

Maruti hits Manesar milestone: Cumulative production surpasses 1 crore units

Mumbai: Maruti Suzuki's Manesar facility has crossed the one crore cumulative production milestone. The company announced that the facility, which was commissioned in October 2006, achieved the milestone in 18 years, becoming the fastest among Suzuki's global automobile manufacturing facilities to reach the milestone. The one crore vehicle to roll out from Manesar was the popular compact SUV Brezza.

Spread over 600 acres, the Manesar facility manufactures the Brezza, Ertiga, XL6, Ciaz, Dzire, Wagon R, S-Presso, and Celerio. These models are sold in the domestic market and are exported to regions such as Latin America,

West Asia, Africa, and neighbouring countries in Asia.

Maruti Suzuki's first passenger car to be exported to Japan, the Baleno, was also manufactured at this facility. The company's overall production capability stands at about 2.35 million units per annum. The company's current market share in the Indian automobile industry stands at about 42 per cent. Since its inception, the company has produced over 3.11 crore vehicles as of October 6, 2024.

On attaining the milestone, Hisashi Takeuchi, managing director and CEO of Maruti Suzuki India Limited, said, "Crossing the one crore cumulative



production mark at our Manesar facility is a testament to India's manufacturing capability and our commitment to the larger national goal of 'Make in India'.

"With a strong focus on local manufacturing of components since its inception, the company has been able to establish a vast supply chain in India.

Through our large-scale manufacturing facilities, we have been able to provide direct and indirect employment to millions of people.

"Along with our supply chain partners, we will continue to contribute to making the automobile industry in India self-reliant and globally competitive."

The company has launched a number of special editions of its existing lineup to boost festive season sales. The most recent launch has been the Maruti Swift Blitz edition, apart from the Baleno Regal edition, the Grand Vitara Dominion, the Wagon R Waltz and the Ignis Radiane edition.

Zomato to mull proposal to raise funds from institutional investors, stock falls



Mumbai: The board of Zomato will meet on October 22 to consider a proposal to raise funds from institutional investors, its first since its initial public offer in July 2021.

Though the size of the offer is not known, there is a buzz about the online food delivery firm raising anywhere between ₹8,000 crore and ₹9,000 crore.

The stock markets reacted negatively to the announcement with the shares of Zomato ending with losses of 4.90 per cent at ₹257.40 on a day the BSE Sensex gained 218 points.

The proposed fund raising comes even as Zomato has cash reserves of ₹12,539 crore for the quarter ended June 30, 2024.

However, this was before its acquisition of Paytm's entertainment ticketing business for over ₹2,000 crore. Speculations are that Zomato could use the QIP proceeds to invest in quick commerce and expand in more cities in the country.

In a regulatory filing, the company informed that a meeting of the board of directors is scheduled to be held on October 22, 2024. Zomato added that at the meeting, its board will approve the second quarter results.

The company reported a net profit of ₹253 crore in the second quarter against ₹2 crore a year ago. Revenues in the quarter jumped 74 per cent to ₹4,206 crore against ₹1,416 crore a year ago.

Meta lays off staff at WhatsApp and Instagram to align with 'strategic goals'

Mumbai: Meta says it has laid off some employees, including staff at WhatsApp and Instagram, to realign its resources with its "strategic goals". A Meta spokesperson confirmed in a statement that some teams were making changes to align with their long-term goals and location strategy. Specific details on the number of impacted employees wasn't disclosed.

"This includes moving some teams to different locations, and moving some employees to different roles," Meta said in a statement. "In situations like this when a role is eliminated, we work hard to find other opportunities for impacted employees." The Verge, who first reported the layoffs, said cuts were made across teams that include messaging service WhatsApp and Instagram and Meta's virtual reality technology unit Reality Labs.

Among those affected was Jane Manchun Wong, a software engineer known for discovering unreleased features in popular social media



apps prior to joining Meta in 2023.

Meta has had several rounds of layoffs to adjust its staffing after it hired aggressively during the pandemic. Earlier this year, it cut several jobs in Reality Labs after letting go of 11,000 employees in 2022. Last year, another 10,000 jobs were cut as CEO Mark Zuckerberg deemed 2023 a "year of efficiency". "I'm still trying to process this but I'm informed that my role at Meta has been impacted," Wong wrote in a public Threads post.

