

Brothers end league in a dismal fashion

Federation Cup champions Brothers Union completed their Star Premier Division football League engagements with a tame goalless draw against Mukti Juddha Sangsad at the floodlit Dhaka Stadium yesterday, reports UNB.

Brothers Union, the third power of country's soccer arena who have earlier confirmed the third slot this season, played a dull match yesterday to finish at 23 points after completing all the 18 league ties.

In the other Premier Division match, last year's number four-ranked team Arambagh KS save themselves from relegation when they beat Wari Club 1-0 in their last match at the same venue earlier in the afternoon.

Azad scored the all important goal in the 60th minute by a rebounder after a Sunny attempt came his way hitting the bar (1-0).

Later, Azad was given the marching order for receiving two yellow cards during the match.

With this shocking defeat, Wari Club face relegation with Rahmatganj MFS and PWD SC, all three securing 13 points but PWD has a match in hand against Agram Bank. Arambagh KS finished at 14 points.

In the Star First Division League, Fakirpool Youngmen's Club maintained their solo lead in the points table after a one-all draw with Dhaka Wanderers' Club at the Hockey Stadium.

Zahir put Wanderers' Club ahead in the 14th minute. Sohel Masum scored the equaliser for Fakirpool in the 60th minute.

Fakirpool have earned 21 points while Wanderers' Club managed 17, playing 16 matches each.

Bhutan to send a small squad

Bhutan will send a 14-member contingent to the sixth South Asian Federation (SAF) Games to be held in Dhaka from December 20-27 this year, reports BSS.

According to a press release of the organising committee of Sixth SAF Games yesterday, Bhutan will participate only in table tennis.

The team will comprise five men and four women players and five officials including one woman.

Kabaddi results

Sonali Bank Club trounced Surjo Kamal Club 54-14 in the only match of the Metropolitan kabaddi league at the Outer Stadium kabaddi court yesterday, reports UNB.

The bankers' earned five points and led the first session 24-7.

Maniknagar Unnayan Samiti will take on Barilghat Boys Club while Jursin Janata Club meet Sreejoni Sangsad today.

Army v'ball

COMILLA, Sept 22: Dhaka Infantry defeated Anti-Aircraft Artillery 15-11, 15-12 and 15-10 in a round robin league match on the second day of the army volleyball championship at the Comilla Cantonment this morning, reports BSS.

In another match of the day, Jessore Area beat Dhaka Signals 15-5, 15-1 and 15-4.

On the opening match of the meet yesterday, hosts Comilla Area beat Savar Area in straight sets.

Games 2000 bid live on BBC

HONG KONG, Sept 22: BBC World Service Television on STAR-TV will carry the International Olympic Committee (IOC) decision on the venue of the 2000 Olympic Games, according to a Star TV news release.

