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GST Collections Rs 2 Lakh Crore in May



New Delhi, June 1: India's gross GST collections rose to around ₹1.94 lakh crore in May 2026, marking a 3.2% year-on-year increase, according to government data released on Monday. Net GST revenue stood at ₹1.66 lakh crore, while total refunds rose slightly to ₹27,281 crore. Adjusted figures indicate stronger underlying growth of around 9% in gross collections and about 10% in net revenue. Domestic GST collections declined 2.6%, but import-based revenues surged 19.1%, reflecting continued strength in external trade activity. For April and May combined, GST revenues have grown steadily, supported by economic resilience despite global geopolitical tensions.

UPI Transactions Surge in May

Mumbai, June 1: India's digital payments system continued its strong momentum in May 2026, with UPI transactions rising 24% year-on-year to 23.2 billion, according to NPCI data. Transaction value approached ₹30 lakh crore, driven by increased digital adoption and daily usage averaging 748 million transactions. The system also recorded growth across IMPS and AePS platforms. UPI, now operational in several international markets, has seen exponential growth over the past decade, reinforcing India's position as a global leader in real-time digital payments.



KCR Greets Telangana Day



Hyderabad, June 1 (Tricolour Estate): BRS president and former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhara Rao extended greetings to the people of Telangana on the occasion of State Formation Day and paid tribute to those who lost their lives in the struggle for statehood. In a statement released on June 2, 2026, KCR recalled the long Telangana movement, describing it as a democratic struggle that overcame decades of discrimination. He said the formation of Telangana marked a turning point after years of neglect under united Andhra Pradesh. Highlighting the performance of the previous BRS government, he claimed the state made significant progress in irrigation, agriculture, power supply, education, healthcare, and drinking water systems within a decade. He said Telangana had emerged as a model state in several development sectors. KCR also urged people to remain alert in protecting the state's identity and progress, stating that the BRS would continue to act as a safeguard for Telangana's interests.

Revanth Pushes Housing, Warns Centre

Asifabad, June 1 (Tricolour Estate): Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has announced an ambitious push to transform Adilabad district into a "hut-free" region, while also sharpening his criticism of the Centre over pending paddy procurement issues. Speaking at a public meeting in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district, he reaffirmed his government's focus on housing, irrigation, and farmer welfare as key development priorities. The Chief Minister said the government is committed to ensuring permanent housing for all eligible poor families, particularly in tribal and Adivasi areas. He stated that thousands of houses have already been sanctioned for the region, along with additional allocations for Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) areas. Emphasising urgency, he directed officials to ensure that "no hut remains visible" in tribal habitations and that housing benefits are extended without political discrimination. Revanth Reddy highlighted the progress of the Indiramma Housing Scheme, noting that large-scale house-



warming programmes have already been completed and more are planned in the coming months. The government, he said, is targeting lakhs of houses under the second phase of the scheme, positioning housing as a central pillar of its welfare agenda. On irrigation, the Chief Minister launched a sharp critique of the previous BRS government, alleging that costly infrastructure projects like Kaleshwaram failed to benefit Adilabad farmers. He pointed instead to the proposed Thummadihetti project, which, according to him, would bring irrigation to over two lakh acres. He also sought cooperation from Maharashtra authorities and

urged Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy to facilitate inter-state discussions. However, it was the issue of paddy procurement that marked the most politically charged part of his speech. Revanth Reddy accused the Centre of failing to procure paddy and maize despite announcing Minimum Support Prices (MSP). He claimed that Telangana had already procured large quantities of grain, including moisture-affected stocks, but said the Union government was not fulfilling its responsibility. Warning of intensified protests, the Chief Minister said that if the Centre does not respond by June 15, the state government, along with farmers, would launch agitation demanding immediate procurement. He reiterated that Telangana would continue purchasing all grain brought to procurement centres, regardless of quality concerns. The speech combined welfare commitments with political messaging, reflecting both the state government's development agenda and its growing confrontation with the Centre over agricultural policy and farmer support systems.

