



Sri Lanka Board XI's Upul Tharanga (C) raises his bat in celebration after scoring a century on the first day of a three-day practice match against India in Colombo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Dhoni strikes mega deal

Cricket

AGENCIES, New Delhi

Newly-married Indian cricket captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni has signed a marketing deal worth 42 million dollars over two years, a report said on Tuesday.

Dhoni, 29, has signed up with an Indian sports management company Rheti, which will handle his endorsements, merchandise, corporate profile, patents and digital rights, as well as visibility on social networking sites.

"We have entered into a two-year contract with Dhoni for 2,000 million rupees (42 million dollars)," general manager of Rheti Sports Management and Mindscapes Sanjay Pandey told the Press Trust of India news agency.

"We signed the contract a week back. From now onwards we will be handling Dhoni's endorsements."

Rheti also manages Dhoni's national teammates Harbhajan Singh and RP Singh.

The deal, the richest in Indian cricket history,

surpasses batting superstar Sachin Tendulkar's 40-million dollar three-year contract with sports management firm Iconix in 2006.

Dhoni, often described as India's most eligible bachelor, married childhood sweetheart and hotel management student Sakshi Singh Rawat at a private ceremony outside the northern town of Dehradun last week.

Dhoni, who led India to victory in the 2007 World Twenty20, is reported to currently endorse 22 leading brands, including Pepsi, Reebok, Aircel, Godrej and Hersheys.

A Forbes study last year on the world's richest cricketers put him at the top with an annual earning of 10 million dollars, followed by Tendulkar at eight million dollars.

Two other Indian cricketers, Yuvraj Singh (5.5 million dollars) and Rahul Dravid (five million dollars), were ranked third and fourth, while England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff was in fifth place with four million dollars, Forbes said.

Australian Test captain Ricky Ponting was in sixth place with 3.5 million dollars a year, the magazine said, adding the figures included club and national team salaries and commercial endorsements.

SL Board XI 432 for 5

CRICINFO

A strong Sri Lanka Board President's XI gave the Indians a welcome as harsh as Colombo's humidity. Upul Tharanga ripped into all their bowlers, nearly reaching his century in the first session.

Lahiru Thirimanne played the foil to Tharanga's assault, and Thilina Kandamby continued attacking, providing the visitors zero respite despite two quick wickets in the middle session. Thilan Samaraweera struggled a bit, but he too joined in the fun in the final session, taking the score well past 400.

The Indian bowlers, at least two of whom will be playing in the Galle Test, struggled to create pressure, and whatever little was created wasn't maintained. That an attack missing Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan and Sreesanth would find it tough was hardly unexpected, and the batsmen tried and demoralised them in a deliberate ploy. Only four maidens were bowled all day, and 22 no-balls, 57 fours and 6 sixes summed up India's inauspicious start to the tour. None of the three centurions' dismissals were set up; all three got out playing adventurous shots.

The only time the Indians had any sort of ascendancy was when Ishant Sharma, the most impressive of the bowlers, got Tharanga to edge one, but that ascendancy ended mid-air. Rahul Dravid dropped the catch at first slip, and Tharanga went on to score 98 more runs.

SCORES IN BRIEF
SL PRESIDENT'S XI: 432-5 (Tharanga 110, Thirimanne 66, Kandamby 101, Samaraweera 102; Ojha 3-133, Mishra 2-120)

Tigers shaping

FROM PAGE 17
Zealand is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka in September.

Bangladesh may get another series before the World Cup as Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has been trying to arrange a one-day series with West Indies at home in December this year.

Paul invited

FROM PAGE 17
to travel to their festival on August 8.

Paul has already been rewarded with honorary citizenship of the town with several Galician businessmen collecting 30,000 euros to make an offer to buy the soccer soothsayer, according to press reports.

The mollusc medium shot to fame after correctly "tipping" all eight games he predicted - seven Germany games and the final itself.

And he has become a symbol of Spain's World Cup victory with Andres Iniesta, the scorer of the winning goal over the Netherlands in the final, carrying a plastic octopus as the team were acclaimed in Madrid on Monday.

Travelling to this region of Spain could however prove hazardous for Paul, as octopus is a delicacy, particularly in Galicia, where the speciality is boiled and served finely sliced with paprika, olive oil and boiled potatoes.

He could prefer to see out his retirement safely in Germany where aged two and a half years he is six months off the life expectancy of his species.

