

Messi's India Visit Draws Glitz, Not Goals

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Argentine football legend **Lionel Messi** has returned to India after 14 years, not for football, but for a string of glitzy public appearances as part of the *GOAT India Tour 2025*. While the tour has generated enormous buzz, it has also attracted criticism for featuring celebrity events and promotional engagements — but no actual football match.

Messi's last visit in 2011 included a FIFA friendly in Kolkata that drew more than 85,000 spectators. This time, however, the tour itinerary focuses predominantly on fashion showcases, high-profile launches and meetings with dignitaries, rather than the sport that made him a global icon.

Star-Studded Engagements Across Cities

The *GOAT India Tour* began in Kolkata and will continue through Hyderabad, Mumbai and New Delhi over three days. In Mumbai, Messi — accompanied by Lionel Messi's former Argentina teammates **Luis Suárez** and **Rodrigo De Paul** — is slated to participate in a **charity fashion event** at Wankhede Stadium featuring celebrities, sports personalities and business leaders.

Other planned engagements include a **Padel Cup event**, youth coaching sessions, and music performances. The final leg of the tour in Delhi will include a scheduled meeting with **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.

Fans Flock but Expectation Gap Emerges

Thousands of fans turned out enthusiastically in Kolkata to welcome Messi's arrival, demonstrating his enduring popularity among Indian supporters. Streets, hotels and public spaces near event venues were transformed into celebratory hubs, with fans waving flags and chanting his name in anticipation of his appearances.

Despite the excitement, many supporters expressed disappointment that the tour lacks a traditional competitive football match. The absence of any football-focused engagement — especially during an event branded around one of the world's greatest players — has sparked debate and frustration among fans and football followers nationwide.

A Glitzy Tour With Mixed Reactions

The *GOAT India Tour 2025* has undoubtedly captured headlines and brought global attention to India's dynamic fan base. From fashion shows and promotional events to high-profile meet-and-greets, the spectacle highlights Messi's global appeal and celebrity status.

However, critics believe the tour misses an opportunity to celebrate the very sport that made him a household name — leaving many fans hopeful that future visits might include the football action they've long awaited

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