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Curbs on agri derivatives: Sebi extends suspension till January 2025

Mumbai : The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has extended the suspension of derivatives trading in seven agricultural commodities, till January 31, 2025.

These agricultural commodities where derivatives contracts have been suspended include wheat, moong, paddy (non-basmati), chana, crude palm oil, mustard seeds and soya bean.

While the ban on futures trading in these items was initially issued on December 19, 2021, and the suspension was set to last until December 20, 2022, it was subsequently extended twice — first for an additional year, until December 20, 2023, and then again until December 20, 2024.

On Thursday, Sebi which also regulates the commodities market extended it till January 31, 2025.

However, this time around, the extension is for only over a month leading to hopes that the bar on at least some of the commodities could be relaxed. These



restrictions were imposed largely to curb excessive speculation and volatility in the commodity markets, particularly in these essential agricultural products, which have a significant impact on food prices and inflation.

India has been facing elevated inflation with headline CPI print being above the 4 per cent target mandated for the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). This has resulted in the central bank maintaining interest rates at high levels. "The suspension in trading in the above contracts has been extended till January 31, 2025," Sebi said in a statement.

The suspension permits the squaring up of existing positions in these commodities, but no fresh futures trading is permitted for a year.

Adani Group plans Rs 20,000 crore super critical thermal power plant in Bihar

Patna (PTI): Billionaire Gautam Adani's conglomerate plans to invest Rs 20,000 crore in setting up a super critical thermal power plant in Bihar even as it expands its cement, food processing and logistics business in the state. Speaking at the Bihar Business Connect 2024, Pranav Adani, Director, Adani Enterprises Ltd, said the ports-to-energy conglomerate is invested in three sectors in Bihar - logistics, gas distribution and agri logistics, where it has already invested around Rs 850 crore.

"We are now going to invest another Rs 2,300 crore in these

sectors. This investment will not only massively increase our warehousing and handling capacity and expand our presence in the EV, city gas distribution (CGD) and compressed biogas (CBG) space but will also generate an additional 27,000 direct and indirect local job opportunities," he said.

The group is also looking to potentially invest another Rs 1,000 crore in developing strategic infrastructure in Bihar, like Gati Shakti Railway Terminals, ICDs (Inland Container Depots) and Industrial Warehousing Parks.

"Another sector we are in-

vesting in is smart meter manufacturing. As Bihar migrates from conventional electric meters to smart meters, we will invest Rs 2,100 crore to manufacture and install over 28 lakh smart meters to automate power-consumption-monitoring in five cities-- Siwan, Gopalganj, Vaishali, Saran and Samastipur-- and this will generate at least 4,000 local jobs in this technology segment," he said.

The cement plants in the state will be expanded to 10 million tonnes per annum capacity with an investment of Rs 2,500 crore in multiple phases. "We are also exploring investment av-



enues in Bihar's energy sector. Our plan is to invest around Rs 20,000 crore to set up an ultra-supercritical thermal power plant," he said.

"We expect such a massive project to open up at least 12,000 job vacancies in the pre-commissioning phase and also lead to around 1,500 skilled jobs during the operational phase," he added.

CBDT launches e-campaign to help taxpayers resolve income mismatches

New Delhi: The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has launched an electronic campaign to assist taxpayers in resolving mismatches between the income and transactions reported in the Annual Information Statement (AIS) and those disclosed in Income Tax Returns (ITRs) for the financial years 2023-24 and 2021-22, according to an official statement issued on Tuesday.

The campaign also targets individuals who have taxable income or significant high-value transactions reported in their AIS but have not filed ITRs for the respective years, the statement said. The initiative is part of the implementation of the eVerification Scheme, 2021. As part of this campaign, informational messages have been sent via SMS and email to taxpayers and non-filers where mismatches have been identified between transactions reported in AIS and the ITRs filed.

The purpose of these messages is to remind and guide individuals who may not have fully disclosed their income in their ITRs to take this opportunity to file revised or belated ITRs for FY 2023-24, according to the CBDT statement. The last date to file these revised or belated ITRs



is December 31, 2024. For cases pertaining to FY 2021-22, taxpayers can file updated ITRs by the limitation date of March 31, 2025. Taxpayers can also provide their feedback, including disagreeing with the information reported in the AIS, through the AIS portal accessible via the e-filing website (<https://www.incometax.gov.in/iec/foportal/>).

