

Dhoni signs big deal

AFP, New Delhi

India cricket captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni cemented his position as the world's top earning player on Wednesday with another multi-million-dollar endorsement deal.

Dhoni, 29, inked a 6.5-million-dollar contract to be the face of Indian mobile phone company Maxx Mobile on Tuesday, four days after agreeing to a 5.7-million-dollar deal with Vijay Mallya's United Breweries, officials said.

While the Maxx deal is spread over seven years, the contract for the United Breweries group -- who own Kingfisher airlines -- is for three years, reports said.

The two agreements are part of a record 42-million-dollar marketing deal the popular Indian captain signed with sports management firm Rihiti in July.

Rihiti's two-year deal gave it the right to handle Dhoni's endorsements, merchandise, corporate profile, patents and digital rights, as well as visibility on social networking sites.

The deal, the richest in Indian cricket history, surpassed batting superstar Sachin Tendulkar's 40-million-dollar contract with sports management firm Iconix.

Bangladesh

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Bangladesh 7-0 on Monday.

India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are scheduled to arrive Dhaka today while Afghanistan is expected to reach Dhaka tomorrow. All five teams will then leave for Cox's Bazar by road.

Bangladesh have reason to dream of playing the last four as they had beaten Sri Lanka 2-0 during the SA Games football event earlier this year. They also had a decent showing in the qualifying rounds of the AFC U-19 Women's Football Championship.

"Now our side is more composed compared to the squad that finished third during the SA Games and they have improved a lot tactically. Besides, our strength is increased after the inclusion of 10 players from the U-19 team," said coach Golam Rabbani Choton on the eve of leaving Dhaka.

"Definitely, India are the best side in the tournament and are ahead of us but Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are almost equal sides though we beat them during SA Games. So we are hoping to qualify for the semifinals and then make it to the final" said Choton.

The coach also informed that he had worked on the mistakes the girls made during the AFC U-19 competitions and believed that the midfielders would play a key role in deciding Bangladesh's fate.

Player like striker Sabina Khatun, midfielders Nubai Ching Marma and Suinu Pru Marma could make the difference, believed the Bangladesh coach.

SQUAD: Kemi Chakma, Sabina Akhter, Trishna Chakma, Farhana Khatun, Surovi Akhter Itri, Khaleda Khatun, Rupali Chakma, Suinu Ching Marma, Bely Khatun, Nubai, Suinu, Mainu Marma, Jahanara Akhter Janu, Asia Khaun Bithi, Mahmuda Akhter Ananna, Tahmina Akhter Putul, Sabina and Ongmraching Marma.



India all-rounder Yusuf Pathan acknowledges the crowd's applause for his match-winning 123 not out in the fourth ODI against New Zealand in Bangalore on Tuesday.

Pathan punishes Kiwis

Cricket

AFP, Bangalore

Yusuf Pathan hammered a career-best 123 not out off just 96 balls as India pulled off a thrilling five-wicket win in the fourth one-day international against New Zealand on Tuesday.

The all-rounder clubbed seven fours and seven sixes on the way to his maiden one-day century to help the hosts overhaul New Zealand's challenging 315-7 with seven balls to spare at the Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bangalore.

The victory put India on course for a series whitewash over the Black Caps who trail 4-0 with one game remaining to be played in Chennai on Friday.

Pathan clobbered the New Zealand attack with his aggressive innings, putting on 133 runs for the unfinished sixth wicket with Saurabh Tiwary (37 not out) after India had been reduced to 188-5 in the 34th over.

Pathan also played a key role with the ball, grabbing three New Zealand wickets for 49 runs off nine overs.

James Franklin top-scored for the Kiwis with an unbeaten 98 off 69 balls including 12 fours and three sixes.

"I have always said Pathan can finish games on his own, and that's what he did today," Indian captain Gautam Gambhir said.

"I had never seen something like this before. But I knew till the time Pathan was there, we would win the game."

Paceman Andy McKay took two wickets in two balls to spoil a rollicking start by India that saw openers Gambhir (27) and Parthiv Patel put on 67 runs in less than 10 overs.

Gambhir, the leading run-getter in the

series, cut McKay to point where Martin Guptill took a sharp catch and Virat Kohli was caught by Kyle Mills for a duck.

Patel, playing his first one-day international in six years, raced to his maiden one-day half-century off 50 balls but was dismissed three runs later by Nathan McCullum.

