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Reliance Power subsidiary Sasan Power Ltd clears debt of \$150 million to IIFCL, UK



Mumbai: Reliance Power announced on Wednesday its subsidiary Sasan Power Ltd (Sasan Power) has made a bullet payment of \$150 million to IIFCL, UK, fulfilling its debt obligation on December 31 2024. The Anil D Ambani-led company said that the repayment will bolster Sasan Power's debt coverage metrics, improve liquidity and enhance its credit rating.

Sasan Power operates a 3960 mega watt (mw) ultra mega power plant (UMPP) at Sasan, Madhya Pradesh, which according to the company is the world's largest integrated coal-based power plant. It has a captive coal mining capacity of 20 million tonnes annually.

The plant supplies electricity to 14 distribution companies (discoms) across seven states — Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand and New Delhi — at

the lowest tariff in India of ₹1.54 per unit, benefiting more than 40 crore people.

Reliance Power added that the loan repayment further strengthens its balance sheet amid the company transitioning its focus toward the renewable energy sector, which is poised to drive future growth.

In September last year, the company had said that it has zero-debt from banks and financial institutions. Subsequently in November 2024, its another arm Rosa Power had settled its outstanding debt by payment of ₹1,318 crore to Varde Partners.

Reliance Power had recently raised ₹1,525 crore through equity-linked warrants via a preferential issue. The capital infusion is expected to position the company to capitalise on growth opportunities in the rapidly expanding renewable energy market.

Indian stock market celebrates New Year with a bang, surges 1,436 points

Mumbai: After a muted beginning, the Indian stock market welcomed 2025 with a bang on Thursday, surging more than 1,400 points, or 1.83 per cent, as auto stocks saw a bumper rally on the back of strong car sales data for December. The Nifty auto index gained 3.79 per cent.

Sensex ended at 79,943.71, up by 1,436.30 points, or 1.83 per cent, and Nifty settled at 24,188.65, up by 445.75 points, or 1.88 per cent. Sensex logged an intraday high at 80,032.87, while Nifty surged to the day's high at 24,226.70.



Nifty Bank ended at 51,605.55, up by 544.95 points, or 1.07 per cent. The Nifty Midcap 100 index closed at 58,108.20 after rising 657.30 points, or 1.14 per cent, while the Nifty Smallcap 100 index closed at 19,080.35 after rising 120.55 points, or 0.64 per cent.

On the Bombay Stock Ex-

change (BSE), 2,400 shares ended in green and 1,571 shares in red, whereas there was no change in 115 shares. On the sectoral front, heavy buying was seen in the Auto, IT, Consumption, Financial Service, FMCG and Realty sectors on the NSE.

According to market experts, increased momentum was observed in the domestic market, driven by optimism about the upcoming earnings season starting next week. The rally was broadbased, with most sectoral indices posting gains, they said.

Ambuja Cements-Adani merger receives no objection letter from stock exchanges

Mumbai: Ambuja Cements Ltd has received an observation letter with 'no objection' from the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and 'no adverse observations' from Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) with regards to merger with Adani Cementation Ltd. The proposal for a merger between Adani Cementation and Ambuja Cements had received approval from the board in June 2024.

According to the stock exchange circular on January 1, "The Scheme remains subject to various statutory and regulatory approvals and of the respective shareholders and

creditors (where applicable) of the companies involved in the scheme."

"Based on the draft scheme and other documents submitted by the Company, including undertaking given in terms of Regulation 11 of SEBI Regulations, 2015, we hereby convey our "No objection" in terms of Regulation 37 of SEBI Regulations, 2015, to enable the Company to file the draft scheme with NCLT," read the circular. Adani Group's cement arm, Ambuja Cement, is poised for robust growth. The company has set an ambitious goal of

reaching 140 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) by 2028.

By this move, Ambuja Cements is set to boost efficiency, enhance competitive strength and simplify compliance processes. To achieve this target, Ambuja Cement acquired Orient Cement Ltd (OCL) at an equity value of Rs 8,100 crore in October last year. The company announced the acquisition of 46.8 per cent shares of OCL from its current promoters and certain public shareholders and the acquisition will be fully funded through internal accruals.

