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Athletics Federation of India

NEWSLETTER

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HSBC partnered with AFI to promote Women's athletics in India

Women's athletics in the country is all set to make a giant leap with huge sponsorship support offered by HSBC India.

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AFI President **Adille Sumariwalla** along with Hitendra Dave, General Manager and CEO of HSBC India, jointly made this important announcement during a press meet organized to launch this partnership in Mumbai recently.



AFI felt immense pleasure in welcoming a global brand to the Indian Athletics family. "The partnership with HSBC India will not only help develop, grow and support women's participation across various disciplines in track and field sport but also raise performance levels of women athletes in international events. The support by the global brand will further raise the profile of athletics in India," **Adille Sumariwalla** said during the above occasion. "Women athletes have been at the forefront of bringing glory to India. We want to bolster their efforts by enabling access

to training and equipment of international standards. We look forward to driving an energised and collaborative effort in supporting our women athletes," **Hitendra Dave** said.

"We have a rich legacy of actively supporting various community development initiatives in India. Our association with the Athletics Federation of India is a step towards ensuring that our Tricolour flutters proudly across international athletic events", he added further.

Anju Bobby George, the first Indian to win a World Athletics Championships medal and AFI Senior Vice President, said HSBC

India's entry as an AFI partner will be a massive shot in the arm for women's athletics. "It is heart-warming that a corporate major is taking keen interest and supporting India's women track and field athletes. It will be a fillip for the sport whose Indian athletes are producing results at the Asian, Commonwealth and global levels," she said.

Apart from Anju, the 2022 Commonwealth Games medallists **Priyanka Goswami** (silver in 10,000m race walk), **Annu Rani** (bronze in Javelin Throw) and 2018 World junior champion **Hima Das** (in 400m) were also present during the above launch.

A glimpse of women athletes' progress in India

Roshan Mistry was the cynosure of all eyes when Independent India organised its first major international competition, the Asian Games at Delhi in 1951. She won a silver medal in 100m and added another as a member of the 4 x 100m relay quartet. **Mary D'Souza** (now aged 91), who was a member of the silver-winning squad, got a bronze medal in 200m. **Barbara Webster** was another athlete to win two medals, both of them bronze, through shot put and javelin throw. Mary was also part of the Indian relay quartet that won the Gold in the next edition of the Games in 1954. However, our first individual gold medallist in the quadrennial Asian Games was **Kamaljit Sandhu**, who at the age of 22 had won the 400m title in 1970.

Geeta Zutshi in 1978 Asiad (800m) and **Rita Sen** in 1979 Asian Championships (400m) continued the golden run. Hurdler **M D Valsamma**, sprinter **P T Usha**, middle distance runner **Shiny Abraham-Wilson** emerged thereafter. Meanwhile, the Marathon runners **Asha Agarwal**, Sunita Godara, Rigzen Angmo, Valli Satyabhama and O P Jaisha proved the endurance power of Indian women.

A galaxy of jumpers like Reeth Abraham, Mercy Kuttan, **Anju Bobby George**, Lekha Thomas, M A Prajusha and **Mayookha Johny** made leaps and bounds to take women's athletics to the next level. Anju went on to win a bronze medal in the World Championships in 2003.

The trio of discus throwers **Krishna Poonia**, **Harwant Kaur** and **Seema Antil-Punia** made a podium sweep in Delhi 2010 Commonwealth Games.

In recent years, **Hima Das** made it rich with a World junior GOLD in 400m in 2018 while **Dutee Chand** conquered the World University Games 100m title in 2019. The budding youngster **Rupal Choudhary** revealed her high ambitions while securing a bronze medal in 400m during last month's World U20 championships at Cali, Colombia.

With HSBC India has come forward to promote the activities, the "Women Power" in India received the needy booster to thrust upward in the future.



Mission Impossible: Sable topples Kenyan applecart in Birmingham

Avinash Sable accomplished what everyone else thought impossible. The 3,000m steeplechase in Commonwealth Games turned out to be a "race of the lifetime" as every athletics fan, Indian or otherwise, enjoyed watching the high-octane competition which pushed the viewers to the edge of their seats.