This initiative reflects the Income Tax Department's commitment to leveraging technology to simplify compliance and ensure transparency. By utilising thirdparty data, the department aims to create a more efficient, taxpayerfriendly system that aligns with the vision of Viksit Bharat, the statement said.

Honda and Nissan consider mutual production of vehicles: Report



Tokyo: Honda and Nissan are considering producing vehicles in one another's factories as part of their talks to deepen ties, news agency Kyodo reported on Saturday without citing sources.

The report added that Honda will also consider supplying hybrid vehicles to Nissan as part of the potential merger, without mentioning the source of the information.

Honda, Japan's second-largest car company, and Nissan, its third-largest, are in talks to deepen ties with an eye on potentially setting up a holding company, according to two people familiar with the matter. One of the people said the automakers are also discussing a potential merger.

A merger could create the world's third-largest auto group by vehicle sales behind Toyota and Volkswagen, with an annual output of 7.4 million vehicles.

The two automakers forged a strategic partnership in March to cooperate in electric vehicle development, but Nissan has faced ongoing financial and strategic troubles in recent months.

SpiceJet inks pact with StandardAero to operationalise its grounded Boeing 737 MAX aircraft

New Delhi: Budget carrier SpiceJet has signed an agreement with US-based maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) services provider StandardAero to operationalise its grounded Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, the airline said on Friday.

Three of the airline's seven grounded Boeing 737 MAX planes are expected to return to service by April 2025 under the agreement.

StandardAero, which also provides MRO services for CFM LEAP-1B en-

gines that power the Boeing 737 MAX fleet, will assist SpiceJet in restoring its grounded 737-8 MAX aircraft, the company said in a statement.

The partnership with StandardAero follows earlier agreements with CFM International, the LEAP-1B engine manufacturer, and aircraft lessors, paving the way for the phased return of the grounded planes. "These developments pave the way for the un-grounding and return to service of three Boeing 737 MAX air-

craft by April 2025," SpiceJet said. The airline's chairman and managing director Ajay Singh described the return of the fuel-efficient MAX aircraft as a significant step towards strengthening the airline's financial position.

SpiceJet is focusing on fleet expansion and dispute resolution after securing ₹3,000 crore in funding. It currently operates about 28 aircraft. Over the past two months, the airline said it has resolved disputes with multiple lessors.

CureFit posts Rs 888 crore loss in FY24

New Delhi: Fitness startup Curefit's consolidated loss has increased by 42 per cent to Rs 888.5 crore in FY24 from Rs 625.5 crore in FY23. The company's EBITDA loss surged by 123.4 per cent to Rs 587.97 crore in FY24 from Rs 263.2 crore in FY23. The reason for the increase in the company's loss in the last financial year is the high cash burn. Curefit's advertising and promotion expenditure has increased by 40.67 per cent year-on-year (YoY) basis to Rs 188.5 crore in FY24 from Rs 134 crore in FY23.

At the same time, the company's expenditure on legal and professional services in the last financial year has increased by 56.62 per cent from Rs 79.3 crore in FY23 to Rs 124.2 crore in FY24. Curefit's expenditure on employees has come down by 5.62 per cent to Rs 324 crore in the last financial year.

AkzoNobel's Project Revive empowers over 800 youth in Northeast India

Guwahati: AkzoNobel India, the makers of Dulux paints and Coatings, has celebrated the milestone three years of Project Revive – its skill building program in decorative painting that has transformed the lives of over 800 drug-rehabilitated youth in Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. Project Revive was piloted by AkzoNobel in Manipur in December 2021 in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare (Government of Manipur) and its NGO partner Makers Foundation. Here, identified vulnerable youth in 21 Drug Rehabilitation Centers (DRCs) across five districts of Manipur participated in AkzoNobel's vocational skill training course in decorative painting.

Rohit Totla, Executive Director of AkzoNobel India, shares how the power of paint is transforming lives and communities, "By empowering drug-rehabilitated youth in the North-East with livelihood-oriented skills,



Project Revive is helping these vulnerable youth unlock a meaningful life with new possibilities and confidence." AkzoNobel India received a Special Mention for 'Project Revive: Skill Building in Decorative Painting for Substance Users in the North East Region,' recognizing the initiative's notable efforts in driving sustainable development in the North East.

