

NORTH EAST BUSINESS MIRROR

Vol.No. 02 ■ Issue - 20 ■ North East Business Mirror ■ Sunday, September 01, 2024 ■ Edition - Guwahati

■ Pages - 4 ■ Price ₹ 3

Rooftop solar capacity up 26 pc in India in Jan-June amid govt push



New Delhi: The country registered 26 per cent growth in rooftop solar capacity addition (year-on-year) at 1.1 gigawatt (GW) in the first half this year -- from 873 MW installed in the same period last year, a report has said. The 1.1 GW of rooftop solar capacity is the highest half-yearly installations to date, according to Mercom India's report. Residential rooftop solar projects largely drove the installation growth under the 'PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana'.

The report mentioned that the rooftop solar capacity additions in the second quarter this year (April-June period) were unprecedented, with 731 MW, up 89 per cent YoY from 388 MW. According to Priyadarshini Sanjay, Managing Director of Mercom India, the residential sector's contribution, historically overshadowed by the commercial and industrial (C&I) sector, soared around 10-fold from the previous quarter.

Sequentially, capacity additions grew by 99 per cent from 367 MW. Rooftop solar accounted for almost 15 per cent of total solar installations in the quarter. Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu were the leading states for rooftop solar capacity additions during the quarter, collectively contributing over 81 per cent of the total installations.

India's cumulative installed rooftop solar capacity reached 11.6 GW (As of June). The top 10 states accounted for over 78 per cent of this cumulative capacity, said the report. Meanwhile, India's addition to solar power capacity jumped by 282 per cent to nearly 15 GW in the first half of 2024, which is the highest-ever half-yearly installation.

Centre partners Visa to skill 20,000 youth for tourism industry

New Delhi: The government on Friday said it has signed a pact with global digital payments leader Visa for a three-year partnership, valued at up to \$1 million, to skill 20,000 youth for the booming tourism industry. The Tourism and Hospitality Skill Council (THSC), under the aegis of Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the company, a global leader in digital payments, for a three-year partnership valued at up to \$1 million.

"India's tourism industry has immense potential to drive economic growth and generate millions of jobs across the country. This partnership with Visa is a pivotal step towards realizing and unlocking that potential, equipping our youth with skills needed to thrive in the tourism sector and make India a premier global tourism destination," said Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

The move aim to train youth across 10 states, including Assam, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, and West Bengal to elevate the tourism service experience for tourists. The ministry said that the programme will focus on essential roles within the domestic tourism industry, such as tour guides, customer service executives, naturalists, and paragliding tandem pilots.

Sensex climbs 231 points to settle at new all-time closing high of 82,365; Nifty up 83 points to hit fresh peak of 25,235

Mumbai: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty marched higher to scale fresh lifetime closing peaks on Friday, tracking a largely firm trend in global markets and renewed foreign fund inflows. Buying in index majors Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank and Infosys also fuelled the rally in equities.

Rallying for the ninth straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 231.16 points or 0.28 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 82,365.77. During the day, it jumped 502.42 points or 0.61 per cent to hit a record intra-day peak of 82,637.03.

The NSE Nifty soared 83.95 points or 0.33 per cent to hit a new lifetime closing high of 25,235.90, taking its victorious run to the 12th day in a row. During the day, it surged 116.4 points or 0.46 per cent to hit a



new record intra-day peak of 25,268.35.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, NTPC, Power Grid, Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel and Tata Consultancy Services were the biggest gainers. In contrast, Tata Motors, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries, Tech Mahindra and ITC were among the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and

Hong Kong settled with gains.

European markets were trading in positive territory. The US markets ended on a mixed note on Thursday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 3,259.56 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors lapped up equities worth Rs 2,690.85 crore.

"Continuation of accumu-

lation of quality large-caps by the DIIs (Domestic Institutional Investors) and HNIs and the FIIs reducing their selling significantly and buying on certain days have contributed to the resilience of the market," said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.08 per cent to USD 80 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark jumped 349.05 points or 0.43 per cent to settle at an all-time closing high of 82,134.61 on Thursday, extending its winning momentum to the eighth day in a row. Rallying for the 11th straight session, the Nifty surged 99.60 points or 0.40 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 25,151.95.

Reliance Industries board to meet on September 5 to consider bonus issue of shares

Mumbai: The board of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) will meet on September 5 to consider a bonus issue in the ratio of 1:1. The windfall will increase the liquidity of RIL shares and make it more affordable to retail investors.