Job creation gathers further momentum in 2024-25



New Delhi: While a massive 4.67 crore additional jobs were created in the Indian economy in the financial year ended March 2024, the fast pace of employment generation has continued into 2024-25 in both the formal and informal sectors, official data shows. The total estimated employment in India's Unincorporated Sector recorded a double-digit growth of 10.01 per cent during October 2023-September 2024, compared to the same period of the previous year, according to the annual survey of the Ministry of Statistics released on Thursday.

The Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE (ASUSE) shows that among the broad sectors covered, the number of establishments in the "Other Services" employed more than 12 crore additional workers between October 2023 and September 2024, marking an increase of more than one crore workers from 2022-23 and reflecting robust labour market growth. Among the broad activities, the "Other Services" sector showed the highest annual growth of 17.86 per cent, followed by 10.03 per cent in the manufacturing sector.

The unincorporated non-agricultural sector plays an important role in the Indian economy contributing significantly to employment, Gross Domestic Product, and the overall socio-economic landscape. This sector not only sustains livelihoods for millions but also acts as a backbone for the incorporated sector by supplying goods and services, reinforcing its role in the domestic value chain.

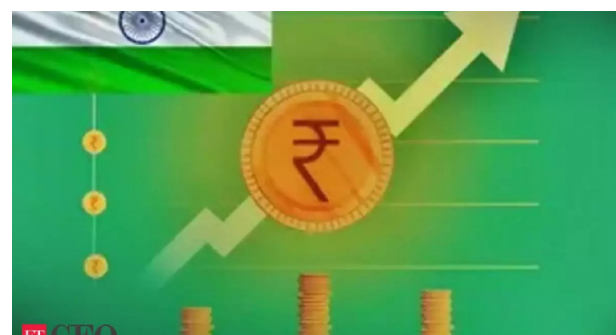
Indian economy in robust spot globally in 2025 with high frequency indicators picking up growth

New Delhi: As 2025 begins on a note of heightened global uncertainties ahead of the US President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration, India continues to be in a much stronger position with high frequency indicators showing a pick up in the pace of growth in the third quarter of current fiscal (Q3 FY25), according to a report on Thursday. GST collections, services purchasing managers' index (PMI), air passenger growth, and vehicle registrations saw a notable improvement in Q3 versus Q2, according to a Bank of Baroda (BoB) report.

On the other hand, in China, while the manufacturing sector is expanding slowly, lifting domestic consumption and reviving the real estate sector is proving to be a task for the administration. The US economy is giving mixed signals regarding growth. While the labour market appears to be softening and manufacturing activity is weak, retail sales, pending home sales, and the service sector seem to be doing well. In Europe, manufacturing activity is unable to pick up pace so far, while the service sector is regaining ground.

In India, the current account deficit (CAD) narrowed to 1.2 per cent of GDP in Q2 FY25 from 1.3 per cent of GDP in Q2 FY24. "While the trade deficit was higher, buoyant services exports as well as continued strength in remittances underscored the lower CAD. Our yearend market analysis shows that both Sensex and Nifty 50 surged by 8.7 per cent and 9 per cent in CY24. Sensex touched an all-time high this year as it breached the mark of 85,500," said Sonal Badhan, economist, Bank of Baroda.

The pressure on yields was lower and boosted de-



mand flow as the market witnessed the bond inclusion in the JP Morgan emerging market index, Bloomberg, and FTSE Russel. According to the report, high frequency indicators have shown notable improvement in the

October-December 2024 period. GST collections have jumped by 8.3 per cent (YoY) in Q3 to Rs 5.5 lakh crore, and are also up from Rs 5.3 lakh crore in Q2, signalling further improvement in consumption pattern.