Kavitha Demands Jayashankar Statue on Tank Bund



Hyderabad, June 1 (Tricolour Estate): Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS) chief Kalvakuntla Kavitha has demanded that the state government install a statue of Telangana ideologue Prof. K. Jayashankar on Hyderabad's Tank Bund before his birth anniversary on August 6. She said it was unacceptable that, even 12 years after the formation of Telangana, a statue of the key figure of the statehood movement has not been installed in a prominent public space in the capital. Addressing a round table meeting titled "Aspirations of Activists - Achievements" at the Telangana Rakshana Sena office in Banjara Hills, Kavitha questioned the delay in honouring those who played a crucial role in the Telangana movement. She also demanded that statues of Prof. Jayashankar, former Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao, and other martyrs of the statehood struggle be properly recognised and installed in Hyderabad. Kavitha raised concerns over what she described as the continued presence of statues of leaders from Andhra Pradesh in Hyderabad, even after the bifurcation of the state. She alleged that Telangana's own icons were not being given equal prominence in public spaces and warned that such issues reflect a neglect of regional identity. Taking a strong political tone, she questioned whether leaders from AP parties had ever spoken about equitable sharing of water resources between the two states. She further remarked that parties such as the TDP, Jana Sena, and YSRCP were attempting to expand their presence in Telangana despite, in her view, lacking commitment to the state's core interests. Kavitha asserted that Telangana's identity and cultural pride must be protected and said that political developments were being closely watched by the public. She also cautioned against attempts to dominate Telangana politics by external forces, stressing that only committed regional leadership could safeguard the state's interests.

TGPSC: Limited Jobs Only

Hyderabad, June 1 (Tricolour Estate): Telangana Public Service Commission (TGPSC) Chairman Burra Venkatesham has stated that it is not possible for the government to provide jobs to every applicant, stressing the limited number of vacancies compared to the huge competition. Speaking at a press briefing in Hyderabad on Monday, he said that only a very small fraction of candidates—nearly 0.01%—can ultimately secure government jobs, while the vast majority of applicants will not be selected. He urged job aspirants to understand the

scale of competition and avoid misinformation or negative campaigns against the Commission. As an example, he cited a recent recruitment drive for 20 Assistant Scientist posts in the Pollution Control Board, which received around 19,000 applications. Despite the large response, only 20 candidates will be selected. Venkatesham warned that the Commission would take strict action against individuals spreading false information. He also announced that Finance Department has approved recruitment for 3,800 posts.

JEE Advanced 2026 Results Declared

New Delhi, June 1: IIT Roorkee has declared the JEE Advanced 2026 results, with Shubham Kumar from the IIT Delhi zone securing All India Rank 1. Over 56,000 candidates qualified out of nearly 1.8 lakh aspirants. Kumar topped the exam with 330 out of 360 marks, while Arohi Deshpande emerged as the highest-ranked female candidate. The results mark the beginning of the Joint Seat Allocation Authority (JoSAA) counselling process for admission into IITs across the country.

Five Appointed to Supreme Court

New Delhi, June 1: The Centre has appointed five judges to the Supreme Court following the recommendation of the Collegium, expanding the apex court's strength to address rising case pendency. The appointments include four Chief Justices of High Courts and senior advocate V. Mohana. The sanctioned strength of the Supreme Court has now been increased from 33 to 37 judges.

Yogi Calls Cow Rashtra Mata

Bijnor (UP): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday strongly reacted to recent demands by some Muslim clerics and organisations seeking national animal status for the cow. Addressing a public event in Bijnor, he said the cow is deeply revered in Sanatan tradition and described it as "Gau Mata", adding that it is not merely an animal but a symbol of cultural and religious faith for many. He further stated that, in his view, the cow holds the status of "Rashtra Mata" and does not require formal recognition. The Chief Minister criticised remarks made by some clerics, alleging inconsistency in their position on cow protection and cow slaughter. He also referred to broader issues of social harmony, law and order, and the rehabilitation of displaced families, highlighting government efforts in providing land ownership certificates to thousands of beneficiaries.



Gen Z Chooses Short Trips

New Delhi, June 1: A growing number of Gen Z travellers are shifting away from long annual vacations and opting instead for multiple short getaways, according to a recent Airbnb report. The study found that seven in 10 Gen Z travellers in India prefer taking three short trips rather than one long holiday. It also revealed that 87% of young travellers prefer trips lasting less than a week, highlighting a clear trend toward quick and frequent travel.

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EDITORIAL

Deepfakes vs Electoral Trust

As artificial intelligence becomes more advanced and widely accessible, one of its most politically sensitive consequences is the rise of deepfakes—synthetic audio, video, and images that can convincingly mimic real people. In the context of elections, this technology is not just a technological curiosity; it is becoming a direct challenge to democratic trust itself. Traditionally, voters relied on a combination of news media, public speeches, and party communication to form opinions. Today, a single manipulated video circulating on social media can potentially alter perceptions within hours. A leader can be made to appear to say something inflammatory, or a fake “leaked” audio clip can be used to influence public sentiment just before voting. The speed of digital dissemination often outpaces fact-checking, creating a dangerous information gap.

The real threat of deepfakes is not only misinformation, but erosion of trust. When voters can no longer distinguish between authentic and fabricated content, even genuine evidence begins to lose its credibility. This phenomenon, often described as the “liar’s dividend,” allows real wrongdoing to be dismissed as fake and fake content to be accepted as real, depending on convenience. Elections in India and across the world are particularly vulnerable due to high social media penetration and multilingual digital ecosystems. Content can be rapidly localized, forwarded through encrypted messaging platforms, and amplified by partisan networks. In such an environment, even corrective statements often fail to achieve equal reach. Regulation and detection technologies are evolving, but they are still catching up.

