



Hardik Pandya Eyes ODI Comeback After Injury Layoff: Clears Fitness Test, Delivers 10-Over Spell in Boost for India

Benaluru, 9 June : Indian all-rounder Hardik Pandya is set for a return to international cricket after successfully clearing a key fitness assessment at the BCCI Centre of Excellence, marking a major boost for India ahead of their upcoming ODI series. Pandya, who has been recovering from a recent injury setback, reportedly completed a rigorous workload test where he bowled a full 10-over spell without discomf—an important milestone in his return-to-play roadmap.

According to team sources, the medical and coaching staff were satisfied with both his fitness levels and bowling endurance, clearing him for selection consideration in the ODI squad for the upcoming series. Big Relief for Team India's team management



had been closely monitoring Pandya's recovery, given his crucial role as a seam-bowling all-rounder in white-ball cricket. His ability to contribute in both innings is seen as vital for balance in the side, especially with a packed international calendar ahead.

Recent updates from the team camp indicated optimism about his availability, with selectors already includ-

ing him in the broader ODI plans pending final clearance. Return After Injury Concerns Pandya's injury layoff had raised concerns about his long-term workload management, with the team being cautious about his return to bowling duties.

The fact that he has now bowled a sustained 10-over spell in controlled conditions is being viewed internally as

a strong signal of readiness for competitive cricket. Selection Boost Ahead of Series: The upcoming ODI series, beginning later this month, is expected to feature a full-strength Indian squad, and Pandya's return would provide a significant boost to both the bowling attack and middle-order batting depth. Team insiders suggest that while final confirmation will come closer to the squad announcement, Pandya is now firmly in contention for immediate selection.

What This Means Going Forward: If he maintains fitness, Pandya is likely to be managed carefully through rotation policies, especially given his history of injuries and heavy workload demands across formats. For now, though, India will be relieved to see one of their most impactful match-winners back

in full bowling rhythm—just in time for an important international assignment.

The incident has triggered widespread debate in international football circles, with critics pointing to the broader implications of restrictive immigration policies reportedly linked to former U.S. President Donald Trump. According to reports, Artan—considered one of Africa's top referees and selected among the 52 match officials for the upcoming World Cup—was sent back despite carrying a diplomatic passport arranged through Somali authorities.

Artan, who has been serving as a FIFA-listed referee since 2018, was expected to make history as the first official from Somalia to participate in a World Cup tournament in an officiating role.

D Gukesh Can Take Inspiration From R Praggnanandhaa's Perseverance And Script Turnaround: Viswanathan Anand

Mumbai, 9 June : Legendary Viswanathan Anand hailed R Praggnanandhaa's highly competitive style of play, and urged the struggling world champion D Gukesh to take a leaf out of the book of newly-crowned Norway Chess champion to script a turnaround. Praggnanandhaa recently became the first Indian chess player to annex the Norway title, but Gukesh finished sixth in the tournament.

"I am delighted that Praggnanandhaa has won Norway Chess in an impressive style. I am very happy at the spectacular turnaround (he made) in the last four rounds. He is playing the game with some amazingly impressive concepts and style," Anand, told PTI. Anand advised Gukesh, who is scheduled to face Jakovhir Sindarov in his title defence later this year, to take "inspiration" from Praggnanandhaa.

"At this moment, Praggnanandhaa is playing better than Gukesh but anything can change. I think there will be form swings repeatedly. Gukesh seems to be stuck a bit. I think he can take inspiration from Pragg.

The five-time world champion said Praggnanandhaa is always "ready for a fight" on the board, and the attitude helps him produce some interesting concepts while playing. "Actually, it's the same Pragg in the last one and half years. Sometimes he plays hard and comes out with interesting concepts, and he is always ready for a fight. The results might not always work out.

"If We Can Play in Pakistan, Why Not India?" Bangladesh T20I Captain Litton Das Reignites T20 World Cup Row

Mumbai, 9 June : The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) triggered huge controversy during the 2026 T20 World Cup after it decided not to send its team to India. The Board cited "security reasons" for taking the step. The move from the BCB had come after Kolkata Knight Riders released Bangladeshi player Mustafizur Rahman from their squad ahead of the Indian Premier League 2026.

The IPL franchise took the decision on the instructions of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). After this, the BCB tried getting its T20 World Cup matches shifted out of India. However, the International Cricket Council (ICC) found no credible security threats in its inspection ahead of the world event. It also gave the



BCB assurances, but the country eventually opted to pull out of the event.

As Bangladesh withdrew, the ICC replaced the team with Scotland for the event, which was jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka. Bangladesh T20I captain Litton Das has reignited the pull-out controversy with

his latest remarks on the issue. While speaking to Bangladeshi outlet Prothom Alo, he revealed details of the meeting that took place and the stance of the Bangladesh players.

Litton said that the players wanted to play the tournament in India and added that they cited the challenging sit-

uations when they tour Pakistan. "They told us there was no safety in that country (India). We told them, we have played in Pakistan too. They used to stand outside the room with guns. What can be more dangerous than that?" Litton said.