Sharvari becomes the face of Godrej professional, spotlight awards highlight top talent in hair styling

Guwahati: Godrej Professional, a leading brand in the professional hair care industry, has announced Bollywood's rising star Sharvari as its first-ever brand ambassador. The announcement took place at the grand finale of the Godrej Professional Spotlight, a platform designed to celebrate and elevate the artistry of hairstylists across India. Sharvari, known for her performances in Munjya, Maharaj, and Vedaa, was chosen for her impeccable sense of style and confidence, making her a perfect fit for the brand.

AbhinavGrandhi, General Manager of Godrej Consumer Products Limited (GCPL), expressed excitement over the partnership, stating, "Sharvari's association comes at a time when we are

expanding our presence in the hair and beauty industry." Sharvari herself shared her enthusiasm, emphasizing Godrej's legacy and innovation in the hair care sector.

The event also saw the announcement of the Godrej Professional Spotlight Awards, with BhavinBavaliya from Rajkot taking home the top prize. In Guwahati, the professional hair care market is witnessing growth, with a rising demand for premium products like Godrej Professional's Colourplay and Dimension ranges. The city's evolving beauty landscape offers significant opportunities for stylists, fueled by platforms like Spotlight that recognize local talent on a national stage.

Tata Communications brings light and health to Meghalaya's Garo Hills villages

Shillong: Tata Communications, a global leader in communications technology, has introduced transformative clean energy and health initiatives in BuriparaAkilang and MandalNokatvillages under its Climate Resilient Village Programme. The two-day initiative, part of the company's CSR efforts, saw senior leaders and volunteers collaborate to implement solar electrification and clean cooking solutions.

The program, "Beyond the Boardroom," enabled Tata Communications leaders to gain firsthand insights into local challenges while addressing energy and health needs. Solar panels were installed in households, powering lights and fans, while solar street-lights enhanced mobility. Additionally, traditional chulhas were replaced with clean cookstoves, reducing firewood consumption by 50% and im-



proving respiratory health.

The success of this initiative highlights the potential for adopting similar clean energy solutions in urban centers like Shillong. With its vibrant markets and dense population, integrating solar-powered lighting and energy-efficient cooking solutions could not only reduce energy costs but also promote sustainable practices across Meghalaya's capital.

Mukul Kumar, Vice Presi-

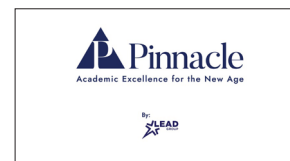
dent of Tata Communications, remarked, "Our efforts in Meghalaya reaffirm our commitment to creating sustainable futures by embedding clean energy and healthcare solutions into communities."

Aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goals, the program has positively impacted over 62,000 lives, underscoring Tata Communications' leadership in sustainability-driven business practices.

LEAD Group launches 'Pinnacle,' revolutionizes high-fee schools in India

Guwahati: LEAD Group, India's foremost School Ed-tech company, has launched 'Pinnacle,' a first-of-its-kind modern curriculum solution aimed at transforming education in over 60,000 high-fee schools across India. With a blend of deeply researched curriculum, pedagogy, and cutting-edge technologies like AI, Pinnacle promises a personalized, adaptive learning experience that is expected to drive 40% of LEAD Group's revenue in the next three years.

Sumeet Mehta, CEO and Co-Founder of LEAD Group, shared that Pinnacle was developed after two years of extensive research and collaboration with schools nationwide. It aligns with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2023 and addresses the unmet needs of India's high-fee schools for innovative, tech-driven education.



Pinnacle's flagship innovation, the TECHBOOK, introduces India's first AI-enabled intelligent books, offering data-driven insights and AR-enhanced experiences to improve student learning outcomes. Additionally, Code.AI, a coding and AI platform, nurtures future technology innovators.

In Guwahati, the demand for progressive educational solutions is on the rise, particularly in the city's expanding high-fee school segment. Pinnacle's comprehensive offerings are expected to cater to the needs of Guwahati's private schools, enhancing their ability to deliver world-class education while keeping up with evolving educational trends.