AI-based watermarking, content authentication systems, and stricter platform accountability are being discussed, yet enforcement remains inconsistent. Moreover, the challenge is not purely technical—it is also ethical and political. Excessive regulation risks censorship concerns, while weak regulation risks democratic distortion. Ultimately, the future of electoral trust will depend on a combination of technology, law, and public awareness. Media literacy must become a civic priority, and citizens must learn to question viral content before accepting it as truth. In the age of AI-generated reality, democracy will depend not only on the right to information, but also on the ability to verify it.

When Will Indian Farmers Become Kings?



Even though India is repeatedly described as an agricultural nation, the reality of farmers' lives still remains harsh and uncertain. The foundation of the Indian economy rests on the hard work of farmers, yet millions of farming families continue to live under the burden of debt, losses, insecurity, and emotional distress. India is one of the largest agriculture-based nations in the world. In 1951, nearly 72% of the country's population depended on agriculture for survival. By 1991, that figure declined to 64%. Even in 2026, around 55% of the population still depends directly or indirectly on agriculture. However, agriculture contributes only around 15% to 17% of the country's GDP. This clearly reflects the economic backwardness of the farming community despite its enormous contribution to national survival. India's geographical area is about 328 million hectares, out of which nearly 140 million hectares are used for cultivation. Around 86% of Indian farmers own less than 2 hectares of land. These are categorized as small and marginal farmers. Though large landowners exist in smaller numbers, it is these tiny farmers who sustain the nation's food security. In 1970, the average landholding per farming family was about 2.3 hectares. By 2025, it had fallen to nearly 1.08 hectares due to family divisions, urban expansion, industrial growth, and shrinking agricultural land. The reduction in cultivable land has made farming increasingly difficult for rural households. There was a time when farming families enjoyed respect and dignity in village society. Over the decades, however, agriculture has become a crisis-ridden occupation because of rising costs, falling incomes, and climate instability. The prices of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, diesel, and electricity have increased continuously. In 2005, a bag of urea cost around ₹270, whereas by 2025 the prices of several fertilizers had risen by 2 to 4 times. Diesel prices also climbed sharply, making cultivation more expensive. Yet the prices received by farmers for their produce have not increased proportionately. As a result, farm incomes have steadily weakened. Agriculture remains completely dependent on nature, making farmers highly vulnerable. Droughts, floods, extreme heat, unseasonal rains, and climate change are destroying crops across the country. In 2022, floods in Assam damaged lakhs of hectares of farmland. In 2023, unseasonal rains in Telangana and Maharashtra severely affected paddy crops. In 2024, extreme heatwaves in northern India reduced wheat yields. Because of climate unpredictability, farmers no longer know whether they will earn profits or suffer devastating losses in a given season.

One of the biggest problems faced by farmers is the ab-

sence of remunerative prices for crops. Although the government announces Minimum Support Prices (MSP), not every farmer benefits from them. Studies suggest that only around 6% to 8% of farmers directly receive MSP benefits. The remaining majority are forced to sell their produce at lower prices to middlemen. In 2023, tomato prices in some regions crashed to ₹2 per kilogram. Onion farmers suffered massive losses in 2018. Cotton farmers continue to face uncertainty due to fluctuations in global markets. A farmer may sell tomatoes for ₹5 per kilogram at the farm gate, while consumers in cities pay ₹40 for the same produce. The farmer receives only a tiny share of the final market value. (States such as Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh account for a significant share of these tragedies. Maharashtra's Vidarbha region has become symbolic of agrarian distress. In Telangana, cotton farmer suicides have shattered thousands of families. Debt remains the leading cause of farmer suicides. Crop failures, poor prices, climate disasters, high-interest loans, family responsibilities, and market instability push farmers into hopelessness. In many cases, farmers are unable even to recover the basic cultivation costs. A farmer's suicide is not merely the death of an individual; it represents the collapse of an entire family's future. The living conditions of rural farming families continue to face serious challenges. Many villages still lack quality education, healthcare, drinking water, roads, storage infrastructure, and other essential facilities. In 2016, the average monthly income of a farming household was only ₹8,931. By 2023, it increased to around ₹13,500, but inflation and rising input costs consumed most of the gains. Agricultural expenses increased by more than 60% during the same period. Because agriculture no longer guarantees stable income, younger generations are moving away from farming and migrating to cities in search of employment. The contribution of Indian farmers to global food production is enormous. In 1965, India produced only around 72 million tonnes of food grains. By 2025, food grain production crossed 330 million tonnes. India emerged as one of the world's leading producers of rice, wheat, milk, fruits, and vegetables. Yet ironically, the very farmers who feed the nation often struggle to access proper nutrition themselves. This contradiction exposes deep flaws in agricultural policy and rural develop-



