to deforestation as well as air and land pollution.

Referring to studies and policy reports, the plea stated that research conducted under the observation of the CPCB's Regional Directorate in Bhopal supported the viability of Gaukash as an eco-friendly alternative fuel.

Javed Khan granted bail in tiljala unrest case

Kolkata, May 21 (GNS): Trinamool Congress MLA Javed Khan surrendered before a court in Alipore on Thursday and was granted bail in a recent unrest case. A complaint had been filed against him in connection with unrest in Tiljala on the day the West Bengal Assembly election results were declared. Javed Khan and 10 others were named in the FIR. According to court sources, the MLA surrendered before the court in connection with that case.

According to the police, unrest broke out in Tiljala following the declaration of the election results on May 4. The area falls under Javed Khan's Assembly constitu-

ency, Kasba. An FIR was subsequently filed against MLA Javed Khan and 10 others in the matter. The remaining accused had already surrendered before the court and are currently out on bail. Javed Khan also appeared before the court of the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate in Kolkata's Alipore on Thursday and was granted bail on a personal bond.

Meanwhile, Trinamool Congress MP from the Kolkata Dakshin constituency, Mala Roy, also surrendered before a court in connection with a case registered under the Arms Act. A case had been lodged against her and her son, Nirban Roy, under the Arms Act.

Manipur: Security forces recover 67 weapons including 27 ak rifles, 4 militants arrested

Imphal, May 21 (GNS): In a major breakthrough, Manipur Police, assisted by central security forces, recovered 67 arms, including 27 AK-series rifles and 11 US-made rifles, besides a huge cache of ammunition and explosives during a series of operations conducted over the past 24 hours, officials said on Thursday. A senior police official said that four hardcore militants belonging to the United National Liberation Front-Pambei faction (UNLF-Pambei) were also arrested during the operations carried out in Imphal West district.

Acting on credible intelligence inputs regarding the illegal sale of looted arms



and ammunition in the Lamshang area, Manipur Police launched a special operation on Wednesday at Lamdeng under the Lamshang police station area, the official said.

During the operation, two active cadres of the UNLF-Pambei, identified as Heishnam Thomas Singh,

29, and Arambam Tomtom Singh, 29, were apprehended along with an INSAS rifle, a Light Machine Gun (LMG), three magazines and 14 live rounds of ammunition. While the arrest process was underway, associates of the two militants allegedly opened fire at the security personnel, trigger-

ing a brief exchange of fire between the two sides.

Subsequently, two more hardcore cadres of the outfit, identified as Ningthoujam Rakesh Singh and Chingakham Mahesh Singh, who were allegedly involved in the firing incident, were also arrested.

During preliminary interrogation, the arrested militants reportedly disclosed that they had come to sell the seized weapons on the instructions of self-styled Lance Corporal Naorem Bijoy alias Macha of the UNLF.

The militants also reportedly admitted their involvement in earlier instances of illegal sale of looted arms and ammunition.

Cong MP Tariq Anwar hails killing of pulwama plotter

New Delhi, May 21 (GNS): Congress MP Tariq Anwar on Wednesday praised reports of the killing of Hamza Burhan, one of the key planners behind the Pulwama terror attack last year, by unknown gunmen in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK). The incident took place at Muzaffarabad in PoK, and Burhan is said to have been shot multiple times.

Speaking to IANS, Anwar said: "Terrorism should be eliminated. This is good news for us because terrorists are being killed in Pakistan which provides a safe haven for terrorism."

While designating him

as a terrorist in 2022, the Indian government had said, "Arjumand Gulzar Dar alias Hamza Burhan alias Doctor, aged 23 years, is a resident of Kharbatpora, Ratnipora, Pulwama, and one of the associate members of Al Badr, a terrorist outfit designated under the UAPA."

Meanwhile, Tariq Anwar defended Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi's "traitor" remark against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. He said: "Rahul Gandhi has put the reality forward. Traitor means one who does not work towards the welfare of the country."