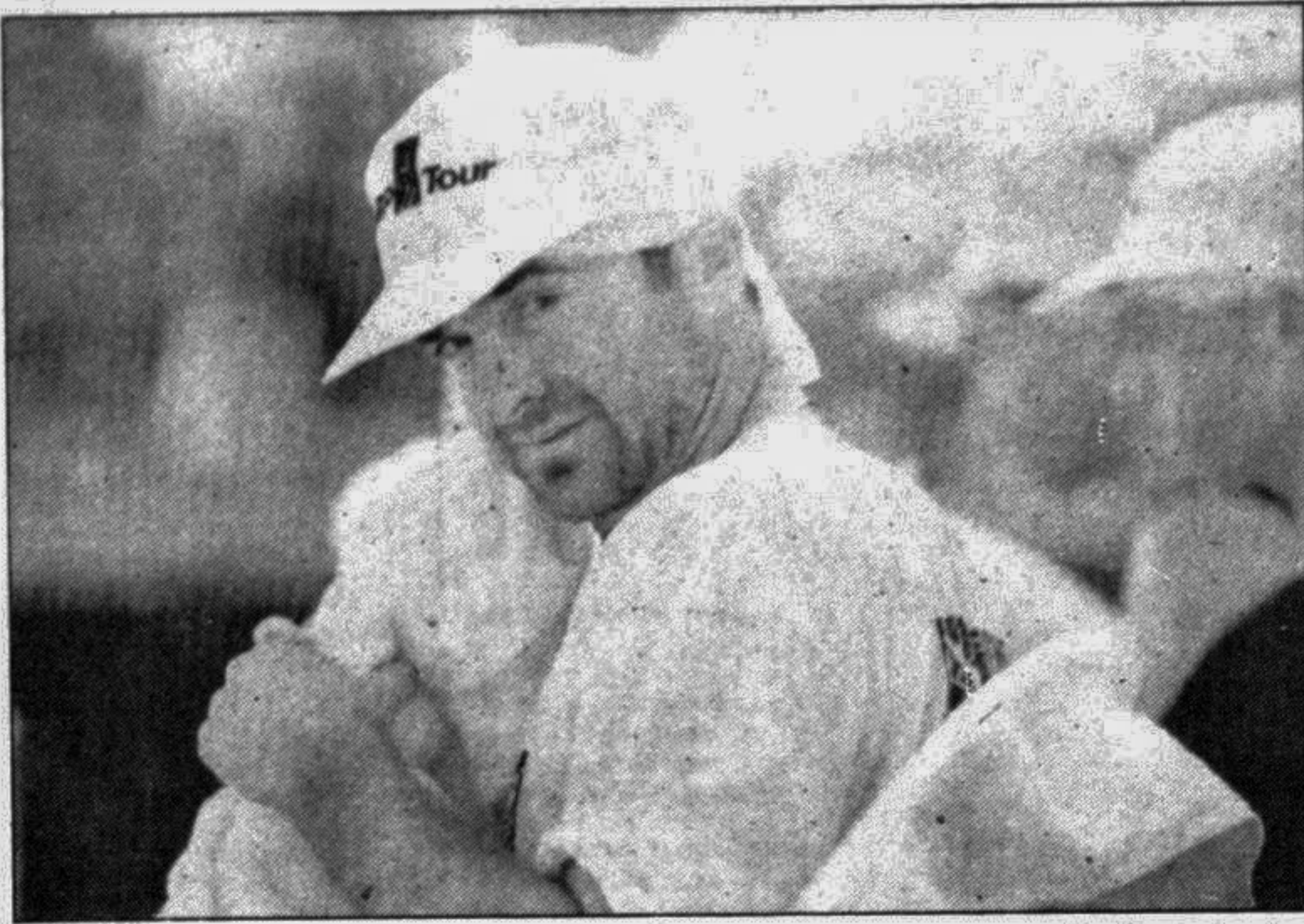
The long-awaited announcement will be seen live in a special World Service Television programme "Olympic 2000: Decision Day" on Friday, 24th September at 2400 (local time). Five cities are bidding for the chance to hold the Games: Beijing, Sydney, Manchester, Istanbul, and Berlin.

Cubans lose without a fight

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo., Sept 22: The Cuban women's volleyball team, gold medalists at the 1992 Olympics, forfeited to Canada on Tuesday night because the US government has held up visas for the players and coaches, reports AP.

The match, part of a regional qualifying tournament for next year's World Championship, was awarded to Canada by a score of 15-0, 15-0, 15-0. It is not clear when the Cubans will be allowed to enter the country.

"We are disappointed that we were unable to play Cuba," Canada coach Mike Burchuck said. "However, we did win our pool, and now we must look ahead to either the United States or Cuba in the later rounds."



Australian Davis Cupper Wally Masur takes a break during a practice session yesterday in Chandigarh, two days ahead of the Davis Cup semifinal against India. Heat and humidity can play determining role in the outcome of the Aussie-India tie. — AFP photo

Krishnan, Paes not so alike



CHANDIGARH, India, Sept 22: After unexpectedly taking India into this week's Davis Cup semi-final, Ramesh Krishnan and Leander Paes find themselves at the opposite ends of a career in tennis, reports AFP.

Krishnan, 32, nicknamed "Surgeon" for his precise tennis touch, is contemplating a graceful exit and slugging Paes, 20, searching for the elusive career break through.

At this level of the game, it is all coming to an end for me," Krishnan said, with his knee in tuck as the team prepared for Friday's start of the semifinal against Australia.