Dr. Rakkireddy Adireddy
- Kakatiya University

connected to agriculture died by suicide in a single year. Among them, 4,633 were farmers or cultivators, while 5,913 were agricultural laborers. This means nearly 28 to 29 people linked to agriculture died by suicide every day. Another interpretation suggests that almost one farmer or farm laborer dies by suicide every hour in India. In 2019, India recorded 10,281 suicides related to agriculture. The number increased to 10,677 in 2020, 10,881 in 2021, and 11,290 in 2022. The year 2022 emerged as one of the worst periods in recent times. In 2023, 10,786 cases were reported. Though the number declined slightly to 10,546 in 2024, experts argue that the crisis remains severe and unresolved. State-wise data shows Maharashtra continuing at the top in farmer suicides. In 2024, Maharashtra reported 3,824 suicides linked to agriculture. Karnataka recorded 2,971 cases, Madhya Pradesh 835, Andhra Pradesh 780, and Tamil Nadu 503. Regions cultivating cash crops such as cotton and sugarcane tend to experience higher economic pressure. Debt is the leading cause behind most farmer suicides. Rising cultivation expenses force farmers to depend on loans from banks, private lenders, and microfinance institutions. When crops fail, repayment becomes impossible. High-interest debt traps push farmers into unbearable stress, often leading to tragic outcomes. Lack of remunerative prices for crops is another major factor. Sudden price crashes in tomatoes, onions, cotton, and chilies destroy farmer incomes. In 2023, tomato prices fell to ₹2 per kilogram in several regions. Farmers were seen dumping produce on roads in protest. Onion farmers in Maharashtra and cotton farmers in Telangana suffered heavy losses. Climate change has intensified the agrarian crisis. Droughts, floods, heatwaves, and unseasonal rains repeatedly destroy crops. Crop insurance systems exist, yet compensation is often delayed. Farmers who lose everything in natural disasters struggle to recover financially or emotionally. Middlemen dominate agricultural markets, reducing farmers' incomes drastically. Produce purchased cheaply from farmers is sold at several times higher prices in

Farmer Suicides in India – A National Tragedy

Farmer suicides have become one of the most painful and persistent social crises in India over the past several decades. Although India is among the world's largest agricultural nations, the lives of farmers remain deeply insecure. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), more than 300,000 farmers and agricultural laborers died by suicide between 1995 and 2024. Independent studies estimate the actual number may exceed 380,000. In Maharashtra alone, over 60,000 farmer suicides were reported between 1995 and 2013. According to NCRB statistics for 2024, 10,546 individuals

connected to agriculture died by suicide in a single year. Among them, 4,633 were farmers or cultivators, while 5,913 were agricultural laborers. This means nearly 28 to 29 people linked to agriculture died by suicide every day. Another interpretation suggests that almost one farmer or farm laborer dies by suicide every hour in India. In 2019, India recorded 10,281 suicides related to agriculture. The number increased to 10,677 in 2020, 10,881 in 2021, and 11,290 in 2022. The year 2022 emerged as one of the worst periods in recent times. In 2023, 10,786 cases were reported. Though the number declined slightly to 10,546 in 2024, experts argue that the crisis remains severe and unresolved. State-wise data shows Maharashtra continuing at the top in farmer suicides. In 2024, Maharashtra reported 3,824 suicides linked to agriculture. Karnataka recorded 2,971 cases, Madhya Pradesh 835, Andhra Pradesh 780, and Tamil Nadu 503. Regions cultivating cash crops such as cotton and sugarcane tend to experience higher economic pressure. Debt is the leading cause behind most farmer suicides. Rising cultivation expenses force farmers to depend on loans from banks, private lenders, and microfinance institutions. When crops fail, repayment becomes impossible. High-interest debt traps push farmers into unbearable stress, often leading to tragic outcomes. Lack of remunerative prices for crops is another major factor. Sudden price crashes in tomatoes, onions, cotton, and chilies destroy farmer incomes. In 2023, tomato prices fell to ₹2 per kilogram in several regions. Farmers were seen dumping produce on roads in protest. Onion farmers in Maharashtra and cotton farmers in Telangana suffered heavy losses. Climate change has intensified the agrarian crisis. Droughts, floods, heatwaves, and unseasonal rains repeatedly destroy crops. Crop insurance systems exist, yet compensation is often delayed. Farmers who lose everything in natural disasters struggle to recover financially or emotionally. Middlemen dominate agricultural markets, reducing farmers' incomes drastically. Produce purchased cheaply from farmers is sold at several times higher prices in

urban markets. Consumers pay more, yet farmers earn less. Only a small percentage of farmers directly benefit from MSP systems, while most remain dependent on private traders. Family burdens also contribute significantly to psychological stress. Educational expenses, healthcare costs, marriages, and social obligations place enormous pressure on farming households. Many farmers experience severe depression, while rural mental health support systems remain extremely weak. Experts believe farmer suicides are not merely individual tragedies but reflections of deep structural inequalities within the economy. A nation that depends on farmers for food cannot claim true development while its farmers continue to die in despair. Fair prices, low-interest credit, effective insurance systems, strong rural infrastructure, mental health support, and sustainable agricultural policies are essential to reducing this tragedy.

