

BCCI invites bids for Team India's title sponsorship, no real money gaming or crypto company allowed

NEW DELHI: The BCCI on Tuesday invited bids for the Indian cricket team's title sponsorship rights after fantasy sports giants Dream11's pullout and barred companies dealing in real money gaming and cryptocurrency from the process due to a government ban on such entities. The Indian team will be without a title sponsor in the Asia Cup starting September 9 in the UAE as the Board has set September 16 as the last date to submit bids.

Dream 11 recently shut down its real money games due to the 'Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act 2025', which states that "no person shall offer any, aid, abet, induce, indulge, engage in offering online money gaming services nor shall involve in any advertisement which directly or indirectly promotes any person to play any online money game".

Dream 11 and My11Circle jointly contributed about Rs 1,000 crore to the BCCI through title sponsorship of the Indian cricket team and Indian Premier League. "Bidder, including any of its Group companies: (i) should not be en-



gaged in online money gaming, betting or gambling services or similar services in India or anywhere in the world; (ii) should not provide any online money gaming, betting or gambling services or similar services to any Person in India; and (iii) should not have any investment or ownership interest in any Person engaged in betting or gambling services

in India," stated a press release from the BCCI. The last date for the purchase of the Invitation for Expression of Interest (IEOI), which will cost Rs 5 lakh, is September 12. "To clarify, a bidder, including any of its Group companies, engaged in any activities/business that is prohibited under the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025 is not

permitted to submit a bid," it added.

Also barred from applying are tobacco, alcohol and any entity "which is likely to offend public morals such as, including but not limited to, pornography".

The Board also made it clear that some brand categories will also be "blocked on account of the BCCI having existing sponsors within the said categories." These include Athleisure and Sportswear Manufacturers; Banks, Banking & Financial Service and Non-Banking Financial Companies; Non-Alcoholic Cold Beverages; Fans, Mixer Grinders and Safety Locks; and Insurance. The brands in these categories that are associated with BCCI right now are Adidas, Campa Cola, IDFC First Bank, and SBI Life, among others.

"...bidding operating or engaged in multiple brand/product categories, one of which falls under either the Blocked Brand Categories or Prohibited Brand Categories, shall not be permitted to submit a bid in respect of such Blocked Brand Categories or Prohibited Brand Categories.

UP Yoddhas beat Patna Pirates 34-31

VISAKHAPATNAM: A hard-fought comeback from UP Yoddhas saw them beat Patna Pirates 34-31 in a Pro Kabaddi League season 12 match here on Monday.

Sumit and Ashu Singh got High Fives, while Gagan Gowda scored seven points as the Yoddhas secured an impressive victory.

In the opening 10 minutes, Patna Pirates edged ahead of UP Yoddhas, leading 7-6 in what began as a tightly fought clash. Patna's young raider Ayan Lohchab was the standout performer in this phase, notching up three raid points and twice sending the Yoddhas defenders to the bench.

Ankit made his presence felt with a crucial tackle on Guman Singh, while Maninder Singh chipped in with a successful raid to keep the Pirates narrowly in front. For the Yoddhas, Gagan Gowda looked lively with a couple of sharp raids, while Ashu Singh and Sumit contributed with important defensive tackles. Midway through the half, Ayan produced the game's defining moment -- a brilliant raid that took out Ashu

and Mohammadreza Kaboudrahan-gi, inflicting the first All Out on UP Yoddhas. He continued to add points at regular intervals, including a raid that removed Mahender Singh and Bhavani Rajput in quick succession.

The Yoddhas found some respite late in the half when Ayan was finally trapped in a Super Tackle, but by then, Patna had built a commanding lead. At half time, the score read 19-13 in favour of the Pirates, with Ayan leading the charge with eight raid points.

Patna Pirates maintained their grip in the opening exchanges of the second half, extending their lead to 23-19 after 30 minutes of play. Substitute raider Ankit Rana made an instant impact with a successful raid that sent Sumit to the bench, while Maninder Singh also did well in a Do-Or-Die raid against Hitesh. The Yoddhas, however, refused to back down. Bhavani Rajput and Gagan Gowda added crucial raid points to keep their side in the hunt, and Sumit pulled off a fine tackle on Ayan to halt the Pirates' momentum.