Kotak Mahindra Bank buys personal loan book of Standard Chartered Bank

Mumbai: Kotak Mahindra Bank (KMBL) is acquiring the personal loan (PL) book of Standard Chartered Bank, India, which has a total loan outstanding of around ₹4,100 crore.

For Kotak Bank, the transaction is expected to strengthen its position in the retail credit market. Standard Chartered Bank said the sale will enable it to focus more on wealth and investment banking business in India.

Last year, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had tightened norms relating to unsecured loans such as personal loans and credit card outstandings by increasing the risk weightage. This has led to moderation in the growth of such lending.

The deal is expected to be completed over the next three months and is subject to regulatory and other approvals and the satisfaction or waiver of customary closing conditions, Kotak Mahindra Bank said in a regulatory filing. It added the proposed transaction consists of loans classified as "standard loans" (or loans that are performing and not NPAs) according to the RBI guidelines.

KMBL said it will acquire the loan book, which will be outstanding closer to the completion date. "This acquisition aligns with KMBL's strategy to transform for scale and focus on customer-centric growth," the lender said.

Reserve Bank of India bars four non-bank finance companies from issuing loans

Mumbai: Four non-bank finance companies, including city-based microfinance company Arohan Financial Services, were asked to cease and desist from sanction and disbursement of loans by the Reserve Bank of India, effective from the close of October 21, 2024. The other three companies are Chennai-based Asirvad Micro Finance Limited, New Delhi-based DMI Finance Private Limited and Bangalore-based Navi Finserv Limited, with the later two being in the category of investment and credit companies (NBFC-ICC).

The regulator in a statement on Thursday said that its action is based on material supervisory concerns in the pricing policy of these companies in terms of their weighted average lending rates and interest spread charged over their cost of funds, which are found to be excessive and also non adher-

ence to regulations laid down under various master circulars. They are also found to be in non conformity with the provisions laid down under the fair practices code issued by the RBI.

Manoj Nambiar, MD of Arohan Financial Services, declined to comment when reached out by this newspaper on Thursday evening. A spokesperson from Flipkart co-founder led Sachin Bansal's Navi Finserv said that they are reviewing the directions from the RBI and will work with the regulator to address all concerns.

"This matter has been immediately brought to the notice of our board and a meeting has been convened urgently to take immediate action. Asirvad Microfinance, which is a subsidiary of Manappuram Finance, has filed a draft prospectus for its proposed listing on the bourses.

India's domestic air passenger traffic clocks 5 pc growth, SpiceJet continues to lose share

New Delhi: India's domestic air passenger traffic reached 11.84 crore in the first nine months of the year, up against 11.28 crore during the corresponding period of the previous year, marking an annual growth of 4.99 per cent, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) data showed on Tues-

day. During the nine-month period (January-September), budget carrier IndiGo carried more than 7.25 crore passengers, clocking a market share of 61.3 per cent, followed by Tata Group-run Air India flying over 1.64 crore passengers with 13.9 per cent share, and Vistara registering a market

share of 9.8 per cent with 1.15 crore air passengers at the third position.

SpiceJet flew 47.42 lakh passengers at a 4.0 per cent market share in the July-September period, while Akasa Air ferried 54.03 lakh passengers at a 4.6 per cent market share, the aviation regulator's data showed.

The Government of Nagaland partners with Tata AIA to provide life insurance to its people

Mumbai: Tata AIA Life Insurance (Tata AIA), one of India's leading life insurers, has been selected by the Government of Nagaland to implement the Chief Minister's Universal Life Insurance Scheme (CMULIS). Under this scheme, the primary earning member of the family will be provided with life insurance cover of INR 2 lakh.

This scheme aims to give families the financial support they need in the unfortunate event of the demise of the breadwinner. It is specifically aimed at helping the vulnerable sections of society, such as those working in unorganized sectors or are part of low-income groups.

As part of the scheme, any one family member in the age group 18-60 years can be designated as the primary earning member or breadwinner. Government employees in the same age group will automatically

be considered as the primary breadwinner for their family. The State Government will cover the cost of the insurance premium.