India looked in deep trouble after losing Yuvraj Singh for 20 runs but man of the match Pathan ensured another fine win for the hosts.

"It was a great game of cricket," said New Zealand skipper Daniel Vettori.

"We were in the game, but Pathan was pretty amazing. Franklin played exceptionally well too to give us a formidable total, but Pathan took the game away from us."

Franklin had underlined a spirited batting display by the visitors after they were put in to bat in the day-night game. Scott Styris (46), Ross Taylor (44) and Brendon McCullum (42) also chipped in with valuable knocks.

Franklin, who had top-scored with 72 in the third match in Vadodara, provided the late impetus, helping New Zealand add 63 runs in the last five overs.

He hit two sixes and as many fours in the last over by Ashish Nehra (2-70) to take the visitors past the 300-run mark.

SCORES IN BRIEF

NEW ZEALAND: 315 for 7 (Guptill 30, McCullum 42, Taylor 44, Styris 46, Franklin 98 not out, Vettori 17; Ashwin 2-66, Nehra 2-70-2, Pathan 3-49)

INDIA: 321 for 5 (Gambhir 27, Patel 53, Yuvraj 20, Sharma 44, Pathan 123 not out, Tiwari 37 not out; McKay 2-63, McCullum 2-38)

Result: India won by five wickets and led 5-match series 4-1.

Man-of-the-match: Yusuf Pathan.

Lankans conquer the world

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but Sri Lanka did beat Australia convincingly in the final. Their style of play greatly altered the way one-day cricket would be played, and they outshone every team in the tournament.

They planned their cricket specifically with batsmen-friendly sub-continental conditions in mind. The side was packed with stroke-players, none more belligerent than the two at the top, Sanath Jayasuriya and Romesh Kaluwitharana, who was also the side's wicketkeeper. Their partnerships weren't always big, but they invariably got the side to a start at more than a run-a-ball. Jayasuriya especially was phenomenal. He finished the tournament with 221 runs with an astonishing strike rate of more than 131 runs per hundred balls, the highlight being a barnstorming 44-ball 82 against England in

the quarterfinals. The middle order was a mixture of explosive stroke-players and calm accumulators. Despite Sachin Tendulkar finishing as the highest run-scorer of the Cup, it was Aravinda de Silva who was the batsman of the tournament, behind the Indian superstar in terms of runs but decisively ahead in the average and strike rate columns. Joining him in the middle order were captain Arjuna Ranatunga, the left-handed Asanka Gurusingha and Hashan Tilakaratne, and Roshan Mahanama. All were players who could mix attack with defence, and on a given day if any three of them clicked, the opposition were in trouble, which in this tournament they inevitably were.

Their bowling was spin reliant, with Jayasuriya and de Silva contributing with their

spin bowling in almost every match, backing up the regular spinners Muttiah Muralitharan and Kumar Dharmasena. Chaminda Vaas was their first choice pace bowler, and he proved effective in keeping the batsmen quiet. The second pace bowling spot toggled between Pramodya Wickremasinghe and Ravindra Pushpakumara, with the former eventually cementing his place for the knockout stage. In the field, Ranatunga usually spread his field out after the fielding restrictions, allowing singles but cleverly plugging the boundaries.

Their preferred method was to bat second, and rely on their dynamite batting line-up to chase down any target. This was amply showcased in their league match against India in which the Indians rattled up 271, but Sri Lanka chased it down in a canter, with Jayasuriya, Tilakaratne and Ranatunga blasting the bowlers all over the park. It was a blueprint they followed in the final in Lahore against Australia, where de Silva led the chase of Australia's 241 with a dazzling hundred, and Sri Lanka became the first host country to win the World Cup.

Aussies lament

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innings to be all out for 304, England's superiority was evident in both play and attitude, he said.

From mid-way through the first Test in Brisbane -- which ended in a draw -- there was an ascendancy which has so far seen "the mountains of runs made by Alastair Cook and the behemoth Kevin Pietersen, and the wickets taken by James Anderson and Graeme Swann".

Andrew Strauss's men took chances while Australia squandered theirs, he said, adding that Swann's five-wicket bowling haul in Adelaide "was as sublime as Warne".

Australia could have saved itself on Tuesday, had it been able to hang on for three, or so hours of determined batting, as by afternoon the Adelaide Oval was hit with thunder, lightning and rain which would have certainly stopped play.

"But donkey-licked Australia was helpless to resist even for 90 minutes against this newly rampant England," Baum wrote.