Network18 concludes the inaugural edition of Green Bharat

Guwahati: Network18, India's leading media conglomerate, has concluded the inaugural edition of Green Bharat, an annual conclave in collaboration with Ola Electric, India's largest pure-play electric vehicle (EV) company. The event aimed to shape the narrative for India's transition to sustainable mobility by addressing the economic, environmental, and societal benefits of EVs while tackling the key challenges hindering their widespread adoption. Distinguished guests, including Shri Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways, and Shri Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, graced the conclave as Guests of Honour.

Speaking at the event, Shri Nitin Gadkari emphasised, "Over the years, we have achieved incredible progress in the green mobility segment." Shri Piyush Goyal echoed this sentiment, stating, "Through Mission LIFE and a collective focus on green energy, we are driving towards a cleaner, greener, and more self-reliant future." Commenting on the success of the event, Avinash Kaul, Chief Executive Officer—Network18 (Broadcast) & Managing Director of AETN18, said, "India stands at the threshold of a transformative shift in mobility, driven by the Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's ambitious vision for a sustainable and self-reliant future."

In Q2-FY2025, ICICI Pru Life resolves 99.04% of claims in 1.2 days

Aizawl: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has declared a claim settlement ratio of 99.04%, the highest in the industry, for the period from July 2024 to September 2024. Importantly, the average time to settle a death claim was just 1.2 days. Mr. Amish Banker, Chief Operations Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said, "In Q2-FY2025, we had a claim settlement ratio of 99.04%, while our average claim settlement turnaround time for non-investigated



claims from last document received date was just 1.2 days. Besides, we settled death claims totaling over Rs. 451 crore in the same period.

Under our "Claim for Sure" initiative, we promise to settle eligible claims in one day after all documents are submitted. We

This year celebrate Christmas merrier and healthier with California Almonds

Guwahati: Christmas is a time for joy, togetherness, and creating cherished memories with friends and loved ones. This year, celebrate the festive spirit by making healthier choices without compromising on flavor. As you bake Christmas treats and prepare traditional feasts, elevate your celebrations with the wholesome goodness of California Almonds—a versatile ingredient that brings crunch, flavor, and nutrition to your festive favorites. The most popular California Almonds are a nutritional powerhouse, with 15 essential nutrients, including protein, healthy fats, fiber, magnesium, zinc, and phosphorus.

From cakes to cookies, almonds, king of dry fruits, not only enhance the taste but also provide some nutritional value to festive creations. Their satiating properties also help control hunger, supporting weight management during the festive season. Additionally, the recently published ICMR-NIN Dietary guidelines for Indians recognize almonds as one of the nutritious nuts that can be consumed daily for good health. Bollywood actress Soha Ali Khan, said, "For me, Christmas is all about family time, festive lights, and baking special treats with my daughter." Sheela Krishnaswamy, Nutrition and Wellness Consultant, said, "Festivals often lead to overindulgence, but it's essential to include healthy options like almonds in your meals."

have settled death claims amounting to Rs. 71.24 crore in Q2-FY2025 under this initiative. We have consistently had an industry-leading claim settlement ratios; in Q1-FY2024 it was 97.94%, in Q2-FY2024 it stood at 98.14%, in Q3-FY2024 it was 98.52%, and for FY2024 it was 99.17%".

Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma's Bhutan visit opens doors for trade and collaboration

Guwahati: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma concluded a landmark three-day visit to Bhutan, strengthening economic and diplomatic ties between the two nations. Welcomed by Bhutan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Lyonpo D.N. Dhungyel, Sarma attended Bhutan's 117th National Day celebrations at the invitation of King JigmeKhesarNamgyelWangchuck.

During his visit, Sarma participated in the Advantage Assam 2.0 summit in Thimphu, where he engaged in fruitful discussions with Bhutanese Prime Minister TsheringTobgay. The summit focused



on expanding cooperation in sectors like energy, tourism, healthcare, and skill development. The Chief Minister emphasized the strategic opportunities presented by Assam's proximity to Bhutan, particu-

larly in projects like the Gelephu Mindfulness City.