Kenya had unquestionable domination in long distance races, especially in the steeplechase, until things went the other way in Alexander Stadium which attracted a packed audience on the first weekend of August.

With an unbeaten record of podium sweeps in the past six editions of the Commonwealth Games, the trio of Abraham Kibiwott, Amos Serem and Conseslus Kipruto entered the fray thinking of extending their team's winning legacy. After hearing the starter's report, the trio entered into the business by leading the first kilometre in 2:39.14 and the second through 5:27.03. However, Sable, stick with the leaders in less than two meters gap made his 'kick' in just 600m to go and took the second spot behind Kibiwott.

Sable went on to chase the leader in an exciting last lap that put the worrying Kenyan made a desperate effort to keep his status quo. Kibiwott, the silver medalist in the previous edition at Gold Coast, was just one step ahead at the finish from Sable (8:11.15 to 8:11.20). It was the ninth time that Sable improved the national record in this event. Thanks to Scott Simmons, his coach, for rapidly improving Sable's stamina and tempo for a final sprinting effort in the race.

The Indian jumpers contributed four out of eight medals the country's athletes won in Birmingham. Tejaswin Shankar brought the first ever medal, a bronze, in the high jump. It was a straight final with just 13 competitors. Windy conditions deterred the jumpers from sailing over great heights. Incidentally, the winning height (2.25m) was the lowest since 1974. Tejaswin cleared 2.22m for the bronze, a modest height for his calibre.



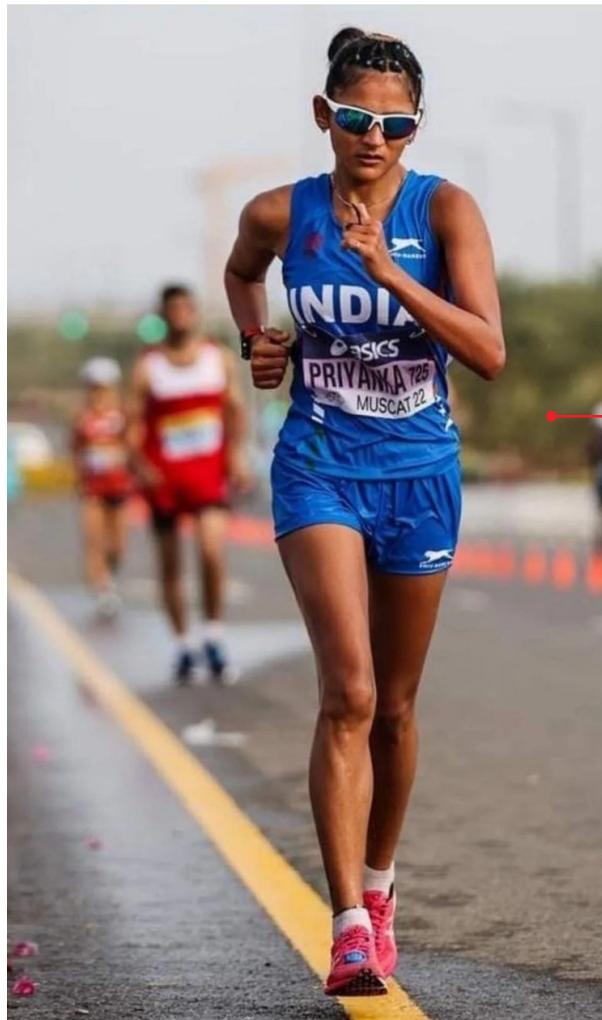
The horizontal (long and triple) jumpers had another problem to tackle in the form of a "new" take-off board. Murali Sreeshankar, who first experienced the take-off issues in the World championships at Eugene the previous month, was a clear favourite among the competitors and easily led the qualifying rounds with 15 cm by leaping to a wind-aided 8.15m. Bahama's LaQuan Nairn, who finished second (7.90m) in the qualifiers has turned the table in the final. Nairn took the lead right from the first round in the final, while Shanku struggled to get his rhythm. The Bahamian jumper leaped 8.08m on his second try, while Sreeshankar replicated the same in his penultimate round. Both the jumpers had two 'no jumps' in the final. However, an appeal by the Indian team, challenging one of the Sreeshankar's jumps that was declared "foul", went unsuccessful. With a better jump series, Nairn took the gold and Shanku got the silver. The other Indian, Muhammed Anas Yahiya, finished fifth (7.97m).