Strauss uses opportunity

Cricket

AFP, Birmingham

England captain Andrew Strauss revelled in the growing competition for places in the one-day side after "leading from the front" as his team wrapped up a series win over Bangladesh.

"We are going to need a squad of players at the World Cup [in Asia next year]," said Strauss after making a career-best 154 and sharing an England record stand for any one-day international wicket of 250 with Jonathan Trott, who made 110, in a crushing 144-run win.

Bangladesh, chasing an imposing 348 to win, never looked like getting remotely close and were bowled out for 203 as England took the three-match series 2-1.

It was just the sort of emphatic victory England needed after the embarrassment of their five-run defeat -- their first against Bangladesh in any format -- in the second one-dayer at Bristol on Saturday.

England fielded the same side in all five matches of their preceding 3-2 home series win over Australia.

But injuries and a desire to rest key men allowed other players to stake a claim. So, for example Ian Bell made 84 not out in the series opener against Bangladesh at Trent Bridge in the absence of Kevin Pietersen.

And Trott then seized his chance with 94 at Bristol before making a maiden ODI century on his Warwickshire home

ground.

Yorkshire seamer Ajmal Shahzad starred with the ball on Monday, looking far more purposeful than the struggling James Anderson whom Strauss insisted was "rotated" rather than dropped, and might well have taken more than two wickets but for a hamstring niggle.

Meanwhile Ravi Bopara, recalled after Bell broke his left foot at Bristol, blazed his way to 45 not out off 16 balls with four sixes on Monday and then took four wickets with his medium-pacers.

"Things have clouded over a little because these guys have come in and done so well," said Strauss, both the man-of-the-match and the series.

"But it's great having a lot of guys competing for places. The likes of Belly, Trott, Ravi and Ajmal are all saying this shouldn't be a closed shop, and moving forward, we need a squad of players because we can't just rely on the same eleven," the left-handed opener added.

"We are going to need a squad at the World Cup, and it's a good thing we've got a lot of guys saying: 'I'm ready to be picked, I'm dying to be picked'." "We're in a much better position at the end of the series than the start of it," Strauss insisted.

Turning to Shahzad, Strauss said: "I'm really impressed. He looks like a wicket-taking bowler, he brings the stumps into play, and it's a shame he picked up that injury. He's another guy who's desperate to prove himself."

England's loss to Bangladesh last weekend was the first time they'd been

beaten by the Tigers in 21 matches across all formats as the minnows ended a run of 24 successive defeats against all opponents stretching back to November last year.

"We certainly felt we let ourselves down a bit at Bristol and we were very keen to come back strong in this game," Strauss said.

"The best way to do that is to lead from the front.

"We've proved we're a dangerous side who can beat anyone but we have got problem over consistency."

Trott has now scored an Ashes-winning century, a Test double hundred and now a one-day ton since making his international debut against Australia last year.

"Obviously with Kevin Pietersen being injured I've got my chance and I am really happy I took it," Trott said.

"After Trent Bridge I felt it would be nice just to get a game and a few days ago I didn't see myself sitting here having scored a hundred; it's amazing."

Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, who led by example with three wickets for 31 runs on Monday, was at a loss to explain his side's dip in form.

"It was (disappointing). We played poorly as a team."

But the seamer promised Bangladesh would bounce back in their remaining four games against Scotland and Ireland.

"We have to play well and win those matches," Mortaza said. "I am confident we will be back and confident we will be better than before."

Bell out of Pak series

Cricket

AFP, London

England batsman Ian Bell was ruled out Tuesday of the upcoming Test series against Pakistan after breaking his left foot while fielding in the second one-day international against Bangladesh last weekend.

"Ian underwent a routine operation last (Monday) night on the fractured metatarsal in his left foot," Nick Peirce, the England and Wales Cricket Board's chief medical officer, said in a statement issued Tuesday.

"He will now undergo a course of rehabilitation that will see him ruled out of the upcoming Pakistan Npower Test series."

"We expect Ian to make a full recovery but his participation in the NatWest [one-day] Series against Pakistan in September will be reviewed in due course once he has made significant progress with his rehabilitation programme."

Bell, in an attempt to catch Junaid Siddiqui in the second one-day international at Bristol on Saturday, fell awkwardly on landing after diving at square leg. He looked in pain immediately and went off the field.

