

Gill is handling (the captaincy job) very well. His individual performance has also improved a lot. He is one of the finest players; I don't know why they don't select him for T20s. He is a good player for all formats and should never have been dropped from any format,

- Mohammed Azharuddin



Messi scores a hat-trick triumph

KANSAS CITY

LIONEL Messi celebrated his record-breaking sixth World Cup appearance with a hat-trick, powering defending champions Argentina to a comfortable 3-0 win over Algeria in a FIFA World Cup 2026 Group J opener at the Kansas City Stadium on Wednesday.

In the process, Messi equalled the all-time FIFA World Cup goalscoring record with his 16 World Cup goals, tying Miroslav Klose of Germany. He also notably holds the records for most caps (199) and most goals (117) for Argentina, while also holding the international record for most World Cup match appearances (26) and being the only player to score in the World Cup group stage, round of 16, quarterfinals, semifinals and final.

Messi started the day three adrift of Miroslav Klose's mark of 16 goals on the global stage, but within 76 minutes of this match he

was on level terms with the former Germany international.

Messi and Algeria's Fares Chaibi both had efforts ruled out for offside in a breathless opening, but Argentina's captain fantastic soon made his mark. Picking up possession 30 yards from goal, he expertly rolled his marker, surged forward and curled a superb finish beyond the grasp of Luca Zidane.

Algeria largely kept the reigning champions at arm's length for the rest of the half, with an Alexis Mac Allister header over the crossbar Argentina's only real chance. Anis Hadj Moussa carved out one of the Fennec Foxes' better opening moments earlier, but a deflection took the sting out of his low effort and Emiliano Martinez gathered comfortably.

Messi was once again at the heart of Argentina's brightest attacking moments after the break. He first flashed a 20-yard effort over the bar before slipping in Lautaro Martinez, whose

dangerous cross was cut out by Zidane.

The Argentina talisman's second goal soon followed, with Zidane unable to hold Mac Allister's powerful strike, allowing Messi to pounce on the rebound and finish coolly with his right foot.

The 38-year-old completed his hat-trick with a trademark curling finish from the edge of the area, capping his 200th senior international appearance in style.

In his historic international career, Messi has guided Argentina to the 2021 and 2024 CONMEBOL Copa America titles and 2022 CONMEBOL-UEFA Cup of Champions crown and further cemented his legacy by leading his country to a historic FIFA World Cup title in 2022.

Having equalled Klose's record, Messi will have the chance to claim it outright when Argentina face Austria on June 22. Algeria, meanwhile, take on Jordan in their next Group J outing.



Kylian Mbappe reacts after scoring a goal

Mbappe sparks in France's 3-1 win over Senegal

EAST RUTHERFORD (US):

Kylian Mbappe scored twice to move past Pele and Lionel Messi with 14 World Cup goals, Bradley Barcola added another as France rebounded from a surprisingly poor first half to beat Senegal 3-1 Tuesday in its opener.

Mbappe had 14 touches in the scoreless first half, the fewest of any player, then showed his brilliance when he put Les Bleus ahead in the 66th minute. He burst past Senegal captain Kalidou Koulibaly, turned onto a diagonal pass from Michael Olise and slid the ball past goalkeeper Edouard Mendy from just outside the 6-yard box. Barcola entered in the 80th and doubled the lead two minutes later, running onto Adrien Rabiot's through ball and lifting the ball past Mendy for his fourth international goal. Senegal forward Ibrahim Mbeye cut the deficit with an angled shot five minutes into stoppage time.

Mbappe then had a spectacular long-range goal a minute later, over Mendy's outstretched arm and just under the crossbar.

Mbappe moved one ahead of Messi and Just Fontaine on the World Cup career scoring list and is tied with Germany's Gerd Muller, trailing only Brazil's Ronaldo (15) and Germany's Miroslav Klose (16).