Commenting on this landmark occasion, Shri Neiphiu Rio, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Nagaland said, "I am extremely happy to partner with Tata AIA Life Insurance and launch this scheme for the working population of Nagaland. Through this program, we are making Life Insurance accessible to Naga people. We hope to enroll all earning population in Nagaland under this scheme, thereby ensuring the financial security of several families."

Mr. Venky Iyer, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of Tata AIA Life Insurance, said, "We are honored to be part of the Chief Minister's Universal Life Insurance Scheme- Nagaland. This landmark initiative by the Government will ensure that the people of Nagaland especially those



in vulnerable segments or employed in unorganized sectors, benefit from the safety net of life insurance. This inclusive scheme will ensure financial security and peace of mind for the families of Nagaland".

Mr. Jeelani Basha, President & Chief Distribution Officer, Tata AIA Life Insurance, said, "Our partnership with the Government of Nagaland will enable us to provide life insurance coverage to nearly 3.5 lakh people in the State. We are committed to working together with the Government in this initiative."

Essilor launches new Varilux® campaign featuring Virat Kohli

Guwahati: Essilor®, a global leader in prescription lenses, has unveiled a new campaign for its Varilux® progressive lenses, starring renowned cricketer Virat Kohli. Targeting consumers aged 40 and above, the campaign aims to position Varilux® as the go-to solution for presbyopia, a common age-related vision condition.

In the campaign, Kohli advocates for Varilux® by recommending the lenses to his coach, showcasing their ability to deliver sharp vision at every distance. Since its inception in 1959 in France, Varilux® has maintained its status as the world's leading progressive lens brand. The latest Varilux® XR series™, engineered with AI technology, integrates up to 30 patents in a single lens for optimal vision correction.

Varilux® progressive lenses are priced starting at INR 8,900 and are available at LensCrafters and major optical stores.

In Guwahati, the demand for advanced eyewear solutions is growing, driven by an increasing number of consumers seeking effective presbyopia solutions. The city's expanding optical retail sector provides an ideal platform for Essilor's Varilux® lenses, aligning with the local population's needs for high-quality vision correction as they age.

Toyota launches Limited Edition Urban Cruiser Taisor for festive season



Shillong: In a move to enhance festive celebrations, Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) has unveiled the Limited Edition of its popular Urban Cruiser Taisor, designed to elevate style and premium features. Available across all Turbo variants, this special edition boasts a Toyota Genuine Accessories (TGA) package worth ₹20,160, featuring stylish enhancements for both exterior and interior.

Key features of the Limited Edition include front and rear under spoilers in granite grey and red, premium door sill guards, chrome garnishes

for headlamps and front grille, body side molding, door visors, all-weather 3D mats, and a welcome door lamp. These accessories will be installed by certified Toyota technicians at dealerships, ensuring high quality and customer satisfaction.

Mr. Sabari Manohar, Vice President of Sales-Service-Used Car Business at TKM, stated, "Our goal is to be a part of our customers' special occasions. We believe the Urban Cruiser Taisor Festive Edition offers something fresh and exciting for this season."

With its striking design and impressive specifications, including a 1.0L Turbo engine that delivers a best-in-segment fuel efficiency of 21.5 km/l, the Taisor has garnered attention from customers nationwide. In Shillong, the festive edition is expected to resonate well with consumers, as the local market embraces unique vehicle offerings, emphasizing style and functionality. Customers can book the vehicle online or visit their nearest Toyota dealership until 31st October 2024 to avail the complimentary accessories package.

India expels Canadian diplomats in retaliation for Nijjar accusations

Guwahati: India has expelled six Canadian diplomats, including Acting High Commissioner Stewart Ross Wheeler, in response to Canada's allegations linking Indian diplomats to the June 2023 assassination of Khalistan supporter Hardeep Singh Nijjar. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has set a deadline for their departure by 11:59 p.m. on October 19.

India's decision comes after a series of unfounded accusations from the Canadian government, which the Indian government has strongly rejected. The MEA stated that the Trudeau administration's actions compromise the safety of Indian diplomats amid rising extremism and violence. "We no longer trust the current Canadian government's commitment to ensuring their safety," the

ministry emphasized.