The 28-year-old was unable to bat in his listed position of No 3 but did come out wearing a surgical boot and with a runner as last man for the final over in a vain attempt to help England get the 10 runs they needed for victory.

As it was, Bangladesh won by five runs -- their first victory against England in 21 matches across all formats -- to level the three-match series at 1-1 after Bell's 84 not out in the first ODI at Trent Bridge had helped put the hosts in front.

But England, without the injured Warwickshire batsman, recovered to beat Bangladesh by 144 runs in the third ODI at Bell's Edgbaston home ground on Monday and so win the series 2-1.

The four-match series against Pakistan, starting at Trent Bridge on July 29, is England's last Test campaign before they begin their defence of the Ashes in Australia in November.

Spain worthy champs: Bolt

AFP, Paris

Jamaica's sprint superstar and keen football fan Usain Bolt on Monday acknowledged that Spain deserved to win the World Cup, but admitted to having supported losing finalists the Netherlands.

The triple Olympic sprint champion, a self-confessed fan of current Argentine star Lionel Messi, went into the tournament having named Diego Maradona's team as his favourites.

With his Jamaica homeland having failed to qualify for the quadrennial showpiece event, Bolt also predicted in April that it would be either "Brazil or Spain" who would mount a serious challenge for the tournament.

With Brazil and Argentina crashing out early in the knock-out phase of the June 11-July 11 tournament, Spain claimed victory late Sunday, Andries Iniesta scoring an extra-time goal for a 1-0 win over Holland.

"It was a good game. Spain deserved to win, they played well in extra time," said Bolt, who is also a fan of English giants Manchester United.

"I wanted the Netherlands to win, the reason being that no one in Jamaica supports the Netherlands."

Bolt, who was in Paris for the IAAF Diamond League meet on Friday, also admitted that when he hooked up with team-mate and rival Asafa Powell at a Swiss meet last week, talk had not been about athletics.

"I met up with Asafa in Lausanne. We didn't talk about track and field, we talked about the football matches going on," he said.

Captains vow good Tests

Cricket

CRICINFO

With both sides weak in their respective fast bowling departments, India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Sri Lanka captain Kumar Sangakkara have pledged to make the Test series more interesting and enterprising by aiming for results.

The three-Test series beginning in Galle on July 18 is expected to be a very high-scoring one due to the imbalance between the batting and bowling strengths for both sides.

India, currently the No.1 team in Tests, have been hit by injuries to opening bowlers Zaheer Khan and Sreesanth, both of whom have been ruled out of the series. Even their key spinner Harbhajan Singh is also struggling for fitness, battling with a bacterial viral infection which ruled him out of the ongoing three-day

practice match against a Sri Lanka Board President's XI.

"Most of the teams playing today want a result in a five-day game. That intent is more than enough to make the game interesting. We are hoping we can get results in all the games," said Dhoni. "It's not about targeting just one bowler, we have to think about the whole bowling department of the opposition."

"They've got experienced campaigners who are playing Test cricket for the past ten years or so. Our preparation level is quite good. When you are playing in the subcontinent and playing a side that has got a batting order that is really experienced and knows the conditions really well it always better to have fast bowlers who have played Test cricket under the circumstances and who have got plenty of experience under them and who know how to bowl in those conditions."

"That experience always comes when you play more and more games. It's a bit of concern that we are missing fast bowlers quite regularly in important series. The good thing is we have somehow been able to do well in all the series we have played. Hopefully we'll have a bench

strength of a minimum of five to six bowlers who are always available and who are at the top of their form."

Although Sri Lanka are not affected by injuries, their fast bowling line-up for the Galle Test doesn't have much experience with Dilhara Fernando and Lasith Malinga, who is making a comeback to Test cricket after two-and-a-half years, being the most experienced pair with 33 and 28 Test appearances respectively. Another seamer who has performed well in recent home Tests, Nuwan Kulasekara, has been dropped. From the Indian side, Ishant Sharma, with 23 Test caps is the most experienced.

"As a team we are going to play as hard as we can on the field to make sure that we come out on top. India will be doing the same so if that is not going to make it an interesting tug of war I don't what is," said Sangakkara. "We are looking forward to an interesting Test match and a result at the end of five days or even before."

The Galle Test marks the end of world's leading Test and one-day wicket-taker Muttiah Muralidaran's illustrious career who will be retiring after the match.

