

**BCCI invites bid for IPL title sponsorship**

MUMBAI, MAY 31 /- The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has invited applications through its website to Tender process from parties to bid for the title sponsorship rights of its cash-cow, Indian Premier League, starting August 1 and ending on July 31, 2022. The IPT will be available at a cost of Rs 3 lakh on a non-refundable basis from June 1 to 21 at the BCCI headquarters here and the bids need to be submitted at 12 noon on June 27 at a place specified in the document or at any other place as decided and intimated by the Board. As per the IPT, issued as a newspaper advertisement by BCCI, the Board reserves the right at its discretion to cancel or amend the entire bidding process at any stage. Chinese mobile firm Vivo had bagged the title sponsorship right of the T20 League for a two-year period (2016 and 2017), reportedly at a cost of Rs 100 crore per year, an upward rise of Rs 20 crore annually from what beverage giant Pepsi had paid through an earlier agreement beginning 2013. The firm that wins the next bid will be the title sponsors of IPL for the next five seasons beginning 2018.

**Maradona declines offer to commentate with Pele**

RIO DE JANEIRO, MAY 31 /- Maradona has declined an offer to join his long-time rival Pele as a commentator for Brazil's friendly against Argentina in Australia next week. The Brazilian Football Confederation approached the Argentine legend earlier this month after securing exclusive broadcast rights for Brazil's international friendlies. Xinhua reported on Tuesday citing the Folha de S. Paulo newspaper that the 56-year-old cited his commitments as the coach of United Arab Emirates outfit



Al-Fujairah for his decision to turn down the proposal, the report said. Widely regarded as one of the greatest players in history, Pele and Maradona have often traded insults amid a decades-long global debate about who was better. Pele scored a world record 1,279 career goals in 1,363 matches and is the only player to win three World Cups. Maradona is credited for almost single-handedly taking Argentina to World Cup glory in 1986 and transformed Napoli from Italian minnows into dual Serie A champions. Brazil will meet Argentina at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on June 9 before a clash with Australia at the same venue four days later.

**5 Indian boys reach last 8 of Asian Junior Tennis Championship**

PUNE, MAY 31 /- Five Indian boys, led by top seed Siddhant Banthia, advanced into the singles quarter finals of the ICL Asian Junior Tennis Championships here today along with four girls. Top seed Banthia had things in control barring the extended second set when getting past Thai qualifier Akanit Punjitt 6-7, 5 in a boys singles quarter-final match. Also through to the last eight with Banthia were his Indian compatriots Nitin Kumar Sinha, a wild card, seventh seed Dhruv Sunish, Digvijay Pratap Singh and Megh Bhargav Patel who upset second seed J Trotter of Japan. Barring Patel, who was stretched to three sets by his seeded Japanese rival before closing out the match 2-6 7-5 6-1, others scored straight-set victories over their respective quarter final rivals. Banthia will play against Taipei's Ho Ray. Sinha is lined up against third seed T Ichikawa of Japan. Sunish faces Christian Didier Chin of Malaysia and Patel will cross swords with Digvijay Singh to gain spots in the semis.

**ENGLAND VS BANGLADESH**

**Both teams aim to banish batting blues in opener at Kennington Oval**



Ben Stokes tested his knee at training, Champions Trophy 2017, The Oval.

LONDON: Spectators have long been advised to get to sporting events early and they could miss the key part of Thursday's Champions Trophy opener between England and Bangladesh at the Oval if they aren't in on time. Even in time, early morning cloud cover that aids swing is often a key part of English cricket conditions. The proof came as recently as Monday when, across London at Lord's, England collapsed to 20 for six in five overs - the worst start in one-day international history - against the South Africa new-ball duo of Kagiso Rabada and Wayne Parnell. A green-tinted pitch did not find favour with England captain Iain Morgan but even on more placid surfaces the issue of how best to bat under grey skies, which can often set in all day in England, as many a cold fan knows, remains. Bangladesh highlighted the issue in dramatic style by collapsing to 84 all out in reply to Champions Trophy title holders India's 224 for seven in their final warm-up match at the Oval on Tuesday. Defeat by 240 runs was certainly not what Bangladesh wanted any more than England, a much-improved one-day side since the Tigers knocked them out of the 2015 World Cup, wished to see their top order suffer such a spectacular slump against South Africa, even if they were already 2-0 up in the three-match series. Yet it says something about England's current 'white-ball' approach that Jonny Bairstow, their only batsman to make a fifty at Lord's, may not play at the Oval if all-rounders Ben Stokes and Chris Woakes are fully fit. "I haven't seen a

team win a global tournament playing defensively," said England coach Trevor Bayliss. "It's always a team that backs itself and plays bold cricket," added the Australian, looking to guide England to their first major ODI title. From the point of view of the message word change, insisted the former Sri Lanka coach. Bangladesh collapsed to 22 for six in 7.3 overs against India, not as bad as England on Monday, but concerning all the same. But Mehedi Hasan, who top-scored for the Tigers with 24, said they still believed they could beat England. "Yes, We have done well in our last few matches against England and we are confident," he said. Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha tried to minimise the impact of Tuesday's reverse by saying, "Obviously it affects the confidence a little bit, but this is a practice game. It's a big game for us, the first game of the Champions Trophy. But our preparation was good apart from this game so we are confident anyway," added the former Sri Lanka batsman, with the Tigers having beaten both New Zealand and Ireland in a triangular warm-up event in Dublin this month. The Champions Trophy opener is set to feature several survivors on both sides from Bangladesh's 2015 World Cup win over England when a hundred from Mahmudullah and aggressive seam bowling propelled the Tigers to a memorable success at the Adelaide Oval. "Whatever you have done in the past gives you a little bit of confidence, but then you have to start again," said Hathurusingha. "So whatever we do first against England, we need to start well and that's what we are focusing on."