This incident has intensified scrutiny on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government, as analysts suggest that the accusations may serve as a strategy to rally support from the politically influential Sikh community ahead of the federal elections. The recent downturn in Trudeau's popularity, highlighted by a mere 26% approval rating in an Ipsos poll, reflects a broader discontent with rising crime and healthcare issues in Canada.

In Guwahati, market analysts note that the diplomatic row could impact trade relations between India and Canada, particularly affecting sectors reliant on bilateral exchanges. As local businesses prepare for potential shifts in trade policies, stakeholders remain vigilant about the ramifications on economic ties.

Kangla Fort lights up for Smile Train's Guinness record bid on World Smile Day®

Imphal: To raise awareness for children born with clefts, Smile Train India illuminated Imphal's Kangla Fort on October 4 as part of its Guinness World Records™ attempt for World Smile Day®. This nationwide initiative, covering 13 heritage landmarks, highlighted the organization's 25-year commitment to providing life-changing cleft surgeries to children across India.

Smile Train's Senior Vice President, Mamta Carroll, expressed the emotional impact of the campaign, noting, "Every landmark that lights up signifies hope for children born with clefts, shining a spotlight on the life-transforming surgeries provided by Smile Train."

Local partner, Shija Hospitals and Research Institute, played a key role in the event. Dr. Palin Khundongbam emphasized, "We are honored to be part of this initiative, helping cleft-affected children in Manipur."

In Imphal, the illumination of Kangla Fort resonated deeply with local vendors and residents. Many traders viewed this awareness effort as an opportunity to spotlight both the city's rich culture and the pressing health needs of children, hoping it could boost community engagement and promote more widespread support for cleft surgeries.

SBI General Insurance enhances rural healthcare in Meghalaya with eye care initiative



Shillong: SBI General Insurance has launched a comprehensive initiative aimed at improving access to eye care in rural Meghalaya. The program includes the donation of a Patient Transport Bus and the organization of 28 community eye check-up camps, targeting approximately 2,000 patients in remote areas. This initiative addresses significant healthcare accessibility challenges faced by residents, especially women, who often hesitate to seek medical attention due to transportation barriers.

In collaboration with Mission for Vision and the Society for Promotion of Eye Care and Sight (SPECS), the newly introduced Patient Transport Bus will facilitate the journey for

patients to SPECS' eye hospital in Shillong. This vital service aims to ease the burden on rural families by providing them with necessary medical support and reliable transportation options.

"Access to healthcare is a fundamental right, not a privilege," said Mr. Rathin Lahiri, Head of Brand Marketing & CSR at SBI General Insurance. He emphasized that this initiative is about empowering individuals to take charge of their health.

In Shillong, this initiative is expected to enhance local healthcare services and stimulate economic activity by increasing patient inflow into the city, ultimately benefiting both the healthcare sector and local businesses.

India again plans to curb laptop imports

New Delhi: India is expected to limit imports of laptops, tablets and personal computers after January, two government sources with direct knowledge of the matter said, a move to push companies such as Apple to increase domestic manufacturing. This plan, if implemented, could disrupt an industry worth \$8 billion to \$10 billion and reshape the dynamics of the IT hardware market in India, which is heavily reliant on imports. A similar plan to restrict imports was withdrawn last year following backlash from companies and lobbying from the United States.

Vi launches innovative solutions at India Mobile Congress 2024

Guwahati: At the India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2024, telecom leader Vi unveiled its theme "Future is LIVE," highlighting its commitment to transforming industries through advanced technologies like 5G and IoT. The event showcased how Vi is addressing contemporary challenges and enhancing everyday experiences with technology-driven solutions.

One of the key highlights was the 'Ready for Next' program, aimed at empowering small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with essential digital tools. Launched in 2022, the initiative has already partnered with 160,000 MSMEs across 16 sectors, offering free digital advisory services to foster growth and innovation.

Additionally, Vi introduced its 'Clinic in a Bag' healthcare solution, enabling real-time assessments in remote areas, conducting over 30 medical tests for under ₹250, thus enhancing healthcare accessibility.