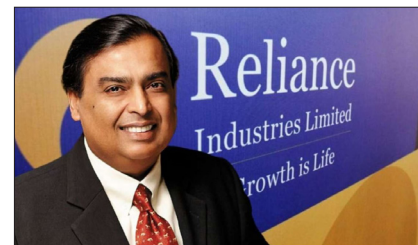
"A meeting of the board of directors of the company is scheduled to be held on Thursday, September 5, 2024, to consider and recommend to the shareholders for their approval, issue of bonus shares in the ratio of 1:1 to the equity shareholders of the company," Reliance said in a stock exchange filing.

In a bonus issue, free shares are issued to existing shareholders — as on the record date set by the company — by capitalising reserves. In other words, part of the accumulated earnings or reserves are converted into share capital. The proposed bonus overshadowed other announcements made by Mukesh D Ambani, chairman

of RIL, at its 47th annual general meeting (AGM) on Thursday.

The proposed bonus will be the sixth by the diversified giant: the last one was in 2017-18 in the ratio of 1:1. Bonuses of a similar ratio were declared in 2009-10 and 1997-98. The first offer was made in 1980-81 in the ratio of 3:5, followed by a 6:10 offer in 1983-84.

Addressing shareholders at the AGM, Ambani attributed the reward of free additional shares to its strong growth. "When it comes to our value creation strategy at Reliance, we have always believed in speaking by action rather than words. "Therefore, I have full confidence that the future growth prospects of all our businesses will become a reality within the timelines outlined by me," Ambani said.



"Higher growth will surely bring richer rewards for you. This confidence is reflected in our notice to the stock exchanges that the board of directors will meet on September 5 to consider issuing bonus shares in the ratio of 1:1."

He said his father and RIL's founder Dhirubhai Ambani firmly believed the shareholders are the backbone of Reliance and they deserve a substantial reward from time to time as the company grows from strength to strength. "I have supreme confidence in the robust performance and bright future growth prospects of all our businesses," he said.

IndiGo to re-start flights from Delhi airport's Terminal 1 from September 2

Mumbai: IndiGo on Friday said it will resume operations from Terminal 1 (T1) at the Delhi airport from September 2. The airline will operate 35 departures daily from T1.

"Proactive measures have been taken to ensure that passengers are well-informed about this transition. Domestic flight with flight numbers 2000-2999 will operate from Terminal 2 and flight numbers from 5000-5999 will operate from Terminal 3 and rest all flights will operate from Terminal 1," the airline said in a release.

The new T1 at the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) started operations on August 17. The old T1 was temporarily shut on June 28 following a roof collapse incident and flight operations from the terminal were shifted to T2 and T3.

Axis Mutual Fund launches Axis Consumption Fund to tap into India's booming consumer sector



Guwahati: Axis Mutual Fund has launched the Axis Consumption Fund, an open-ended equity scheme focused on India's consumption theme. The New Fund Offer (NFO) will be open from August 23 to September 6, 2024, allowing investors to benefit from India's growing consumer market, driven by rising incomes and urbanization. The fund is benchmarked against the NIFTY India Consumption TRI and will be managed by Mr. Hitesh Das, Mr. Shreyash Devalkar, and Ms. Krishnaa Narayan.

The Axis Consumption Fund aims to provide diversified exposure to sectors like FMCG, auto, healthcare, and realty, capitalizing on India's con-

sumption-driven growth. With a minimum application amount of Rs. 100, the fund targets long-term investors seeking to tap into the evolving consumer landscape.

Guwahati, known for its robust retail growth and increasing consumer spending, is expected to benefit from the fund's focus on urbanization and premiumization. The fund's strategic emphasis aligns with Guwahati's expanding middle class and rising demand for branded products.

Axis Mutual Fund's Chief Investment Officer, Mr. Ashish Gupta, highlighted the fund's potential to capture India's dynamic consumption trends, offering investors a promising avenue for wealth creation.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance's AUM soars past Rs 3 lakh crore

Shillong: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Co. Ltd. has reached a new milestone, with its Assets Under Management (AUM) surpassing ₹3 lakh crore. As of July 31, 2024, the company's AUM stood at ₹3.14 lakh crore, underscoring its robust growth and the increasing trust of its customers.