The Larger Crisis Behind Farmer Suicides

Farmer suicides in India are not merely economic incidents; they are deeply connected with social, psychological, political, and environmental realities. Whenever a farmer dies by suicide, the impact extends far beyond one individual. Entire families are pushed into darkness. Widows inherit debts, children discontinue education, and many families migrate to cities for survival as laborers. Studies show that small and marginal farmers are the most vulnerable. Farmers owning less than 2 hectares of land struggle to withstand rising cultivation costs. Since formal banking support often fails to reach them on time, many depend on private moneylenders charging interest rates as high as 3% to 5% per month. If crops fail, debts spiral out of control. Corporate influence in agriculture has also reshaped farming economics. From seeds to fertilizers to marketing systems, large corporations increasingly dominate the agricultural sector. Hybrid seeds must be purchased every season, increasing costs for farmers. Earlier, farmers could save seeds from previous harvests, but modern commercial agriculture has weakened such traditional practices. Cotton farmers in regions such as Vidarbha, Telangana, and Rayalaseema face severe distress. Bt cotton seeds, costly pesticides, and unstable international market prices have created massive financial pressure. In some cases, farmers invest over ₹100,000 in cultivation but fail to recover even ₹60,000 from sales. Women play a critical role in Indian agriculture, yet they continue to remain invisible within policy frameworks. Nearly 60% of agricultural labor is performed by women, but land ownership, credit access, and government benefits largely remain in male names. After a farmer's death, women often carry the burden of sustaining the family without adequate support. Crop insurance programs frequently fail to protect farmers effectively. Compensation is often delayed for months, while insurance companies sometimes reject claims citing technical reasons. Farmers suffering immediate losses are forced back into debt before assistance arrives.



RCB Win, Romance

Bollywood actress Anushka Sharma celebrated Royal Challengers Bengaluru's historic IPL 2026 title win with a touching tribute to her husband, Virat Kohli. After RCB secured their second IPL championship by defeating Gujarat Titans by five wickets in the final at Narendra Modi Stadium, Anushka shared a heartfelt photograph on Instagram. The image showed her kissing Kohli on the forehead while he proudly held the IPL trophy. Accompanying the picture, Anushka posted simple yet

meaningful emojis—a crossed-fingers emoji, a red heart, and folded hands—expressing her joy and gratitude. Earlier, she had shared another celebratory post featuring Kohli with the caption: "One felt nice, you did it twice," referring to RCB's second IPL title. Anushka was visibly thrilled during the final match. Videos circulating on social media captured her cheering enthusiastically from the stands as Kohli guided RCB to victory. She was also seen exchanging flying kisses with him after the win. An-

other viral clip showed the couple dancing together during the team's post-match celebrations, delighting fans with their chemistry. Anushka and Virat first met in 2013 while filming a commercial and married in an intimate ceremony in Italy in 2017. The couple are parents to two children—daughter Vamika and son Akaay. RCB's title victory marked another memorable chapter in Kohli's illustrious cricket career, with Anushka standing proudly by his side to celebrate the achievement.

ABD Hails Kohli Masterclass

Former Royal Challengers Bengaluru star AB de Villiers heaped praise on Virat Kohli for his unbeaten 75 in the IPL 2026 final, saying the veteran batter once again showcased his unmatched ability to pace a run chase. Kohli's 42-ball knock, studded with nine fours and three sixes, guided RCB to a five-wicket victory over Gujarat Titans at the Narendra Modi Stadium. De Villiers said Kohli's presence at the crease brings calmness and confidence to the batting line-up, especially in high-pressure matches. He felt Gujarat Titans allowed Kohli to settle early by bowling too many deliveries in his scoring zones, enabling the RCB stalwart to build momentum and take control of the chase. The former South African captain added that once Kohli got going, the contest became one-sided. He described it as fitting that Kohli remained unbeaten and struck the winning runs, highlighting his ability to manage a chase from start to finish. De Villiers noted that removing Kohli from RCB's batting order would have made the final look very different. AB De Villiers also praised RCB's overall composure during the IPL 2026 season, saying the team carried a quiet confidence after winning the title in 2025. According to him, the RCB franchise looked more relaxed and assured this year, ultimately producing a remarkable achievement by securing back-to-back IPL championships.