"At my age, there are always problems here and there, there are other priorities like family. It is becoming more and more tough to keep playing on the circuit. Travel is not easy."

After 15 years of tennis, a bad back needs constant care, the legs are heavy, the waistline expanding and he is bothered by nagging injuries.

His world ranking is at the wrong side of 200 after peaking at 23 in 1987 — the year in which he took India into the Davis Cup final where they lost to Sweden.

But non-playing skipper Nareish Kumar says no opponent can take the quiet and unassuming Krishnan lightly even now.

"To beat Ramesh is like making par on a golf course," he said. "His opponents have to keep playing good shots."

At his peak, the five feet, seven inches tall Krishnan was a gifted shotmaker known for his elegant court craft and touch play.

The world junior no. 1 in 1979, he remained in the top 100 for a decade until 1990.

Australian Wally Masur, the world no. 16, is an admirer remembering his defeat to Krishnan in the 1987 Davis Cup semifinal.

"It was his touch, his angles, they made him special," Masur said. "He used his head a lot, always kept you off-balance and guessing. I don't know whether he can still play like that."

Krishnan shone in the fourth set to beat Rodolphe Gilbert in the decisive match of the quarter-final against France. He credited the win to destiny.

Krishnan won eight career titles despite having one of the slowest serves in the game.

John McEnroe was once driven to desperation by Krishnan's service. "By the time it crawls across to you, there isn't enough pace for even a stroke," he wept.

Now, as he says he is ready to bid good-bye to tennis if patriotic pressures do not intervene, Krishnan does not know what he wants to do.

"Good question," he said. "I wish I could answer it. I guess I would like to stay involved in tennis in some capacity or the other."

Paes, US and Wimbledon junior champion in 1990. Who loves to play the guitar off the court, knows where he wants to go — to the top.

"It is just a matter of time," he said. "If I keep working hard, have patience, I know I can do it, you can't force things to happen, you have to wait."

Paes was instrumental in the Davis Cup quarter-final victory over France — he beat Henri Leconte and Arnaud Boetsch — and won the mantle of miracle man.

In the US Open, he reached the doubles semifinal with a Canadian partner.

Wildcards in tournaments in Toulouse and Marseilles have followed.

Paes and his father Vece, a former Indian hockey Olympian, give Krishnan a lot of the credit.

"He is a real super person," Paes said of Krishnan.

"We have been good for each other, I guess. He has got a little pumped up because of me and I a little less excitable because of him."

Krishnan took a break from Davis Cup from 1988 until Paes came along in 1990. A normally private person with few words, he opened up to Paes, who took to tennis after a knee injury ruled out a soccer career at age 12.

"One of the ways to mature is that a senior player imparts his experience to a youngster," said Paes's father, who played hockey for India in the 1972 Munich Olympics.

"On his own, Leander can be an excitable kid. Ramesh has helped him mature."

Paes's progress has been unspectacular but steady, ranked 195 now, he is looking to break into the top 100 and thinks he will hit his peak at age 23.

FIFA satisfied at FFF action

ZURICH, Switzerland, Sept 22: World soccer's governing body FIFA on Wednesday said it was satisfied with the French Soccer Federation's action against Olympique Marseille and pulled back from a threat to bar France from international soccer, reports AP.

"It is with satisfaction that FIFA has taken note of the decisions taken by the French Football Federation," FIFA said in a statement.

French soccer officials probing a payoff scandal earlier Wednesday suspended three Marseille players, barred Marseille's ex-manager from the sport and stripped the team of their 1993 European Champions Cup title.

"FIFA feels that these decisions have preserved the credibility of French football as a whole, and have thus settled a matter which was of great concern to the world football federation," the statement said.

Match-fixing trio suspended

PARIS, Sept 22: Olympic Marseille will be stripped of their fifth league title by the French Football Federation (FFF) when it meets again Wednesday over the club's alleged involvement in a match-fixing scandal, an authoritative source said, reports AFP.

The source said the sanction, to be announced before midday Wednesday at a press conference at the headquarters of the FFF, will be effective until the court looking into the affair gives its ruling.