Anup Bagchi, Managing Director and CEO of ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, commented on this achievement, stating, "Crossing the ₹3 lakh crore mark highlights our commitment to helping customers achieve their long-term financial goals. Our focus on simplifying products and processes has been a key driver of this growth."

In Shillong, this achievement is resonating with investors who are looking for reliable financial products that offer security and growth. The city's increasing engagement with life insurance products from ICICI Prudential reflects a broader trend of financial maturity and planning in the region.

ICICI Prudential Life's dedication to excellence is further demonstrated by its claim settlement ratio of 99.17% in FY2024, with an average turnaround time of just 1.27 days. This solidifies the company's standing as a trusted provider in the life insurance sector, committed to delivering on promises and enhancing customer satisfaction.

Super.money and Utkarsh Small Finance Bank announces world's first UPI-enabled credit card

Guwahati: super.money has teamed up with Utkarsh Small Finance Bank to launch the world's first UPI-enabled credit card, superCard, a revolutionary addition to the credit market. This co-branded credit card, unveiled at the Global Fintech Fest 2024, integrates UPI functionality with a secured credit card on the RuPay network. It features credit limits ranging from Rs 90 to Rs 9 lakh, making it accessible to a diverse customer base.

The superCard allows users to obtain a credit card with a minimum deposit of Rs 100, which earns attractive interest. This approach provides a low entry point into the credit ecosystem while also allowing

users to build their credit profile. Cardholders can enjoy rewards such as lifetime access to superUPI, 5% off on Myntra, 3% off on Cleartrip, 2% off on Flipkart, and 0.5% cashback on all eligible transactions.

In Guwahati, the introduction of superCard is expected to drive significant growth in credit card adoption. With an increasing shift towards digital payments in the region, the card's UPI integration offers a convenient and inclusive financial solution for local consumers, potentially boosting the credit card user base.

Govind Singh, MD & CEO of Utkarsh Small Finance Bank, highlighted the card's role in enhancing financial inclusion, while



Prakash Sikaria, Founder & CEO of super.money, emphasized its impact on democratizing access to credit.

Himalaya Wellness Company reaches milestone with one million trees planted across India

Shillong: Himalaya Wellness Company, a leading wellness brand in India, has announced the successful planting of over one million trees across the country. This achievement was celebrated with the planting of the one millionth tree by dedicated Himalaya employees, marking a significant step towards the company's commitment to environmental sustainability as part of its 2030 vision.

Himalaya's reforestation efforts focus on regions of high ecological significance, particularly the Western Ghats, where they have planted over nine lakh trees. This initiative is vital for restoring biodiversity and mitigating climate

change, especially in Maharashtra and Karnataka. The company has also expanded its environmental conservation efforts to Meghalaya, where over 30,000 indigenous trees have been planted in Kyrdekmlha, Perkseh, and Mawphlang.

From a local perspective, Shillong has seen growing interest in eco-friendly products and sustainability initiatives, reflecting a positive reception of Himalaya's efforts. The company's collaboration with the Khasi tribe to build eco-villages and promote sustainable farming practices is seen as a step forward in aligning local economic growth with environmental conservation.

MG announces India's first intelligent CUV, the Windsor, featuring 15.6-inch GRANDVIEW touch display

Guwahati: JSW MG Motor India has introduced the MG Windsor, heralded as India's first Intelligent Crossover Utility Vehicle (CUV). Unveiled on August 26, 2024, the Windsor boasts the segment's largest 15.6-inch 'GRANDVIEW Touch Display,' redefining in-car experiences by transforming the vehicle into an entertainment, gaming, and learning hub when stationary.

Inspired by the architectural grandeur of the UK's Windsor Castle, the MG Windsor combines meticulous craftsmanship with luxury. The 15.6-inch touchscreen enhances both functionality and aesthetics, perfectly complement-

ing the Windsor's sophisticated design. This intelligent CUV blends aerodynamic design with spacious interiors, catering to the evolving demands of Indian consumers, whether for daily commutes or weekend getaways.

The MG Windsor's design, reflecting the royal heritage of its namesake, also boasts higher ground clearance, ensuring smooth navigation across India's diverse terrains. With the Guwahati showing an increasing appetite for premium and versatile vehicles, the MG Windsor is poised to meet the region's growing demand for innovative automotive solutions that combine luxury with everyday practicality.