Viraasat Handloom Expo is organized by the Development Commissioner

Guwahati: The Viraasat Special Handloom Expo has been organized by the Development Commissioner (Handlooms) under the Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India. The best handloom creations from all over India will be displayed at this mega event, scheduled from January 8 to January 14, 2025, at Mahavir Dharm Sthal, M.S. Road, Near Railway Gate No. 4, Fancy Bazar, Guwahati. The Expo will remain open for visitors from 11:00 AM to 8:00 PM every day.

A very large variety of handloom products will be put up at the exhibition cum-sale to showcase Banarasi, Jamdani, Baluchari, Mad-

hubani, Kosa, Muga, Eri, Ikkat, Patola, Tussar Silk, Maheshwari, Moirang Phee, Mekhela Chador, Kota Doria, Baluchari, Bhagalpuri, Block Printed, Phulkari, Laheriya, and Khandua, to name a few, and all the unique weaves carried out in different regions. The Viraasat Special Handloom Expo, which is held as a part of the campaigns #MyHandloomMyPride and #MyProductMyPride, focusses on the relevance of Indian handloom heritage to sustainable and ethical fashion. With free entry, the Ministry of Textiles invites all residents of Guwahati and beyond to participate in this vibrant celebration of Indian handloom artistry.

Uttar Pradesh Ministers lead roadshow for Prayagraj Mahakumbh 2025 in Dimapur

Dimapur: In a grand initiative to promote the upcoming Prayagraj Mahakumbh-2025, Uttar Pradesh Ministers Dr. Dayashankar Mishra "Dayalu" and ShriSomendraTomar led a roadshow in Dimapur, Nagaland. The event aimed to highlight the Mahakumbh as a monumental celebration of India's unity in diversity and to invite people from Nagaland to join the spiritual gathering in Prayagraj.

Dr. Mishra stated the Uttar Pradesh government's commitment to making the Mahakumbh a global symbol of cultural unity, boasting state-of-the-art facilities and international participation. The Mahakumbh, to be held from January 13 to February 26, 2025, is expected to draw over 450 million pilgrims, saints, and tourists. Key arrangements include clean drinking water, advanced crowd management, and digital ser-



vices for real-time monitoring.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Mishra also announced initiatives for a plastic-free environment, healthcare facilities for pilgrims, and digital advancements, including AI-powered chatbots and smart parking systems. Dimapur interest in the event was palpable, with local travel agencies and influencers showing enthusiasm for promoting the Mahakumbh as a global pilgrimage destination.

Nissan registers best December sales for new Nissan Magnite

Guwahati: Nissan Motor India announced at the start of the new year that it has crossed the booking milestone of 10,000+ units of the new Nissan Magnite SUV this month and ended the calendar year (CY) with 91,184 units between Jan 24 to Dec 24. This milestone comes alongside recording total consolidated wholesale dispatches of 11,676 units in December 2024, reflecting robust demand for Nissan cars in both domestic and international markets. Export wholesale stood at 9,558 units, and domestic sales accounted for 2,118 units for the month of December'24. The export wholesale of 9,558 units in December'24

witnessed a 72% Year-on-Year (YoY) increase compared to 5,561 units sold in December'23 last year and a Month-on-Month (MoM) growth of 43% vis-a-vis 6,698 units sold in November'24.

Mr. Saurabh Vatsa, Managing Director, Nissan Motor India, said, "The year 2024 marked a transformative phase for Nissan in India as we embarked on the turnaround and introduced new models like the 4th Generation Nissan X-TRAIL and the New Nissan Magnite." The new Nissan Magnite features a bold, stylish design both inside and out, offering 20+ first & best-in-segment features and 55+ total safety features.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance launches 'ICICI Pru Wish'

Aizawl: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched 'ICICI Pru Wish', the first health product in the life insurance industry specifically designed for women. ICICI Pru Wish instantly pays out up to 100% of the health cover amount on diagnosis of critical illnesses like breast, cervical, uterine cancers and heart ailments to name a few. Importantly, the premium amount remains constant for a period of 30 years, enabling customers to plan their funds outflow in a better manner. Another notable feature of this product is the premium holiday i.e. the customer has the option to not

pay premiums for a period of 12 months anytime during the premium payment tenure.

