

## Nike nets \$43m deal with BCCI

AFP, Mumbai

Nike has signed a 43-million-dollar deal to kit out the Indian cricket team after outbidding rivals Reebok and Adidas, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said on Friday.

The five-year contract, which starts on January 1, 2006, also gives the US sports goods giant the rights to sell the BCCI's official merchandise at its retail outlets across the country.

Nike's bid for 1.97 billion rupees (43 million dollars) topped Reebok's 1.19 billion rupees and Adidas' bid of 1.28 billion rupees, BCCI vice-president Lalit Modi said.

"The aim was to maximise the gains from the game for the benefit of the game," Modi said.

"The BCCI is looking at exploring new sources of revenue and would soon open itself to product merchandising, ground sponsorship and other licensing as part of its strategy to market the game."

Nike's coup follows the BCCI's tie-up with Sahara India group to be the official sponsor of the Indian team for four years at a whopping 70 million dollars.

"We look forward to working with the Indian team and to creating the best performance products for the players," said Peter Bratschi, Nike's sports marketing director for Asia-Pacific.

India, placed second behind Australia in the International Cricket Council's official Test rankings, begin the new year with a high-profile tour of Pakistan for three Tests and five one-day internationals.

India is also scheduled to play a home series against England in February-March before touring the West Indies in May.

## Gaibandha champs in regional cricket

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Hosts Gaibandha managed a thrilling five-run victory against Lalmonirhat to become champions in the Rajshahi Division regional cricket tournament yesterday.

With the outcome of the last game, Gaibandha bagged nine points while Kurigram secured six points to finish runners-up.

Rudra hammered 80 as Gaibandha scored 151 before being all out in 35.2 overs after deciding to bat first at the Gaibandha Stadium.

In reply, Lalmonirhat were bundled out for 146 in 39.1 overs.

## Sonali Bank lift V-Day hockey title

SPORTS REPORTER

Sonali Bank clinched the Victory Day hockey title defeating Bangladesh Army 6-5 in the tie-breaker at the Maulana Bhashani National Stadium yesterday.

The match rolled into the shoot-out after a 1-1 draw in the stipulated time.

Atiqur Rahman put Army ahead in the 53rd minute while Shamim Reza levelled the margin for Sonali Bank in regulation time.

## U-14 football camp begins

SPORTS REPORTER

A three-week training camp for under-14 footballers began at the Abahani ground in Dhanmondi on Friday.

The players were picked for the Sheikh Russel U-14 football tournament, which was organised by the youth and sports sub-committee of Awami League in September-October this year.

The training camp will be conducted by a panel of coaches led by national coach Golam Sarwar Tipu. Obaidul Quader, joint-general secretary of Awami League, inaugurated the camp. Former national footballer and AL youth and sports secretary Dewan Shafiul Arefin Tutul, ex-national footballers and AL officials were present.

## Zim deeper

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He is heading to Bangladesh to resume his career after retiring from international cricket -- at the age of 22.

He resigned the captaincy in protest at the alleged maladministration of Chingoka and Bvute.

Taibu, who is black, became international cricket's youngest captain aged 20 in April last year after he was thrust into the role following a race row that led to the axing of former skipper Heath Streak.

The row led the ZC to sack a total of 15 senior players, all white, and sparked a chain of events that saw Zimbabwe temporarily suspended from Test cricket.

## PRIMERA LIGA

# Osasuna freeze out Atletico

Football

AFP, Madrid

Osasuna maintained their 100 per cent home record this season, and defied the freezing conditions and their own frozen pitch in Pamplona, with a 2-1 victory over Atletico Madrid on Thursday.

The win, in the last Spanish League game of the year, means that Osasuna stay in second just two points in arrears of leaders Barcelona, who beat Celta Vigo 2-0 on Tuesday with Samuel Eto'o scoring both their goals.

Osasuna were given an early shock after 25 minutes when Martin Petrov opened the scoring for Atletico.

The Bulgarian striker was the quickest to react and found the net after Gabi Fernandez's long range effort evaded the finger tips of Osasuna keeper Ricardo Lopez but bounced back into play after hitting the post.

