

'Numbers don't mean anything': Messi after equalling World Cup goals record with hat-trick

New Delhi, June 17

Lionel Messi downplayed his latest record-breaking achievement after equalling Miroslav Klose's all-time FIFA World Cup goals record, insisting that statistics do not define greatness. The Argentina captain reached 16 World Cup goals with a stunning hat-trick in his side's 3-0 victory over Algeria in their FIFA World Cup 2026 opener, drawing level with former Germany striker Klose at the top of the tournament's scoring charts. Messi's treble also saw him move ahead of Brazil legend Ronaldo (15 goals) and extend his advantage over Germany's Gerd Muller and France forward Kylian Mbappe, who are both on 14 goals.

Despite adding another milestone to his illustrious career, the 38-year-old remained focused on the bigger picture rather than individual records. "It's an honour. Mbappe and Ronaldo are there, but those numbers don't mean anything. They're just statistics.



Ronaldo is one of the greatest and he's not in first place, so it's just one statistic," Messi was quoted as saying by Argentine newspaper La Nacion. Messi produced a master-class against Algeria, scoring three contrasting goals to seal Argentina's opening win. He

broke the deadlock with a powerful long-range strike after a quickly taken free-kick from Rodrigo De Paul, added a second from close range after reacting quickest to a rebound, and completed his hat-trick with a trademark curling finish in the 76th minute following

a dazzling run. The Argentine superstar was visibly emotional after scoring his first goal and later revealed that the reaction stemmed from personal challenges he had faced in recent days. "It was something unrelated to the game. I went through some difficult and complicated days. I'm grateful to the team and all my teammates.

They were always by my side and gave me the strength to get through this," Messi said. Reflecting on Argentina's performance, Messi praised the team's composure and maturity as the defending champions opened their title defence with a convincing victory. "We were well-positioned when we had the ball and managed the game very well. We had the experience of the last one and nobody gives anything away," he added. The victory puts Argentina in a strong position in Group J and gives Messi the opportunity to become the outright leading scorer in World Cup.

India beat Japan 2-1 to storm into Nations Cup semis

New Delhi, June 17

India booked their place in the semi-finals of the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup 2026 with a hard-fought 2-1 win over Japan in their second Pool A match in Auckland on Tuesday. Captain Salima Tete led from the front, while Lalremsiami scored the winner as India registered their second straight victory of the tournament. The match was also a memorable one for midfielder Jyoti, who made her 100th senior international appearance. The first half was closely contested, with both teams creating chances but unable to find a breakthrough before the interval. India finally broke the deadlock in the 33rd minute through a well-worked penalty corner. Navneet Kaur's strike was cleverly redirected by



Nikki Pradhan into the path of Salima, who made no mistake in putting the ball into the net. Japan responded quickly and drew level just two minutes later when Hiramitsu Ai converted a penalty corner to make it 1-1. With the contest finely balanced, Lalremsiami produced the decisive moment in the final quarter. In the 49th minute, Sushila Chanu delivered a precise pass into the circle and Lalremsiami was perfectly placed to deflect it

home and restore India's lead. India then defended resolutely in the closing stages to seal the victory and confirm a semi-final berth with one pool match still to play. The win takes India to the top of Pool A with six points from two matches after earlier defeating the USA. They will now face Uruguay in their final group-stage game on June 18, while Japan and the USA will battle for the remaining semi-final spot from the pool.

FIFA WC: Thomas Partey to miss Ghana opener after visa appeal fails amid sexual assault charges

New Delhi, June 17

Ghana have suffered a major setback ahead of their FIFA World Cup 2026 campaign, with midfielder Thomas Partey set to miss their Group L opener against Panama after a Canadian court dismissed his appeal against a visa refusal. The ruling means the former Arsenal midfielder remains unable to travel to Canada for Ghana's opening fixture, casting fresh uncertainty over his availability for the remainder of the tournament.