Notably, the product also offers customers the option to take cover related to maternity complications and newborn congenital illnesses. Mr. Amit Palta, Chief Product and Distribution Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said, "ICICI Pru Wish is the first health product in the life insurance industry specifically designed to cater to the health needs of women. The lump sum payout on diagnosis of a critical illness gives them financial strength to face such difficult situations."

Max Life Insurance rebrands to Axis Max Life Insurance for Double Bharosa



Guwahati: Axis Max Life Insurance Ltd., formerly known as Max Life Insurance, has officially unveiled its rebrand, marking a significant step forward in its growth strategy. With the inclusion of 'Axis' in its corporate name, the company aims to enhance its presence in the life insurance and financial services sectors. The rebranding introduces a fresh logo, combining Axis's iconic 'A' with a modern burgundy hue, symbolizing trust, responsibility, and forward-thinking. The new identity reflects the company's promise of "Double Bharosa" (Double Trust), emphasized through an integrated marketing campaign featuring cricket captain Rohit Sharma and his wife RitikaSajdeh.

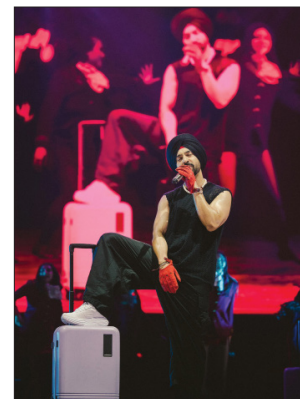
PrashantTripathy, MD & CEO of Axis Max Life, noted that the rebrand aligns with the company's vision to expand beyond metros and tier-1 cities, including significant strides in Tier 2 cities. Guwahati is set to benefit from Axis Max Life's increased reach and enhanced customer engagement. The company's recent expansion, with over 90 new offices and 41 new distribution partners, is expected to strengthen its foothold in the region, offering residents greater access to trusted financial solutions.

Rajiv Anand, Deputy MD of Axis Bank, emphasized that this rebrand represents a deeper collaboration aimed at securing a brighter financial future for millions across India.

Diljit Dosanjh and Mokobara: A statement of global cool

Guwahati: Diljit Dosanjh has always been a cultural disruptor. Whether it's his music that effortlessly straddles continents or his fearless approach to fashion, he's a master at blending tradition with modernity. His latest accessory? Mokobara—a brand quickly shaping the future of travel style. Driven by the need for constant innovation in the fashion industry, Diljit and Mokobara are a statement of global cool. "No one is doing it like Diljit, on a global stage. From electric sets to iconic fashion, he's got it all, and we absolutely love being a part of that journey," says Sangeet Agrawal, Founder of Mokobara.

Founded in January 2020, Mokobara has been making waves in the travel and lifestyle industry from day zero. Despite launching on the cusp of a pandemic, the brand



quickly became synonymous with elevating the joy of travel. Known for its modern, design-driven luggage, backpacks, totes, and accessories, Mokobara has carved a path for itself through its emphasis on seamless functionality and bold style. "Big love for Mokobara," Diljit shares. From day zero, Mokobara has been on a mission to elevate the joy of travel for people #goingplaces.

Shanyo Horam's inspiring journey to global success

Guwahati: The story of Shanyo Horam, a young lady belonging to a small village in Nagaland consisting of only 33 houses, is a shining example of perseverance, faith, and determination. Being the eldest sister in her house, this young lady experienced poverty and very limited opportunities in life. Born into humble beginnings, she shouldered immense responsibilities, mainly supporting her sibling's education and their dreams. In 2003, Shanyo moved to Bangalore to create a better future for her family. She worked in the travel industry for three years but realized the limitations of a salaried job prevented her from achieving financial freedom. In 2011, she returned to her village to recharge and met a Swedish holistic wellbeing brand.

Shanyo Horam, a Diamond Director with Oriflame, has transformed from a shy, inexperienced individual into a confident and inspiring leader. She mentors entrepreneurs from various backgrounds and has traveled to over 15 countries with her husband. Shanyo now owns a home, a car, and a stable life for her family. Oriflame has been a support system, unlocking her potential and building confidence. Her story demonstrates that dreams can change lives with passion and dedication.