Two Valenciennes players, Christophe Robert and Jorge Burruchaga, and Marseille player Jean-Jacques Eydelie, are to be suspended. The three had told a judge that Marseille general manager Jean-Pierre Bernes had bribed the Valenciennes players to throw a crucial league match on May 20 last season.

Marseille clinched their fifth consecutive league title after winning the match against Valenciennes.

Marseille, who won the European League Cup, has been banned from competing for the cup this season over the scandal.

French football has also been threatened by the world governing body FIFA with a worldwide ban if authorities did not take sanctions against Marseille before Thursday.

Netherlands sink San Marino

SAN MARINO, Sept 22: The Netherlands beat San Marino 3-1 (half-time 0-0) in a European Under-21 Soccer Championship Group Two qualifier on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Standings: Netherlands: Mutsaers (55th and 89th minutes), Van Hoogdale (84th).

San Marino: Valentini (7th).

Attendance: 614.

Standings: Tabulate under played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against.

	W	D	L	GF	GA
Norway	8	6	1	19	6
Poland	7	5	0	22	9
Turkey	8	4	2	21	9
England	8	3	2	15	7
Netherlands	8	3	1	10	7
San Marino	0	0	9	1	30

Nest Matches: October 12: Netherlands v England; Poland v Norway.

Norway nip Poland

STAVANGER, Norway, Sept 22: Norway beat Poland 3-1 (half-time 2-0) in European Under-21 Soccer Championship Group Two qualifier on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Standings: Norway: Egil Oestestad (2nd minute), Frank Strandli (27th), Egil Oestestad (78th).

Poland: Henryk Baluszynski (84th).

Attendance: 2,395.

It's time Olympics have Muslim hosts

BERLIN, Sept 22: Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller on Wednesday put in a good word for Istanbul's long-shot bid for the Olympics in the year 2000, saying it's time for the Summer Games to be held in a Muslim country, reports AP.

Istanbul will be considered a distant outsider when the International Olympic Committee votes on Thursday in Monte Carlo.

During a news conference in Berlin, Ms Ciller noted if Istanbul wins, it would be the first time the Games are held in a Muslim nation.

She noted that barriers between countries are falling, adding that the Turkish city straddling Europe and Asia might be "one of the best platforms" for improved international contacts.

Berlin is one of Istanbul's rivals for the Olympics.

Maradona game for new task



BUENOS AIRES, Sept 22: The roller-coaster career of Diego Maradona takes another lurch forward next month when the one-time world's greatest player makes his debut for his latest club — Newell's Old Boys of Rosario, reports Reuters.

Maradona, 33, at the end of October, has changed his mind about retiring, accepted a new challenge and even has his eye on a place in the national side.

"I'm losing sleep over this debut," said Maradona, who signed for Newell's last week, just a few days after Sevilla of Spain, his previous club, said they would block any moves by any other club to sign him.

But a week of secret negotiations between the Spanish and Argentinian football associations and the two clubs, seems to have resolved the situation amicably.

Maradona joined Sevilla at the start of the 1992-93 season after a controversial transfer from Napoli in Italy.

He consistently underperformed for the club, appearing overweight and missing a string of games through injury.

Then he left Spain before his contract was due to expire on June 30. Sevilla are still refusing to pay 1-1 million dollars, still officially owing on his contract.

But the EFE news agency has reported that the Spanish

federation has accepted guarantees of three final transfer payments to Napoli.

Maradona has shed over 12 kgs (26 pounds) in the last few months and says his love for the game has returned — even though at the end of June, he said he was thinking of quitting. But when Argentina were



DIEGO MARADONA

crushed 5-0 in Buenos Aires by Colombia in a World Cup qualifier earlier this month, the crowds chanted for Maradona's return.

"As I watched from the stands and heard the chants, I was swept away all over again," said the man who led his nation to victory in the 1986 World Cup final against West Germany.

Seven years later, Argentina will only qualify for next year's finals in the United States if they beat Australia in a two-

legged playoff.

Maradona has not been included in the squad for those two vital internationals, but he has not given up hope of a return to the national team.

He says that if he impresses with his new team, a call from national team manager Alfio Basile is possible.