The visit is poised to boost Guwahati, especially in trade and tourism. Assam's capital is expected to see increased business exchanges and tourism traffic as the partnership deepens. Enhanced cooperation in energy generation and infrastructure development will open up new avenues for local enterprises and attract investments, fostering economic growth in the region. Sarma's visit signifies a promising future for Assam-Bhutan relations, with Guwahati positioned as a key player in this emerging bilateral cooperation.

Durex The Birds and Bees Talk makes a lasting impact at the 25th Hornbill Festival

Shillong: The 25th edition of the iconic Hornbill Festival, famously known as the Festival of Festivals, has concluded with unprecedented enthusiasm, drawing a record-breaking footfall of 2.5 lakh visitors to the Kisama Heritage Village, Nagaland. Durex The Birds and Bees Talk (TBBT), a transformative life skills program by Reckitt, a global leader in health and hygiene, made its mark as the festival's official Health Partner, driving impactful conversations around consent through groundbreaking initiatives.

This year, Durex TBBT made history by launching Asia's first-ever Consent Cafe, inaugurated by Shri Anoop Khinchi (IAS), Commissioner & Secretary, Health & Family Welfare, and Shri

Thavaseelan K (IAS), Principal Director, School Education & CEO, State Health Authority. Shri Temjen Imna Along, Honorable Minister for Tourism and Higher Education, Government of Nagaland, said, "This partnership reflects a shared commitment to promoting health, hygiene, and inclusivity, especially among adolescents." Shri Toka E Tuccumi, Joint Director, Department of Tourism, Government of Nagaland, said, "Congratulations to Team Reckitt for exceeding our expectations through this excellent partnership!" Gaurav Jain, Executive Vice President, Reckitt—South Asia, said, "At Reckitt, we firmly believe that knowledge is the cornerstone of empowerment."

Chicco announces the opening of its latest flagship store at Ambience Mall Gurgaon

Kolkata: Chicco, a leading brand in baby care trusted by parents for more than 65 years in 120 countries, is delighted to announce the opening of its latest flagship store at Ambience Mall, Gurgaon. The new store reflects Chicco's focus upon expanding its retail footprint in India, bringing a trusted range of baby care solutions closer to families in Gurgaon. This new store not only caters to National Capital Regions' growing demand for world-class baby products but also marks another milestone in Chicco's ongoing expansion across the country.

Mr. Rajesh Vohra, CEO, Artsana India (Chicco), inaugurated the Chicco flagship store, which is also considerably the brand's biggest store in the country. "This new store is part of our mission to bring Chicco's trusted baby care solutions closer to families, making it easier



for parents to access a variety of essential products," shared Mr. Rajesh Vohra, CEO of Artsana India. Chicco's expansion comes across as a devoted effort from the beloved baby care brand to bring the superior experience of Chicco products to more cities across India, right from major cities to the smaller, but densely populated ones.

2025 Bajaj Chetak electric scooter launched in India

New Delhi: Bajaj Auto has launched the highly anticipated 2025 Chetak 35 series electric scooter in India, introducing significant upgrades to the iconic model. Built on a new platform, the updated range boasts enhanced features and improved specifications, offering a more competitive edge in the growing electric scooter market. The 2025 Bajaj Chetak 35 series is available in three variants – 3501, 3502, and 3503. The mid-tier 3502 variant is priced at ₹1.20 lakh, while the 3501 variant, featuring more advanced features, is

priced at ₹1.27 lakh (ex-showroom, Bengaluru). Pricing details for the top-spec 3503 variant are yet to be announced. The latest Chetak retains its retro-inspired design, now with subtle styling updates and fresh colour options. The most notable addition is the fully digital TFT touchscreen dashboard, exclusive to the premium 3501 variant. This advanced console includes smartphone connectivity, music controls, integrated maps, geofencing, and other smart features, significantly elevating the user experience.

Shillong joins the entertainment boom in BookMyShow's year-end report

Shillong: BookMyShow's #BookMyShowThrowback year-end report highlights a groundbreaking 2024 for India's entertainment industry, with Shillong emerging as a key player in the expanding market. The year saw a major shift in entertainment consumption, driven by iconic films like Pushpa 2: The Rule, which became the most-watched movie, and a surge in live events and on-demand streaming. November 1st, 2024, marked a record-breaking day with 2.3 million tickets sold within 24 hours.