Indobell Insulations Limited announces ₹1,014.30 lakhs IPO

Kolkata: Indobell Insulations Limited, a prominent manufacturer and contractor of specialized insulation products, has launched its Initial Public Offering (IPO) on the BSE SME platform. The IPO aims to raise ₹1,014.30 lakhs through the issuance of 22,05,000 equity shares, priced at ₹46 each. The issue is open from January 6 to January 8, 2025. IPO Highlights: Issue Size: ₹1,014.30 lakhs, Price Per Share: ₹46, Market Lot: 3,000 shares, Post-IPO Dilution: 35%, Listing Platform: BSE SME. The proceeds from the IPO will be directed towards: 1. Acquiring advanced machinery to enhance production capacity, 2. Supporting working capital requirements to stream-

line operations, 3. General corporate purposes.

Indobell Insulations Limited specializes in Nodulated Wool, Ceramic Fibre Nodules, and Mineral Fibre Nodules, catering to diverse industries, including power, commercial, and industrial sectors. The company offers comprehensive solutions such as consultancy, engineering, fabrication, installation, and project management. The company has demonstrated robust financial performance, with revenue of ₹556.30 lakhs and a PAT of ₹42.39 lakhs for the half-year ending September 30, 2024. Speaking on the IPO launch, Managing Director Mr. Vijay Burman said, "This IPO marks a new chapter in our growth journey."

Vi offers 12 am-12 pm Unlimited data every day, all year long

Guwahati: Leading Telecom operator Vi recently launched an industry-first proposition, “SuperHero,” that has offered unlimited access to data between 12 AM to 12 PM, designed keeping in mind the ever-increasing need for more high-speed data. To further sweeten the deal for customers looking for yearly packs or value for money offers, Vi has three Best in Value Annual Recharge options which not only deliver upto 25% savings compared to monthly plans but also cater to the entertainment & uninterrupted mobile data requirements throughout the year.

Vi's annual recharge plans offer half-day unlimited data from 12 AM to 12 PM in addition to a 2 GB daily data quota



for the remaining 12 hours of the day. Not just that, Vi SuperHero packs also offer Weekend Data Rollover, which allows users to carry forward unused weekday data and use it during the weekend. Add to it, these plans also offer emergency data top-up with the Data Delight feature, which provides an unconditional additional 1GB of data twice a month. In addition to these benefits, users can also enjoy OTT subscriptions like Disney+ Hotstar & Amazon Prime Lite for a full year.

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 Inna 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.”

The inspiring journey of Shanyo Horam, Oriflame Diamond Director

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Rainbow Children's Heart Institute performs world's first fetal aortic valvuloplasty with device closure

Guwahati: Rainbow Children's Heart Institute has achieved a world-first milestone by successfully performing fetal balloon aortic valvuloplasty with device closure on a 27-week-old fetus diagnosed with critical aortic stenosis. This pioneering procedure, which involved sealing the puncture site with a device after relieving the valve obstruction, sets a new global benchmark in fetal cardiology.

The groundbreaking procedure, led by Dr. KonetiNageswaraRao, Chief Pediatric Cardiologist, along with Dr. ShwetaBakhu and Dr. Sri PhaniBhargaviDhulipudi, utilized state-of-the-art technology to

perform the life-saving intervention. The fetus showed significant improvement in cardiac function and was recently discharged in good health following a successful delivery.

Dr. Rao hailed the achievement as a testament to the institute's commitment to pushing the boundaries of fetal therapy. He stressed the power of innovation and teamwork in saving lives before birth.

This advancement could significantly impact the healthcare sector in Guwahati. With rising awareness of advanced pediatric care, families in the region may seek specialized treatments for congenital heart



conditions. This could lead to increased demand for pediatric cardiac services and attract further investments in healthcare infrastructure, particularly in northeastern India, where such procedures are still rare.