RESULTS

- France 3 Senegal 1
- Iraq 1 Norway 4
- Argentina 3 Algeria 0
- Austria 3 Jordan 1
- Portugal vs Congo DR 10:30 pm

Fixtures (in IST)

ON THURSDAY

- England vs Croatia 1:30 am at AT&T Stadium, Arlington, Texas
- Ghana vs Panama 4:30 am at BMO Field, Toronto, Canada
- Uzbekistan vs Colombia 7:30 am at Estadio Banorte, Mexico City, Mexico
- Czechia vs South Africa 9:30 pm at Mercedes-Benz Stadium, Atlanta, Georgia

ON FRIDAY

- Switzerland vs Bosnia-Herzegovina 12:30 am at SoFi Stadium, Inglewood, California
- Canada vs Qatar 3:30 am at BC Place, Vancouver, Canada
- Mexico vs South Korea 6:30 am at Estadio Akron, Guadalajara, Mexico

Women's T20 WC Australia thrash B'desh by 9 wkts

LEEDS: Australia continued their strong start to the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 with a dominant nine-wicket victory over Bangladesh at Headingley on Wednesday. After restricting Bangladesh to just 77/8 in 20 overs, the six-time champions chased down the target in only 9.3 overs with opener Georgia Vull leading the way with an unbeaten 45.

Chasing a modest target of 78, Australia were briefly tested by some disciplined bowling from Marufa Akter, who conceded only four runs in the opening over. However, the pressure did not last long as Beth Mooney and Vull quickly took control of the chase.

Mooney got Australia's first boundary in the second over before Vull shifted gears. The young opener struck a six and a four against Marufa in the third over and continued to find the gaps with ease.

BRIEF SCORES:

Bangladesh 77/8 in 20 overs (Nigar Sultana 27, Ritu Moti 16; Ellyse Perry 2-14, Sophie Molineux 2-14, Kim Garth 2-18) lost to Australia 78/1 in 9.3 overs (Georgia Vull 45*, Ellysa Perry 19*; Marufa Akter 1-28) by 9 wickets.

Tri-series: India A crush Afghanistan A by 101 runs

DAMBULLA: A compelling all-round performance helped India A thrash Afghanistan A by 101 runs here on Wednesday, bolstering their chances of making the tri-series final.

After amassing 319 by nine riding on fifties by skipper Tilak Varma, Priyansh Arya and Kumar Kushagra, India A bowlers produced a unified show to bundle out Afghanistan A for mere 218 in 36.5 overs.

Nishant Sindhu was the pick of the bowlers as he returned 4/31 from his 6.5 overs, while pacer Yash Thakur claimed 2/48 from his seven overs. Anshul

Kamboj, Vipraj Nigam, Suryansh Shedge, and Anukul Roy claimed one wicket apiece.

For Afghanistan, Bahir Shah (57 off 52 balls; 4 fours, 1 six) and Faisal Shinozoda (46) provided some resistance but most of their batters failed to convert their starts.

BRIEF SCORES:

India A: 319/9 in 50 overs (Tilak Varma 59, Priyansh Arya 58, Kumar Kushagra 58; Abdollah Ahmadzai 2/62) beat Afghanistan A 218 in 36.5 overs (Faisal Shinozoda 46, Bahir Shah 57; Nishant Sindhu 4/31, Yash Thakur 2/48) by 101 runs.

India seal ODI series with 170-run win

LUCKNOW: Captain Shubman Gill battled intense heat and cramps to produce a masterful 154, while the increasingly confident Ishan Kishan scored a statement century as India recorded a dominant 170-run win over Afghanistan in the second ODI here on Wednesday to seal the series.

India have taken a 2-0 unassailable lead in the three-match series. Afghanistan's decision to bowl first under the scorching afternoon sun backfired as Gill and Kishan, who scored his second ODI hundred in his comeback series, helped India put up a formidable 402.

The conditions were very demanding through out



the game with several players struggling with cramps while Gill also battled with an ice collar. In fact, the Indian skipper didn't return to the field once he got out.

BRIEF SCORES:

India: 402 all out in 49.5 overs (Shubman Gill 154, Ishan Kishan 125; N Kharode 4/76). Afghanistan: 232 all out in 44.3 overs (Rahmat Shah 79, Sediqullah Atal 42, Rahmanullah Gurbaz 41; Arshdeep Singh 3/45, Gurnoor Brar 3/60).

Hyderabad Heroes bag first win; Mumbai Dreamers stay unbeaten

Rugby Premier League Day 2

HYDERABAD: The second day of the Rugby Premier League season 2 witnessed hosts Hyderabad Heroes, and Mumbai Dreamers register wins at the Ganti Mohana Chandra Balayogi Athletic Stadium, Gachibowli, Hyderabad on Wednesday.