In Guwahati, Vi's innovative solutions are poised to support local businesses and healthcare providers, bridging the digital gap and promoting economic development. As Akshaya Moondra, CEO of Vi, stated, "We are committed to harnessing advanced connectivity to transform industries and improve lives."

MSDE teams up with meta to revolutionize Skill India Mission with AI and VR innovations

Guwahati: The Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has partnered with Meta to launch two transformative initiatives: an AI Assistant for the Skill India Mission and five Centers of Excellence (CoEs) in Virtual Reality (VR) and Mixed Reality (MR). This partnership aims to enhance the learning experience on the Skill India Digital (SID) Portal through a chatbot powered by Meta's open-source Llama model, enabling seamless access to course information and interactive support.

The five CoEs, strategically located at National Skill Training Institutes in Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Jodhpur, Chennai, and Kanpur, will provide cutting-edge VR resources to equip learners and instructors with immersive learning experiences. As Shri Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge), stated, "Our mission is to empower India's youth with the skills they need to thrive in today's competitive landscape."



In Guwahati, these initiatives are expected to significantly boost local employability. With advanced training methods and technologies being introduced, the region can expect a more skilled workforce, ultimately attracting new businesses and investments. This strategic move aligns with the ongoing efforts to enhance the skill development ecosystem across India, fostering economic growth and innovation.

Bajaj Allianz Life expands in Northeast with first branch in Arunachal Pradesh

Itanagar: Bajaj Allianz Life, one of India's top private life insurers, has launched its first branch in Naharlagun, Arunachal Pradesh, strengthening its presence in the Northeast. This strategic move aims to boost life insurance accessibility and promote financial inclusion in the region. The new branch offers a comprehensive range of life insurance products, including financial planning, policy servicing, and claims support, ensuring tailored solutions for local customers.

Rajesh Krishnan, Chief Operations & Customer Experience Officer, emphasized the importance of this expansion, stating, "The Northeast holds immense potential, and this branch marks a significant step toward providing financial security for all. Aligned with IRDAI's 'Insurance for All by 2047' vision, we are committed to making life insurance accessible across the region."

For Itanagar, the nearby branch in Naharlagun is expected to boost financial awareness and accessibility. The availability of Bajaj Allianz Life's services is set to encourage long-term financial planning, benefiting individuals and families in the capital city and fostering financial security.

Bajaj Allianz Life's move aligns with its mission to become Arunachal Pradesh's preferred life insurance partner by offering customized products and services to meet the financial goals of its customers.

Introducing exclusive 'Festive Limited Edition' of the Glanza



Shillong: Marking the festive spirit, Toyota Kirloskar Motor has announced the introduction of 'Festival Limited Edition' of the Toyota Glanza. Customers can now enjoy exclusive dealer-fitted Toyota Genuine Accessory (TGA) packages, designed to elevate their driving experience with enhanced style, performance and comfort of the Glanza during this festive period. Celebrated for its advanced technology, sleek design, and high fuel efficiency, since 2019, the limited-edition Toyota Glanza comes equipped with 13 exclusive TGA Package, worth ₹20,567. The vehicle features standout elements like premium chrome and black body side moulding, back door garnish chrome, and ORVM garnish chrome.

Mr. Sabari Manohar – Vice President, Sales-Service-Used Car Business, Toyota Kirloskar Motor, said, "Our aim is to bring added excitement to our customers during this festive season with the introduction of the 'Festival Limited Edition' of the Toyota Glanza. Glanza has always been appreciated for its blend of dynamic-sporty design, advanced features, and superior performance, and with this limited edition, we are enhancing its appeal even further."

As a part of the festive offer, the complimentary TGA packages for the customers opting for Toyota Glanza Festival Limited Edition will be available until 31st October 2024. Furthermore, each accessory is expertly fitted by certified Toyota technicians at dealerships, ensuring quality to deliver unmatched customer experience.