NSDC drives workforce transformation in 2024; focus on skills, innovation and inclusivity

Guwahati: The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) marked 2024 as a transformative year in India's skill development landscape. Anchored by the government's vision of a skilled India, NSDC's initiatives, such as the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH), have been instrumental in equipping the workforce with industry-relevant skills. SIDH, offering over 500 courses in emerging fields like AI, drones, and cloud computing, has seen over 1 crore registrations and 50 lakh course completions.

NSDC's economic contributions include a 3.5% growth in IT and manufacturing sectors and the creation of over 2.3 lakh green jobs in renewable energy. Initiatives like the Pradhan-

MantriKaushalVikasYojana (PMKVY) 4.0 and the Skill Impact Bond have enhanced job readiness and inclusivity, particularly for women and disadvantaged communities.

In Guwahati, NSDC's programs align with the city's aspirations of becoming a hub for skilled talent in the Northeast. Courses tailored to AI, robotics, and renewable energy are empowering the region's youth to tap into emerging job markets, contributing to Guwahati's economic growth and reducing unemployment.

Looking ahead, NSDC's focus on international collaborations, entrepreneurship, and advanced technologies ensures India's workforce is future-ready, driving the nation closer to its \$1 trillion digital economy goal by 2030.

Godrej Agrovet launches Pride Hog feed range to enhance pig farming in Northeast India

Guwahati/Dibrugarh: Godrej Agrovet Limited (Godrej Agrovet), a leading diversified agri-business company, has announced the launch of Godrej Pride Hog, a scientifically developed pig feed range designed to provide optimal nutrition at each stage of a pig's lifecycle. The range includes Starter, Grower, and Finisher variants, ensuring balanced nutrition for better health, immunity, and growth. Godrej Agrovet hosted a roundtable discussion in Guwahati as part of the launch to explore best practices for managing pig farms and preventive measures against African Swine Fever (ASF). The event saw participation from industry experts, including Dr. Purnananda Konwar, General Manager, Assam Livestock and Poultry Corporation Ltd., and Capt. (Dr.) A.Y. Rajendra, CEO, Animal Feed Business, Godrej Agrovet.

Commenting on the launch, Balram Singh Yadav, Managing Director, Godrej Agrovet, said, “We are confident it will contribute to improv-



ing farmer profitability and productivity.” Dr. Purnananda Konwar, General Manager, Assam Livestock and Poultry Corporation Ltd, noted, “The North East's vulnerability to ASF outbreaks highlights the urgent need for preventive measures and modernized pig farming practices.” Godrej Agrovet's Animal Feed Business emphasizes preventive healthcare through biosecurity measures such as restricted farm access, equipment disinfection, pig isolation, and hygiene maintenance.

Isuzu Motors India celebrates 1-Lakh vehicle milestone

Mumbai: Isuzu Motors India announced a significant achievement of rolling out one lakh vehicles from its advanced manufacturing facility in Sri City, Andhra Pradesh. This milestone highlights the company's commitment to the Indian automotive market, exemplified by the popular Isuzu D-MAX V-Cross model, known for its durability. The event was graced by key figures, including Dr. N. Yuvaraj, Secretary to the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

Since commencing operations in 2016, Isuzu has expanded its production capabilities, doubling vehicle and engine output in the last two years. The workforce includes 22% women, emphasizing diversity and inclusion. Isuzu aims to enhance its presence in India while maintaining global quality standards, as it continues to adapt to customer needs and expand its reach for a superior ownership experience.

Tata Salt leads the way in combating iodine deficiency across India



Mumbai: India has made significant strides in addressing the health issues caused by iodine deficiency. Iodine, a critical micronutrient, plays an essential role in thyroid function, and its deficiency can lead to iodine deficiency disorders (IDD). These disorders affect people of all ages and can have severe consequences, especially for children and pregnant women. One of the most concerning conditions linked to iodine deficiency is hypothyroidism, where the thyroid fails to produce enough hormones.

