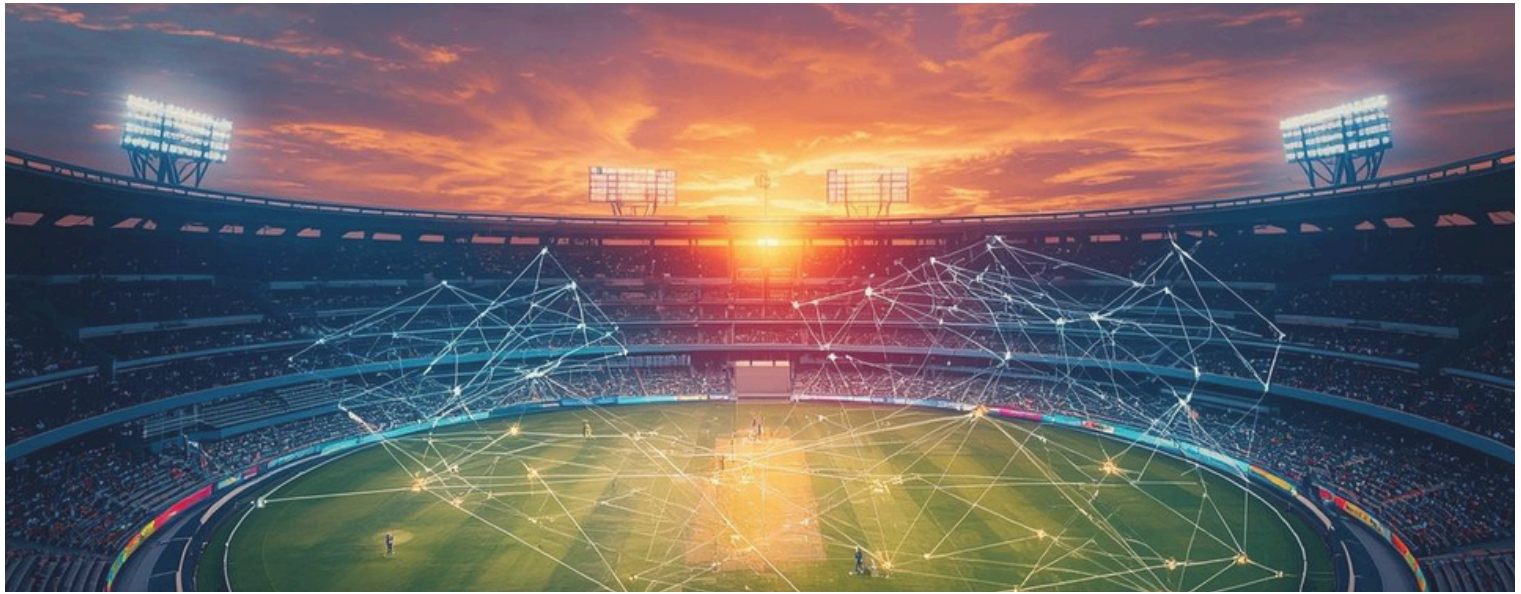




MARKING WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DAY 2026

IP AND SPORTS: READY, SET, INNOVATE!



April 2026

World Intellectual Property Day, celebrated annually on 26 April under the auspices of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), highlights the role of Intellectual Property (IP) in fostering innovation, creativity, and economic development.

The 2026 theme, “IP and Sports: Ready, Set, Innovate!”, explores how Intellectual Property supports modern sport through innovation, branding, media rights, and commercialisation.

For Sri Lanka, this theme is particularly resonant. As a cricket-loving nation with a deep sporting identity and a developing innovation ecosystem, Sri Lanka presents a strong local context through which to understand the commercial and legal relevance of IP in sport.

LEGAL AND COMMERCIAL SCOPE OF THE THEME

The 2026 theme reflects an integrated IP framework in which several rights operate simultaneously:

- Trademarks and Brand Identity – team and player identities, tournament names, sponsorship-linked branding, and merchandise.
- Copyright and Related Rights – broadcasts, streaming, highlights, commentary, and archival content.
- Patents and Technological Innovation – equipment, wearables, analytics systems, and training tools.
- Industrial Designs and Commercial Presentation – visual identity, apparel, and product aesthetics.

SRI LANKA: CURRENT INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DEVELOPMENTS

Sri Lanka's IP regime, principally governed by the Intellectual Property Act No. 36 of 2003, is undergoing progressive but measured modernisation.

- Legislative Reform and International Alignment

Steps have been initiated to amend the IP Act to facilitate accession to international trademark systems, including the Madrid framework.

- Digitization of IP Administration

Recent developments indicate a move toward improved accessibility and transparency, including public online search facilities, integration of records into internationally searchable databases, and development of online filing and payment systems.

- Copyright Reform (Under Review)

Sri Lanka is also reviewing its copyright framework, particularly in relation to digital content, royalty structures, collective management, and enforcement in the digital environment.

- Enforcement Trends

There is a growing emphasis on border enforcement and anti-counterfeit measures, complemented by the continued use of civil and criminal remedies.

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms, while not central to enforcement, are increasingly utilised in commercial IP disputes. In Sri Lanka, preliminary initiatives and policy-level discussions indicate a gradual move towards greater adoption of ADR in appropriate IP contexts.

- Digital and Data-Related Issues

Sri Lanka's broader legal environment is beginning to intersect more visibly with data governance, digital content ownership, and emerging questions relating to AI-generated material.

- Innovation-Led IP Development

A notable example is the "Scale Up Your IP" programme, implemented in collaboration with WIPO and Sri Lanka's innovation ecosystem, focusing on IP ownership structuring, branding, competitor analysis, and investor-oriented commercialisation.

- Emerging Sports-Technology Innovation

Sri Lanka is also beginning to see the emergence of sports-related technology ventures, including simulation-based and performance-oriented systems, engaging patents, copyright, industrial designs, and trademarks.

RELEVANCE OF THE THEME TO SRI LANKA: THE CASE OF CRICKET

Cricket provides the clearest and most accessible local lens through which to examine the 2026 theme.

- Copyright and Media Rights

Cricket's modern commercial structure relies heavily on broadcasting, streaming, highlights, and multi-platform distribution.

- Branding, Licensing, and Commercialization

Sri Lankan cricket also reflects broader commercial IP structures through team and tournament branding, franchise-based leagues such as the Sri Lanka Premier League, sponsorships, and merchandise.

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

Sri Lanka demonstrates a deep cultural connection to sport, clear examples of innovation in cricket, a growing media and commercial sports environment, and emerging integration of IP into innovation ecosystems.

At the same time, legislative reforms remain incomplete, administrative modernisation is still in progress, sports-tech innovation remains early-stage, and institutional coordination between law, policy, and commercial uptake continues to evolve.

Sri Lanka is therefore best understood as being in a transitional phase: the importance of IP in sport is already visible and commercially real, while the legal and institutional framework is still evolving to fully support that reality.

CONCLUSION

World IP Day 2026 highlights a broader principle of modern economic life: value increasingly lies not only in what is produced, but in what is created, identified, protected, and commercialised.

Sri Lanka's sporting ecosystem—particularly cricket—demonstrates how innovation, identity, content, and commercialisation interact within an IP framework.

Cricket reflects the historical and cultural foundation. Innovation-led IP development reflects the future direction.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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