

Short Takes

To promote women in sports, Maneka to work with Sports Ministry

New Delhi, Oct 11 : Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi on Wednesday announced that she would be working with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to empower women.

"Sports can play a vital role in transforming and empowering lives of women and girls. Today, we recognise it as a platform for girls to demonstrate their skills and achieve their aspirations" she said, adding it was this reason that the two Ministries have decided to work together to "promote greater participation of women in sports".

In her address at an event organised by her Ministry and UNICEF to celebrate International Day of the Girl Child, she said that a campaign will be launched to motivate girls and women to take up sports.

"More importantly, sports infrastructure for girls is proposed to be developed for which the (Women) Ministry is willing to contribute funds," she said.

UNICEF India representative Yasmin Ali Haque told IANS: "Girl Child Day is a long term commitment of multi-sectoral partners to continue to draw attention to all girls' needs and opportunities."

"Three priorities that can change the paradigm completely are girls' education, preventing their early marriage and enabling their safe mobility," she added.

UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Sachin Tendulkar, Indian Women's cricket captain Mitali Raj, former captain of Indian women's basketball team Raspreet Sidhu, Special Olympics athlete Ragini Sharma, Karate champion Mana Mandekar and para swimmer Rajni Jha were also present on the occasion.

Midfielder Benat pens new deal with Athletic Bilbao

Madrid, Oct 11 : Athletic Club Bilbao on Wednesday confirmed that midfielder Benat Etxebarria has signed a new contract with the Basque football club.

The 30-year-old, who is a product of the club's youth system, has signed a two-year contract extension, meaning that he will now remain with Athletic until the end of June 2020, reports Xinhua news agency.

His previous deal had been due to expire at the end of June 2018.

Benat has made 120 league appearances for Athletic, as well as another 49 in other competitions and also played 75 times for the club's B-team.

But it was at a spell with Betis that he began to produce his best form, winning four Spain caps and earning a return to Athletic in the summer of 2013.

His new deal includes a 50 million euros (nearly \$60 million) buyout clause, but it now looks likely Benat will end his career at the club where he started it.

Athletic will now turn their full attention into persuading Spain goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga to extend his current contract.

The goalkeeper, who recently celebrated his 23rd birthday, is also out of contract at the end of the current season and could leave for nothing unless they are able to persuade him to stay.

Sindhu to support Bridgestone campaign for breast cancer awareness

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U-17 World Cup: India face do-or-die clash against Ghana

New Delhi, Oct 11 : India are bracing up for another tough test against Ghana here on Thursday as they need a win by a big margin to keep their hopes alive for qualification to the Round-of-16 of the FIFA Under-17 World Cup.

India have suffered two losses from as many games in Group A, against the United States (0-3) and Colombia (1-2) at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. The US lead the group with six wins, while Ghana and Colombia have three points each.

Hence, India will not only have to win by a big margin but also hope that Colombia lose to the US by a big margin in the other match of the day. If the two teams end up with same number of points, goal difference will be taken into consideration.

Luis Norton de Matos' boys have, however, won hearts all over for their brave show against higher-ranked Colombia. Jeakson Singh Thounaojam etched his name in Indian history books by becoming the first goal-scorer in a FIFA World Cup of any age-group.



With ambition running high in the squad, the colts are aiming for nothing less than a win that would eventually propel them into contention of progression.

"We will go for nothing less than a win. We have shown the world that we belong on the same page as them and now we want to show that we can win against them," insisted head coach Matos.

"Ghana will be a physical as well as a mental challenge for us. They (Ghana) are a strong physical team

who are quick on the ball. We would have to be on our toes for the entirety of the match, if we are to secure a win," he added.

"However, the boys are ready for the challenge that will be thrown in front of them. We will give it our all and aim to create history once again."

Central midfielder and skipper Amarjit Singh added: "We have the utmost respect for our opponents but we will give them a very tough fight, even tougher than we gave

Colombia.

"It is a matter of survival and we will do anything to go into the next round."

Ghana like to play fast football, using the pacy flank players Sadiq Ibrahim and Aminu Mohammed. Captain Eric Ayiah is a dangerous customer up front.

To contain these two will demand superb performances from India's back-line of Boris Singh, Namit Deshpande, Anwar Ali and Sanjeev Stalin. India's goalkeeper Dheeraj Singh Moirangthem will also have

to be on guard.