MG Windsor teases First-in-Segment 'Infinity View Glass Roof' in its latest video

Guwahati: JSW MG Motor India, in a latest video, has teased the 'Infinity Glass Roof' of its much-anticipated vehicle - MG Windsor, India's first Intelligent Crossover Utility Vehicle [CUV]. This innovation has a bespoke design that seamlessly fuses the outdoor environment with the plush cabin of the car, providing the occupants with a panoramic and immersive driving experience. With this expansive glass roof, proud owners of the MG Windsor can enjoy an uninterrupted connection with the outdoors, whether navigating

through urban landscapes or the serene countryside. This one-of-a-kind feature not only adds a touch of luxury but also enhances the sense of space, resulting in an airy feel inside the advanced cabin, making every journey more enjoyable.

The Infinity View Glass Roof perfectly complements the Windsor's elegant design, making it an ideal choice for Indian consumers who value both premium style and comfort. As the Indian road network and infrastructure continue to evolve, the need for CUVs has become progressively rel-

evant. CUVs offer a perfect blend of aerodynamic design and spacious interiors, making them ideal for navigating bustling urban roads and tighter spaces in smaller towns. Due to their versatility and adaptability, CUVs ensure that families can travel in ample comfort, whether it's for daily commutes or weekend getaways. The vehicle's higher ground clearance allows for better navigation over potholes, speed bumps, and uneven surfaces, all translating into a smoother and more comfortable drive.

Aeron Composite Ltd launches Rs. 56.10 crore IPO to fuel expansion



Guwahati: Aeron Composite Ltd, a prominent player in the fiber glass reinforced polymer industry, is set to raise up to Rs. 56.10 crore through its initial public offering (IPO), which opens on August 28, 2024, and closes on August 30, 2024. The company will issue 44.88 lakh equity shares at a price range of Rs. 121 to Rs. 125 per share. The IPO aims to support the construction of a new manufacturing unit in Mehsana, Gujarat, and fund general corporate needs. Hem Securities Ltd is the book running lead manager for this offering.

Founded in 2011 and holding an ISO 9001:2015 certification, Aeron Composite has demonstrated strong financial performance, with FY23-24 (till February 2024) revenue at Rs. 179.14 crore and a net profit of Rs. 9.42 crore. The company's products are exported to over 30 countries.

In Guwahati, the IPO is expected to garner significant attention due to the city's burgeoning industrial landscape and increasing demand for high-quality composite materials. Aeron Composite's expansion plans align with the region's growth trajectory, presenting an attractive investment opportunity for local investors and businesses seeking to leverage the company's advanced FRP products and innovation-driven approach.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor teams up with Union Bank to transform vehicle financing

Shillong: Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) has unveiled a strategic partnership with Union Bank of India, aimed at offering groundbreaking vehicle financing solutions to customers across India. This new alliance provides up to 90% financing on the on-road price of Toyota vehicles for private use, without foreclosure or part-payment charges.

The collaboration features two key schemes: the Union Vehicle Scheme for private vehicles, offering flexible tenures up to 84 months with interest rates starting at 8.80% per annum, and the Union Parivahan Scheme for commercial

vehicles, with tenures up to 60 months. Union Bank's extensive branch network ensures easy access to these financing options nationwide.

In Shillong, this partnership is set to significantly impact the market by providing residents with more accessible financing solutions for Toyota vehicles. This move is expected to enhance Toyota's presence in the region, where demand for high-quality vehicles is on the rise.

Mr. Sabari Manohar, Vice President of Sales-Service-



Used Car Business at TKM, emphasized the initiative's role in improving customer experience by offering more accessible and flexible financing options. Union Bank's General Manager, Mr. Arun Kumar, highlighted the bank's commitment to streamlining the auto finance process, enhancing customer convenience.

Large & Mid Cap Fund launch by ITI Asset Management Company

Guwahati: ITI Asset Management Company Ltd (ITI AMC) has announced the launch of ITI Large & Mid Cap Fund, an open-ended scheme that will invest in equity, equity related securities, primarily in the top 250 companies engaged in India growth story. The scheme opens for subscription on August 21, 2024, and closes on September 4, 2024. The MF scheme aims to offer long-term capital growth by in-

vesting in companies actively involved in this dynamic sector, providing investors with a pathway to diversification and capital appreciation.

According to Mr Vishal Jajoo, Fund Manager at ITI AMC "India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, and the "growth companies" would continue to command a premium for the visibility in earnings that they offer. We as a fund house adopt bottoms up approach in

selection of scrips."