Court rejects request for urgent intervention. Judge Roger R. Lafreniere declined to fast-track the case or order immigration authorities to reconsider



their decision before Ghana's World Cup matches. According to the ruling, Partey failed to demonstrate a "serious issue" with the original visa refusal and did not satisfy the legal requirements necessary for extraordinary judicial relief. The judge also

noted that Partey had been informed of concerns related to multiple rape and sexual assault charges he faces in the United Kingdom but had not adequately addressed those concerns during the visa application process. The decision leaves Partey unable to enter Canada.

Messi's adviser alleges Ex-Bengal minister Aroop Biswas triggered security chaos during Kolkata visit

Kolkata, June 17

Fresh controversy has emerged over Lionel Messi's 'GOAT India Tour' event in Kolkata, with a member of the Argentine star's team alleging that former West Bengal Sports Minister Aroop Biswas was responsible for the chaos that unfolded at Salt Lake Stadium during the football icon's visit in December last year. According to Bidhannagar Police sources, an email sent to Police Commissioner Tripurari Atharv by one of Messi's advisers claimed that security arrangements at the event broke down after Biswas entered the field along with several unauthorised individuals.

The adviser, who was present alongside Messi during the event, alleged that the former minister repeatedly approached the football superstar for photographs and



physical interactions, creating an uncomfortable situation and contributing to growing concerns over the player's security. The email reportedly stated that only three accredited photographers were supposed to be present on the field. Instead, nearly 40 people gained access to the restricted area, leading to crowding around Messi and disrupting the planned

programme. According to the complaint, the unexpected influx of people left Messi's entourage concerned about safety and ultimately forced changes to the scheduled appearance. The communication further stressed that the incident was beyond the control of event organiser Satadru Dutta and that he should not be held responsible for Messi's early

departure from the venue. Organiser cites email in ongoing legal battle. The organiser, who was arrested following the alleged mismanagement at the event, welcomed the contents of the email and said it would aid the ongoing investigation. He has consistently accused Aroop Biswas of contributing to the disorder during Messi's visit and has previously filed complaints with Bidhannagar Police over the matter. The organiser has also challenged the legal protection granted to the former minister by the Calcutta High Court, with a petition filed before a division bench earlier this week. Ticket distribution allegations resurface. Dutta has additionally alleged that around 70,000 tickets were printed for the event, claiming that Biswas received approximately 22,000 tickets due to his position.

FIFA World Cup: Haaland scores twice on debut as Norway cruise past Iraq 4-1

New Delhi, June 17

Erling Haaland marked his long-awaited FIFA World Cup debut with a brace as Norway opened their FIFA World Cup 2026 campaign with an emphatic 4-1 victory over Iraq in their Group I clash at Boston Stadium on Wednesday. Playing in their first World Cup match since 1998, Norway made an immediate statement through their star striker, who scored either side of Iraq's equaliser to put the Scandinavian side firmly in control. Leo Ostigard added a third after the break before a late own goal from Iraq sealed a comfortable opening-day win.

The result propelled Norway to the top of Group I on goal difference and provided the perfect start to their return to football's biggest stage after a 28-year absence. Haaland, already Norway's all-



time leading scorer, added another milestone to his growing list of achievements by becoming one of the standout performers of the tournament's opening round. The Manchester City forward's two-goal display also made him the sixth player to score a brace at the FIFA World Cup 2026.

Norway struck first after an intricate move that began with goalkeeper Orjan Nyland. Following a patient build-up, David Moller Wolfe delivered a low cross from the left flank and Haaland slid in at the far post to finish clinically. Iraq responded impressively 10 minutes later when veteran striker Aymen Hussein etched his name into the history books. Rising

highest to meet Amir Al-Ammari's floated delivery, Hussein headed beyond Nyland to become only the second Iraqi player to score at a FIFA World Cup.

