

Dream is to play World Cup alongside Hardik: Krunal Pandya

NEW DELHI, JUN 29 /-/
Krunal Pandya has been finally granted official recognition by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), meaning there will be two national leagues in the country from 2017-18.



"The aim is not just to represent India for a couple of matches here and there but to play for as long as possible. It would be a dream come true if I and Hardik can together play for India in the 2019 World Cup. But right now focus will be on doing well for India A," Krunal told PTI after his selection in the A squad for a limited-overs tour in South Africa. In fact, Hardik called him from Antigua after getting the news of his 'A' team selection. "Hardik was ecstatic. He called me and said that 'You are getting there'. Having been part of the played for India, he has an insight about top flight cricket and I always discuss with him to pick finer points. There can't be a close buddy than your own brother," says Krunal. While he has been one of the vital component for the Mumbai Indians in their IPL triumph, he attributes his success to the hard work he had put in to counter the 'Second Season Syndrome' that affects many cricketers. "I knew opposition teams would study my game during this edition of the IPL after a reasonably good first season. Had to pick up my weaknesses as the second season becomes the very key in an international level tournament like IPL-1

worked on both aspects of my game and it paid off," said Krunal, who scored 243 runs and took 10 wickets in 13 IPL games. For the older among Pandya siblings, his performance in the Vijay Hazare Trophy also helped him make a case for himself in the 50-over format. "It was a tough first few months as I had undergone surgery for quadriceps muscle injury. I was out of action for four to five months. The Vijay Hazare Trophy was like my comeback tournament for Baroda. "We played the semi-finals and I had the highest runs (366) and highest wickets (11) for our team. I had a couple of 30s in the Deodhar Trophy. All these performances helped my confidence," said 26-year-old Krunal, who played 14 List A and 40 T20 matches, said. His slow left-arm orthodox bowling has been restrictive but Krunal backs his style. "My thinking is simple. When you are batting, think like a bowler to stay one step ahead and vice versa while bowling. Reading the mind of an opposition player is very important," he said. "I would only like to focus on things which are in my control. I can't perform thinking about who are my competitors. My job is to maximise my potential and perform to the best of my abilities. I will strive doing that," he concluded.

Defending champion Advanito lead India's charge at Asian meet

BISHKEK (KYRGYZSTAN), JUN 29 /-/
Austrian ace Panjk Advanito is set to defend his 6-red snooker title in India fielding a strong team at the Asian 6-Red Snooker and Team Championships scheduled here on the next week. The Indian contingent will be spearheaded by 16-time world champion Advanito, who will be accompanied by Kamal Chawla, Faizal Khan, Maikhet Singh besides former billiards player Ashok Shandilya, who will be here as a coach. In the 2016 edition in Abu Dhabi, Advanito lifted the title to make it his first Asian snooker victory. "I am excited to play an Asian event in a different place (Kyrgyzstan) as well as am looking forward to defending my Asian 6-Red Snooker Title," said Advanito. "This will be the final Continental Championship before the World Snooker commence in August. Therefore, I'm looking to add another medal, preferably gold again, and maintain my good run for the season so far. When asked how the second half of the year is looking, Advanito said, "Once this event is over, I'll be gearing up for the IBSF World 6-Red Snooker Championship in Egypt in August, followed by another world event in Bangkok in September. "Then I'll be time for Billiards where I'll be defending the World Title in the point format in India. The final event of the year will be the IBSF World Snooker Championship (15-red) in Malta. Lots of cue sport action to look forward to," Advanito won the Asian Snooker Championship earlier this year before losing in the final of Asian Snooker Championship.

Football, showbiz stars set for Messi's wedding

ROSARIO, JUN 29 /-/
Football and showbiz stars gather in northern Argentina tomorrow for Latin America's celebrity wedding bash of the Argentine Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi marries his childhood sweetheart Antonella Rocuzzo. Pop star Shakira and her husband, Messi's teammate Gerard Pique, are expected among the 200 guests, according to media reports. A Spanish court last month rejected his appeal against a conviction for tax fraud. Brunette bride Rocuzzo, 29, will wear a dress by Spanish designer Rosa Clara, which has been flown over from Barcelona. The designer has dressed stars such as actresses Eva Longoria and Sofia Vergara as well as Spain's

Fixtures:

- 1st one-dayer - India A vs Australia A - July 26
- 2nd one-dayer - South Africa A vs India A - July 28
- 3rd one-dayer - South Africa A vs Australia A - July 30
- 4th one-dayer - India A vs Australia A - August 1
- 5th one-dayer - South Africa A vs India A - August 3
- 6th one-dayer - South Africa A vs Australia A - August 5
- Final - August 8
- 1st four-day match - South Africa A vs India A - August 12-15
- 2nd four-day match - South Africa A vs India A - August 19-22

Queen Letizia. From 2200 GMT the guests will pack into the Hotel City Center Casino, which stands right next to a crime-ridden slum run by drug gangs. "Messi's wedding accents the sense of inequality that is symbolized by the casino in that neighborhood," said Carlos del Prado, author of several books on the rich and poor in Rosario. This city of 1.2 million people is also a cradle of footballing talent, however. "Rosario lives and breathes football. That is another reason Lionel feels so comfortable here," the city's mayor, Monica Fein, told AFP. "I think that through his wedding his

ISL gets recognition from AFC, two national leagues now

NEW DELHI, JUN 29 /-/
The cash-rich Indian Super League (ISL) has been granted official recognition by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), meaning there will be two national leagues in the country from 2017-18.

The franchise-based league didn't get AFC recognition in its first three editions, and has been trying for it for a while now. The AFC gave its consent to the All India Football Federation's proposal through a letter signed by general secretary Dato Windsor John, a top AIFC official told PTI today. So, as of now, the winner of the I-league will participate in the AFC Champions League qualifiers, while the next ISL champion will be eligible for an AFC Cup qualifying slot. If the 2017-18 I-League winners fail to qualify - no Indian club has done so far - they will get an automatic berth in the AFC Cup, the continent's second-tier tournament. The AFC however specified that the arrangement was a temporary one and required the stakeholders to come up with a long-term plan. The development comes as a good news for Bengaluru FC, who have so far been the only Indian club serving about the AFC Cup competition. Having emerged runners-up last year, Bengaluru FC has made the zonal semi-finals this time and will play North Korea's 425 SC in home and away league in August and September respectively. "The champions of the 10-team ISL that will run for five months beginning November will get an AFC Cup qualifying slot. Till 2016-17, it was given to the winners of the Federation Cup (FTI)

Table tennis: China's men pull out of Australian Open

SHANGHAI, JUN 29 /-/
The powerful China men's table tennis team on Thursday pulled out of next week's Australian Open, deepening a crisis sparked by the removal of their head coach. The team's withdrawal from next week's event on the Gold Coast was announced by the governing International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) in a statement issued Thursday.

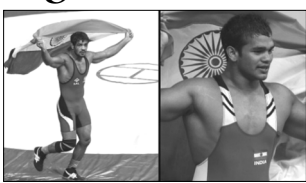
It comes days after the world's top three players - Ma Long, Fan Zhendong and Xu Xin - failed to appear for the second round of singles matches at the prestigious China Open in a protest at the decision to sideline the high-ranked Liu Guoliang of his duties as head coach. The Chinese Table Tennis Association (CTTA) announced an investigation - into the embarrassing show - "It is unfortunate that the CTTA has decided to withdraw the entire men's team," the ITTF said in the statement. It called the move "disappointing news for all table tennis fans around the world." The Chinese women's team will play the ITTF said. Two Chinese coaches also pulled out of the event in Chengdu last week, triggering a furore in table tennis mad China. The coaches and players were upset that Liu, a former Grand Slam champion, had lost his job as coach in a reshuffle at the top of the CTTA. The Australian Open, an event on the sports top-level Platinum World Tour, starts on July 4.

friends (from abroad) will be able to go to know the city he loves so much. The opening ceremony and party will all take place inside the venue, and the guests will be lodged there too. "Messi, 30, is the star of few words - has reportedly asked chefs to cook local delicacies such as 'locro' stew for the 'empanda' pre-game feast. The star dish is a typical Argentine beef roast including chitterlings, gizzards and sausages, and the Argentine Rombai and Marama plus singer Karina, wife of Argentina footballer Sergio Aguiero, will be the main attraction. It is not known whether the guests will

also get a song from Shakira, the Colombian diva famous for her retro-reggaeton. Some journalists have been accredited to cover the bash, but have been warned they will have no access to the bride and groom, which is handled by a private team of Israeli specialists used by Messi for all his excursions. "Whenever Messi goes, he's widely accepted by the people at all levels," said Diego Manso, a local private security consultant. "He has a family, and the systems will never overlook the probability of a lot of people wanting to approach him. He expects to take photos with him, from their risk

Sports Ministry rejects Narsingh Yadav's conflict of interest charge against Sushil Kumar

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The cash-rich Indian Super League (ISL) has been granted official recognition by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), meaning there will be two national leagues in the country from 2017-18.