5-a-side football

SPORTS REPORTER

Katalyst, Unicom, HRC and Dhaka Bank won their respective matches of the Ascent Five-a-side Football Tournament at the STM Hall in Uttara yesterday.

Katalyst defeated Cairn Energy 3-2 in an entertaining game that saw both sides produce spectacular goals as Arafat struck twice and Fahad netted once for Katalyst while Rumi and Fariat did it for Cairn.

Unicom registered an emphatic 5-3 win over Square Group as the winners dominated the game 5-0 at one stage before Square hit back a bit to score three goals to reduce the gap.

In the other matches, HRC also recorded an identical 5-3 win over Securex Ltd while Dhaka Bank handed a 4-2 defeat to Market Access Group.

Sr Div soccer

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohakhali XI and Purbachal Parishad played out a goalless draw in the Bashundhara Senior Division Football League at the Birshreshtha Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

With three draws in 10 matches, Mohakhali raised their points tally to 12 while it was also the third draw for Purbachal, who are at the bottom of the table with six points from 10 matches.

Sree also sidelined

Cricket

AFP, New Delhi

India's pace attack for their Test series in Sri Lanka was depleted further on Tuesday after Shanathakumaran Sreesanth was ruled out with a knee injury.

Sreesanth, 27, will join pace spearhead Zaheer Khan on the sidelines after suffering a ligament sprain in his left knee during training in Colombo ahead of the first Test in Galle from Sunday.

"Sreesanth has sprained a ligament of his left knee and has been advised rest for three to four weeks," the Indian cricket board said in a statement.

"The selection committee has picked Munaf Patel as his replacement and he will join the squad in Sri Lanka at the earliest."

Patel, 27, a right-arm seamer, played the last of his 12 Tests against New Zealand in April 2009. He has taken 34 wickets at an average of 36.17.

Patel will compete with rookie Abhimanyu Mithun for the second seamer's spot behind Ishant Sharma in the Test series.

Air gun meet from tomorrow

SPORTS REPORTER

A two-day National Air Gun Championship gets underway tomorrow at the Gulshan Shooting Complex.

Around 200 shooters from 23 Rifles and Shooting Clubs across the country will compete in four events, two each for men's and women's.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	41 Grassy plains	61 Female sheep	19 Chum
1 Eggs	of South America	21 Exist	23 Dry, as wine
4 Violinist's need	7 Dueling sword ...	DOWN	25 Tend a text
7 Dueling sword ...	11 ... and its handle	1 Resistance measures	26 Undressed
11 ... and its handle	13 "— la la!"	2 ABC daytime show, with "The"	27 Witted
13 "— la la!"	14 Volcano outflow	3 Lotion additive	28 Formal dance
14 Volcano outflow	15 Cat's call	4 — constrictor	29 First victim
15 Cat's call	16 Gorilla	5 "My bad"	30 Crumbly cheese
16 Gorilla	17 Basin accessory	6 Puppy	31 Speck
17 Basin accessory	18 Use a broom	7 Last moment	35 Lobster eater's item
18 Use a broom	20 Balkan native	8 Handle clumsily	38 A billion years
20 Balkan native	22 — Vegas	9 Previous night	40 Talk on and on
22 — Vegas	24 Overuses the mirror	10 Listening organ	42 Aptitude
24 Overuses the mirror	28 Con-founded	12 Shake-speare play	45 Toy on a string
28 Con-founded	32 Provide	Solution time: 24 mins.	47 Merriment
32 Provide	33 Help a criminal	PLEAT ASIDE	48 Chew away at
33 Help a criminal	34 Corn on the —	ORIOLE RENAMER	49 Harvard rival
34 Corn on the —	36 Ocean motion	BANNER MANNER	50 Oktober-fest vessel
36 Ocean motion	37 Mythical river of forgetfulness	EGG SMART CEO	51 Had dinner
37 Mythical river of forgetfulness	39 Take up the slack	SUET SHE HERS	52 Scooted
39 Take up the slack		EERIE ASPERSE	54 Fresh
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CRYPTOQUIP

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S U R S , F E S W G Y T L T G C L B T S I
" M S R F H L E G C Y H ! "

Saturday's Cryptoquip: BECAUSE AUTHOR VONNEGUT IS FOLLOWING THAT FELLOW VERY CLOSELY, I THINK HE'S BEING KURT-TAILED.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: E equals H