However, Osasuna took just four minutes to get back on level terms, with Raul Garcia finding the net from the edge of the area.

The hosts then took the lead six minutes later with Bernardo Romeo taking advantage of the poor positioning of Atletico keeper Roberto Jimenez, although the teenager could be forgiven for his inexperience.

Roberto was making his first division debut after a spate of injuries and suspensions left Atletico having to opt for their fifth choice goalkeeper, who normally plays for their third team in the Spanish fourth division.

Romeo was only on the pitch because Osasuna's Serb striker Savo Milosevic limped off after just 12 minutes, following a recurrence of a recent thigh strain, but the Argentine striker nearly got a hat-trick.

He hit the post with a header seven minutes from the whistle and then, just a few seconds before the regulation time was up, he sent a clever lob from the edge of the area crashing against the crossbar.

Osasuna now have 38 points

from 17 games and have notched up nine consecutive wins at home, while Atletico have now not won in eight games.



Osasuna players celebrate their victory over Atletico Madrid in the Primera Liga at El Sadar Stadium in Pamplona on Thursday.

PHOTO: AP

## Adriano feared the worst?

AFP, Milan

Brazilian international striker Adriano admitted on Thursday that he feared the consequences after suffering a head injury in Inter Milan's 4-1 Serie A win against Empoli on Wednesday.

"I was very worried, that's for sure," said Adriano who scored the first goal for Inter after just three minutes on Wednesday before being knocked unconscious after a clash of heads with an Empoli defender.

He spent the night in hospital before being released Thursday. "But now everything is fine and the doctors have told me that I can go on holiday with peace of mind."

## Cicinho joins Real Madrid

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid have bought Brazil defender Cicinho from world club champions Sao Paulo, the Spanish side announced on Friday.

Real said the 25-year-old attacking right back had signed a five-year deal and would begin training with his new team on December 29 when they returned from their Christmas break.

Cicinho, who has an Italian passport and so will not take up one of the three berths permitted for non-European Union players, is the fifth Brazilian international in the squad.

He joins Ronaldo, Roberto Carlos, Julio Baptista and Robinho at the Primera Liga club who sacked former Brazil coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo earlier this month.

Spanish media reported that the defender, who was part of the Brazil side that crushed Argentina 4-1 to win the Confederations Cup in June, had signed for a fee of around four million euros (4.75 million dollar).

Cicinho played in the Sao Paulo team that beat Liverpool 1-0 to win FIFA's Club World Championship last Sunday.

Real now have a surfeit of right-sided defenders with Spanish internationals Michel Salgado and Sergio Ramos and Uruguay's Carlos Diogo all competing for a slot in the back four.

## JFA CUP FOOTBALL Kapru propels Khagrachhari

SPORTS REPORTER

Hattrick-hero Kapru Chaipa took Khagrachhari to the zonal semifinals of the JFA Cup Under-16 football tournament with a 5-2 win over Noakhali at the Rangamati Stadium yesterday.

Kapru slotted three goals while Sumon and Al-Amin added one each for the winners who led 2-0 in the first half. Himel and Anis scored consolation goals for Noakhali.

Six more teams reached the zonal semifinals on the same day. Panchagarj edged Chapainawabganj 2-1 at Gaibandha, Kishoreganj won a 3-2 thriller against Netro-kona at Tangail while Narail blanked Barguna 3-0.

The other matches were decided in tiebreakers. Meherpur beat Jessore Education Board 5-4 after a goalless draw in regulation time at Salkhira, Bogra eliminated Rajshahi 3-2 after a 1-1 draw while Faridpur defeated Munshiganj 4-3 at Manikganj.

## Mohammedan

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three minutes later when Emeka received the ball near the six-yard box and blasted it into the back of the net after fellow Nigerian Peter Oda's freekick came off the wall.

The second half belonged to Mohammedan who widened the margin in the 52nd minute when Nigerian forward Francis, taking the ball from fellow midfielder Divine, shrugged off his marker and placed in a left-footer.

Divine wasted a chance on one-on-one but Mohammedan sealed the victory in the 90th minute, thanks to an own goal by the Feni side defender Ramjan who added more woes to the side while trying to clear a minus by Mohammedan fullback Rony.