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta says ration cards issuance has resumed after 13 years

New Delhi, May 21 (GNS): Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said on Thursday that the process of issuing more than seven lakh new ration cards for the needy has resumed on a large scale from May 15, ending a 13-year wait of nearly eight lakh poor. Addressing a press conference at the Delhi Secretariat, Chief Minister Gupta urged eligible and needy families to apply and said the Delhi government is implementing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Antyodaya' vision to ensure that welfare benefits reach genuine people. The Chief Minister said online applications for new ration cards and for adding family members have been opened through the e-District portal (edistrict.delhigovt.nic.in) from May 15. Older applications submitted in the past have also been returned to applicants through their login profiles. Applicants can update and resubmit



them with a valid family income certificate and other required documents. Chief Minister Gupta said the Delhi government carried out a comprehensive audit of the public distribution system after assuming office, which uncovered large-scale irregularities.

A total of 7,71,384 ineligible and bogus beneficiaries were identified. Of these, 6,46,123 beneficiaries were found to be above the prescribed in-

come limit and therefore ineligible for subsidised ration. Another 95,682 beneficiaries had not availed ration for more than a year. In 6,185 cases, the names of deceased persons continued to remain on ration records, while 23,394 beneficiaries were found to be drawing benefits from multiple locations. With these ineligible names removed, nearly 7.72 lakh vacancies have opened up in the system.

Madras HC Seeks ECI Response On PIL Alleging TVK Used Children For Poll Campaigning

Chennai, May 21 (GNS): The Madras High Court on Thursday sought a response from the Election Commission of India (ECI) on a public interest litigation (PIL) alleging that Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) had used children to influence voters during the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections.

A division bench of Justices G.R. Swaminathan and V. Lakshminarayanan heard the petition filed by advocate Vasuki and raised questions regarding the legal implications of alleged electoral misconduct by political parties.

During the hearing, the bench orally questioned whether a political party itself could face disqualification for corrupt practices under election laws.

"The candidate can be disquali-



fied, but can a party be disqualified?" the court asked while seeking clarification on the legal position. Counsel appearing for the petitioner argued that the case involved allegations relating to "vote-for-money" practices and the use of children as instruments of electoral influence. The petitioner also pointed out that after the election results, TVK President Vijay had publicly thanked

children during his address, which was cited as an indication of their involvement during the campaign.

The court noted that the allegations required closer examination and directed the Election Commission to provide instructions and its response on the matter. "Matter requires some investigation. Get instructions," it told counsel representing the ECI.

IPL 2026: Gujarat Titans knock out CSK and seal top-two finish

Ahmedabad, May 21 (GNS): Chennai Super Kings' (CSK) slim playoff hopes were crushed emphatically by Gujarat Titans (GT) in Ahmedabad on Thursday night as they sealed a top-two spot with an 89-run win. Sent in to bat on a red-soil surface with pace and bounce, GT went all-in to post 229. Shubman Gill's 23-ball half-century set it up for late fireworks from B Sai Sudharsan (84 off 53) and Jos Buttler (57 not out off 27).

In reply, CSK's top five perished inside eight overs before Shivam Dube tonked 47 off 17 to briefly inject life into the chase. His dismissal left the door ajar for GT to knock over the lower order, which they did courtesy Rashid Khan to bowl CSK out in the 14th over.

In the game's second over, Sanju Samson left the field to nurse a finger injury after Spencer Johnson's hard-length delivery down the leg side suddenly swerved away after passing the batter. He left the field immediately, and didn't return for the rest of the innings with Kartik Sharma taking over the wicketkeeping duties. The nature of his on-field injury meant Samson could return to bat in his original position, but he lasted all of one ball, nicking a Mohammed Siraj away-swing in the very first over. Having taken a wicket off the first ball in GT's defense of 230, Siraj then saw Ruturaj Gaikwad loft him through the line over the covers, and then walk across to scoop him for six. In



his next over, he saw the CSK captain whip him nonchalantly over the midwicket fence. Siraj, though, remained unperturbed and removed him with a length ball that ducked back in to crash into the stumps. One ball later, he silenced the home fans rooting for local hero Urvil Patel by having him top-edge a flick straight down Prasad Krishna's throat at deep backward square leg.

At the start of the ninth, CSK were 72 for 5. It took Dube all of two overs to get the fans excited. Having endured a poor season, he began by thumping left-arm seamer Arshad Khan for 6, 4 and 4 in an over that went for 19. He went into overdrive in the next, thumping Jason Holder's hard-length de-

livery over long-on for six. And when Holder went full, Dube's long levers helped scythe the ball behind square. Overs 8-10 fetched 37.