With the all-new Kylaq Škoda Auto India initiates its New Era

Guwahati: Škoda Auto had made its ambitions to grow the brand in India clear with the announcement of a compact SUV in February this year. A nation-wide naming campaign got the Kylaq its name, which will be premiered globally on November 6, 2024. With the Kylaq, Škoda Auto India will offer a range of SUVs including the luxury offering Kodiaq and the first launch from Škoda Auto's India 2.0 project, the mid-sized SUV, Kushaq. The Kylaq will see Škoda Auto present in the sub-4m segment, which holds almost 30% of the total Indian car market and is one of the fastest-growing segments in India.



ening our 'Make In India' commitment."

The 189mm of ground clearance in the Kylaq ensured it tackled all obstacles it was put through for the test. Moreover, the Kylaq undergoes many quality practices in the manufacturing process itself ensuring class-leading safety and dynamics. The roof and other joints are laser-blazed, the geometry setting of the Kylaq is robotised, inline measurements of the chassis are done at two locations and AI cameras at the assembly line inspect for variations and inconsistencies on the engine surface.

Piyush Arora, Managing Director and CEO, Škoda Auto Volkswagen India says, "I'm proud to present Kylaq – the first compact SUV from Škoda India. Kylaq is designed and made with high levels of localisation, thereby strength-

ITC's 'Feel Good With Fiana Mental Wellbeing Survey 2024'

Shillong: With mental health conversations gaining traction, ITC's 'Feel Good With Fiana Mental Wellbeing Survey 2024' marks its 4th year by exploring the perceptions and realities of mental health in India. Commissioned with NielsenIQ, the survey unveils the awareness, attitude and behavioural landscape for mental wellbeing in India. It reflects progressiveness in acknowledging the need for mental wellbeing while also indicating the persistent barriers in accessing professional support. Despite growing

awareness, many individuals still struggle in silence, hesitant to openly discuss their emotional well-being or seek professional help. While 83% of the surveyed individuals believe mental health issues are nothing to be ashamed of, 81% feel ashamed of telling others that they are taking therapy.

"The 'Feel Good with Fiana' initiative resonates deeply with our brand purpose. We understand that the journey to mental well-being can be challenging, and sometimes even knowing where to start can

feel overwhelming." said Sameer Satpathy, Divisional Chief Executive, Personal Care Products Business, ITC Limited.

While professional help is crucial for addressing mental wellbeing, the survey also highlights the importance of incorporating healthy coping mechanisms into our daily lives. 29% of the surveyed individuals turn to practices like yoga, 31% to meditation, and 30% to physical exercises like playing sports, dancing, gym, walking, etc. to de-stress. 36% find solace in the soothing power of music.

Indian Navy and TVS Motor Company embark on 2,500 km expedition to inspire youth

Shillong: To engage and inspire India's youth, the Indian Navy has partnered with TVS Motor Company for a remarkable 2,500 km expedition across the North East, showcasing career opportunities in the armed forces. Over the next 15 days, 40 Navy personnel will ride TVS Apache motorcycles through Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, and Assam, aiming to motivate students about careers in the Navy, including the Agnipath scheme.

The expedition was officially launched in Shillong by Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar, alongside Lt Gen Sanjay Malik and Air Marshal Inderpal Singh Walia. The riders, including four women as part of the Navy's Naari Shakti initiative, will engage with schools and colleges along their route, fostering a sense of national pride and encouraging young women to consider careers in the armed forces.

Vimal Sumbly, Head Business – Premi-

um, TVS Motor Company, emphasized the partnership's significance, stating, "This collaboration reflects our commitment to support our armed forces and empower the youth." As the riders traverse various towns, including Shillong, the initiative resonates deeply within local markets, where the spirit of adventure and exploration thrives, inspiring a new generation to consider service to the nation.

ICC Women's T20 World Cup: Buoyant New Zealand face upbeat West Indies in semifinal

Buoyant New Zealand will seek to continue their inspirational run in the women's T20 World Cup when they face the West Indies in the second semifinal here on Friday. New Zealand has undoubtedly been the story of the tournament so far in which they got the better of Asian sides India and Sri Lanka to make the final four from Group A, putting behind their 10-match losing streak before the competition.

With her towering presence, Sophie Devine has rallied the Kiwis troops impressively. Their success story features solid contributions at the top from Georgia Plimmer and veteran Suzie Bates, along with the all-round threat posed by Amelia Kerr further down the order.