ICC WORLD CUP DRS from knock-out stage

PTI, Mumbai

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has decided to introduce the highly debated Decision Review System (DRS) from the quarterfinal stage of the World Cup, scheduled to be held in the Indian sub-continent in from Feb-April 2011.

"The DRS will be used in the four quarterfinals, two semifinals and the final, a total of seven matches, in the ICC World Cup," an ICC spokesman told reporters here on Wednesday.

He added that the DRS would be used only in the later stages of the tournament, to be jointly hosted by India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh from February 19-April 2, because of paucity of enough number of proper equipment for it to be used during the league phase too.

Shafiul

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teammates with both bat and ball, and in the field is Zimbabwe's stand-in skipper Prosper Utseya.

Utseya, who has taken 5 wickets and scored 120 runs, expects his side to bounce back in Chittagong: "It seems that a 240-250 score will be a good one in this conditions. Our aim will be to make the best use of our strength and play our best cricket. If we can bat well, we can expect to win the series."

Siddikur

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"My form is very good and I'm looking forward to this week in Cambodia. I started playing well after the Queen's Cup in Koh Samui and since then I've managed to achieve many good results," said Siddikur, who grew up in a poor family where his father worked as a farmer and taxi driver to raise a family of four sons.

Siddikur worked as a ball boy and caddie at the Kurmitola Golf Club in Dhaka to fund his education.

"To be honest, I don't really see myself as a superstar despite the widespread publicity on my achievements back home," he said.

"I'm just happy to do my part in growing the popularity of golf in my country. It's nice to know that I've set the benchmark for my countrymen to follow."

Siddikur will be up against a host of elite players at the Phokeethra Country Club, including defending champion Marcus Both of Australia and Singapore's Mardan Mamat, as well as Thailand's Thaworn Wiratchant and Thongchai Jaidee, who jointly hold the highest number of Asian Tour victories.

As the penultimate event on the 2010 Asian Tour schedule before the season finale King's Cup in Hua Hin, the battle for playing rights for next season will also intensify, with players aiming for a good finish to earn their full playing rights for next season.

Pioneer League

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said sports minister Ahad Ali Sarker after inaugurating the opening ceremony.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin promised the players that the talented players of the pioneer league would be given training at the proposed football academy in Sylhet.

Warne 'flattered' by comeback calls

Cricket

AFP, London

Legendary leg-spinner Shane Warne has labelled calls for his return to Test cricket in a bid to boost Australia's flagging Ashes hope as "very flattering".

But he has also said Australia should now think about handing a debut to left-arm spinner Michael Beer.

Warne, 41, has not played Test cricket since retiring following Australia's 5-0 whitewash of England on home soil in 2007.

Australia's all-time leading Test wicket-taker, with 708 in 145 matches, Warne has hinted at a comeback.

Calls for his return intensified after Ashes-holders England crushed Australia by an innings and 71 runs in Adelaide on Tuesday to go 1-0 up with three to play in the current series.

Brisbane cricket fan Ross Heywood has established a website devoted to raising funds to entice Warne to make himself available for the rest of the Ashes series.

Meanwhile Sydney Morning Herald columnist Peter FitzSimons has said Warne, widely regarded as an excellent cricket tactician, should replace Ricky Ponting as Australia captain.

"Ricky Ponting, we love you and thanks, but it just isn't working... Shane Warne should be offered the captaincy if he will just make a three-Test comeback," FitzSimons wrote.

But Warne played a straight bat to those overtures in his column for Britain's Daily Telegraph newspaper here on Wednesday, saying: "There has been a bit written in

Australia and people have been asking me about making a comeback. All I can say is that it is very flattering to hear those words."

As for Ponting, Australia's captain when they lost Ashes series in England in 2005 and 2009, Warne added: "It must be tough for Ricky Ponting at the moment. Leading a losing team and being the only captain who could lose three Ashes series in the modern era is hard for such a great player."

Warne warned Australia against wholesale changes for the third Test, which starts at Perth's WACA ground on December 16.

"This is not the time to blood youngsters or panic.

"If Australia lose this series badly then that is the time to reassess everything and say, 'Right, it is back to the drawing board'."

"Then they can give three or four youngsters a go, with four or five experienced players, and try to rectify things."

However, he also said some changes may be needed for the third Test.

"The pitch is not fast and bouncy these days, so maybe you get a local guy who knows the Perth conditions, like left-arm spinner Michael Beer."