RCB Skip Bengaluru Visit



Fresh off their second consecutive IPL title, Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) will not be returning to Bengaluru immediately for celebrations. Director of Cricket Mo Bobat revealed that players and support staff will head directly to their homes or holiday destinations from Ahmedabad. Bobat himself is travelling back to the UK, while captain Rajat Patidar and other team members are set to spend time with their families. RCB's remarkable transformation from perennial underachievers to back-to-back champions has been driven by a balanced and evidence-based approach to team building and match preparation. Bobat highlighted the franchise's reliance on data, analytics and expert judgment under the leadership of head coach Andy Flower, analyst Freddie Wilde and mentor Dinesh Karthik. He stressed that while data is important, decisions are made by combining statistics with crick-

eting insight and experience. A key contributor to this success has been lead analyst Freddie Wilde, whose work in squad planning, auction strategy and match analysis has played a significant role in RCB's rise. Bobat praised Wilde's ability to bridge the gap between analytics and coaching, helping players and staff make informed decisions throughout the season. The franchise's methodical approach has helped shed the long-standing "nearly men" tag associated with RCB. Captain Rajat Patidar credited Wilde for helping improve his game, particularly against spin bowling. Patidar revealed that he regularly consulted Wilde for video analysis of bowlers like Rashid Khan, Sunil Narine and Varun Chakaravarty to better understand their variations. The results were evident in IPL 2026, as Patidar significantly improved his performances against pace and spin, becoming one of RCB's key match-winners during their successful title defence.

BCCI Backs Sooryavanshi

The BCCI has signalled strong support for teenage batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi after his record-breaking IPL 2026 season. The 15-year-old, representing Rajasthan Royals, finished as the tournament's highest run-scorer with 776 runs at a staggering strike rate of 237.30, becoming the youngest ever Orange Cap winner in IPL history. He surpassed Sai Sudharsan's earlier record by a wide margin. BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia praised the young batter, calling him a "wonderful player with a bright future" and assured that the board would "do everything" to help him reach the highest level of cricket. Speaking after the IPL final in Ahmedabad, Saikia also congratulated Royal Challengers Bengaluru for their title success.

Messi Statue Dismantled in Kolkata



A 70-foot statue of Argentine football legend Lionel Messi in Kolkata's Lake Town area was removed on Monday by the West Bengal Public Works Department (PWD) after engineers raised serious safety concerns following recent storm-related damage. Officials said the structure had shown signs of instability in strong winds, prompting continuous monitoring in the days leading up to its removal. As a precaution, ropes were earlier tied around the statue to prevent any risk of collapse in the busy locality near the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass. The statue was carefully dismantled using a hydraulic crane and transported on a trailer under official supervision. Authorities confirmed that the operation was completed without damage, and the structure has been placed under PWD custody for further technical evaluation. Installed in 2025, the monument was part of a high-profile initiative by the then state government and was unveiled during Messi's visit to the city in December 2025 as part of the "G.O.A.T India" promotional tour.

Zee Secures FIFA Rights

Zee Entertainment Enterprises Limited (ZEEL) has secured the Indian media rights for the FIFA World Cup 2026 and FIFA World Cup 2030, along with several major FIFA tournaments through 2034. As part of its expansion into sports broadcasting, the company has also announced the launch of four dedicated sports channels — Unite8 Sports 1, Unite8 Sports 1 HD, Unite8 Sports 2 and Unite8 Sports 2 HD. The FIFA World Cup 2026, scheduled from June 11 to July 19, will be broadcast across the newly launched sports channels and streamed live on Zee5. The company said viewers will be able to enjoy the matches in multiple languages, ensuring a wider reach among football fans across the country. The tournament, to be hosted jointly by the



United States, Mexico and Canada, will feature 48 teams and a record 104 matches. Apart from the men's World Cups in 2026 and 2030, Zee has also acquired rights for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2027, FIFA Intercontinental Cup, FIFA U-17 and U-20 World Cups, and FIFA Futsal World Cups up to 2034. The partnership makes Zee a major destination for international football content in

India. ZEEL CEO Punit Goenka said football has immense growth potential in India and that the investment reflects the company's long-term vision for sports broadcasting. FIFA Chief Business Officer Romy Gai described India as a strategically important market with a young and passionate audience, expressing confidence that Zee's extensive television and digital network will help expand.