Hyderabad Heroes beat Delhi Redz 31-17 (men)

Looking to bounce back from their opening defeat, Hyderabad Heroes made a flying

start through Sumit Kumar and Maurice Longbottom. Despite sustained pressure from Delhi Redz, Taitaifono Tavita extended the Heroes' advantage before Luciano Gonzalez and Javed Husain brought the Redz back into the contest. Tavita struck again in the second half, while Patrick Odongo kept Delhi in the hunt. However, Wolfram Hacker's late

try sealed the victory for the Heroes. Mumbai Dreamers defeat Bengaluru Bravehearts 19-7 (men) Dreamers applied pressure on the Bravehearts early to gain territory. Bravehearts sustained the pressure but Lucas Mignot sprinted end to end to open the score with a try for Dreamers. Guillaume Bouche backed it up with another try for the Dreamers at the end of the first quarter.



Person of Indian origin hits jackpot of Rs. 5.5 cr in UAE

ABU DHABI: A person of Indian origin in Abu Dhabi, Shajeer vanga, has hit a jackpot of Rs. 5.5 crore in the UAE millionaire campaign conducted by the Sharja Islamic Bank within two months of opening an account. The bank announced details of the winners in its X account.

The campaign is conducted every year with a view to encourage the customers to make savings, with a prize money of 20 million dirhams. The customers who deposit 10,000 dirhams are eligible to take part in the regular draw, with the winners eligible to secure cash rewards and luxury vehicles.

Vanga has expressed his happiness over the good fortune in bagging the jackpot. He says after becoming aware of the millionaire campaign I decided to win the booty on some day or the other.

He says the cash award will change his life. "With it I will get my family to the UAE." Vanga has thanked the bank.

Nationwide showdown looms over VB-G RAM G

ACTIVISTS DEMAND REPEAL OF NEW SCHEME FROM JULY 1

NEW DELHI

DEMANDING the repeal of the proposed Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission - Gramin (VB-G RAM G), activists and workers' organisations on Wednesday announced protests against the new scheme from July 1.

Addressing a press conference here, members of the NREGA Sangharsh Morcha, agricultural workers' unions and labour rights groups claimed that an analysis of the government's own data showed the promised 125 days of employment under the proposed scheme was neither financially backed nor administratively feasible. The draft rules released by the Centre expose the "shrinking employment guarantee" under the scheme, they alleged, adding that "The draft rules continue the opaque erasure of MGNREGA."

They further alleged that the proposed framework centralises powers with the Centre while reducing



According to an analysis by the activists, no major state would be able to generate even half of the promised 125 days of employment per active job card in the proposed interim allocations

the effective employment guarantee available to rural workers. According to an analysis by the activists, no major state would be able to generate even half of the promised 125 days of employment per active job card in the proposed interim allocations. "This law destroys the spirit of the rural employment guarantee act... There is already a downward trend in employment generated," activist Nikhil Dey said.

"The burden will be on the states, and the push

would be not to provide employment because the states will have to bear the expenditure," he said. All India Agricultural Workers Union General Secretary B Venkat said they would hold protests at every village against the new scheme.

"From July 1, nationwide demonstrations would be held at the village, block, panchayat and ward level. We will also hold some protests in Delhi," he said, adding that 'jail bhara' campaigns would also be held along with the Samyukt

Kisan Morcha (SKM). They will also approach Opposition parties to raise their issues.

According to figures released by groups, Andhra Pradesh would be able to generate only about 42 person days per active job card under the proposed allocation, while Chhattisgarh would generate 39 person days, Bihar 31, Karnataka 26, Madhya Pradesh 26 and Uttar Pradesh 28. Maharashtra would be able to generate only about 14 person days per active job card, they claimed.

The groups said the gap between the promised employment guarantee and actual allocations translated into massive funding shortfalls for states.

Based on their calculations, Madhya Pradesh would require an additional Rs 31,013 crore to provide 125 days of employment per active job card, while Rajasthan would need Rs 27,212 crore, Uttar Pradesh Rs 27,987 crore, Maharashtra Rs 22,549 crore, Karnataka Rs 17,481 crore and Bihar Rs 15,939 crore.

TMC's Guha held, third ex-minister behind bars

KOLKATA: Udayan Guha, the former West Bengal Minister in charge of the North Bengal Development Department in the previous Mamata Banerjee-led cabinet, was arrested on Wednesday from his residence in Phoolbagan, Kolkata.

Although the officials are yet to specify the exact charges under which Guha was arrested, sources said police had been trying to track him for some time.