In the absence of Neeraj Chopra, who was nursing a groin injury after the Oregon Worlds, India fielded two other javelin throwers Prakash D Manu and Rohit Yadav in Birmingham. They finished fifth (82.28m) and sixth (82.22m) respectively. Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem won the event with a personal best 90.18m, thus becoming the first South Asian to cross the 90m barrier, beating the World champion Anderson Peters (88.64) to second place in Birmingham.





Fourteen athletes took part in the men's triple jump. **Abdulla Aboobacker started with a modest 16.57m while Praveen Chitravel logged** a better 16.75m in the first round. However, the third Indian competitor Eldhose Paul had a struggling run-up to land in a below-par 14.62m while opening his CWG campaign. But that did not deter his ambitions as he registered 17.03m in windy conditions in the third round, which remained as his gold-winning jump. Incidentally, Paul finished a credible ninth in the previous month's World championships in Oregon. Abdulla managed to make his mark in the fifth round (17.02m) to join his teammate on the podium. However, Praveen's best in Birmingham (16.89m) was not enough to join them to make an all-Indian podium sweep. He narrowly missed the bronze to Bermuda's Jah-Nhai Perinchief by just 3 cm.



India won two medals in the newly introduced 10,000m race walk, through Sandeep Kumar Sangwan (Bronze, 38:49.21) and Priyanka Goswami (Silver, 43:38.83). Javelin thrower Annu Rani was the other medal winner for India as she took a bronze with a distance of 60.00m.

Never Say Never Again: Team India posted an Asian U20 record with a silver in Cali

India is a land of several untapped potentials. The nation's athletes dominated the Asian athletics stage alongside Japan in the conventional era. However, the emergence of technological advancement and the arrival of migrated athletes in other countries tilted the balance and made a temporary setback to the subcontinent's athletics prowess for quite some time.

The Indian athletes, especially the young and upcoming ones, did not budge easily. They are ready to train hard and deliver goods. It was evident already with two World U20 gold medals won by javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra (Bydgoszcz 2016) and quarter-miler Hima Das (Tampere 2018).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2020 edition of the championships was held in Nairobi last year (2021) where Indian athletes won 2 silver and 1 bronze medal.

Our athletes replicated the same medal position (2s, 1b) in this year's championships held at Cali, Colombia. As in the previous edition, Indian athletes secured two individual medals through triple jumper T Selva Prabhu (silver) and 400m runner Rupal (bronze).