In particular, Shillong witnessed an 18% increase in live entertainment consumption, as Tier 2 cities like it experienced a 682% growth in event participation. The city's entertainment scene was energized by major global acts, with fans flocking to live music events and contributing to the rise of music tourism. Over 4.77 lakh fans traveled across India to attend these events, and Shillong played a key role in this trend, with increasing engagement in both cinema and live shows.

Additionally, the streaming sector soared, with BookMyShow Stream registering over 107,000 hours of content consumed. As the year concludes, Shillong's growing market is set to continue driving India's entertainment revolution, with diverse, high-quality content and live experiences fueling the demand for more.



The 100th Tansen Sangeet Samaroh creates a Guinness World Record



Mumbai: The 100th Tansen Sangeet Samaroh, a grand celebration of Hindustani classical music, has etched its name in history by creating a Guinness World Record for the Largest Hindustani Classical Band with 546 musicians. Held at the iconic Gwalior Fort, the event witnessed an awe-inspiring performance by the musicians, who played three of Tansen's iconic ragas: Rag Malhar, Rag Mia ki Todi, and Rag Darbari. Organised by the Cultural Department of Madhya Pradesh government, this milestone event also celebrated Gwalior's recent recognition as a UNESCO City of Music, highlighting its global significance in the world of classical music.

The record-setting performance was presided over by Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav and attended by dignitaries, music lovers, and international guests. The performance left the audience mesmerised. Commenting on the achievement, Nischal Barot said, "This Guinness World Record reflects the enduring spirit of Indian classical music and flawless teamwork." A spokesperson for the Cultural Department hailed the event as a moment of pride for the nation, saying, "This achievement reflects not only the artistic excellence of our musicians but also their unity in celebrating Tansen's timeless legacy."

The NE Tech Summit 2024 marks a transformative chapter for the Northeast region

Kohima: The 1st edition of the NE Tech Summit 2024, held at RCEMPA, Jotsoma, Kohima, has marked a transformative chapter for the Northeast region, setting a foundation for innovation and entrepreneurship. Organized by the Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) in collaboration with the Nagaland Industrial Development Corporation (NIDC), the summit brought together policymakers, entrepreneurs, students, and thought leaders to explore the untapped potential of Northeast India in shaping the global technology ecosystem.

Gracing the occasion, Shri. Sethrongkyu Sangtam, Advisor, Department of IT & Communication (DITC), Government of Nagaland, inaugurated the event and highlighted the region's untapped potential to become a hub for technological innovation in the near perceivable future. Addressing the paradigm shift in technology, Shri. Arvind Kumar described AI as the "second revolution" and the engine that would propel India's digital ecosystem towards greater milestones. Sharing his insights on the evolving tech ecosystem in northeast India, Shri Arvind Kumar said, "We are witnessing a second revolution in technology." Interactive workshops and sessions added depth to the summit, with industry leaders like Rahul Sehgal, Founder, Gamer2Maker, Saumya Singh Rathore, Co-founder, WinZO, and Rupam Gogoi, VP-GTM, TechVariable offering mentorship and actionable insights.

Network18 accelerates Green mobility with 'Green Bharat' conclave

New Delhi: Network18, in partnership with Ola Electric, concluded the first edition of the 'Green Bharat' conclave, setting the stage for India's electric vehicle (EV) growth. The event brought together policymakers, industry leaders, and innovators to discuss actionable strategies for EV adoption and sustainability. Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari and Piyush Goyal spearheaded discussions, advocating for a unified 'One Nation, One EV Policy.' ShriGadkari stated, "India is on the path to becoming the world's largest EV manufacturing hub within five years, driven by innovation and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision." Shri Goyal added, "FAME I and II have paved the way for EV self-reliance, and India holds immense potential to lead the global market." Avinash Kaul, CEO of Network18, emphasized the conclave's importance, saying, "Green Bharat is fostering collective efforts to build a robust EV ecosystem and accelerate India's clean mobility transition."

Ashwin quietly returns to Chennai after announcing retirement

Chennai: Just one day after declaring his retirement from international cricket, India's celebrated off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin arrived back in Chennai early Thursday morning. The cricketer, who announced his departure from the international stage during the ongoing Test series against Australia, was escorted by local officials through Chennai International Airport amidst flashes from fans' cameras.