Jeakson and Amarjit will start in midfield, while right-winger Ninothoingamba Meetei has earned his place. Attacking midfielder Abhijit Sarkar is also a certainty and the battle for the left wing spot will be between Rahul Kannoly or Komal Thatal.

It is also not clear whom Matos will put up front. It looks like Rahim Ali will earn second consecutive chance ahead of Aniket Jadhav.

Mohun Bagan academy product Rahim impressed with his pressing against Colombia and Matos may field him again from the start against Ghana defenders Gideon Acquah, Gideon Mensah and Abdul Yusif and create problems for goalkeeper Danlad Ibrahim.

Goalkeeper Dheeraj called for even more support from India crowd against Ghana. "Against Ghana we will need a lot of support. We will give it our very best on the pitch. I expect all to be cheering for us like they have done for us. We won't disappoint them. Come and back the blue," he said.

Set girls free: Tendulkar's message on Girl Child Day

New Delhi, Oct 11 : Lamenting the discrimination that girls face in India and worldwide, cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar on Wednesday said that their gender should be given a fair platform and above everything else, "freedom".

"There should be a fair platform. We should not discriminate (between the two sexes)," Tendulkar said during a panel discussion organised here by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and Unicef on the occasion of the International Day of the Girl Child.

"While sending our girls out, we are always afraid thinking she might make mistakes but we don't feel so in case of boys.

"We insulate her and don't give her the chance to use her brains and have her own experiences," said Tendulkar, who is also the Unicef Goodwill ambassador.

"We definitely need to protect them. We also need to provide what they want -- opportunity, encouragement, guidance and above all, freedom. They should have freedom about what the want to be in life," he added.

The discussion on "The Role of Sports in the Empowerment of Girls" pointed out the decline of child marriages from 47 per cent to 27 per cent. To this, Tendulkar reacted saying it was not enough.

"Child marriage and other social pressures hamper a child's growth. I stand to SAY NO to Child Marriage and make a better world for our girls," he said.

He gave his own example to inspire parents of girl children. "As a kid, I decided to follow my dream of playing for India.

This should be the case of every girl child in India and the world. Every girl child should chase her dreams. It is very important for parents to give them a platform. Their contribution is significant," he said.

He explained how hearing about female athletes in his childhood created an impact on his mind.

"I grew up watching so many great athletes...women athletes. They have had a huge impact on me and not just the cricket legends," he said. "Talking to the athletes last year at Rio Olympics made me realise how difficult their journeys have been, and the amount of struggle they have had to do," he added.

"Our female athletes made us so proud at Rio last year. Looking at them we proudly say that we belong to the same country."

Sports gave me confidence, independence: Mithali Raj

New Delhi, Oct 11 : India's inspirational women's cricket captain Mithali Raj feels that child marriage can be dealt with by introducing girls to sports which, she says, gave her huge confidence and made her a strong and independent woman.

"Society needs to liberate from the clutches of their own vicious design. Parents are worried about the security of their children and look at marriage as a provision of a secured future for girls," she said here on Wednesday.

Mithali was speaking at a panel discussion organised by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and Unicef on the occasion of the International Day of the Girl Child.

"Not everybody makes it to the top in sports because of various factors, lack of facilities or opportunities for girls, who are dependent on parents," she said, adding: "Girls who take up sports gain a lot of confidence," she said.

"They are given jobs by the government and that



gives you the strength to take your own decisions pertaining to your own life. Independent girls get support from the parents as well," she added.

She stressed that it was important for girls to get the opportunity where they become independent and strong women. "Sports is one of the mediums."

"I have been working for railways and have gained a lot of confidence. I am extremely independent and not dependent on anybody for anything," she said. Mithali also described the world of her

dreams where women are considered and treated equal to men.

"I want to see a world where women don't have to struggle or fight for opportunities but are given opportunities equal to men, where there is no gender bias in sports or any other field, and equality in everything."

"That would be my ideal world for women." "People should not subjugate or look down on women that she cannot have dreams or aspirations. They should see both genders equally," she added.

Kenya's Kipsang ready for New York Marathon

Nairobi, Oct 11 : Despite his failure to finish the Berlin Marathon last month, Kenya's Wilson Kipsang has confirmed he will compete at the New York Marathon on November 5.