"If we can play in Pakistan, why not India?" he added. Earlier, in January, when the whole row erupted, Das had remained non-committal over revealing his opinion on the issue. "Are you sure we are going to play the World Cup? From my side, I am uncertain; everyone is uncertain. I think the whole of Bangladesh is uncertain at this moment. No answer. I understand what question you are going to ask. That is not safe for me. No answer," said Litton.

From Donald Trump To Lionel Messi, Iran To ICE, Politics and Sport Collide At Biggest World Cup In History

Mumbai, 9 June : The wait is over for the biggest World Cup ever with 48 teams, 104 matches, three host nations and a slew of questions and controversies swirling around the highly scrutinized event that will last for nearly six weeks. The tournament kicks off in Mexico City on Thursday amid concerns about soaring ticket prices and political tensions. There are unprecedented logistical challenges to staging a three-country event across the United States, Canada and Mexico. All of that is separate from the on-field drama that will play out through the July 19 final as soccer's top stars battle for the sport's biggest prize.

"This will be the biggest, the most inclusive, the greatest FIFA World Cup ever," declared FIFA president Gianni Infantino, who has predicted 7 million fans will pack the stadiums and 6 billion more will be watching from afar. "FIFA is the official happiness provider for humanity."

That remains to be seen. The tour-

namment kicks off in the U.S., which hosts the majority of the games, at a time of rising inflation, the war in Iran and the Trump administration's policies regarding immigration.

President Trump has been a big supporter of the World Cup coming to America, repeatedly hosting Infantino at the White House and speaking in glowing terms about the tournament. Infantino has gone to great lengths to strengthen those relations, awarding Trump the inaugural FIFA Peace Prize last year after he was overlooked for the Nobel Prize. There was also the Tiffany-crafted golden Club World Cup trophy, which sat in the Oval Office after America hosted the tournament last year. In an interview with broadcast DAZN, Trump said he asked FIFA when it would pick up the trophy. He was told: "You can have it forever in the Oval Office. We're making a new one."

Six months have passed since a German soccer federation official said it was time to consider a World Cup boy-

cott because of Trump's actions, which included threats to take control of Greenland. That was even before the United States and Israel launched military attacks on Iran, which has led to a surge in oil prices and destabilization in the Middle East.

It also raised questions about Iran's participation in the World Cup. The team moved its training base from Tuscon, Arizona, to Tijuana, Mexico, called out visa hassles just a week before it opens play and arrived wearing lapel pins highlighting the victims of a deadly missile strike on an elementary school at the start of the war. FIFA has come in for fierce criticism over its ticket pricing strategy for this World Cup, which was already considered an expensive trip.

When tickets went on general sale in January they ranged from \$140 to \$8,680. While some have since been made available for less, others have risen significantly -- up to \$32,970 for the final. Fans have accused the governing body of a "monumental betrayal".

Whistle Blown at the Border: FIFA Referee Denied Entry to U.S. Sparks World Cup Immigration Storm

Brazil, 9 June : Miami, June 2026: A major controversy has erupted ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup after a top international referee was denied entry into the United States and deported shortly after arriving at Miami International Airport, igniting debate over immigration enforcement and its impact on global sporting events.

The official, widely regarded as one of Africa's leading referees and selected for World Cup duty, was stopped by U.S. border authorities despite holding official tournament accreditation and travel documentation. After a brief inspection process, he was refused entry on grounds described as "routine vetting concerns" and

placed on a return flight via a third country.

The decision has immediately drawn international attention, with football stakeholders questioning how a FIFA-appointed official could be barred from entering the host nation just days before the tournament preparations intensify. The referee had been expected to participate in pre-tournament training sessions and officiating briefings, making his absence a logistical setback for organizers.

While U.S. officials have not disclosed detailed reasons for the denial, immigration scrutiny for travelers from certain regions has increased in recent years under policies originally associated

with stricter national security frameworks. Critics argue that such measures are now clashing with the global, inclusive nature of the World Cup, where officials, players, and fans from nearly every country are expected to participate without obstruction.

FIFA has responded cautiously, stating that accreditation for the tournament does not override sovereign immigration laws. However, behind the scenes, officials are reportedly seeking clarification from U.S. authorities, concerned about the precedent this may set for other participants.

The incident has also sparked criticism from sports analysts and human rights observers, who argue that in-

consistent visa enforcement could undermine the credibility of the tournament. Questions are now being raised about whether similar issues could affect players or fans from other countries as the event approaches.

Supporters of stricter immigration controls, however, maintain that border security procedures are necessary and apply universally, regardless of professional status or sporting affiliation. They argue that entry clearance decisions fall strictly under national jurisdiction and are not influenced by FIFA credentials.