Ashwin, who chose not to interact with the media waiting at the airport, made his way quickly with his family. His retirement announcement came

as a surprise during the five-match Test series with Australia, which currently stands tied at 1-1 after three matches. Despite stepping down from international duties, Ashwin confirmed he will continue to play club cricket and is set to return to the Chennai Super Kings in the IPL next year. During his career, Ashwin accumulated 537 wickets in 106 Test matches, ranking him as India's second-highest wicket-taker in the format behind Anil Kumble, who holds 619 wickets. "I do feel there is a bit of punch left in me as a cricketer but I would like to show-



case that in club level cricket," Ashwin remarked during his retirement announcement in Brisbane.

Before leaving Australia, Ashwin also took the opportu-

nity to speak to his teammates, offering them his ongoing support. "The cricketer in me, the Indian cricketer, international cricketer might have come to an end, but the cricket nut

in me will never come to an end," he expressed in a heartfelt farewell address, which was later shared by the BCCI on social media.

Ashwin's illustrious 14-year career also featured significant achievements in limited-overs cricket, including being part of the victorious 2011 World Cup and 2013 Champions Trophy squads. He played 116 ODIs and 65 T20 Internationals, capturing 156 and 72 wickets respectively. His journey began in ODIs in 2010 and he made his Test debut a year later, marking a remarkable stint in the annals of Indian cricket.

Virat Kohli Clashes with Journalist Over Privacy Concerns at Melbourne Airport

Melbourne: Tensions flared at Melbourne airport as Indian cricketer Virat Kohli confronted a journalist shortly after arriving for the upcoming Boxing Day Test. The incident occurred amidst preparations for the fourth Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy between Australia and India.

According to reports, the confrontation stemmed from Kohli's displeasure at media cameras focusing on his family upon their arrival. The Sydney Morning Herald noted that while reporters were initially interviewing Australian bowler Scott Boland, the presence of Kohli and his family nearby drew the attention of the cameras, leading to



Kohli's upset reaction.

A Channel 7 reporter clarified the situation, explaining, "It was upon seeing the waiting cameras that Kohli became a little heated over what is largely a misunderstanding when he thought the media was filming him with his children." Kohli was heard requesting privacy for his family, emphasizing

that filming should not occur without his consent. The situation was resolved amicably when it was made clear to Kohli that his children were not being filmed. He subsequently shook hands with the cameraperson involved before departing the scene.

Kohli's reaction comes in a context where the star batter has had a challenging series, starting strong with a century in Perth but faltering in subsequent matches with only 21 runs in his last three innings. The series, currently tied at 1-1, will continue with the fourth Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on December 26, followed by the final Test in Sydney.

Mitchell Starc Lauds Retired Ravichandran Ashwin as a Persistent Challenge for Australia

Brisbane: Australian fast bowler Mitchell Starc has offered high praise for Ravichandran Ashwin, the recently retired Indian off-spinner, acknowledging his significant impact on Australia-India cricketing duels. Describing Ashwin as "a bit of a thorn" in their side, Starc reflected on the spinner's formidable presence in matches that have often swung India's way. Ashwin, who unexpectedly announced his retirement during an ongoing Test series against Australia, leaves behind an impressive legacy as India's second-most prolific Test wicket-taker. With 537 wickets from 106 matches, he trails only behind the iconic Anil Kumble, who amassed 619 wickets.

Throughout his career, Ashwin played 23 Tests against Australia from 2011 to 2024, claiming 115 wickets which included a remarkable 10-wicket haul and seven five-wicket performances. His pivotal role was instrumental in India's memorable series victory on Australian soil in 2020-21. "It's been a fantastic career and I'm sure it will



be celebrated that way," Starc said during an interview with SEN Radio following the draw in the third Test. He praised Ashwin's enduring prowess and the significant tally of over 500 wickets, which underscores his long-term value to Indian cricket. Starc also highlighted Ashwin's close professional relationship with Australian counterpart Nathan Lyon, both of whom share the distinction of surpassing 500 Test wickets. "He's got a close working relationship with Nathan, and that mutual respect between teams and for someone of his calibre - congratulations on his career,"