Yellow cards: Rony, Robin (Mohammedan)

**TEAMS**  
**MOHAMMEDAN:** Shakil, Rony, Biplab, Oda, Hassan, Mintu (Kamal), Divine, Asad, Emeka, Nakib (Manju) and Francis (Robin).  
**FENI SOCCER CLUB:** Sujan, Pradip, Ramjan, Jhontu, Juku, Jahangir (Farid), Kabir, Shakil, Baten, Ritu (Nazmul) and Yusuf (Ridon).  
**Referee:** Ramkrishna Ghosh.

# Diego 'threatened at gun-point'

Football

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

Football legend Diego Maradona was threatened at gun-point during a fracas at Rio de Janeiro airport, a friend claimed on Thursday.

The Argentina World Cup winner was arrested by police for causing a disturbance after missing his flight to Buenos Aires from Brazil.

Police in Brazil claim that Maradona, as well as a group of travelling companions, had even destroyed the VIP waiting room. All were arrested but later released.

But Alejandro Mancuso, a former player who was travelling on the same flight, said Maradona was furious because a door had been slammed in his face.

"They shut the door in his face and then they called the police who threatened him with their guns," Mancuso told Argentinian radio station Mitre.

"Maradona's anger was logical and spontaneous. They shut the door, we asked for an explanation and they called the police. Armed police arrived, they threatened us with their guns."

"At that point Diego became angry. It was incredible. We arrived

at the airport, did some shopping and when we went to board the plane, the door was shut."

In Rio, police told Radio CBN that they intended to conduct an alcohol test on Argentina's 1986 World Cup hero but Mancuso denied that Maradona had submitted to a test during his detention.

Maradona, vice-president of Boca Juniors, found himself in trouble after "losing his cool" over failing to make his plane back home, an agent reported.

Maradona was in Brazil to take part in a charity match on Wednesday with Brazil's former football star and now coach of Japan, Zico.

According to CBN Maradona had already ruffled feathers when announcing just before kick-off of the game in aid of Rio's poor children that he wouldn't be playing.

He finally turned up surrounded by a posse of bodyguards for the fixture at Zico's football school which ended 4-4.

Later Thursday, the 45-year-old was released, along with four friends, after being detained for a number of hours.

Police said Maradona had wrecked part of the VIP waiting room at the airport during the fracas and would be expected to pay for the repairs.

## Kaka ties the knot

REUTERS, Sao paulo

Soccer ace Kaka was to marry 18-year-old Caroline Celico in Sao Paulo on Friday in a match that is a contender for the title of Brazil's Wedding of the Year.

The 600-person guest list includes the AC Milan striker's fellow Brazilian national players Ronaldo, Adriano and Cafu, Kaka's spokesman Diogo Kotscho said.

The ceremony takes place at the evangelical Reborn in Christ Church in Sao Paulo. The choir Reborn Praise, with whom Celico usually sings, will perform.

Bride and groom are born-again Christians. The marriage is due to be officiated by Reborn Church founders Estevam and Sonia Hernandez, who are famous in Brazil for their live broadcasts of services.

Kaka, 23, arrives in Brazil on the day of the wedding. After a honeymoon in an undisclosed location, he will rejoin AC Milan on Jan. 2.

He met Celico, a student, in 2002. The romance survived his transfer from Sao Paulo to Italy in 2003 while she was still studying. They will live together in Italy after the wedding, Kotscho said.

Kaka, whose real name is Ricardo Izecson dos Santos Leite, is one of the top players in a Brazilian team that is the favorite to win the World Cup next summer.

# Mourinho regrets 'voyeur' slur

Football

REUTERS, London

Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho has apologised to Arsenal counterpart Arsene Wenger for calling him a "voyeur" earlier this season.

Mourinho made his comments in October, reacting to Wenger's suggestion that champions Chelsea were suffering a dip in form after a draw with then bottom club Everton and a League Cup defeat by Charlton Athletic.

The Portuguese coach accused Wenger of "having a real problem with us" and said "he is someone who likes to watch other people -- in English you say voyeur."