Kerr has been at the forefront of the Kiwis attack with 10 wickets and 85 runs in what has been a largely low-scoring tournament, providing New Zealand with a lot of impetus.



Rosemary Mair has also been at the helm of New Zealand's success in this World Cup with seven wickets on slow pitches of the UAE. Eden Carson set up the tone for New Zealand's high profile clash against India and the Kiwis will hope that the right-arm spinner is at the top of her game against the West Indies, who are coming off a huge win over England.

Hayley Matthews' West Indies topped Group B and like New Zealand they also lost one game in the group stage, but overall the winners of the 2016 edition have put together robust

performances.

The West Indies have qualified for their first semifinal since hosting the tournament in their back yard in 2018, while the biggest moment for the Caribbean side arrived in this edition when they pipped England in their last group stage match.

The West Indies had lost 13 matches in a row against England before the two teams met in their last Group B fixture, but their run-chase of 142 showed no signs of mental fatigue against this opponent.

Matthews teamed up with the young Qiana Joseph to shut

England out of the tournament with a rapid 102-run stand in which both the batters brought up their respective half-centuries. While Matthews is the only Caribbean batter to have crossed the 100-run mark in the competition, Sarah Taylor and Deandra Dottin remain vital cogs in their batting.

Spinners Afy Fletcher (8 wickets) and Karishma Ramharack (5 wickets) have been the most successful bowlers for the Caribbean side. New Zealand hold upperhand against the West Indies when it comes to bilateral record, having won 15 out of 23 matches so far with two tied games and one without a result.

The winner of this contest will take on the triumphant team from the first semifinal, to be played in Dubai on Thursday between the six-time winner and defending champions Australia and South Africa. The final will be played on Sunday in Dubai.

Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan says he is unlikely to travel home for farewell test

Agency: Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan said he is almost certain he will not return home for a farewell test against South Africa next week following public anger over his silence during deadly protests in the country. Shakib was a member of parliament for the Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina, whose 15-year rule as prime minister ended in August with her fleeing to India. Shakib, 37, apologised for his silence last week and asked fans to be present for his final test at the Sher-EBangla National Cricket Stadium.

He has not been home since protests erupted in July but the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) had assured him he will not be harassed on his return for the test in Mirpur, which starts on Monday. "I am not sure where I am going next, but it is almost sure that I am not going home," Shakib told ESPNcricinfo.

Bangladesh chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain had said in a press conference on Wednesday they had not received any further instructions from the BCB or the cricket operations committee.

"It is a paused status at the moment. He is in transit in Dubai," Ashraf Hossain added.



Shakib is considered the greatest cricketer Bangladesh has ever produced but his political past places the former captain in a tricky position as an interim government supervises a power transition. Shakib announced his intention to retire from tests in September. He played 71 tests, 247 One-Day Internationals and 129 Twenty20 Internationals, amassing 14,730 runs and claiming 712 wickets to establish himself as one of the leading all-rounders of his era.

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Virat Kohli becomes fourth Indian to reach 9000 Test runs milestone

Bengaluru: India batter Virat Kohli has added another feather to his highly illustrious cap as he completed 9,000 Test runs in the ongoing match against New Zealand at M Chinnaswamy Stadium. He reached the milestone during India's second innings.

Kohli became the fourth Indian batter to reach the feat after Sachin Tendulkar (15,921), Rahul Dravid (13,265) and Sunil Gavaskar (10,122). Among them, Kohli is the slowest to reach the milestone in terms of innings taken (197).

The 35-year-old batter, who has not hit a Test fifty in 2024, smashed his 31st Test half-century as India were put under pressure by New Zealand after posting 402 in the first innings. Kohli is the second-highest Test run-getter among active players after England's Joe Root (12,716 runs). In the overall list, he is placed in 18th spot.

Glenn Phillips finally ended Kohli's innings for 70, which included eight fours and a six as India were 231/3 at stumps on Day 3. Sarfaraz Khan is unbeaten on 70 as India trail by 125 runs after bundling out 46 in the first innings, their lowest total at home. Kohli and Sarfaraz



had a 136-run partnership for the third wicket to stabilise the innings after the wickets of Yashasvi Jaiswal (35) and India captain Rohit Sharma (52).