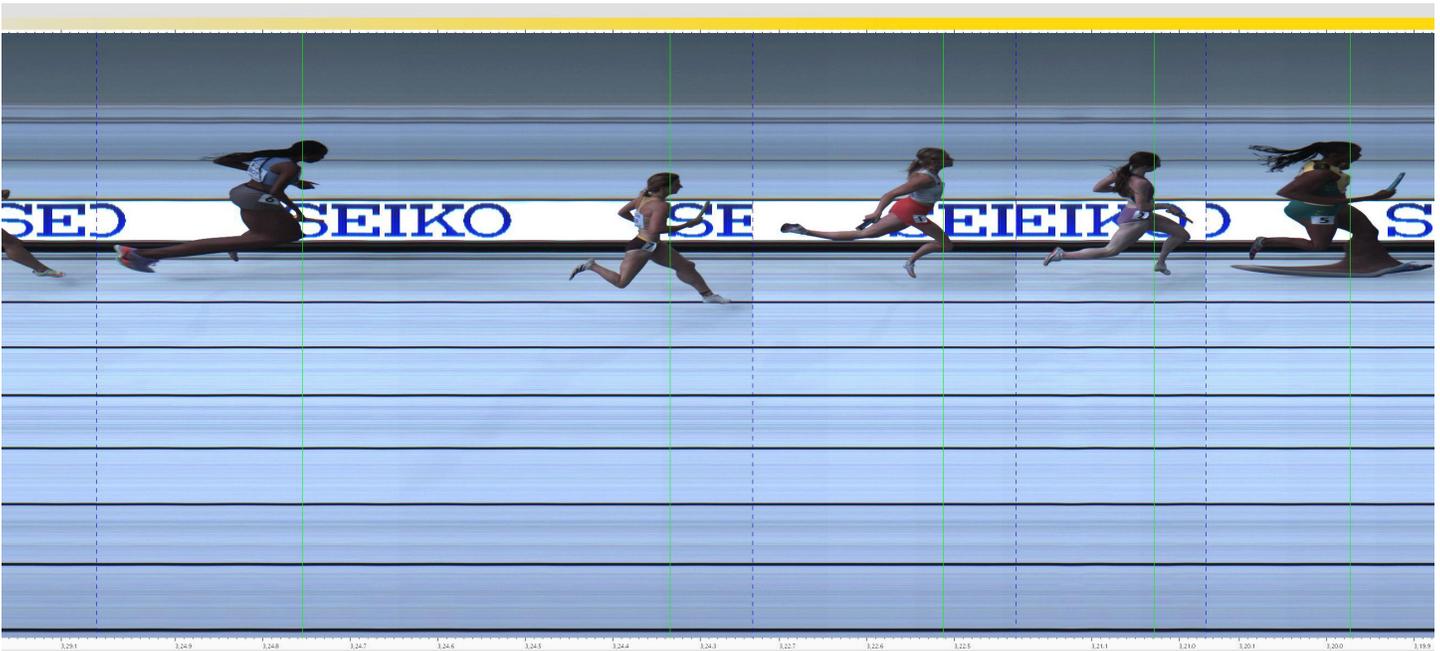
For Selva Prabhu, who hails from the southern state of Tamil Nadu, it came as a surprise as his silver winning jump (16.15m) was more than a metre behind that of the winner Jaydon Hibbert (17.27m) from Jamaica. Jaydon went one place up from his silver position in Nairobi. The 2021 European junior bronze medalist Viktor Morozov (Estonia) took the bronze 2 cm behind Prabhu. Incidentally, Prabhu's state-mate Donald Makimairaj barely missed



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a medal last year by just 1 cm in Nairobi. For Prabhu, the mark in Cali (16.15) was his personal best,

an improvement of 4 cm from what he logged in the TN state meet in Coimbatore earlier this year.



On the other hand, Rupal showed a splendid display, improving her performance rapidly this year and clocked her first sub-52 secs timing in Cali at the final to win a bronze medal. She improved her 2021 best by 2 seconds. In fact, nine of her top-10 timings in 400m came this year. Earlier she took the Junior FedCup title in Nadiad with a remarkable time of 52.48 secs. A confirmatory 52.72 secs clocking, while taking the silver medal in the inter-state nationals at Chennai, revealed she is on serious business. In Cali, Rupal started with 52.50 secs to top in her qualifying heat and improved it rapidly to 52.27 secs to win her semi-final. That sends a warning and expectation of another top place finish as Hima Das did in 2018. However, her 51.85 secs personal best in the final was only enough to fetch her the bronze medal. Britain's Yemi Mary John (51.50) and Kenyan Damaris Ndeleva (51.71) took the top two spots. Priya H Mohan, who finished fourth in Nairobi, fails it makes it to the final this time after finishing fifth in her semi-final heat.

But the real drama for the Indian Team came in the mixed relay. The team consisting of Barath Sridhar, Priya H Mohan, Kapil and Rupal took the top spot in their qualifying heat with an Asian U20 record of 3:19.62. The quartet went on to improve it further in the final (3:17.76) to snatch the silver medal behind the United States (3:17.69). Jamaica occupied the bronze spot in 3:19.98. It was really a thrilling race as they barely missed the gold to the US team at the finish. While the two male athletes were strong in the US team, Indian women contributed richly to the team's performance in Cali. Incidentally, Priya (52.52) and Rupal (51.82) ran the fastest timings in their respective legs which even their counterparts in US and Jamaica could not match. If groomed well, the Indian mixed relay team will certainly create history in the global arena.