Serena Makes Comeback

Tennis legend Serena Williams is set to make a sensational return to professional tennis at the age of 44. The 23-time Grand Slam champion will compete at next week's HSBC Championships at Queen's Club, marking her first appearance on the professional circuit since the 2022 US Open. Williams, who stepped away from the sport in 2022 after describing her decision as an "evolution away" from tennis rather than retirement, has received a wild-card entry in the women's doubles event. She is expected to partner with rising Canadian star Victoria Mboko for the prestigious grass-court tournament. The announce-

ment has sparked speculation about a possible return to The Championships, Wimbledon later this month. While it remains unclear whether Williams intends to compete only in doubles or pursue a singles comeback, her recent registration with the International Tennis Integrity Agency's testing programme had already fuelled rumours of a return. Widely regarded as one of the greatest players in tennis history, Williams won 23 Grand Slam singles titles during her illustrious career. Her last major triumph came at the 2017 Australian Open while she was pregnant. Reflecting on her comeback, Williams said Queen's Club



felt like the perfect place to begin a new chapter, adding that grass courts had given her some of the most memorable moments of her career and that she was excited to compete once again on one of tennis' most iconic stages.

Pink Ball Trial Approved

The International Cricket Council (International Cricket Council) has approved a new trial in Test cricket that could see the traditional red ball temporarily replaced by a pink ball when bad light disrupts play. The decision was taken during the ICC Board's annual meeting held in Ahmedabad. Under the proposed trial, Test matches will begin with the red ball as usual. However, if deteriorating light conditions threaten to reduce playing time, and both participating teams have agreed in advance, officials may switch to a pink ball and continue play under floodlights. The aim is to ensure that scheduled overs are not lost due to poor visibility. For instance, if a significant portion of the day's play is completed but fading light prevents the remaining overs from being bowled, those overs can be finished using the pink ball under artificial lights, provided there is mutual consent between the teams. The ICC said the initiative is designed to "maximise play in case of anticipated bad light" while preserving the full quota of overs in Test cricket. In addition to this experimental rule, the ICC has also approved the use of Hawk-Eye technology for reviewing and reporting suspected illegal bowling actions. It further announced collaboration with the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) on research into advanced lighting systems aimed at reducing stoppages caused by poor visibility. According to reports carried by WION, the move is part of broader efforts to modernise Test cricket and minimise interruptions without altering its traditional structure.

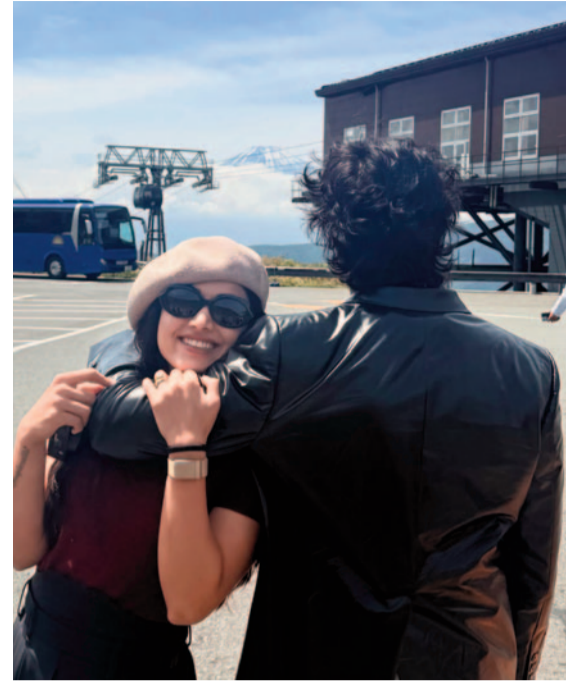




Sonal Chauhan

Rashmika Gives Glimpse of Japan Trip

Actress Rashmika Mandanna delighted fans by sharing glimpses from her recent Japan vacation with husband Vijay Deverakonda. Posting a series of photographs and videos on social media, Rashmika captioned the update, "Japan was extra fun this year!" The post featured travel experiences, food adventures, scenic locations and candid moments from the couple's getaway. The photo collection included Rashmika posing in a floral yukata-inspired outfit, a mirror selfie in a floral dress, and visuals from an immersive art installation featuring glowing mushroom-like structures. She also shared clips of Japanese cuisine being prepared and snapshots of local delicacies, including fluffy Japanese pancakes and matcha beverages. One of the most talked-about pictures showed Vijay Deverakonda strolling through Tokyo at night, while another captured a candid moment of the couple against the backdrop of the iconic Mount Fuji. The pair first worked together in the films Geetha Govindam and Dear Comrade. Their off-screen chemistry has long been a subject of discussion among fans. On the professional front, Rashmika and Vijay are expected to reunite on screen in Ranabaali, marking their third collaboration after their previous successful ventures.