Earlier, an excellent 134 from Rachin Ravindra – his second Test century – helped New Zealand take a lead of 356 runs after their first innings ended at 402 in 91.3 overs.

Ravindra dazzled to hit 13 fours and four sixes in his 157-ball knock yielding his second international hundred in Bengaluru, the city of his family's origin. He also added a crucial 137 runs for the eighth wicket with Tim Southee, who hit 65 off 73 balls. It's now the joint-highest eighth wicket partnership for New Zealand in Tests against India.

Birthday boy Wilmar powers Chennaiyin FC

Guwahati: It's still a nascent stage of the ongoing ISL season but Chennaiyin has been good on the road so far. That was the case on Thursday as they posted their second victory in three away matches. The Chennai-based club beat NorthEast United FC 3-2 in Guwahati on the day. It was an unforgettable outing for Wilmar Jordan Gil, who was celebrating his 33rd birthday. Before Wilmar came to the fore, it was the home side who had taken the lead in the fifth minute through Nestor

Albiach. Wilmar equalised for the visitors in the 25th minute before Lukas Pivetta Brambilla had handed Chennaiyin the lead. Jordan doubled his tally early on in the second-half.

Alaeddine Ajarai reduced Chennaiyin's, who were down to 10 men in the 83rd minute after a red card for defender Laldinliana Renthlei, lead in the dying minutes but that was not enough for NorthEast. Having gained three points, Chennaiyin moved to fifth place in the points table.

Paras Mhambrey returns to Mumbai Indians as bowling coach

Former India bowling coach Paras Mhambrey returned to the Mumbai Indians on Wednesday and will team up with Lasith Malinga in the same capacity. Mhambrey, 54, was a part of the coaching unit of team India during the 2024 T20 World Cup triumph under Rahul Dravid's regime and left the national side after his stint ended. Mhambrey was a medium pacer who played for Mumbai between 1992 and 2003, picking 284 wickets in 91 first-class matches.

He also holds a level 3 coaching diploma from the National Cricket Academy (NCA) and served as coach to Baroda, Maharashtra, Vidarbha, and Bengal at the domestic level before reaching the national level, eventually coaching under Dravid's regime.

This will be the second time Mhambrey will be working with the Mumbai Indians with the veteran winning several titles with Mumbai, such as the IPL 2013 and the Champions League T20 (2011, 2013) in his first stint. He was also there when the franchise finished as runners-up in 2010.

Uttar Pradesh hockey and its road to revival

Agency: The magic of Dhyan Chand, the artistry of Mohammed Shahid, and the sublime dribbling of KD Singh 'Babu' have their roots in the land of nawabs, kebabs, and poets – Uttar Pradesh. Once the cradle of Indian hockey, its players possessed a certain quality – flamboyant, skilful, with a silken touch – and saw them figure prominently in the country's gold medal-winning Olympic campaigns. After India's eighth Olympic gold in 1980, Moscow – in which Shahid played a starring role – it took 41 years for the country to win another Olympic medal. In this period, UP hockey suffered a slide, and its glory days faded into nostalgia.

In 2021, when India won a bronze at the Tokyo Olympics, Varanasi's Lalit Kumar Upadhyay was part of the medal-drought ending side. This year, in Paris, India won its second successive Olympic

bronze in hockey. Upadhyay's colleague at UP's Karampur Hockey Academy, Raj Kumar Pal – raised by a widowed mother with limited means – shone at the Games, earning PCs and scoring the winning goal for 10-man India in the quarterfinal against Great Britain

"Hockey runs in our veins. It's our culture. We grew up listening to stories of Dhyan Chand Ji, Babu Sahab and Mohd Shahid ji. I dreamt of becoming a hockey player right from when I was a kid. It's not a mere sport, but a heritage for all of us," said Lalit. Now, with the Hockey India League (HIL) being revived after a seven-year hiatus, there's money and opportunity in it for existing players and an incentive for many others from the state to take up the sport. Upadhyay was bought for ₹28 lakhs by the UP Rudras while Pal went to Delhi SG Pipers for a whopping 40 lakhs.