If untreated, this condition can be life-threatening, causing symptoms like fatigue, weight gain, dry skin, and sensitivity to cold. In children, iodine deficiency can impair mental development, and for pregnant women, it increases the risk of stillbirth, miscarriage, and developmental issues in the fetus, including cretinism. Deepika Bhan, President of Packaged Foods at Tata Consumer Products, stated, “Tata Salt is committed to providing iodized salt with the right amount of iodine to address challenges linked to iodine deficiency.” Continued efforts to increase the adoption of iodized salt will be one of the key steps to ensuring a secure future for generations to come.

Bumrah Breaks Ashwin's Rating Record in Latest ICC Rankings

Dubai: Jasprit Bumrah has surpassed Ravichandran Ashwin's all-time rating-point record in the latest ICC rankings. Bumrah reached a career-high 907 rating points, breaking Ashwin's record of 904, which he achieved in December 2016.

This remarkable feat places Bumrah joint-17th in the all-time list, tied with England's Derek Underwood. Bumrah had equaled Ashwin's 904 rating points before the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne, and his out-standing performance, where he claimed nine



wickets despite India's loss, helped him achieve this new milestone, further solidifying his position as the No. 1 Test

bowler.

Australia's captain, Pat Cummins, gained 15 rating points following his six-wick-

et haul in the Melbourne Test. As a result, he moved up to No. 3 in the Test bowler rankings. In addition, Cummins secured the third spot in the Test all-rounder rankings, boosted by his crucial 90 runs in the 184-run victory over India. India's Yashasvi Jaiswal's 82-run performance in the first innings of the Boxing Day Test propelled him to a career-high ranking of fourth, with 854 rating points. Nitish Kumar Reddy's impressive maiden Test cent-ury saw him rise 20 spots to No. 53 in the Test batting rankings.

Watson Backs Kohli, Rohit on India's Pakistan Absence

Sydney: Former Australia all-rounder Shane Watson called it "unfortunate" that India would not be traveling to Pakistan for the upcoming Champions Trophy, but he emphasized the excitement that the tournament will still bring, particularly in the India-Pakistan encounters, which are always special in global cricket.

Speaking during the Champions Trophy Tour, Watson acknowledged the significance of the event, especially as a bridge between two World Cups. "The Champions Trophy is critically important in world cricket because the ODI World Cup is only once in every four years. It breaks up those four years," Watson said. He also noted that while

Test cricket takes center stage, and T20s are on the rise, the Champions Trophy keeps the ODI format alive. "You keep giving one-day cricket the energy that it needs because it is a great format. It provides balance between Test cricket and T20 cricket." Regarding the India-Pakistan fixture, Watson expressed his disappointment that it wouldn't be played in Pakistan. "It's unfortunate that India aren't traveling to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy. But that's just the way it is right now," he added. Still, he emphasized the importance of the matches, saying the rivalry between the two nations always brings something unique to the game.

Confidence in Rohit and



Kohli's ODI Form Watson also addressed concerns about the form of Indian superstars Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, both of whom have faced struggles in recent months. While acknowledging their difficulties in Test cricket, he expressed confidence that they would perform well in the Champions Trophy. "I don't think the current poor form will really play a part in their impact on oneday cricket. The format gives them more

freedom," he said. He also highlighted Kohli's exceptional ODI numbers, praising the 295-match veteran for his remarkable consistency over the years. "Kohli is an absolute master of one-day cricket. His extraordinary numbers — averaging around 57 and a strike rate of 93 — show his control over his innings."

Similarly, Watson expressed optimism about Rohit Sharma's ODI potential, citing his excellent form during the 2023 World Cup. "We'll see that again in the Champions Trophy. Rohit, when he's at his best, is taking on the game. He's difficult to stop in one-day cricket, and I'd be very surprised if he doesn't perform well."

Rohit 'no more' part of selectors' plan for Tests post BGT, talks with ViratKohli on

Sydney: Amidst the Indian skipper Rohit Sharma 'opted out' of the fifth and final Test against Australia at Sydney Cricket Ground, a report by leading English daily said that Rohit is no more a part of the selectors' plan beyond the Australia tour when it comes to red-ball cricket. The report even added Rohit had already been communicated to him before the Sydney Test.