The minimum application amount for the scheme is Rs 5,000, while investors can invest through Systematic Investment Plan route at a minimum amount of Rs 500. The scheme will not have any entry load charges, while an exit load of 0.5% will be charged to investors if the units are redeemed or switched out on or before the completion of 3 months from the date of allotment of units.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor reinforces commitment to gender equality on Women's Equality Day

Shillong: As Women's Equality Day approaches on August 26th, Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) has reaffirmed its dedication to gender equality and the empowerment of women within its workforce and beyond. Aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), TKM is making significant strides toward creating a more inclusive and diverse workplace.

A key goal for TKM is to increase women's representation in its workforce to 30% by 2030. To achieve this, the company has launched several Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives,

including forming a dedicated senior-level DEI team and aligning its efforts with the International Labour Organization's 2030 agenda. TKM recently celebrated a major milestone by inducting 160 new female team members and capping its first batch of 55 women supervisors, raising the total number of women in the company to over 450.

Beyond its Bangalore headquarters, TKM's commitment to gender equality resonates across various markets, including Shillong. Local women in Shillong's automotive sector have welcomed TKM's initiatives as they pave the way for more inclusive industry practices, fostering a progressive and equitable market environment.



Toyota Kirloskar Motor's ongoing investments in infrastructure, such as the construction of a dormitory to house 600 female students at the Toyota Technical Training Institute (TTTI), and the enhancement of safety features, further underline its commit-

Godrej Consumer Products reimagines bathing with Cinthol Foam Bodywash innovation

Guwahati: Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL) is setting a new benchmark in the Indian bodywash sector with its latest innovation, Cinthol Foam Bodywash. Priced at INR 120 for a 200ml bottle, this new product is designed to captivate the INR 900 crore market by offering a unique foam-based format that eliminates the need for a loofah.

The Cinthol Foam Bodywash features an automatic foamer that produces instant, rich lather, making it easy to rinse off and eliminating the concerns of loofah hygiene. This move comes as GCPL addresses barriers that have kept bodywash adoption low, with traditional soap still being the choice for 90% of Indian consumers.

In Guwahati, where traditional bathing products dominate, Cinthol Foam Bodywash is anticipated to attract a growing segment of consumers seeking modern, convenient solutions. The product's affordability and innovative format are expected to resonate well with Guwahati's evolving consumer preferences, providing an accessible luxury that enhances daily routines.

A Statistical Report by IIM Bangalore Professors

Guwahati: Researchers from the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, and SP Jain Institute of Management & Research recently published a joint report, which objectively concludes that the effect of the user's skill is significantly more than that of chance, in determining the winnability in a fantasy sports contest. The study, "Decision Support System for Policy-Making: Quantifying Skill and Chance in Daily Fantasy Sports (DFS)", further proposes a data-driven approach to determine, through empirical evidence, whether any game is a game of skill or chance. This is the second paper by Professor U Dinesh Kumar, which focuses on studying the statistical aspects of online games.

This study goes beyond measuring the effect of skill and chance on a user's performance. Also, it focuses on quantifying several other indicators of skill, such as the effect of user's past performance, experience and recent participation, which have not been studied previously.

U. Dinesh Kumar, Professor, IIMB, emphasized the significance of these findings: "This research provides a decision support system that can allow policymakers to objectively and quantitatively differentiate between games of skill and chance. The framework proposed in the study can be replicated for any online game, subject to data availability."



MG Windsor triumphs in Rann of Kutch, showcases unmatched performance

Guwahati: JSW MG Motor India's latest innovation, the MG Windsor, has successfully demonstrated its exceptional capabilities in the extreme conditions of the Rann of Kutch, Gujarat. As India's first Crossover Utility Vehicle (CUV), the MG Windsor has proven its prowess in one of the world's largest salt deserts, enduring temperatures exceeding 44°C.

The latest promotional video highlights the Windsor's robust design and advanced technology, showcasing its ability to handle the harsh, unforgiving terrain with remarkable resilience. This performance test not only underscores the vehicle's durability but also establishes its dominance in real-world conditions. The MG Windsor features cutting-edge amenities such as segment-first 'Aero-Lounge Seats' and an 'Infinity View Glass Roof', setting a new standard for luxury and comfort in its category.