In other events, Vivek Kumar finished a credible fourth in javelin throw after reaching a personal best 72.17m. Agasara Nandini finished seventh in 100m hurdles. Earlier in the heats she posted an Indian U20 record of 13.34 secs. In the U20 women's 4x400m relay, the Indian team finished eighth. Like Nandini, the quartet consisting of Summy, Priya, Rajitha and Rupal delivered 3:34.18, an Indian junior best in the relay.



Diamonds Are Forever: Chopra sparkles to win in Lausanne Diamond League

Earlier this year, Neeraj Chopra won a silver medal in the Bauhaus-Galan in Stockholm, a Diamond League series this year, with a personal best and national record 89.94m. Everyone expected him to cross the 90m barrier on his next stop in Eugene, during the World championships however he had a groin injury but managed to win a silver medal with a modest 88.13m.

The injury forced Neeraj to take a rest and skip the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham wherein Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem created ripples with his first 90m throw to win the gold.

When his name first appeared in the list of participants in the 47th edition of the Athletissima in Lausanne, some authorities in the national federation as well as

his ardent fan-followers voiced concern over his fitness. Varying reports suggesting his withdrawal from the appointed competition started circulating on social media. However, the courageous soldier overcomes all the hypes and cries to land in Lausanne on time.

Athletissima, a part of the Wanda Diamond League, had a galaxy of stars entered in the start lists along with Neeraj. Czech Republic's Jakub Vadlejch, who finished behind Neeraj during Tokyo Olympics as well as the Eugene Worlds, 2012 Olympic champion Keshorn Walcott from Trinidad and Tobago, another Eugene finalist Curtis Thompson from the United States were among the elite athletes who logged horn with Neeraj in Lausanne.

One and done, echoed by an announcer during the World championships when some of the classic throwers including Neeraj Chopra started qualifying for the final with their very first throw, holds good in Lausanne too. But this time it was a straight final and his first and foremost throw of 89.94m placed Neeraj on top of the orbit as none of the other competitors came nearer to it in the rest of the competition.

In fact, Neeraj's second throw in Lausanne measured to 85.18m and the last one a nondescript 80.04m. In between, he passed two of his throws, while the other one was declared null.

The win in Lausanne took Neeraj to the Diamond League Final to be played in another Swiss city, Zurich, on September 7-8.

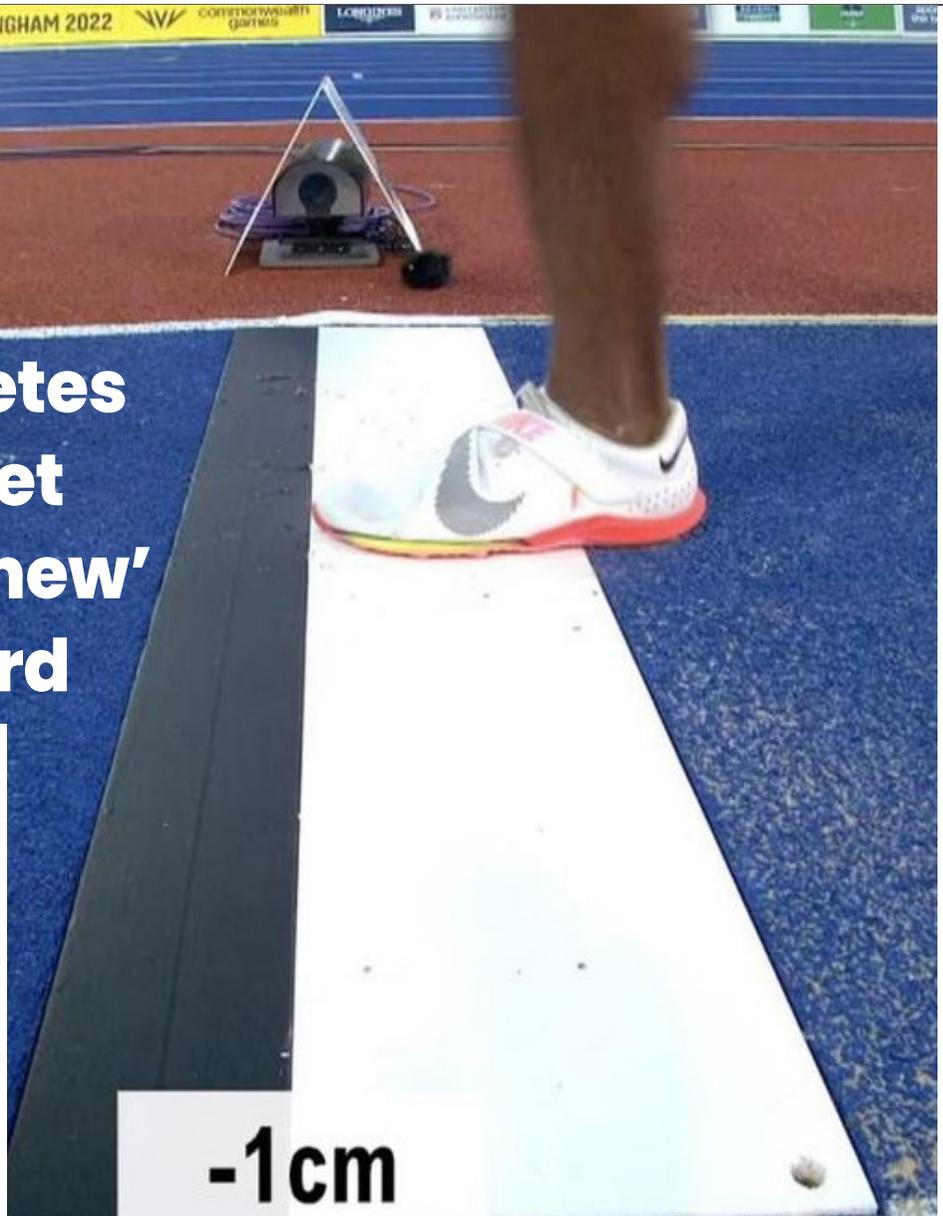
Fallout: Athletes struggle to get off with the 'new' take-off board