**Kohli comments put Kumble job in doubt**

MUMBAI, MAY 31 /- India's campaign for Champions Trophy has begun under a cloud of discontent within the dressing room with the captain, and possibly a few other senior players, expressing a lack of confidence in their head coach. Speculation had been rife ever since the BCCI chose not to automatically extend the tenure of Anil Kumble as the head coach, choosing instead to advertise the post and it has now emerged that the decision was made following feedback from Virat Kohli and other players. Kohli's coaching method, which he is said to have described as "intimidating", has been a year-long contract expires at the end of the Champions Trophy. The development comes less than an ideal time for India, with their first match in the Champions Trophy, against arch-rivals Pakistan, just days away. It is understood that Kohli relayed the sense of discontent to the BCCI's top office bearers as well as the Committee of Administrators (CoA) before the tour to England. He is also understood to have spoken to Sourav Ganguly, who is part of a cricket advisory panel which has been tasked with deciding the coaching option. The panel, which is thought to centre mainly around Kumble's management skills. In the words of one official familiar with the details, Kumble has been conducting himself like a "headmaster" at a school. Such an approach, the official said, "had not gone down well" with the players who are used to a more relaxed dressing room. Some players - not the bigger personalities like Kohli or MS Dhoni - have felt a bit intimidated by Kumble's approach. Such has been the approach, the official said, that some of the injuries that have ruled players out during Kumble's tenure were not strictly cricket related. "Kumble was pushing hard. The bulk of them [injuries] are non-cricketing injuries. One of our players was stressed out. So the aim is not to be happy. We have surprised the BCCI is that Kumble has failed to read these concerns. The official said that the reason Kumble has been successful in the past is that he has been successful playing cricket mostly at home. "The way the cricket set-up works in India is the coach is not

the king. So the coach has to understand that." Based on the player feedback, the BCCI decided that the time to "change" had come and the "best" way to move forward was to put in place an advertisement inviting fresh applications. The official admitted that the timing was not ideal - the advertisement went out on the day Indian squad arrived in London to de-

They want to follow the same pattern." Kohli was equivocal in his response to the success India have had under Kumble. "When you have results come your way, the contribution is from every part of the team," he said. "It is not from a single source to say the least. Everyone works hard equally if not more than the other person." Kumble has not yet spoken publicly about the situation. He is, however, thought to be disappointed considering India have only lost one series in any format under his charge: the two-match Twenty20 series in Florida against West Indies last August. Kumble has also been front and centre in talks with the BCCI over enhancing the contracts not just of the national team's players but also domestic players and Indian coaching staff. The situation also puts three other Indian legends in an awkward position. It was only last June that Kumble was named as one of the three-member advisory panel comprising his contemporaries Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and VVS Laxman; Kumble wasn't in the original list of candidates the BCCI had finalised because he had no formal coaching experience. But it was at the panel's insistence that he was put in. And now they have to go through the process again; it isn't yet known if Kumble will go through the process again. Ganguly is currently in England, doing television commentary for the official broadcaster of the Champions Trophy. At the time of Kumble's appointment, the BCCI made out the contract for only a year saying that would give Kumble time to prove his coaching credentials. The former BCCI president Anurag Thakur had said that a review would be carried out after one year. Incidentally, Ajay Shirke, who was the BCCI secretary last June, had said that when the review was done, Kumble should find himself in the "driver's seat" considering India were playing a long home season comprising 13 Tests and a couple of ODI series. Kumble might not be holding the steering wheel anymore.



The run machine is geared up for net session

send the Champions Trophy; and applications for the job close on the eve of the tournament opener - but he said the process had to follow. The most telling public comments came from Kohli, who said last week he did not find anything untoward with what the BCCI was doing. "The process has been followed every single time the similar way in Indian cricket for the past so many years is what I know," Kohli said at his first media briefing upon landing in England. "Even the last time this was up for a change the same procedure was applied. With the term being one year, the procedure is being followed in the same manner. I don't see anything very different from what has happened in the past. That is something the board has recognised."