However, a source in the state police said the former minister is accused of involvement in post-poll violence in his native district of Cooch Behar following the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections, which marked the beginning of the third consecutive term of Mamata Banerjee as Chief Minister.

Guha's arrest has likely been in connection with those cases registered against him in relation to the 2021 post-poll violence.

He is the third minister in the previous Mamata Banerjee-led cabinet to be arrested since the new Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government led by Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari took charge on May 9.

Former state Fire Services Minister Sujit Bose was the first member of the previ-



Udayan Guha

ous cabinet to be arrested last month by the officials of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for his alleged involvement in the multi-core municipalities' job case.

Then on June 9, Ujjal Biswas, the former Correctional Services Minister in the previous Mamata Banerjee-led cabinet, was arrested on charges of illegally hoarding relief material of the state government.

Now, on Wednesday, Udayan Guha is the third minister of the previous cabinet to be arrested.

Udayan Guha is the son of Late Kamal Guha, who was an All India Forward Bloc (AIFB) leader from Cooch Behar district and a member of the Left Front cabinet in West Bengal for over two decades.

Udayan started his legislative career with AIFB, when for the first time he got elected from Dinhatra Assembly constituency in Cooch Behar district in 2011.

Mamata's protest walk sees low turnout

KOLKATA: Trinamool Congress president and former West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday led a protest walk in central Kolkata against the recent hawkers' eviction drives carried out by the state administration across different parts of the state.

However, the event failed to make a mark because of fewer attendees. Although a public meeting was initially planned at the end of the protest walk from Esplanade to Subodh Mallick Square, both in central Kolkata, it was later cancelled.

The former Chief Minister left immediately after the protest walk ended.

Since the landslide defeat of Trinamool and Mamata Banerjee's personal defeat in the recently concluded West Bengal assembly elections, she has restricted her political programmes mainly to occasional video messages on social media.

After her nephew and Trinamool general secretary Abhishek Banerjee was attacked at Sonarpur in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal last month, she sat on a protest demonstration on June 2, which was her last public programme. On Wednesday, she led a protest walk against the hawkers' eviction. However, the event failed to attract a large number of attendees, with only a few front-ranking Trinamool leaders participating.

Major fire under control along Indo-Nepal border

KOLKATA: Quick response by personnel of the 41Bn Sashstra Seema Bal (SSB) prevented a fire at a market along the Indo-Nepal border from spreading and causing damage to life and property on the night of June 16.

A major fire broke out around 9.35 p.m. at the Bhatgaon Border Market, situated around 100 meters from the Bhatgaon company camp of the 41Bn SSB at Ranidanga in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal.

Personnel from the camp reacted immediately and rushed to the spot with fire extinguishers, sand buckets and water. They actively participated in firefighting operations, even after fire trucks arrived. The jawans helped in breaking open shutters and gates to allow firefighters access to the blaze.

Gujarat bus accident: Death toll touches seven

NEW DELHI/VADODARA: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday expressed condolences over the fatal luxury bus accident on the Vadodara-Jarod Road in Gujarat, as the death toll from the crash rose to seven and 28 people were injured, including two in critical condition.

In a post on the social media

platform X, HM Shah described the incident as "extremely tragic" and said his condolences were with the families of those who had lost their loved ones.

He said the local administration was providing medical facilities to the injured and prayed for their speedy recovery.

"The accident that occurred on the Vadodara-Jarod Road

in Gujarat is extremely tragic. My condolences are with those who have lost their loved ones in this accident. The local administration is providing medical facilities to the injured. I pray for the speedy recovery of those who have been injured," HM Shah wrote. The accident occurred at around 4 am. near Kotambi village when a luxury

bus travelling from Banswara in Rajasthan to Surat rammed into the rear of a truck parked on the roadside.

According to preliminary information, the truck had been halted while its driver was checking tyre pressure.

The collision crushed the front portion of the bus, trapping several passengers inside.

Local residents and passing motorists rushed to the scene before emergency services arrived and launched rescue operations.

Police, fire brigade personnel and teams from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) carried out a large-scale rescue effort.

Firefighters used a JCB

machine to separate the two vehicles and cut through the mangled metal of the bus to extricate trapped passengers.

Most of the passengers travelling on the bus were from Rajasthan. The injured were shifted to Sir Sayajirao General (SSG) Hospital and private hospitals in Vadodara, where treatment is continuing.