

14 Elite runners brave pollution, COVID in Delhi half marathon



15 Real Madrid slump to 2-1 loss at home to Alaves



15 Neymar scores his 50th league goal; PSG held



Barcelona trounce Osasuna 4-0

Messi salutes Maradona as Clubs across Europe pay tribute



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Argentinean forward Lionel Messi shoots the ball during the Spanish League football match between FC Barcelona and CA Osasuna at the Camp Nou stadium yesterday. — AFP

PARIS: Clubs across Europe continued to pay tribute to Diego Maradona yesterday with particularly poignant moments in Italy and Spain where the Argentine played. Maradona, who played two seasons for Barca, one for Sevilla and spent seven mostly glorious years at Napoli, died on Wednesday aged 60. Barcelona played yesterday afternoon while Napoli were planning an elaborate and emotional tribute before their game in the evening.

Before Barcelona faced Osasuna, the club played 'The Song of the Birds' by Catalan cellist Pablo Casals as the teams stood around the centre circle where a Maradona shirt was laid on the centre spot. Lionel Messi, who has inherited Maradona's legendary Argentina number 10 shirt, bowed his head. Flags at the Camp Nou flew at half mast. Maradona's image was displayed on every screen and digital advertising hoarding, while a club official held a framed Maradona Barcelona shirt.

Messi got his goal in the 74th minute with a dazzling strike that sealed a 4-0 victory. The Argentine picked up the ball in midfield, danced past two defenders and smashed a rising left-foot shot into the top far corner. He celebrated by pulling off his Barcelona shirt to reveal a vintage Newell's Old Boys jersey from Maradona's one season with the club in Rosario, Argentina.

Earlier this week, Newell's tweeted a photograph from Maradona's debut showing a six-year-old local prodigy, in a similar black and red shirt, doing ball tricks for the crowd at half-time. That boy was Messi. "It was a great moment," said Koeman. "Leo's goal, his gesture dedicated to Maradona. "It was something very big. We Europeans don't realise how big Maradona is in Argentina." On Friday, Koeman said the best tribute his team could pay Maradona was to "show what we can do on the pitch". In Italy, in addition to the minute's silence,

players have stopped to applaud for 60 seconds as Maradona's picture appears on the stadium screens in the 10th minute.

'I felt like crying'

In Rome, Lazio's players took to the pitch with special edition 'ADIOS' jerseys in honour of Maradona but lost 3-1 to Udinese, for whom four Argentine-born players followed Koeman's advice. Roberto Pereyra set up the first goal, then Rodrigo De Paul provided assists for the next two, scored by Ignacio Pussetto and Fernando Forestieri.

After his goal, Pussetto opened his hands wide, to form 10. "This victory is for him," said Forestieri. "After the goal I felt like crying. Diego was the greatest of all time." Maradona's former club Napoli host Roma with tributes planned for the player who led the club to their only league titles in 1987 and 1990 and the UEFA Cup in 1989. Napoli will wear a

jersey reminiscent of Argentina's for their first league game since his death. The club said the launch had already been planned with kit sponsors Kappa before Maradona's death.

"A year ago, together with Kappa, we thought of designing a special jersey that echoes Diego Maradona, his beloved Argentina and the very strong bond with the people of Naples," Napoli said in a statement. "Together we hoped that Diego could see it, maybe wear it and share in the excitement with us. "The presentation of the new kit had already been agreed for the ninth matchday of the championship, on the occasion of the SSC Napoli-Roma match. "The Kombat that will be worn by the players tonight will have an even greater significance than initially assumed." In Germany, Bundesliga clubs observed a minute's silence before games. In England, players applauded for a minute. — AFP

AC Milan pull 2 points clear

MILAN: AC Milan shrugged off the absence of injured star Zlatan Ibrahimovic to consolidate their lead in Serie A yesterday with a 2-0 win over Fiorentina. Milan pulled five points clear of city rivals Inter Milan and Sassuolo, with AS Roma and Juventus six points adrift. But Lazio slumped to a 3-1 home defeat to Udinese, days before their Champions League trip to Borussia Dortmund, in a victory paved by the visitors' Argentina players on a day Serie A paid tribute to Diego Maradona.