Real Madrid wins Intercontinental Cup; Ancelotti notches 15th title

Lusail: Real Madrid secured a commanding 3-0 victory over Mexican club Pachuca in the Intercontinental Cup final, propelling Carlo Ancelotti to a historic milestone as the most decorated coach in the club's storied history. Kylian Mbappé, Rodrygo, and Vinícius Júnior each found the net, ensuring that Madrid not only won the match but also became the most successful club in the history of the competition with four titles. The victory marks a significant achievement for Ancelotti, who has now amassed 15 titles with the Spanish giants, surpassing the previous record held by himself and Miguel Muñoz, who coached the team during the 1960s and 70s.



The match, which took place on Wednesday in Qatar, saw Real Madrid demonstrate their prowess on the international stage. Mbappé, recently recovered from a thigh injury, opened the scoring in the 37th minute following an assist from Vinícius. Rodrygo extended the lead in the 53rd minute with a precise shot into the corner. The victory was sealed by Vinícius, who converted a penalty in the 84th minute. Ancelotti expressed his satisfaction with the team's performance, especially after a shaky start. His comments came after he was named men's coach of the year at FIFA's "The Best" awards on Tuesday.

Pachuca, despite strong efforts in preliminary rounds where they defeated South American champions Botafogo and Egypt's Al Ahly, could not overcome the European champions. This final was Pachuca's first appearance in the title match of the tournament, which now gathers champions from all six soccer confederations under a new format set to expand further by 2025.

Real Madrid, who qualified directly to the final as the reigning European champions, added this Inter-continental Cup to their illustrious trophy cabinet, which includes five Club World Cup titles won in 2014, 2016, 2017-18, and 2022. Ancelotti's remarkable achievement underscores a successful second stint at the club, which began in 2021 and has been highlighted by multiple major titles, including a Champions League victory.

Tamil Thalaivas beat Bengal Warriorz 60- 29 in PKL

Pune: Moein Shafaghi and Himanshu dished out superb performances as Tamil Thalaivas thrashed Bengal Warriorz 60-29 in their Pro Kabaddi League match here on Wednesday. Shafaghi and Himanshu scored Super 10s (13 points each), while defenders Nitesh Kumar (7 points) and Amir Bastami (4 points) also made important contributions for Tamil Thalaivas. In the other corner, Manjeet bagged 7 points and Chinese Taipei's Chia Ming scored 4 for Bengal Warriorz.

Border rates Bumrah as highly as Hadlee and Marshall

Jasprit Bumrah's stocks rose exponentially ever since he arrived on Australian shores this summer, with the pace ace leading India to a commanding win in the Border-Gavaskar series opener in Perth, before leaving his mark in Adelaide and Brisbane. With his dismissal of Mitchell Starc between day three's rain interruptions, Bumrah became the second Indian after Kapil Dev to take 50 Test wickets in Australia. Since the start of the 20th century, no bowler has a better bowling average Down Under than Bumrah's mark of 17.82 (minimum 20 wickets).

The feat also statistically made Bumrah the best visiting bowler to Australia in more than 100 years, trumping the likes of Richard Hadlee (whose 77 scalps came at a marginally higher rate of 17.83 runs per wicket), Curtly Ambrose (78 wickets at 19.79 in Australia) and Michael Holding (63 at 24.22). With the 31-year-old almost certain to better Kapil's record in Australia, and also on course to breaking the record for the most wickets taken in a Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, former Australia skipper Allan Border has rated Bumrah as highly as Hadlee and Malcolm Marshall. "I can't properly compare him to Marshall because I never faced Bumrah but just watching him there is not much (between them). Bumrah is remarkable.

Scheffler, McIlroy beat LIV's Koepka, DeChambeau

North Las Vegas (USA): Scottie Scheffler and Rory McIlroy never trailed and needed only 14 holes to beat Brooks Koepka and Bryson DeChambeau of LIV Golf in a made-for-TV exhibition Tuesday night that gave fans a chance to see PGA Tour and LIV stars together for the first time outside the majors. Chalk one up for the PGA Tour, although it was hard to take this seriously because it was more about the show, under the lights at Shadow Creek in temperatures that got so chilly DeChambeau had an oversized puffer jacket even before the sun went down