Sreeleela Calls for Women-Friendly Sets

Actress Sreeleela has highlighted the challenges faced by women working on film crews during outdoor shoots and called for greater support and basic amenities for them. Reflecting on her recent shooting experience in difficult conditions, Sreeleela pointed out that while lead actors often have access to vanity vans and private facilities, many women crew members, including assistant directors and dancers, do not enjoy the same privileges. She said actresses should extend the use of their facilities to other women on set whenever needed, describing it as a matter of basic humanity and responsibility. Supporting her views, veteran actress Hema Malini recalled the hardships faced during the shooting of the iconic movie Sholay. She said there were no vanity vans, hotels, or even proper restrooms during outdoor schedules at the time. Hema Malini agreed that sharing restroom and vanity van facilities with women crew members is the decent and compassionate thing to do, especially in locations where basic amenities are unavailable.



Nikhil's Warrior Transformation

The makers of Swayambhu marked the birthday of actor Nikhil Sidhartha by releasing a special behind-the-scenes video that showcases the extensive effort and dedication he invested in preparing for the ambitious period action drama. The video offers fans an exclusive look at the transformation that turned the actor into a powerful on-screen warrior. The footage begins with Nikhil undergoing intensive training in Vietnam, where he mastered sword fighting, staff combat and various martial arts techniques under expert guidance. Despite suffering a hamstring injury during the process, the actor contin-

ued his rigorous training schedule, demonstrating remarkable determination and commitment to the role. As the training progressed, Nikhil took on increasingly demanding challenges, including wire work, aerial stunts, acrobatic flips and complex combat choreography. The video highlights months of preparation that enabled him to perform physically demanding action sequences and bring authenticity to the character. The final portion of the making video unveils glimpses from Swayambhu, featuring Nikhil in elaborate armour, charging into battle, leaping through flames and participating in large-scale action sequences. Directed



by Bharat Krishnamachari and produced by Pixel Studios, the film is currently in the final stages of post-production. The makers believe the video reflects the scale, dedication and craftsmanship behind the much-awaited historical spectacle.



Sonali Bendre Returns with 'Raakh'

Actress Sonali Bendre is set to make a comeback with the upcoming web series Raakh, a thriller set in late-1970s Delhi, a period remembered for its relatively carefree and secure social environment. Speaking about her return, Sonali said the emotional depth of the story attracted her to the project. "What drew me to Raakh was how layered and emotionally complex it is. While it unfolds as a thriller, at its heart it is a deeply human story," she said. In the series, Sonali portrays Mona Arora, a griev-

ing and emotionally burdened mother. According to the actress, the role allowed her to explore new dimensions of performance. "The series gave me the opportunity to explore emotional spaces I hadn't tapped into before as an actor. Mona is a character who carries both vulnerability and quiet strength, and portraying her was incredibly rewarding," she said. Sonali also expressed hope that audiences would connect with the story and its emotional journey in the same way the cast and crew did while creating it.

IMAX Returns Hyderabad

Cinema lovers in Hyderabad have a reason to celebrate as an IMAX screen is officially set to return to the city. The announcement has generated excitement among movie enthusiasts, who have long awaited the comeback of the premium large-format viewing experience. The development gained momentum after the family of film exhibitor Suniel Narang signed an agreement with IMAX Corporation. A photograph released on the occasion captured the signing ceremony, marking a significant step toward bringing IMAX technology back to Hyderabad. The project is being undertaken through a collaboration involving Mahesh Babu, Asian Cinemas and Rana Daggubati. The new IMAX screen will be established at AMB Cinemas Victory, formerly known as Sudarshan 70mm, located near RTC X Roads, one of the city's most iconic movie destinations. Construction and renovation works are expected to be completed by December 2026, when the IMAX screen is likely to be inaugurated. Reports also suggest that another IMAX screen may be planned for Hyderabad in the future, further strengthening the city's reputation as one of India's premier destinations for cinema lovers.



Peddi Bookings Open in AP

Advance bookings for Peddi, starring Ram Charan, have officially opened across Andhra Pradesh, generating significant excitement among fans ahead of the film's release. Ticket sales were initially launched through the District App before becoming available on BookMyShow. Bookings are currently open in major centres including Visakhapatnam, Nellore, Guntur, Ongole and Anantapur. The remaining regions in the state are expected to follow shortly, allowing fans across Andhra Pradesh to secure their tickets for the much-anticipated sports action drama. The response has been encouraging from the outset, with Peddi reportedly beginning to trend on BookMyShow within minutes of ticket sales going live. The early momentum reflects the strong anticipation surrounding the film and its lead star. Directed by Buchi Babu Sana, Peddi stars Janhvi Kapoor as the female lead, while music is composed by A. R. Rahman. The film is scheduled to have paid premiere shows on June 3, ahead of its worldwide theatrical release on June 4. Meanwhile, ticket bookings in Telangana are expected to begin after the government issues an order regarding the proposed ticket price hike.