But one ball after launching Rashid over deep midwicket, Dube was out to him when Gill, running back from cover, pulled off a stunner. CSK lost their last four wickets in the next three overs, with Rashid finishing with 3 for 18. Long before his catching brilliance and the direct hit to run out Kartik, Gill began like a bullet train, surging to a 23-ball half-century to lay down the marker, even as Sai Sudharsan buckled down to play second fiddle. He was run-a-ball for his first 22 deliveries en route to a seventh century stand with Gill - the most by an opening pair in the IPL.

Conducive Ranchi weather a big boost to confidence, say top athletes ahead of Sr National Athletics

Ranchi, May 21 (GNS): Good weather conditions at this time of the year in Ranchi will be an advantage for the athletes during the four-day 29th National Senior Athletics Federation Competitions, says Commonwealth Games bronze medallist in men's high jump, Tejaswin Shankar. Many other top athletes agreed to his assessment as the national athletics circuit gears up for the mega event of the domestic circuit, the last opportunity to qualify for the Indian squads for the Commonwealth Games, which starts on Friday.

Shankar, 27, will compete in the gruelling decathlon in Ranchi, which will be the last domestic competition for as-



piring athletes to achieve the qualification standard set by AFI (Athletics Federation of India) for the Glasgow Commonwealth Games starting July 23. "I've been camping here for the last two days

to get used to local weather conditions, and surprisingly, the weather has been good in the morning and evening," Shankar told the media on the eve of the Ranchi competition. "Recovery between

each of the ten disciplines in the decathlon, spread over two days, is important to perform at an optimum level." The Indian contingent had won eight medals, including gold in men's triple jump through Eldhouse Paul at the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games. Shankar had won a bronze medal in the men's high jump in Birmingham. However, this his focus will be on the decathlon and not the high jump. "I'm all set to achieve my goal here in Ranchi," says Shankar with an air of confidence. India's talented sprinter Animesh Kujur says his main focus during the four-day competition will be on the 200m.

Mukund loses as Indian challenge ends in singles at SM Krishna Memorial Open

Bengaluru, May 21 (GNS): India's campaign in the men's singles at the SM Krishna Memorial Open came to an end, but not before Mukund Sasikumar produced a stirring fight against second seed Alastair Gray of Great Britain in a quarterfinal battle that stretched two hours and 40 minutes here on Thursday. The 29-year-old from Chennai, ranked 536 in the world, pushed the higher-ranked Gray to the brink before eventually falling 6-2, 5-7, 6-7 in one of the most gripping matches of the tournament.

Meanwhile, former world No. 40 Ilya Ivashka continued his dominant run, brushing aside Alex Hernandez of Mexico 6-1, 6-2 in just 72 minutes to storm into the semifinals while third seed Hamish Stewart of Great Britain was equally clinical, requiring only 57 minutes to dismantle sixth seed Ognjen Milic of Serbia 6-2, 6-1. Fourth seed Petr Bar Biryukov overcame Malaysia's Mitsuki Wei Kang Leong



6-2, 5-7, 6-3 to complete the semifinal lineup. Heavy rains disrupted the doubles quarterfinals with only one match being completed while two others were in progress. Mukund's performance was marked by resilience and fearless shot-making, as he fired 14 aces five more than Gray and committed fewer

double faults despite facing sustained pressure. The Indian repeatedly clawed his way back into the contest and was within touching distance of a semifinal berth. Gray raced ahead early, capitalising on three breaks of serve in the opening set to pocket it 6-2 despite Mukund breaking in the second game.

India Holds 60% of Gold Reserves Domestically, Adds 102 Tonnes in April-September: RBI

New Delhi, May 21 (GNS): As gold prices continue to surge amid geopolitical tensions, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had 854.73 metric tonnes of gold as of September 30 and out of which, 510.46 metric tonnes were held domestically. Gold held domestically surged more than 102 tonnes between April and September this year to 510.46 metric tonnes, against 408 metric tonnes at the end of March.