Wenger threatened legal action and branded Mourinho "stupid" and the long-running feud between the pair resurfaced again at the weekend when Mourinho refused to shake Wenger's hand after his side beat Arsenal 2-0 at Highbury.

Mourinho was reportedly upset that Wenger had not responded to a personal apology he had sent in a Christmas card.

In an interview in men's magazine FHM, however, Mourinho appeared to offer an olive branch to his rival, saying he regretted using the word voyeur.

"For sure. I do not want to hurt him like I did," said Mourinho. "If I could go back I would say 'Hey, it's time to stop talking about Chelsea, go to your corner and speak about your team'."

"But I wouldn't say what I said about him that hurt him. I didn't intend that. If I could go back and change it then I would."

For his part Wenger denied that he had snubbed Mourinho on Sunday, saying that card, or no card, he was happy to put the incident to rest.

"I appreciated the sentiment in the card," the Frenchman was quoted in the Sun. "It was an apology but I had no preconceived ideas or special

resentment. Once I said it was over, it's over."

"And if the card had come in or not it would not have changed the way I feel about the situation. We didn't blank

anybody...I'd never talk to a rival before a game. I find it ridiculous. This card has been treated like a CIA bomb."



POLES APART: Arsenal coach Wenger (L) and his Chelsea counterpart Mourinho.

FILE PHOTO: AFP

# Ganguly unlikely

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make big scores, Wasim Jaffer's selection as reserve opener is a virtual certainty. Although Jaffer did not play in the final XI at Ahmedabad he was very much in the mix, and the fact that he is in the best form of his life ensures that no-one will get ahead of him in the queue.

If the BCCI approves of a 16-member squad the selectors will choose between taking an additional wicketkeeper, and keeping Karik in the squad as a reserve spinner.

Before the Ahmedabad Test there was some doubt on whether Yuvraj Singh had done enough to shut the door on Ganguly. His second innings 75, off just 83 balls, was a stroke-filled innings where he took the attack to the spinners so viciously that Marvan Atapattu underbowed Muttiah Muralitharan at one stage. On the back of his 77, a more studied and cautious innings, at Delhi, this has convinced the last of the skeptics of Yuvraj's value at number 6 ahead of Ganguly.

The selection committee is set to meet in Mumbai on Saturday morning. Kiran More, the chairman of selectors, will also attend a meeting with the board president, secretary and coach to finalise the list of centrally contracted players for the coming year. **LIKELY SQUAD**

Rahul Dravid (captain), Gautam Gambhir, Wasim Jaffer, Virender Sehwag (vice-captain), Sachin Tendulkar, VVS Laxman, Yuvraj Singh, Mohammed Kaif, Mahendra Dhoni, Anil Kumble, Harbhajan Singh,

## Eng shift focus

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20 March.

Vaughan backs the policy of allowing players home leave in such circumstances.

"Sport is very important, but your family is the most important thing in your life."

"If a player comes to me and says he'd like to be at the birth of his child, I respect that and we have to get on without them," he said.

Vaughan admitted England, who have slipped below India in the ICC Test rankings, had under-performed in Pakistan.

"It's not nice to lose a series and we didn't play the cricket we would have expected, but you've got to give Pakistan a lot of credit."

"They bowled fantastically well -- Shoaib Akhtar's probably proved a lot of people wrong by showing he can bowl for long periods game after game -- and Inzamam batted fantastically well."

"They put us under a lot of pressure. We just weren't at our best, but I'm sure we'll learn from the experience of being out there," he said.

"Liam Plunkett's come through, (Paul) Collingwood's proved he can be a Test cricketer, Ian Bell's played very well and Geraint Jones kept fantastically well for the whole of the trip."

"There are positives to take but the most important thing is that we learn from our failures and move on to India in February."



FOOTBALL AGAINST POVERTY: Italian referee Pierluigi Collina (L), Brazil footballer Ronaldo (C) and Zinedine Zidane of France share a light moment during a charity match to raise funds for UNDP to fight poverty in Dusseldorf on Thursday. Zidane and Friends won the game against Ronaldo and Friends 4-2.

PHOTO: AP