Inspired by the grandeur of Windsor Castle, the MG

Windsor reflects the same meticulous craftsmanship and royal heritage. This alignment with high standards is expected to resonate with Indian consumers seeking a blend of premium features and practical performance.

In Guwahati, the MG Windsor is anticipated to attract considerable interest due to its versatility and advanced features, appealing to families and professionals alike. The vehicle's design and performance are seen as highly relevant to the diverse driving conditions and urban landscapes of the region.

JSW MG Motor India, a joint venture between SAIC Motor and JSW Group, continues to focus on developing advanced automotive technologies while strengthening the local manufacturing landscape and creating job opportunities. MG Motor's legacy of innovation and excellence, evident in its state-of-the-art facility in Gujarat, reinforces its commitment to delivering futuristic vehicles to the Indian market.

Ashwin Supports IPL's Impact Player Rule, Cites Strategic Benefits

New Delhi: Veteran Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has voiced his support for the Indian Premier League's 'Impact Player' rule, suggesting it enhances the strategic depth of the game and promotes fairness. Contrary to criticisms from prominent figures like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma—who argue the rule could stifle the development of Indian allrounders—Ashwin believes the regulation introduces a new layer of tactical nuance.

Introduced in the 2023 IPL season, the 'Impact Player' rule allows teams to substitute a player during a match, adapting their lineup to the evolving demands of the game. This rule, Ashwin contends, is a boon for strategic planning rather than

a hindrance to player development.

Speaking on former captain Krishnamachari Srikkanth's YouTube show, Ashwin elaborated on his stance. "The 'Impact Player' rule enriches the strategic framework of the IPL. It's not just about swapping players; it's about enhancing the tactical complexity of matches," he explained, according to 'ESPNCricinfo'.

Ashwin refuted the notion that the rule deters players from honing all-round skills, citing rising stars who have utilized these new tactical opportunities to excel. "Venkatesh Iyer's success at Lancashire exemplifies this. The rule encourages innovation and can help balance games, especially in scenarios like



excessive dew, which can otherwise lead to one-sided matches," he added. The spinner highlighted a particular instance from the Qualifier 2 of the recent IPL season where Sunrisers Hyderabad's strategic use of Shahbaz Ahmed as an 'Impact Player' proved game-changing. Ahmed's performance not only secured

a victory but also demonstrated how teams could effectively counter environmental factors like dew.

Ashwin also pointed to the broader benefits of the rule in fostering new talent within the league. "Players like Shahbaz Ahmed, Shivam Dube, and Dhruv Jurel have made significant strides in their careers, partly due to the opportunities afforded by this rule," he noted. The discourse around the 'Impact Player' rule continues as stakeholders in Indian cricket and beyond debate its implications for the future of the sport. Ashwin's endorsement adds a significant voice in favor of maintaining and potentially expanding the strategic elements it introduces to the IPL.

Pooja Singh breaks U20 NR in high jump to qualify for final at World U20 C'ships



Lima: India's Pooja Singh rewrote the national U20 women's national record in high jump to qualify for the final with a ninth-place finish in the qualification round at the ongoing World Athletics U20 Championships here.

The 17-year-old, who hails from Fatehabad district of Haryana, cleared a height of 1.83m to finish second in qualification round group B and ninth overall late Thursday night and qualify for the final to be held on August 31. Pooja broke her own national U20 record of 1.82m set last year in Korea while winning a silver medal at the Asian U20 Championships.

Nine athletes in group A and three in group B made the cut for the final. Pooja, who started her journey at the Parta Sports Academy under coach Balwan Singh without proper landing mat or equipment, had won gold in the U-14 girls' category with a jump of 1.41m but picked up a quadricep injury which kept her out for 15 months. On her return, Pooja won a gold medal in the U-16 girls' category at the 2022 junior nationals with a new national record of 1.76m before claiming another gold in U-18 category at 2022 youth national championships.

Ronaldo to Receive UEFA Award for Champions League Scoring Record

New Delhi: Cristiano Ronaldo, the legendary football icon and the UEFA Champions League's all-time leading scorer, is set to be honored with a special award by UEFA. The recognition will be bestowed upon him by UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin during the inaugural draw ceremony of the 2024/25 UEFA Champions League's new 36-team league phase, scheduled for Thursday at Monaco's Grimaldi Forum.