Bronze at World Championship feels like redemption after Olympic pain, says Chirag

NEW DELHI: "It feels like redemption," says Chirag Shetty, one half of the celebrated SatChi combo that ensured that India did not go medal-less at the just-concluded World Badminton Championship in Paris, the city where the two endured the biggest heart-break of their career.

Chirag and his long-time partner Satwiksairaj Rankireddy won the men's doubles bronze last week. The world No. 9 pair notched up a commanding win over Malaysia's two-time Olympic medallists Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik in the quarterfinals to secure what was their second World Championships



medal. However, their bid to become the first Indian men's doubles pair to reach the final ended with a defeat to China's 11th seeds Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi in the semifinals.

"I think that win against Aaron is definitely very spe-

cial. More than winning the medal, just knowing for a fact that if we play the right game tactically, we can beat anyone. We've not had a very handsome record against them lately, especially at both the Olympics," Chirag told PTI.

National ranking table tennis returns to Delhi after 13 years

NEW DELHI: A host of India players including reigning national champion Divya Chitale and Commonwealth Games gold medalists G Sathiyar and Harmeet Desai will headline the UTT National Ranking Table Tennis Tournament beginning here from September 7.

The tournament has attracted as many as 2958 entries. Delhi State Table Tennis Association is hosting a national ranking tournament for the time first time since 2008 though the Table Tennis Federation of India had organised one in the capital back in 2012 with the support of Haryana. The tournament

will run from September 7 to 14 at the Thyagraj Stadium. The players will battle it out across 12 events including the senior, U-19, U-17, U-15, U-13 and U-11 categories. The national champions in the men's field include Sathiyar, Harmeet, Anthony Amalraj and Soumyajit Ghosh, who disappeared from the national set up after featuring at the 2012 London Olympics due to personal issues. Also part of the field is Delhi-based Payas Jain.

Chitale will be the favourite in the women's field including veteran Mouma Das, Madhurika Patkar, Reethi Rishya and Divya Deshpande.

Praggnanandhaa takes on a strong field at Grand Swiss, eyes Candidates berth

SAMARKAND: India's top-ranked Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa will be keen to seal his Candidates tournament 2026 berth, taming a strong field in the FIDE Grand Swiss that begins here on Wednesday.

The 11-round tournament, which carries a total prize pool of USD 625000 in the open section and USD 230000 in the women's section, will see the top two players entering the Candidates in the open and women's categories.

Praggnanandhaa is almost assured of his place in the Candidates thanks to a healthy lead that he enjoys in the performance category qualifier for 2025. The



Candidates consists of eight contestants with one player qualifying on his performance in the FIDE circuit in 2024 and 2025, two players from Grand Swiss, three players from World Cup to be held in Goa in Octo-

ber-November this year and two players based on six months of highest rating average.

Fabiano Caruana of the US has already made it to the Candidates thanks to his brilliant run in 2024.

Tiny 3D-Printed Device Supercharges Tissue Engineering With Unprecedented Precision

A newly developed 3D-printed device offers scientists the ability to build human tissue models with far greater precision and complexity. The tool, created by an interdisciplinary team at the University of Washington and UW Medicine, is designed to integrate easily into existing laboratory methods.

Recent progress in 3D tissue engineering has already improved the speed and accuracy of building cell-based systems, giving biomedical researchers powerful new ways to design and test treatments for a wide range of diseases. A central aim of the field is to recreate laboratory environments that mimic the natural conditions cells experience inside the body.

One common method involves suspending cells

within a gel positioned between two freestanding posts. This setup has been used to grow tissues such as heart, lung, skin, and muscle. While effective at allowing cells to function in a life-like way, the approach has limitations: it is difficult to examine how multiple tissue types interact. Achieving finer control over the composition and arrangement of cells could make it possible to model complex conditions, including neuromuscular disorders.

