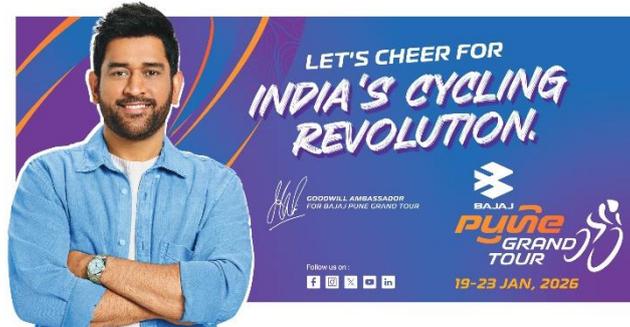




## Mahendra Singh Dhoni Extends Support To Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026 as Goodwill Ambassador



**Pune, January 15<sup>th</sup> 2026:** Former Indian Cricket team captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni has been named Goodwill Ambassador for the most awaited Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026, lending his support to India's first international cycling road race, scheduled from 19-23 January in Pune.

Dhoni's association comes at a time when India is stepping onto the global professional cycling calendar. As Goodwill Ambassador, Dhoni will play a key role in amplifying the profile of the Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026 and inspiring greater interest in cycling, especially among young athletes. His association comes at a pivotal moment as India takes a giant leap in the global professional cycling calendar.

The Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026 will be India's first-ever UCI 2.2 category multi-stage, five-day Continental Road Cycling Race for Men, firmly placing the country on the global professional cycling circuit. The five-day race will wind through a newly laid 437-km route across the Deccan Plateau and Sahyadri Range, featuring sharp bends and challenging elevations. The event has attracted 171 riders from 29 teams across 35 countries.

Known for his emphasis on fitness, discipline, and endurance throughout his sporting career, Dhoni's values align closely with the demands of competitive cycling. His involvement adds credibility and visibility to the event, helping position the race as a landmark initiative for the growth of cycling in the country.

Commenting on his association, **MS Dhoni** said: *"I'm happy to be associated with Pune Grand Tour in promoting the sport. With the emergence of Pune Grand Tour, India is pedalling into a new chapter in cycling as a professional sport. I wish the organisers, the Pune District Administrators, great success with the initiative and all the riders the very best. A special mention to the Indian National Team, this is their moment to shine in front of home fans and bring glory to the nation."*



Leading the international charge will be Spain's Pro Team Burgos Burpellet BH, ranked 25 in the world's UCI ranking, being the highest ranked in Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026, followed by China's Li Ning Star (ranked 36); Malaysia's Terengganu Cycling Team (ranked 37).

The Indian challenge will be led by country's most decorated rider Naveen John for the Indian National Team. Host India will also field its second team - Indian Development Team – thus, featuring a total of 12 Indian riders with four substitutes, having an opportunity to prove their mettle on the home conditions at India's first UCI 2.2 competition.

### **Information About Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026**

Bajaj Pune Grand Tour 2026 is India's first-ever **UCI 2.2 category** multi-stage, five-day Continental Cycling Race for Men, marks a watershed moment for the India's presence in the global professional circuit. A gruelling **437-km route passes** through the diverse terrains of Deccan Plateau and Sahyadri Ranges, the event has received an unprecedented field of **171 elite riders** from 29 teams representing five continents and 35 countries. Organised by Pune District Administration, Government of Maharashtra under the aegis of Cycling Federation of India, the race combines high-performance sporting excellence, celebrating Pune's cultural heritage, historic landmarks and rural tourism through 9 talukas and 150 villages.

### **World-Class Infrastructure & Global Ambition**

Central to the Bajaj Pune Grand Tour's success is a massive infrastructure overhaul, highlighted by the rapid road construction, upgrades with safety protocols in just 75 days. This project is part of a broader district-wide initiative in upgrading the road infrastructure to meet stringent UCI guidelines, ensuring top-tier safety and ride quality. By delivering this world-class arena, Bajaj Pune Grand Tour not only reclaims Pune's legacy as India's "*Cycle Capital*" but also establishes a permanent blueprint for sustainable urban-rural development and positions India as a premier destination for international sports tourism and elite competitive cycling.

### **Race Stages**

- **19 Jan 2026: PROLOGUE (7.5 KM) – GOODLUCK CHOWK:** Team's pole position
- **20 Jan 2026: STAGE 1: MULSI-MAVAL MILES (87.2 KM, Elevation 828 M):** Weaving through Pune's IT hub Hinjewadi, this opening stage combines flat sprints with sharp urban turns, focusing on landmarks and scenery, blending tech with nature.
- **21 Jan 2026: STAGE 2: MARATHA HERITAGE CIRCUIT (105.3 KM, Elevation 1051 M):** Cyclists will ascend the challenging ghats, facing steep gradients of the Purandar Fort, Sinhagad and Khadakwasla Lake, making the Day-2 a true test of endurance.



- **22 Jan 2026: STAGE 3: WESTERN GHATS GATEWAY (134 KM, Elevation 1024 M):** Stretching across the Deccan plateau from Purandar to Baramati, Day-3 favours speed and tactical prowess, with crosswinds and rolling terrain to keep competitors on edge.
- **23 Jan 2026: STAGE 4: PUNE PRIDE LOOP (95 KM, Elevation 578 M):** The final phase winds through the urban sprawls of Pune, passing through modernity and historic relevance like Shaniwar Wada, featuring technical sections and a dramatic finish.

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