Ronaldo, whose illustrious career spans clubs like Sporting Clube de Portugal, Manchester United, Real Madrid, and Juventus, has netted an impressive 140 goals in 183 Champions League appearances. This feat places him 11 goals ahead of his closest rival, Lionel Messi, and 46 goals above Robert Lewandowski, who is third on the list. The statement from UEFA President Ceferin praised Ronaldo's un-

matched contributions to Europe's top club competition: "Cristiano Ronaldo is one of the brightest stars in the UEFA Champions League constellation. His extraordinary goalscoring achievements in the competition seem destined to stand the test of time, posing a remarkable challenge for future generations to surpass. His sustained excellence at the highest level is a testament to his relentless pursuit of both team and individual honors."

Ronaldo's record includes finishing as the Champions League's top scorer in seven different seasons, more than any other player. His scoring spree ranges from eight goals during Manchester United's victorious 2007/08 campaign to a staggering 15 goals in 2017/18 when Real Madrid secured their third consecutive title. Moreover, Ronaldo also holds the record for the most goals in a single Champions League



season, having scored 17 times in 2013/14, including a crucial goal in the extra-time final victory against Atletico Madrid.

The Portuguese forward has lifted the Champions League trophy five times—once with Manchester United and four times with Real Madrid. He is the only player to have scored in three different Champions League finals (2008, 2014, 2017), underscoring his ability to deliver on the biggest stage.

Kohli and Jaiswal Climb, Rohit Drops in Latest ICC Test Rankings

Dubai: In the latest ICC Test rankings update, Indian cricketers saw a mixed shift in their positions. Virat Kohli, the seasoned batter, climbed two spots to secure the eighth position, while Rohit Sharma, the team captain, experienced a slight drop, falling one place to sixth. The rankings also highlighted the ascent of young talent Yashasvi Jaiswal, who moved up to the seventh spot.

At the pinnacle of the rankings, Joe Root of England retained his top position, underscored by his performances in the recent Test against Sri Lanka in Manchester. His teammate Harry Brook made significant strides, jumping three places to claim the fourth spot, sur-



passing notable players such as Babar Azam of Pakistan and Australia's Steve Smith.

Babar Azam faced a notable decline, plummeting six places to ninth, after a disappointing performance in the

Rawalpindi Test against Bangladesh. Conversely, Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan ascended seven places to break into the top ten at a joint tenth, courtesy of his century in the same match. Mushfiqur Rahim of Bangladesh also made notable gains, moving up seven places to 17th, marking a career-best in the rankings.

In the bowling rankings, India's Ravichandran Ashwin held steady at the top, with Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja maintaining their third and seventh positions, respectively. England's Chris Woakes and Sri Lanka's Asitha Fernando also saw improvements, climbing to 16th and 17th places, respectively.

Pakistan Rejigs Squad, Drops Shaheen Afridi for Second Test Against Bangladesh

Rawalpindi: Pakistan's cricket team has made significant changes for the upcoming second Test against Bangladesh, notably dropping star pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi, following a heavy defeat in the series opener. The decision comes amid broader criticisms regarding team strategy and composition.

In the aftermath of the first Test, critiques from several former players suggested that Pakistan's decision to field four fast bowlers was misguided, advocating for a stronger spin presence. In response, the team management, led by head coach Jason Gillispie, has opted for a revised approach for the must-win game. Gillispie explained the rationale behind Shaheen's exclusion, emphasizing the need for the left-arm fast bowler to recharge both physically and mentally. "Shaheen has been through a busy period personally and professionally. Shaheen, who has been intermittent in his Test appearances due to a knee injury, will use this time to work on his game with bowling coach Azhar Mahmood, focusing on enhancing his effectiveness. The head coach expressed confidence in the current bowling lineup, believing it sufficiently covers all bases.

Gillispie also addressed concerns regarding over rates, an issue that cost the team both financially and competitively in the first Test.

Sathiyam Leads Dabang Delhi to 9-6 Victory Over Goa Challengers

Chennai: Dabang Delhi captain Sathiyam Gnanasekaran put up a dazzling show against Goa Challengers' Mihai Bobocica to set up a maiden win for his team in Ultimate Table Tennis league. In the battle of the Olympians, Bobocica struck first, taking the first game 11-8 via a 23-shot rally, the longest of the season so far. However, Sathiyam retaliated with an inspired comeback and took games two and three to claim the match. In the first women's singles match, Dabang Delhi's Orawan Paranang scripted history by becoming the first paddler to defeat Yangzi Liu in UTT.