Apart from this, the selectors will also sit with ViratKohli to discuss the way ahead post the BGT. RavindraJadeja may continue to remain in the scheme of things, citing his stats and contributions to the team in last few Tests.

Coming back to the questioned if Rohit 'opted out' or forced to 'opt out' from the Sydney Test, the report claims the decision was taken by the player and head coach GautamGambhir after the meeting with the chairman of selectors, AjitAgarkar. In the ongoing BGT 2024-25, after missing the first Test at Perth, Rohit's struggles with the bat continued.

Ryan Rickelton becomes 1st Test centurion of 2025

Centurion: South African batter Ryan Rickelton became the first Test centurion of 2025. Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's KusalPerera claimed the honour of being the first overall centurion of the year, smashing the fastest T20I hundred for Sri Lanka in the final match against New Zealand. Rickelton couldn't have asked for a better start to the new year, registering his second Test century in style. He reached the milestone in just 135 deliveries on Day 1 of the New Year's Test between South Africa and Pakistan at Newlands, Cape Town.

Interestingly, whenever



Ryan Rickelton has crossed the fifty-run mark in Test cricket, he has gone on to convert it into a hundred. As a result, he is yet to register a fifty in the format. Rickelton's maiden Test century came during South Africa's second Test against Sri Lanka in December.

Naomi Osaka Advances to Quarterfinals in Auckland WTA Tournament



Auckland: Four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka began 2025 on a high note, defeating Julia Grabher 7-5, 6-3 to secure a spot in the quarterfinals of the Auckland tennis classic. Osaka showed resilience despite challenging conditions, including a swirling breeze and a lengthy rain delay. Though the wind affected her ball toss at times, she managed to hold serve throughout the match, breaking Grabher once in each set. This victory marks Osaka's second appearance in the Auckland quarterfinals, having reached the same stage in 2017 during her only other visit to New Zealand.

"It was a tough match, and I just focused on myself and tried not to get too nervous," Osaka said after the win. She credited her recent addition to the team, coach Patrick Mouratoglou, for some helpful advice that helped her stay focused. Mouratoglou, who was previously associated with Serena Williams,

has been guiding Osaka since the off-season. Osaka also showed no signs of the back injury that curtailed her 2024 season, moving freely around the court and playing with power, especially from her forehand side. Her first serve was a key weapon, winning 80% of points when it landed in.

The first set was closely contested, with no breaks until the 12th game. After a rain delay, Osaka broke Grabher immediately and won the first set. She took control in the second set, holding serve with ease and breaking Grabher in the sixth game to lead 4-2. Osaka finished the match with a comfortable hold of serve, clinching it on her first match point. The Auckland tournament serves as a warm-up for the Australian Open, which starts on January 12. Osaka's path to the final has become more open following the withdrawals of former U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu and Elise Mertens due to injuries.

Kapil Dev Promises to Visit Vinod Kambli After Health Struggles

Mumbai: Legendary all-rounder Kapil Dev has assured former India batter Vinod Kambli, who recently left a hospital in Thane, that he will visit him as soon as he recovers. Kambli, 52, was admitted to the ICU on December 21 with health complications, including a urinary infection, cramps, and brain clots. However, after several days of treatment, Kambli was discharged, visibly frail but in good spirits. He even posed for photographs with the hospital staff and enjoyed a brief game of cricket.

During his hospital stay, Kambli had a video call with Kapil Dev, the captain of India's 1983 World Cup-winning team, who expressed his concern and support. The emotional exchange between



the two former teammates included Kapil's reassurance to Kambli, "I will come and see you. You are looking good, you've coloured your beard. Don't rush. If you need to stay (in the hospital) for a few more days, please don't rush. Tell the doctors it is fine if you stay for a couple more days," Kapil said. Kapil continued with words of encouragement: "Take care. When you're better and come out, I will come to meet you. Look after yourself, love you."