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Ministry as national observers for the first time for the development of national sports. "All these national observers have been performing their duties as per the guidelines and role assigned to them by the Ministry," Goel stated in a release. The Minister also pointed out that as per the responsibilities assigned to the national observers, their job is to observe selection of national teams and to suggest measures for further strengthening free and transparent selection. Modifying the existing sports infrastructure/equipment, quality of

including foreign training and competition exposure with special focus on sub junior and junior level athletes. "To examine complaints from players and other stakeholders on the taking up the matter with the NSF (National Sports Federations) concerned for redressal and send a report to the Ministry. The Ministry said that their job was also to assist NSFs/ National Sports promotion Organisations/ SAI in preparation and finalisation of ACTC. "To accompany the performance profile of international athletes as well as coaches. "To assist the performance of national team in the international tournaments and suggest training needs of athletes

Cricket Australia warns players as pay row deadline looms

SYDNEY, JUN 29 /-/
Cricket Australia has sent a formal letter to warring players officially informing them they will be unemployed if a deal is not reached this week in their protracted dispute.

payments would be capped at 18 percent (men) and 150 percent (women). In the latest CA correspondence, Howard told the players: "If your contract expires on 30 June, you will not be an employee of CA, a State Association or a W/BBL Team from 1 July."

Amid reports that Australia's cricketers will decide this weekend whether they want to be paid for the time they will be unemployed if a deal is not reached this week in their protracted dispute. "The players have been told that if they do not agree to the new contract by the end of the week, they will be unemployed from 1 July. This means that you are not required to play train, perform player appearances or media commitments, and you will not be paid a retainer until such time as a MOU is agreed and a player contract is agreed with you in writing." The players have been told that if they do not agree to the new contract by the end of the week, they will be unemployed from 1 July. This means that you are not required to play train, perform player appearances or media commitments, and you will not be paid a retainer until such time as a MOU is agreed and a player contract is agreed with you in writing.

Damning FIFA report nails England malpractices in 2018 World Cup bid

MOSCOW, JUN 29 /-/
Former UK Prime Minister David Cameron asked South Korean football officials to trade notes seeking to win the 2018 FIFA World Cup bid, in a violation of FIFA rules, a report by the game's voters, governing body on the inquiry into the bidding process has said.

The International Federation of Football Association (FIFA) published a full report on Tuesday about the investigation into the organisation's decisions to award the World Cups of 2018 and 2022 to Russia and Qatar. The report said that Cameron had asked South Korean officials to trade notes seeking to win the 2018 FIFA World Cup bid, in a violation of FIFA rules, a report by the game's voters, governing body on the inquiry into the bidding process has said.

Mary Kom pep talk inspires Indian eyes ahead of HWL semis

NEW DELHI, JUN 29 /-/
The Indian women's hockey team chief coach Marjje Soer told PTI. The Indian eyes, who are clubbed in a tough Pool B along side world powers Argentina, no.6 USA besides South Africa and Chile, will have to finish in top five to qualify for the World Cup. The coach really liked how Mary interacted with the girls and inspired them with her life story. "During the session Mary told her story to the girls. She talked about how important it is the mental preparation. It was really an inspirational session," he said. Marjje said that about how important it is the mental preparation. It was really an inspirational session," he said.

Argentina and USA are two higher ranked teams in our pool but we are not at all bothered about our opponents. We are just looking to beat Argentina and Dutchman said. Just after taking charge of the team, he once said that Indian eyes lack self belief but Marjje is quite happy with the progress they have made on that front. "The self belief is getting much better. The better the results the higher will be the confidence of the girls. They have also improved their fitness a lot. They now can play harder," he said. Before the tournament starts, India will play two practice games against England and Ireland, which the coach feels will give him an idea about where his wards stand in front of their rivals.

analysis. "Messi and Rocuzzo live in Barcelona where he plays. He still returns regularly to Rosario on holiday. The couple had their two children baptized there last year: Thiago, 4 and one-year-old Mateo, both born in Barcelona. "It's no surprise that he is coming back here to get married." The wedding guests, he said, will include Messi's family, the player's old school friend Diego Valjeos, told AFP. "He is an ordinary person who just wants to be with his family and secure. He is a humble person. Money has not changed his personality." Messi and Rocuzzo met as they played for Barcelona when he was 13 to join FC