While 324.01 metric tonnes of gold were kept in safe custody with the Bank of England and the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), 20.26 metric tonnes were held in the form of gold deposits, according to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) 'Half Yearly Report on Management of Foreign Exchange Reserves: April-September 2024.'

In value terms (USD), the share of gold in the total foreign exchange reserves increased from 8.15 per



cent as at end-March 2024 to about 9.32 per cent as at September end. During the half-year period under review, foreign reserves increased from \$646.42 billion in March end to \$705.78 billion in September. On a balance of payments basis (excluding valuation effects), foreign exchange reserves increased by \$5.2 billion during April-June 2024 compared to the increase of \$ 24.4 billion during April-June 2023.

Foreign exchange reserves in

nominal terms (including valuation effects) increased by \$5.6 billion during April-June 2024 as compared with an increase of \$16.6 billion in the corresponding period of the preceding year, according to the RBI data. The net forward asset (payable) of the Reserve Bank stood at \$14.58 billion as at the end of September. During the period between end-June 2023 and end-June 2024, the external assets increased by \$108.4 billion and external liabilities increased by

\$97.7 billion. "The net International Investment Position (IIP) as at end-June 2024 was negative at \$368.3 billion as against a negative net IIP of \$379.0 billion at end-June 2023, implying that the sum of all external liabilities is more than that of the external assets in both periods. There has been a decrease in the negative gap on a year-on-year basis," the Central Bank informed. The foreign currency assets (FCAs) comprise multi-currency assets that are held in multi-asset portfolios as per the existing norms, which conform to the best international practices followed in this regard.

As at end-September 2024, out of the total FCA of \$617.07 billion, \$515.30 billion was invested in securities, \$60.11 billion was deposited with other central banks and the BIS and the balance \$41.66 billion comprised deposits with commercial banks overseas.

National Internet Exchange of India to Expand Its Global Presence: Centre

New Delhi, May 21 (GNS): The National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) has a very important role to play in the field of Internet, not just at national level but also globally, the government said. NIXI has unveiled its new office at the World Trade Centre in the national capital, along with launching new initiatives.

S. Krishnan, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), unveiled NIXI's latest digital initiatives for a secure and inclusive internet and festive offer for .in accredited registrars, aimed at accelerating the adoption of the .in domain across the users. "NIXI is ready to make a difference in this field as its role is being redefined



right now," Krishnan said at the event. Dr Devesh Tyagi, CEO of NIXI, said they have booked 41 lakh domains and the next target is to reach 50 lakh which will be a very significant target. "We have 77 exchange points across the country which have proven helpful in keeping our data within the country. We are also planning to bring a new scheme to increase these exchange points," he in-

formed. The event was also marked by the signing of a strategic agreement with Telecommunications Consultants India Ltd (TCIL) for the implementation of NIXI SSL Certificate Authority (SSL CA). This partnership will enhance internet security across India by providing trusted SSL certification services, ensuring safe online transactions and bolstering user trust.

Hyundai Unveils First Look of Upcoming Ioniq 9 Electric SUV

Seoul, May 21 (GNS): Hyundai Motor on Wednesday unveiled a teaser image of its upcoming all-electric Ioniq 9 sports utility vehicle, highlighting its massive-yet-sleek exterior design. The teaser for the three-row electric SUV presents the overall silhouette and the model's elongated wheelbase. Hyundai said the Ioniq 9 draws inspiration from the sleek exteriors and cozy interiors of boats, reports Yonhap news agency.

The Ioniq 9 symbolises the largest vehicle class in Hyundai Motor's Ioniq lineup and the company's inaugural venture into the realm of large electric SUV models.

Hyundai plans to fully unveil the design and features of

the Ioniq 9 at a global showcase event next month.

Meanwhile, Hyundai Motor reached a major milestone of 100 million units in global cumulative production, an achievement accomplished in 57 years since the company's foundation. The company said it delivered its 100 millionth and first vehicle, an Ioniq 5, directly to a customer. The vehicle rolled off the final inspection conveyor belt at the plant's shipping centre during a handover ceremony.

"Reaching global cumulative production of 100 million vehicles is a meaningful milestone that was possible thanks to our customers around the world who have chosen and supported.