A paper published in Advanced Science details how the new platform lets scientists examine how cells respond to mechanical and physical cues, while creating distinct regions in a suspended tissue. The 3D-printed device is known as STOMP (Suspended Tissue Open Microfluidic Pattern-terning). Ashleigh Theberge,

UW professor of chemistry, and Nate Sniadecki, professor of mechanical engineering and interim codirector of the UW Medicine Institute for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine, led the scientific team. The group showed that their device can recreate biological interfaces like bone and ligament, or fibrotic and healthy heart tissue.

The first authors of the paper were Amanda Haack, a student in the School of Medicine's medical scientist program and postdoctoral fellow in the Theberge Lab, and Lauren Brown, a Ph.D. student in chemistry. UW faculty members Cole DeForest, professor of chemical engineering and bioengineering, and Tracy Popowicz, professor of oral biology in the School of Dentistry, are coauthors.

STOMP builds on a tis-

sue-engineering technique known as casting, which the researchers describe through the simple analogy of making Jell-O in a mold. In laboratory practice, the "gel" is a mixture of living and synthetic materials, placed into a supporting frame with a pipette rather than poured. STOMP takes this approach further by using capillary action—similar to the way water rises in a straw—to allow scientists to precisely position different cell types in chosen patterns, much like arranging fruit pieces evenly within Jell-O.

To evaluate its potential, the team tested STOMP in two experiments: one examined the contractile behavior of engineered heart tissue in both diseased and healthy states, while the other recreated the ligament that secures a tooth within its bone socket.

Why Kids With More Colds Are Less Likely to Get COVID

A recent study from researchers at National Jewish Health suggests that catching a common cold (most often caused by rhinoviruses) might provide short-term protection against SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for COVID-19. The findings offer new clues about why children typically show fewer symptoms than adults and may also open doors to new ways of easing the impact of respiratory infections.

The work, published in the Journal of Infectious Diseases, used data from the Human Epidemiology and Response to SARS-CoV-2 (HEROS) study. This national project followed more than 4,100 individuals across 1,394 households between May 2020 and February 2021.

The researchers discovered that people, especially children who had recently been infected with rhinoviruses, were less likely to test positive for SARS-CoV-2 in the weeks that followed. The reason appears to be the body's antiviral defenses. Rhinoviruses trigger a strong interferon response in the airways, which helps prepare the

immune system to fend off other viral threats.

"Our findings suggest that the immune boost from a recent cold may give the body an early advantage in fighting SARS-CoV-2 before it has a chance to take hold," said senior author of the study Max Seibold, PhD, a researcher and Director of the Regenerative Medicine and Genome Editing Program (REGEN) at National Jewish Health. "This may help explain why children, who tend to get more colds than adults, generally experience fewer and less severe COVID cases."

Using thousands of self-collected nasal swabs, the team tested for both SARS-CoV-2 and other common respiratory viruses, including rhinovirus, in participants of all ages.

They also analyzed airway gene expression to see how recent viral infections influenced the body's antiviral defenses.

Children were found to have higher baseline expression of interferon-related genes — proteins that act as the immune system's first line of defense against viruses — compared to adults.

CERN Deploys Cutting-Edge AI in 'Impossible' Hunt for Higgs Decay

The Higgs boson, first observed at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) in 2012, is a cornerstone of the Standard Model of particle physics.

Through its interactions, it gives fundamental particles such as quarks their mass. Interactions between the Higgs boson and the heaviest "third-generation" quarks—the top and bottom quarks—have already been confirmed and shown to align with Standard Model predictions.

However, studying how the Higgs couples to lighter quarks remains much more difficult. Its interactions with "second-generation" quarks, like the charm quark, and "first-generation" quarks, the up and down quarks that form the nuclei of atoms, are still largely untested. This leaves open the key question of whether the Higgs boson is responsible for giving mass to the very quarks that make up everyday matter.

To explore these interactions, physicists examine how the Higgs boson decays into other particles or is produced alongside them in high-energy proton-proton collisions at the LHC.

Planet in Peril: 60% of Earth's Land Now Outside 'Safe Zone'

A new study provides the first detailed mapping of the planetary boundary known as "functional biosphere integrity," tracing its status across centuries and in specific regions. The analysis shows that 60 percent of the world's land surface has already moved beyond the safe operating range, with 38 percent falling into the category of high risk. The research was conducted by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) in collabora-

tion with BOKU University in Vienna and published in the journal One Earth.