The World Athletics introduced a new take-off board during the World Indoor Championships in Belgrade early this year, followed by their outdoor World Championships in Eugene. A similar one was in use during the Commonwealth Games at Birmingham.

At the end of 2020, the World Athletics amended its Technical Rules (TR) which paved way for the introduction of this new take-off board. Although it was originally intended to introduce the new board in 2021, the global body postponed it for a year due to the worldwide rescheduling of the major sports competitions following the Covid-19 pandemic.

What is this new take-off board meant? Previously, when the traditional take-off board was in use, a plasticine strip was laid at an angle of 45 degrees from the take-off board. So, whenever an athlete's foot/shoe touched beyond the take-off line (i.e. end of the board) it will be called a foul.

The change in TR30 and



especially TR 30.1.1 read as follows—

An athlete fails if, they (he/she), while taking off [prior to the instant at which they (he/she) ceased contact with the take-off board or ground], break the vertical plane of the take-off line with any part of their take-off foot/shoe, whether running up without jumping or in the act of jumping.

The word "vertical plane" thus has significance here. To make it simpler, the "take-off" board

is now extended with another piece of board that sits slightly higher beyond the actual take-off line at 90 degrees. In a rough comparison, it now looks like the 'ring' in the discus/hammer circles.

Many athletes, including the elite class, had difficulties adjusting themselves to the new boards. Apart from athletes, normal technical officials also have issues in judging during this new environment.

The foul indicator goes digital

It plays a key role in determining a valid (legal) jump. A simple video technology using a high-definition video camera aligned exactly with the take-off line. The judge is looking at the take-off images on a screen which can be either infield or outfield. A duplicate screen is provided on the "Field of Play" for the athlete to check the take-off. The image chosen from the video for the call is normally the last frame before the shoe leaves the take-off board, but the judge is checking the whole sequence. Of course, all images are stored and can be re-checked if need be.

For the measurement of the jump, either video (VDM) or EDM technology is used.

The change is, however, not universal. Even in many world-class competitions, the use of plasticine is continuing. A large number of globally acclaimed athletes were against this new board. Carl Lewis, who held an incredible record of four Olympic titles in Long Jump, called it a farce. Unlike the 'no false start' rule, which draw criticism at the time of its introduction but was accepted universally thereafter, the 'new take-off board' required expensive equipment to determine the foul without leading to any controversy.