Despite these explanations, the optics of a World Cup referee being turned away at the host nation's air-

port have already become a flashpoint. On social media, the phrase "red card at the airport" has gone viral, symbolizing what many see as a clash between global sport and domestic policy enforcement. As preparations continue for what is expected to be the largest World Cup in history, the incident has added an unexpected political undertone to the tournament narrative.

Whether this remains an isolated case or signals broader challenges for participants entering the United States remains to be seen. For now, one thing is clear: before the first whistle is even blown on the pitch, the rules off it are already under intense global scrutiny.



Romania's Jaqueline Cristian plays a return against China's Qinwen Zheng during their first round match at the Queen's Club tennis championships in London.

"Have Never Seen A Team Work So Hard": Head Coach Amol Muzumdar On India Women

Mumbai, 9 June : India head coach Amol Muzumdar believes the team's sustained success over the last few years has helped create a winning culture within the squad, as the reigning ICC Women's Cricket World Cup champions prepare for another shot at global silverware at the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026. India enter the tournament carrying the tag of world champions after ending their long wait for a senior women's ICC title by lifting the 50-over World Cup last year. The achievement has elevated expectations around the side, but Muzumdar insists his players are well-equipped to handle the pressures that come with competing on cricket's biggest stage.

"There's pressure in every tournament, and the players are used to it. They've been playing international cricket for some time now. But in a tournament like the World Cup, we'll be going in as ODI World Cup champions for the first time," Muzumdar told JioStar.

The coach believes India's recent success has not been built solely on major tournament performances but on a mindset developed through consistently treating every series as an important assignment.

"Winning is a habit.



Over the last three years, we've tried to win every series and to treat each one as extremely important, regardless of who we're playing against. Once you get into the habit of winning series, it becomes second nature," he said.

Under Harmanpreet Kaur and Muzumdar, India have established themselves as one of the most consistent teams in women's cricket, with the World Cup triumph serving as the culmination of years of progress. The focus now is on maintaining those standards and ensuring the team approaches the T20 World Cup with the same intensity that fueled their success in the 50-over format. Muzumdar also highlighted the commitment shown by the squad during its build-up to the tournament, praising the players' dedication during the preparation phase.

"The team has been

working very hard on this for the past month. I've never seen a team, irrespective of gender, work so hard and be so dedicated towards one goal," he mentioned.

While India will rely heavily on experienced campaigners such as Harmanpreet Kaur, Smriti Mandhana, Deepti Sharma and Jemimah Rodrigues, the squad also includes players who were not part of the World Cup-winning group. Integrating those players into the team's culture has been a key focus for the coaching staff.

Discussing the message delivered to squad members who missed out on last year's historic triumph, Muzumdar emphasised the importance of unity and knowledge-sharing within the dressing room.

"It's about bringing the youngsters together. This team has seniors who are always ready to share whatever experiences they have gained," Muzumdar stated.

How Alexander Zverev Beat Type 1 Diabetes To Become French Open Champion

Mumbai, 9 June : For Alexander Zverev, the French Open 2026 is perhaps the biggest milestone in a long career. At 29, Zverev is older than current generation's superstars Carlos Alcaraz (23) and Jannik Sinner (24). Despite being predicted to be the next superstar in world tennis, the top prize eluded the German tennis star for long. He entered the 2020 US Open final - his first Grand Slam title clash. His next Slam final happened in the 2025 Australian Open. Zverev had to wait one more year to taste his first Grand Slam - at the 2026 French Open.

Zverev's triumph is not just the validation of a passionate athlete, but it also holds significance for those who struggle with physical ailments. Zverev was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at four. He has been photographed taking insulin shots in between matches. A large part of his challenges involves balancing his performance with blood glucose management.

"When I was younger, not so much now, I remember going into the doctor's office and getting told that professional sports with this type of illness is impossible. Being 7-8 years old only, it was frus-

trating and it was upsetting, but luckily I was told by my parents, 'we will prove it otherwise.' They have achieved that. We have achieved that goal in a way," Zverev said in an interview.

"To be honest, if any parent walks into the doctor's office and if they are getting

intense learning process of what to do next. Terms like basal insulin and fast insulin became common for them. For Zverev, growing up with diabetes meant that his teenage years were different from others. "I did not go partying or went out at night after matches."



told that achieving their dreams with diabetes is not possible, well, there are perfect examples. Not only me, there are great examples in football and other industries."

Zverev's mother Irina said diabetes had a big role to play in him becoming a successful athlete: "Because of diabetes, he was always disciplined. He played a lot of sports. He used to run around a lot instead of getting injections."

When Zverev was diagnosed with diabetes, his family had to go through an

Zverev has maintained a monitoring system that helps him keep his glucose management at the optimum level. It includes planned nutrition, insulin management, and data-driven wearables.

In 2022, Zverev teamed up with his brother Mischa and parents, Irina and Alexander Zverev Sr., to launch the Alexander Zverev Foundation, which supports children with Type 1 diabetes around the world. With the French Open win, Zverev has taken a step towards inspiring generations