Functional biosphere integrity describes the capacity of the plant world to help regulate the stability of the Earth system. To do so, vegetation must generate sufficient energy through photosynthesis to sustain the circulation of carbon, water, and nitrogen that underpins ecosystems and their interconnected processes, even under conditions of intense human disturbance.

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Love in the time of AI: Companion apps boom



A girlfriend, virtual husband, digital friend community, holographic companion — these are some new-age terms, which define human relationships with AI.

Demand for a 'fantasy match' has fuelled the growth of AI companion apps. As of July 2025, there are 335 revenue-generating companion apps, of which 128 were released in just six months of 2025. The cate-

gory generated \$82 million this year and is on track to clock \$120 million by the year end, according to Appfigures data. VC firm Ark Investment predicts the industry could hit \$150 billion annually by 2030.

App analytics platform Sensor Tower says 'relationship' chatbots are a growing sub-trend and are demonstrating "a stunning, largely organic, growth trajectory through unusually high user retention."

Mysterious New Bacteria Discovered in the Amazon Raises Global Health Questions

A previously unidentified species of bacteria belonging to the genus Bartonella has been detected in phlebotomine insects, commonly known as sand flies, within the Amazon National Park in Pará, Brazil. Sand flies are typically recognized as carriers of leishmaniasis, yet genetic testing revealed that the DNA of this new microorganism is closely related to two Andean species, B. bacilliformis and B. ancashensis. These bacteria are known to cause Carrion's disease (also referred to as Oroya fever or Peruvian wart) and are transmitted by the same type of insect.

So far, there is no indication that this newly discovered bacterium causes illness in Brazil. Even so, because other Bartonella species are linked to several diseases worldwide, the researchers emphasize that more investigation is necessary.

The study was led by Marcos Rogério André in collaboration with Eunice Aparecida Bianchi Galati. Both are affiliated with Brazilian research institutions: the Faculty of Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences at São Paulo State University (FCAV-UNESP) in Jaboticabal, and the School of Public Health at the University of São Paulo (FSP-USP). Funding was

provided by FAPESP through two projects (22/08543-2 and 22/16085-4).

The findings were published in the journal Acta Tropica with additional contributions from Paulo Vitor Cadina Arantes, Israel de Souza Pinto, Daniel Antônio Braga Lee, Anna Cláudia Baumel Mongruel, and Rosângela Zacarias Machado.

Bartonellosis refers to a group of diseases caused by bacteria from the genus Bartonella. These pathogens can be spread by several vectors, including sand flies, fleas, and lice.

Infections often take a long time to resolve in both humans and animals. The bacteria may remain undetected in the body for extended periods, which can worsen outcomes for people with existing immune system problems.

"Bartonellosis is a neglected disease. The disease best known to health professionals is cat scratch disease, caused by Bartonella henselae. It's important to understand the real prevalence of these diseases, especially in isolated regions with low human development indices, where populations don't have easy access to health services," explains André. The study aimed to detect the presence of Bartonella spp. DNA in 297 female sand flies (Diptera: Psychodidae) gath-

ered from the Amazon National Park in Pará, Brazil. "This park has caves and receives many visitors, so it's important to study it," noted the researcher.

Sample collection took place from February 2022 through February 2023. Each month, specimens were gathered along two trails situated near the Uruá and Tracóá rivers, both within the boundaries of the conservation unit.

"The discovery of Bartonella species in phlebotomine sand flies here in Brazil may indicate that B. bacilliformis and B. ancashensis, which cause Carrion's disease or Peruvian wart, can adapt to non-Andean species and be transmitted in areas outside the Andes. This isn't too much of an extrapolation, as two species that have been identified as vectors of B. bacilliformis, Pintomyia robusta and Pintomyia maranonensis in Peru, are very similar to species found in Brazil, namely Pintomyia serrana and Pintomyia nevesi," explains Galati.

In recent years, the group has been studying the diversity of bacteria found in this genus and the diseases they cause in both humans and animals. According to the scientists, the sequences found in the Amazon differ from those found in Peru; however, the results corroborate data collected in a previous study.