"Sometimes horses for courses works. Australia have to explore all options and win this next match to get back in this series. They need to look at all avenues and go all out for a win."

Victory in Adelaide, one of England's best all-round team performances in recent times, took the tourists a step closer to their goal of a first Ashes series win in Australia since Mike Gatting's side achieved the feat in 1986/87.

"We have to give England credit. They are well-planned, hungry and up for it," said Warne, who captained English county side Hampshire.

Tickets on sale from Jan 1

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whether there is any chance for the fans to purchase tickets online but he did confirm that one person will be eligible to buy a maximum of four tickets for matches.

Babu did not have a definitive answer on how many tickets would be available altogether for the general public. However, it is envisioned that fans will have to be quick to wrap up their tickets as the local organising committee (LOC) will set apart a significant number of tickets for distribution among the ICC and local dignitaries. The LOC also want to make a payback to the local high-ups who are helping them prepare for the showcase event.

As the capacity of the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur is a little more than 24,000 it is a reasonable estimation that about 16,000 to

17,000 tickets will be available for general fans for each match. The number will be proportionately lower for the 16000-capacity Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong.

However, for the opening ceremony in the 25000-capacity Bangabandhu National Stadium, most of the tickets will be reserved for the invitees.

Five per cent of the match tickets have already been committed to online sales from June 1 through the World Cup central organising committee. The respective boards of the three co-hosts -- Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka -- will sell the rest of the tickets.

Bangladesh will host eight matches in Dhaka and Chittagong including two quarterfinals besides the opening ceremony, which will

be held on February 17 next year.

Besides the opening match against India to be held on February 19, Bangladesh will take on Ireland on February 25 in Dhaka, West Indies on March 4 in Dhaka, England on March 11 in Chittagong and Netherlands on March 14 in Chittagong.

The two quarterfinals will take place at Dhaka on March 23 and March 25. BCB has already fixed the rates for the galleries.

TICKET RATES

Eastern Gallery (Category D) USD 3.00 (est. Tk 210)
North Gallery (Category C) USD 6.00 (est. Tk 420)
South Gallery (Category C) USD 6.00 (est. Tk 420)
Club House (North-South) USD 10.00 (est. Tk 700)
International Gallery (North-South, Category A) USD 30.00 (est. Tk 2100)



Arun Kaul (3rd from L), managing director of British American Tobacco Bangladesh, hands over prizes to winners of inter-corporate women's badminton tournament at the BATB head office premises on Sunday. BATB's head of human resource Syed Imtiaz Faruque and head of corporate and regulatory affairs Zakir Ibne Hai are also seen. BATB's Zereen Khan and Shamima Ahsan won the doubles title and Banglalink's Rubayat-E-Tasneem Moonal clinched the singles crown.

HIGH COMMISSION OF INDIA DHAKA COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP (2011-12)

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) offers two scholarship slots to meritorious Bangladeshi nationals under the Commonwealth Scholarships / Fellowships plan 2011-12 to pursue Under Graduate, Post-Graduate, M.Phil, Ph.D and Post Doctoral (except MBBS/BDS/MD/MS) studies in India.

Eligibility Criteria:

Candidates with following qualifications can apply:

- B.E. Course** : HSC in Science with subjects i.e Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics;
- Post Graduate Course** : Bachelors degree from a recognized University;
- M.Phil / Ph.D Course** : Masters degree from a recognized University in addition to the above; and
- Post Doctoral Course** : Ph.D from a recognized University in addition to the above.

The candidates should have proficiency in English. Further information along with application forms for these scholarships may be collected from the Education Wing, High Commission of India, House No. 2, Road No. 142, Gulshan-1, Dhaka 1212 on any working days between 1100 hrs and 1300 hrs from 12 to 30 December 2010 upon submission of photocopy of the mark sheet of the qualifying examination. Forms can also be collected from and deposited at the Assistant High Commission of India, Chittagong / Rajshahi till 30 December 2010. The last date for receipt of completed application forms by the High Commission of India, Dhaka and Assistant High Commission of India, Chittagong / Rajshahi is 30 December 2010.

CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

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CRYPTOQUIP

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Saturday's Cryptoquip: IF TABLE-PROTECTING DISKS FOR DRINKS HAD WHEELS, DO YOU SUPPOSE THEY WOULD BE ROLLER COASTERS?
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: M equals O