Indian Stock Market Opens Lower; PSU Banks and Pharma Stocks Face Selling Pressure

Mumbai, May 21 (GNS): The Indian stock market opened in red for the second consecutive day on Wednesday as selling was seen in PSU bank and pharma sectors in early trade.

Sensex was trading at 80,057.15 after falling 311.88 points or 0.39 per cent. At the same time, Nifty was trading at 24,372.75 after falling 94.10 points or 0.38 per cent.

The market trend remained positive. On the National Stock Exchange (NSE), 1,666 stocks were trading in green, while 586 stocks were trading in red.

The Nifty Bank was at 52,890.30 after slipping 430.40 points or 0.82 per



cent. The Nifty Midcap 100 index was trading at 56,460.75 after climbing 209.45 points or 0.37 per cent. The Nifty Small cap 100 index was at 18,355.35 after climbing 156.40 points or 0.86 per cent.

Maruti, IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors, TCS and ITC

were the top gainers in the Sensex pack. At the same time, Sun Pharma, Bajaj Finserv, Titan, HCL Tech, PowerGrid and Asian Paints were the top losers.

Maruti, BEL, IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors and Bajaj Auto were the top gainers in the Nifty pack. Cipla, Dr

Reddy's, Sun Pharma, Shriram Finance, Bajaj Finserv and Titan were the top losers. In Asian markets, except the Tokyo market, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Jakarta and Seoul markets were trading in the red. US stock markets had closed in the red on the previous trading day.

According to market experts, in the near term, the market will be influenced by two factors -- one positive and the other negative. The positive is the sharp decline in FII selling to just Rs 548 crore on Tuesday. This is an indication that the FII tactical trade of 'Sell India, Buy China' is coming to an end. With more DII and retail

Centre Strengthens Digital Security Measures for Citizens

New Delhi, May 21 (GNS): National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) and the United Service Institution of India (USI) on Tuesday organised the quad cyber challenge as part of the cyber 'Swachhta Abhiyaan' to promote cyber security for citizens. The quad cyber challenge was announced by the quad leaders to strengthen responsible cyber ecosystems, promote public resources, and raise cyber security awareness.

The theme for 2024 is promoting cybersecurity education and building a strong workforce. This challenge was supported by Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan and had the participation

of principals, faculties and students from ten Kendriya Vidyalaya Schools. In the quad cyber challenge, speakers highlighted that cyber security is a priority area for our country and that the role of education in cyber security is paramount and plays a pivotal role in combating cyber threats.

"Schools must include cyber security awareness modules in their curriculum not only for promoting cyber security education but also to encourage the students to take up cybersecurity as a career option," they added. The National Cyber Security Coordinator of India encouraged students to develop cyber hygiene.

CM Revanth Demands Special Parliament Session For Women's Reservation Bill

Hyderabad, May 21 (GNS) Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Thursday demanded the Centre hold an immediate special session of the Parliament on 33 per cent women's reservation in legislative bodies.

Paying rich tributes to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on his death anniversary, the Chief Minister said that the INDIA bloc is ready to support women reservation bill in the Parliament. He said the Modi government created hurdles in the implementation of women's reservation by linking it to delimitation of Parliamentary constituencies and demanded that the women's reservation bill not be politicised.

The CM emphasised that women's reservation in the legislative bodies should be



enacted with the inspiration of Rajiv Gandhi, who introduced women's quota in local bodies for their political empowerment.

Terming Rajiv Gandhi a great leader who sacrificed his life for the nation, he remembered the yeoman

services rendered by the former Prime Minister.

Calling the late leader a great visionary, he said it was Rajiv Gandhi who introduced information technology to the nation and earned it global recognition. "It was Rajiv Gandhi who

ushered in the era of technology in the country and also steered the country onto the path of development through liberalised policies," he said.

Revanth Reddy claimed that the "People's Government" in Telangana was

following the ideals of Rajiv Gandhi for the empowerment of women. The Congress leader said the Gandhi family made many sacrifices for the country.

He also recalled that Sonia Gandhi took a courageous decision to fulfil the dream of a separate Telangana state.