**Karthik feels 'ready' for Champions Trophy**

LONDON, MAY 31 /- Done in by nerves to start with, keeper-batsman Dinesh Karthik feels he has a good chance of making India's Champions Trophy playing XI after his fluent knock in the warm-up game against Bangladesh. After failing in India's first warm-up match against New Zealand, Karthik, who replaced an injured Manish Pandey from the original squad, scored a blazing 94 off just 74 balls against Bangladesh yesterday. India will open their Champions Trophy campaign against Pakistan on June 4. "I saw this game (against Bangladesh) as an opportunity to showcase my skill and it was nice to get some time in the middle. I feel ready for the tournament now," he said after India's convincing 240-run win over Bangladesh. "For me obviously it was an important match. I guess the likes of captain and coach are watching me bat, and (for them) seeing where I stand is very important. It's important that whenever I get the opportunity, I try and do the best that I can," the wicket-keeper batsman said. Karthik's career started on a promising note in the early 2000s, but since then he has been looked upon as a replacement specialist ever since Mahendra Singh Dhoni came to the fore. By his own admission, Karthik needed the knock against Bangladesh after scoring a nervous nine-ball duck in India's first warm-up match against New Zealand. "In the last game I was a little nervous going in," he admitted. "Even though Virat (Kohli)

(But) Against Bangladesh, I calmed myself down and thought: it's an important opportunity for me to go out there and play a few shots. I worked on my batting a little bit yesterday, got a hit and felt better today." Karthik knows the English conditions well as he has had a fair amount of success here in the past. "On a personal note, it is important to feel how it is to be batting back in England. It's a green surface because I don't play cricket," said Karthik, who didn't feature in an ODI since 2014. "You have to be aware of the conditions. If the sun is out, it's pretty beautiful to bat. In fact it's better than India because the ball bounces even better and comes on to the bat. But if there's a bit of cloud cover, the bowler gets the upper hand. There's a bit of swing and immediately things change and you can see the way the game progresses. There is a certain game flow with the sun being out and not," he said. "Other than that, there are small things. There is probably a little more bounce than India. The ball does skid on a little more but at times it's great for stroke-making and it's good to play some shots and just great to bat." (PTI)



tried his best to calm my nerves, it was a little difficult. I was back in the blues after a long time, so I guess I was very over-excited probably. It was one of those days where the bowler and the keeper were playing and I was just standing in between not doing much and getting beaten! It was pretty embarrassing out there," Karthik

**Kohli, Dhoni, Yuvraj, Raina in list of top 100 athletes**

MUMBAI, MAY 31 /- India captain Virat Kohli, former skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni and stylish left-handed batsman Yuvraj Singh and Suresh Raina, have found places in this year's ESPN World Fame 100 list that made its debut last year. While Kohli is placed in the 13th spot and Dhoni in the 15th, Yuvraj and Raina have been ranked 90th and 95th respectively, said a media release here today. The list is ESPN's ranking of the 100 most famous active athletes in the world. Heading the list is top Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo while NBA great LeBron James, another soccer star Lionel Messi and tennis ace Roger Federer are the top four athletes, in that order. The others in the top ten are Phil Mickelson, Neymar Usain Bolt, Kevin Durant, Rafael Nadal and Tiger Woods. The ranking is based on a formula devised by ESPN director of sports analytics, Bob Alamar, which combines endorsements, social media reach and other data to create a comparative ranking system, the media release explained. In February 29-year-old Kohli joined the likes of Bolt, Rickie Fowler and Thierry Henry as a Puma en-

dorser and his eight-year deal with the shoe company is worth more than 100 crore rupees, the largest ever for an Indian athlete, the release said. As part of the overall package ESPN The Magazine will dedicate an entire issue to World Fame 100, including features on some athletes, notably Yuvraj, and it's slated to hit newsstands in the US on June 2, the release said. After beating a rare form of lung cancer, Yuvraj has given fans someone to look up to when things get tough. In 2015, he launched the YouCan Foundation to fight cancer. Among others to be featured likewise are 18-time Grand Slam men's singles champion Federer, Real Madrid superstar Ronaldo, biggest drug foundation to fight cancer, Amon others to swimming ace, Ryan Lochte, and Formula One champion, Lewis Hamilton.



**Champions Trophy: India, Australia favourites despite off-field worries**

LONDON, MAY 31 /- There are serious off-field issues plaguing both teams but defending champions India, along with the mighty Australia, will start as title contenders in the ICC Champions Trophy, beginning here on Thursday. Hosts England, who have shown amazing transformation as a potent limited-overs side,

will be the 'Dark Horse' in the eight-team tournament where the once formidable West Indies are a notable absentee. Hosts England will kickstart the tournament against minnows Bangladesh here tomorrow before the much-awaited rivalry between India and Pakistan on June 4. However, the two teams that will enjoy maxi-

mum traction are surely going to be India and Australia in a tournament where you can expect high-scoring matches on good batting tracks. Both teams have a fantastic blend of youth and experience, a must for 50-over cricket. Ironically, both teams have been in the news for reasons which aren't ex-

actly cricketing to say the least. While a rumourous rift between the top ten players, Virat Kohli and chief coach Anil Kumble has been gaining ground since the past few days, the Australian team's payment dispute with their cricket board is out in the public domain. Both teams will be starting their respective campaigns

in such an uncomfortable backdrop, but they have respective quality players in their ranks, who will not let the controversies affect their game. The Indian team has not displayed any signs of stress during their two warm-up matches which they won without breaking a sweat. At the same time,