However, Norway regained the lead before halftime after a defensive mix-up between Zaid Tahseen and goalkeeper Jalal Hassan gifted Haaland an opportunity he did not waste. The Norwegians tightened their grip on the contest shortly after the restart. Substitute Leo Ostigard took advantage of slack marking from a corner and powered home a header just minutes after entering the field. Iraq's hopes of a comeback faded further when Hussein inadvertently turned the ball into his own net late in the game, completing a frustrating evening for the Lions of Mesopotamia.

Deepti, Charani make big gains in latest ICC T20I rankings

New Delhi, June 17

India's impressive start to the ICC Women's T20 World Cup has been reflected in the latest ICC rankings, with star all-rounder Deepti Sharma climbing to third in the Women's T20I All-Rounder Rankings after her match-winning performance against Pakistan. Deepti, who claimed a sensational five-wicket haul in India's 64-run victory at Edgbaston, moved up two places in the all-rounders' rankings. Her rise comes after a standout display that also saw her become the leading wicket-taker in Women's T20I history. At the top of the all-rounders' list, Hayley Matthews regained the No.



1 spot from Melie Kerr following West Indies' seven-wicket win over New Zealand. Matthews scored 48 runs and picked up a wicket, while Kerr managed just five runs and went wicketless. India also had reason to celebrate in the bowling rankings. Left-arm spinner Shree Charani jumped five

places to a career-best second position after her three-wicket haul against Pakistan. She now trails England spinner Linsey Smith by just five rating points. Deepti enjoyed a similar rise in the bowling charts, moving up five spots to fifth place after her record-breaking spell.

Mansukh Mandaviya to Lead Fit India Cyclothon along Mumbai's Worli Seafront On June 17

Mumbai, June 17

Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports and Labour and Employment Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya will lead a special edition of the Fit India Cyclothon along Mumbai's iconic Worli Coastal Cycle Track on Wednesday, as part of the nationwide celebrations leading to the 12th International Day of Yoga on June 21. Organised by the Sports Authority of India (SAI), Regional Centre Mumbai, the event titled "Cycling by the Sea" is expected to bring together around 250 cyclists from diverse backgrounds who will ride



alongside the Union Minister against the backdrop of Mumbai's scenic coastline. The cyclothon, scheduled to begin early Wednesday morning, forms part of the Government's broader Fit India Movement, which promotes fitness, wellness,

and healthy living through community participation in physical activities such as cycling, yoga, and sports. The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports said the event aims to reinforce the message that physical fitness and mental well-being.

FIFA World Cup 2026: Austria overcome Jordan 3-1 in first appearance since 1998

New Delhi, June 17

Austria made a winning return to the FIFA World Cup after a 28-year absence, overcoming spirited debutants Jordan 3-1 in their Group J opener at the San Francisco Bay Area Stadium on Tuesday. Goals from Romano Schmid and Marko Arnautovic, along with an unfortunate own goal by Jordan defender Yazan Al Arab, handed Austria all three points in their first World Cup match since France 1998.

Jordan, appearing at the tournament for the first time in their history, threatened early and nearly stunned their European opponents inside the opening minutes. Captain Ehsan Haddad fired into



the side netting before Odeh Fakhouri tested goalkeeper Alexander Schlager with a long-range strike. Despite Jordan's bright start, Austria broke the deadlock in the 20th minute

through Schmid, who produced a superb curling effort from the edge of the penalty area to give his side the lead. The underdogs responded impressively after the break and made history in the 50th

minute. Ali Olwan raced onto a pass from deep inside the Austrian half before cutting inside and bending a brilliant shot into the far corner via the post, becoming the first Jordanian player ever to score at a FIFA World Cup. Jordan's dream of claiming a point remained alive until the closing stages when Austria's pressure from set pieces finally paid off. Arnautovic thought he had restored Austria's lead midway through the second half, only for VAR to rule out the goal after detecting a handball in the build-up.

Moments later, however, another dangerous corner created confusion in the Jordan box, with Al Arab inadvertently turning the ball into his own net.