He stated that Telangana is maintaining an inseparable bond with the Gandhi family. The relationship between the Gandhi family and the Telangana people was more than a family. People will remember and cherish the Gandhi family as long as Telangana exists, he said. The Chief Minister garlanded the statue of Rajiv Gandhi near the State Secretariat. State ministers and senior Congress leaders attended the event.

Police Arrested Bandi Sanjay's Son, Says CM Revanth Reddy

Hyderabad, May 21 (GNS) vTelangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy said on Thursday that police had arrested Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay's son, Bandi Bhageerath, in a Pocco case. Replying to queries at a press conference, the Chief Minister said that he believes what the police said. Bandi Sanjay has been claiming that he handed over his son to the police to cooperate in the investigation. This is contrary to the statement by Cyberabad police that they arrested Bhageerath.

"If Bandi Sanjay wanted to hand over his son to the police, he could have called police to his home," the Chief Minister said. Revanth Reddy also remarked that BRS leaders are behaving like sadists, acting as if they have achieved some great victory in this POCO case. He alleged that BRS Working President K. T. Rama Rao (KTR) and other BRS leaders are playing politics over the case. "KTR and Bandi Sanjay have some sort of dispute, and KTR is attempting to settle the score by dragging children into it," he said. "If you wish to engage in politics, you should aim to defeat your op-



ponents in elections; do not resort to such degrading behaviour," he remarked. The Chief Minister said police were proceeding in the POCO case as per the procedure.

"Even when drugs were discovered at the farmhouse belonging to KTR's brother-in-law, we issued a notice and conducted an inquiry.

Police lacks authority to investigate food safety cases: Telangana HC



Hyderabad, May 21 (GNS) The Telangana High Court has ruled that offences relating to food regulatory violations fall exclusively within the statutory domain of authorities empowered under the provisions of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

The court made these observations on May 4, while quashing criminal proceedings initiated by Mailardevally police against a biryani masala manufacturer in Katedan, Jivani Sahil Firoz Ali. The court passed this

order relying on a previous Telangana High Court order (criminal petition 3731 dated August 27, 2018), which states that local police lack the jurisdiction to investigate crimes under the Food Safety and Standards Act and asserts that only specialised Food Safety officers hold such authority.

The petitioner contended that the police had exceeded their authority by registering a criminal case without involving officials designated under the Food Safety and

Standards Act. It was argued that the Act provides a complete mechanism for inspection, sampling, investigation and prosecution through authorised Food Safety Officers, leaving no scope for parallel police action in such matters.

Agreeing with the submissions, the High Court observed that the Food Safety and Standards Act is a special legislation enacted to regulate food safety violations in a comprehensive manner.

Ponnam Prabhakar reviews MJP Gurukula results, calls for academic excellence

Hyderabad, May 21 (GNS) The State Government has accorded top priority to irrigation projects in the Palamuru region to address the historical backwardness and chronic drought conditions prevailing in the area, Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy said on Monday. The Minister conducted an extensive review meeting at the Secretariat on the status of irrigation projects in the erstwhile Mahabubnagar district with MLAs and Ministers from the region.

Ministers Juppally Krishna Rao and Vakiti Srihar, Irrigation Secretary E. Srihar and Engineer-in-Chief General Ramesh Babu participated in the meeting.

Uttam Kumar Reddy assured the elected representatives that the progress of the Palamuru irrigation projects was being closely monitored and that sustained efforts were under-



way to resolve bottlenecks affecting execution.

He stated that projects in the Palamuru region were being treated on par with major priority schemes such as Devadula, SLBC and Sitarاما projects, and that the government was making all-out efforts to complete them at the earliest. The Minister said the Congress government was committed to correcting the injus-

tice done to the Palamuru region during the previous BRS government's ten-year tenure. He assured the MLAs that another dedicated review meeting on Palamuru projects would be convened within a fortnight to reassess priorities and accelerate implementation.

Highlighting the importance of the Jurala Project, Uttam Kumar Reddy said the government was taking

steps to address severe sedimentation issues that had reduced the reservoir's storage capacity to below eight TMC. He said proposals had already been submitted to the Ministry of Jal Shakti to consider Jurala project for assistance under the DRIP (Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project).