Speaking from Iken on Wednesday, Kipsang said he is in good shape and relaxed ahead of the New York Marathon, where he will come up against compatriots and world half marathon champion Geoffrey Kamworor and Lucas Rotich, reports Xinhua news agency.

"I am very happy to confirm I will be running the New York Marathon in a few weeks," said Kipsang. At stake in New York will be the first finisher prize money of \$100,000 with a time bonus of \$25,000 also up for grabs.

In Berlin last month, Kipsang who was gunning for the world record, failed and had to stop by the 30 kilometres mark. However, he has suddenly made a recovery and has his eyes set on conquering

the New York Marathon course.

"My training was excellent before Berlin, but I had a bad day there," Kipsang said. "Now, I am very happy and thankful I was given a chance to use my training effort in New York, and will try to win there as I did three years ago." Kipsang will join a previously announced professional athlete field that represents 29 different countries and now includes 12 past champions, 22 Olympians and 20 Paralympians.

They will toe the line with defending champions Ghirmay Ghebreslassie of Eritrea while Mary Keitany of Kenya will lead the women's race.

Kipsang, 35, won the New York Marathon in 2014 on his debut, taking the tape in 2:10:59 hours, just seven seconds ahead of Ethiopia's Lelisa Desisa.

This year, Kipsang has set a new course record of 2:03:58 at the Tokyo Marathon with his first-place finish in February.

FIFA suspends Pakistan Football Federation over 'third-party interference'

Zurich, Oct 11: FIFA on Wednesday suspended the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) on

account of undue third-party interference.

"The Bureau took this decision as a result of the

fact that the PFF offices and its accounts remain in control of a court-appointed administrator, which constitutes a violation of the PFF obligations to manage its affairs independently and without influence from any third parties in accordance with the FIFA Statutes," the world football governing body said in a statement.

"The suspension will be lifted once the PFF offices

and access to the PFF accounts are returned to the PFF," the statement added.

Following its suspension, the PFF loses all its membership rights as defined in article 13 of the FIFA Statutes. The PFF representative and club teams are no longer entitled to take part in international competitions until the suspension is lifted.

The suspension also means that neither the PFF

nor any of its members or officials may benefit from any development programmes, courses or training from FIFA or the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

Moreover, and in accordance with Article 16 Paragraph 3 of the FIFA Statutes, other member associations may not entertain sporting contact with the PFF during its suspension.

Messi clinches World Cup spot for Argentina

Quito (Ecuador) , Oct 11 : Barcelona forward Lionel Messi has bagged a hat-trick and with it Argentina has secured a direct berth at next year's World Cup in Russia with a 3-1 victory over Ecuador.

In a dramatic final round on Tuesday in the South American zone qualifiers, Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Uruguay and Colombia booked their tickets to the 2018 FIFA World Cup,

Xinhua news agency reported. Needing the win to avoid missing the World Cup for the first time since 1970, Argentina got off to a bad start against Ecuador who were already out of the contention.

Ecuador took the lead in the first minute with Romario Ibarra firing from close range after combining smartly with Roberto Ordenez.

Argentina took just

12 minutes to equalize with Messi's first-time strike after Angel Di Maria's pull-back.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner gave the visitors the lead eight minutes later when he snatched possession from Ecuador's defence before thumping a shot past Maximo Banguera.

Messi pocketed his third goal just after the hour mark, chipping into the top left corner from the edge of the

box while being dragged to the ground.

The result broke a run of four matches without a victory for Argentina in the Conmebol qualifiers.

Before Tuesday, their last win in the qualifying tournament was against Chile on March 23 with a 1-0 margin.

"It's an enormous feeling of happiness," an elated Albiceleste coach Jorge Sampaoli told TyC Sports moments after the final

whistle. Brazil earlier eliminated Chile with a 3-0 home victory,

Venezuela wrecked Paraguay's hopes with a 1-0 win in Asuncion, Uruguay won 4-2 at home to Bolivia and Colombia clinched an automatic place by drawing 1-1 with Peru.

By finishing fifth in the 10-team Conmebol group, Peru earned the right to meet Oceania winners New Zealand in a two-legged play-off.