Serie A top scorer Ibrahimovic watched from the stands after picking up a muscle injury last weekend. Head coach Stefano Pioli was absent recovering from coronavirus, but Milan extended their unbeaten run in the league this season. Franck Kessie set up Alessio Romagnoli for the opener after 17 minutes with the Ivorian forward adding a second from the penalty spot 10 minutes later. Fiorentina goalkeeper Bartlomiej Dragowski denied Kessie a second in the first half after Martin Caceres fouled Theo Hernandez.

Franck Ribery missed chances for Fiorentina with Gianluigi Donnarumma holding firm in the Milan goal. Pioli spoke to the team by video link after the game. "Pioli congratulated everyone for winning this very important match," said Kessie. "It's like this on penalties, either your score or miss, but I'll still take the next one." New Fiorentina coach Cesare Prandelli fell to his second defeat in as many games, with his side above the relegation zone without a goal in their last four games.

In Rome, Lazio's players took to the pitch with special edition 'ADIOS' jerseys in honour of former Argentina and Napoli great Maradona who died last week aged 60. But the hosts trailed after quarter of an hour when Argentine Roberto Pereyra set up Turkish midfielder Tolgay Arslan for Udinese's first goal against Lazio in the Stadio Olimpico in six years. Rodrigo De Paul then set up fellow Argentine Ignacio Pussetto for the second just before the break, and provided the assist for another compatriot Fernando Forestieri's third midway through the second half. After his goal, Pussetto opened his two hands wide, to symbolise the number 10, Maradona's jersey number. Forestieri dedicated the success to Maradona after the match: "This victory is for him!" "After the goal I felt like crying. Diego was the greatest of all time," said Forestieri. — AFP

Tottenham take back top spot with goalless Chelsea draw

LONDON: Tottenham moved back to the top of the Premier League after grinding out a 0-0 draw at Chelsea that bolstered their claim to be contenders for a first league title in 60 years. Chelsea enjoyed the better of a game of few chances, but Spurs showed the resilience and steel of Mourinho's three Premier League title-winning seasons when Chelsea manager to hold out for a fourth consecutive clean sheet.

A share of the spoils means Chelsea remain just two points behind their London rivals in third, with Liverpool trailing Tottenham only on goal difference. By extending a now nine-game unbeaten run in the Premier League, Mourinho also ensured he did not lose three consecutive league meetings to the same manager for the first time in his career and to one of his former players, Frank Lampard. Lampard showed what he has learned from the Portuguese as the cautious tactics from both saw the sides largely cancel each other out.

Chelsea were wary not to give Tottenham any chance to counter-attack in the manner that cut open Manchester United and Manchester City in recent weeks. Spurs showed why with a sprightly team move that ended with Steven Bergwijn turning inside and blasting just over the bar early on. The arrival of

Edouard Mendy has resulted in a huge upturn in Chelsea's defensive record and the Senegalese produced a smart stop to deny Serge Aurier's strike from outside the box.

But that was the only effort on goal either side managed before the break as Chelsea controlled possession with little potent threat. Timo Werner did produce an exquisite finish to fire in off the far post, but the goal was ruled out for offside against the German international. Chelsea began to push with more purpose early in the second half as three times Tammy Abraham could not get a clean contact on inviting crosses from Reece James and Werner.

Lampard showed his intent to try and win the game by throwing on Christian Pulisic, Kai Havertz and Olivier Giroud in the final quarter, while Mourinho kept Gareth Bale in reserve for the full 90 minutes. Hugo Lloris was finally forced into a meaningful save 10 minutes from time when the Spurs captain turned Mason Mount's powerful strike behind. But the biggest chance to win the game came in stoppage time when Giroud pounced on a weak header from Joe Rodon, but he did not get enough on his attempted lob over Lloris and his French teammate easily saved. — AFP