The Minister expressed confidence that desiltation works under DRIP would

significantly improve dam safety, storage capacity and operational efficiency of the Jurala reservoir. Dismissing BRS claims that the Palamuru Rangareddy Lift Irrigation project was "90 per cent complete" as a myth, he said it was misleading. He observed that the project had suffered major setbacks after the off-take point was shifted from Jurala to the Srisaillam reservoir during the previous regime.

He further pointed out that tenders called by the BRS gov't for distributor network did not help the project as the land acquisition process for the canal system was not completed. It led to implementation hurdles. Officials at the meeting were directed to prepare a comprehensive report detailing the progress of works, and priority-wise execution schedules for all ongoing projects in the region.

Telugu states sizzle, mercury soars to 48.1 Degrees celsius in Andhra's piduguralla

Hyderabad, May 21 (GNS) T Telugu states are in the grip of intense heat wave conditions as Piduguralla in Andhra Pradesh sizzled at 48.1 degrees Celsius while Dilawarpur in Telangana recorded 46.5 degrees Celsius on Thursday.

As many as 19 districts in Telangana recorded the highest temperature of 46 degrees Celsius and above, while the maximum temperature in 18 districts of Andhra Pradesh exceeded 45 degrees Celsius. In light of the heat intensity rising to record levels in both states, authorities urged the public to remain vigilant.

According to Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority Managing Director Prakhar Jain, a maximum temperature of 48.1 degrees Celsius was recorded in Piduguralla in Palnadu district. He said that temperatures exceeded 45 degrees in 18 districts. He further revealed that out of the state's 28 districts, temperatures exceeding 44 degrees were recorded in 200 mandals across 20 districts. He specifically highlighted that the heat intensity was particularly severe in 26 mandals of Palnadu district, 23 in Prakasam, 22 in Krishna, 21 in Eluru, 20 in Bapatla, 15 in NTR, 14 in Guntur, and 11 in Markapuram.

As the severe heat is likely to persist until Monday (May 25), he advised people to postpone travel between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.



He stated that on Friday (May 22), severe heatwave conditions are likely to prevail in 15 mandals, while heatwave conditions are expected to affect 219 mandals.

Temperatures ranging from 45 degrees Celsius to 47 degrees Celsius are likely to be recorded in certain areas of the Alluri Sitarama Raju, Polavaram, Konaseema, East Godavari, West Godavari, Eluru, Krishna, NTR, Guntur, Bapatla, Palnadu, Markapuram, and Prakasam districts.

Temperatures ranging from 43 degrees Celsius to 45 degrees Celsius are likely to be recorded in certain areas of the Kakinada and Nellore districts. Temperatures ranging from 40 degrees Celsius to 43 degrees Celsius are likely to be recorded in certain areas of the Sriakulam, Vizianagaram, Parvathipuram Manyam, Visakhapatnam, Anakapalli, Kurnool, Nandyal, Anantapur, Sri Sathya Sai, YSR Kadapa, Annamayya, Chittoor, and Tirupati districts.

Delivery Boy Held For Supplying Mule Accounts, Earned 50K Each



Hyderabad: A 27-year-old delivery boy was arrested by the Cyberabad police on Friday, May 21, for allegedly supplying bank accounts for cybercrime activities.

Dilip Singh, from Jeedimetla, was paid Rs 25,000 for each savings account and Rs 50,000 for each current account. He was a mule account holder, police said.

The delivery boy worked for a gang involved in trading fraud, digital arrest, online gaming, stalking, part-time job frauds, and other online financial scams.

Dilip had come into contact with the cybercriminals through an Instagram advertisement in 2024. After clicking the advertisement link, he was able to communicate with the fraudsters through WhatsApp, who offered him money in exchange for bank accounts. When Dilip

asked what the accounts would be used for, the fraudsters reportedly admitted to using them for cybercrime. Despite knowing the illegal use, he willingly participated for easy monetary gains.

He allegedly collected and forwarded bank account details, ATM cards, SIM cards, passbooks, cheque books and other linked banking materials to cyber fraudsters for commission, police said.

Upon his arrest, police seized Rs 1.02 lakh cash, three phones, 12 debit cards and one credit card, three bank passbooks and seven cheque books. Investigation also revealed that certain bank employees allegedly colluded with the accused persons in facilitating the opening and supply of bank accounts. Further investigation is underway to identify.

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