"Basile hasn't called me, nor has the trainer, nor even the sponge-man," he said.

"Although physically I'm ready, first I have to prove I deserve to be part of the side."

If Maradona should ever play for Argentina again, it would complete an amazing comeback.

He faded from the international scene after Argentina lost the 1990 World Cup final to West Germany and was banned from soccer for 15 months on cocaine charges in 1991.

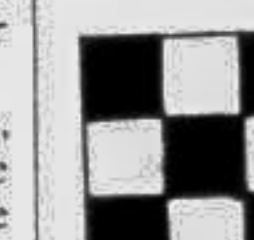
He resurged his career at Sevilla, but after less than a season he fell out with the club and possibly out of soccer for good.

Pele, the greatest player the world has ever known, and some observers believe, the only player ever better than Maradona when the South American was at the peak of his powers, does not believe Maradona can return.

Pele predicts his comeback will end in disappointment, that he won't be able to stand the pressure of fan's expectations.

"Pele's words deserve no credit," said Maradona. "Only time will tell."

Kasparov in amazing form



LONDON, Sept 22: Reigning world chess champion Garry Kasparov was in magisterial mood

after widening his already commanding lead over British challenger Nigel Short on Tuesday by winning Game Seven of their title match, reports Reuters.

Kasparov, 30, now leads the 24 game contest 5-1/2 to 1-1/2 with four wins and three draws. He needs only a 12-12 tie to retain his crown.

The crowd in London's Savoy Theatre erupted in applause when Short, 28, resigned after a game which followed a familiar pattern.

Kasparov played quietly in the opening despite the advantage of the white pieces, but quickly baffled watching experts who could not pinpoint where Short's game began to slide downhill.

"Kasparov's best game of the match, what a massacre," said English Grandmaster Raymond Keene.

Kasparov was persistently asked afterwards if the lopsided score damaged the credibility of the PCA (Professional Chess Association), which he and Short founded after world chess

body FIDE disqualified them in a dispute over match conditions.

Kasparov, a half-Jewish, half-Armenian Russian, could not extend any sympathy to those who might lose interest as

the champion promised to reveal big news from the PCA before the end of the match, with corporate sponsorship that would guarantee the vitality of fledgling organisation.

Kasparov was asked if he had known that Princess Diana, wife of heir to the throne Prince Charles, had been a spectator for the seventh game.

"I was told after the game. It shows that there is a lot of public interest, unfortunately, I paid too much attention to the game," he smiled.

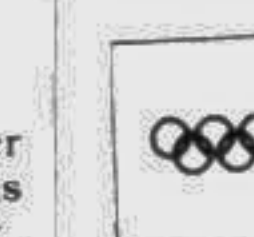
The Times newspaper is sponsoring the match, having raised a purse of £1.7 million pounds (2.62 million US dollars) with just over one million pounds (US dollar 1.5 million) going to the winner.

The official FIDE World Championship resumes on Wednesday in Amsterdam with Russian Anatoly Karpov leading 5-4 against Dutchman Jan Timman.

"I'm playing a World Championship match and I have to retain my title," he said. "I wanted to win in crushing fashion and if it is not as close as people want, I'm sorry, but there is nothing I can do for them."

He also had no patience for the suggestion of a reunification

All nock to knock Beijing out



MONTE CARLO, Monaco, Sept 22: With the crucial vote just a day away, the Sydney and Manchester

delegations took aim Wednesday at front-running Beijing and touted their cities as safe, stable venues for the 2,000 summer Olympics, reports AP.

Asked during a Manchester news briefing about China's human rights record, British Environment Minister John Gummer said this was a topic of legitimate concern for the International Olympic Committee in choosing a host city.

The real issue is whether it is an incentive or a prize for improving the treatment of dissidents," Gummer said. "I am sure there will come a time when Beijing will be a very suitable host for the Olympic Games. I don't happen to think that it is the moment now."

He also suggested that Beijing lacked the stable atmosphere that Manchester could provide.

Sydney and Manchester are considered Beijing's strongest rivals, while Berlin and

Istanbul, the other two candidates, are viewed as longshots. To win, a city must gain an outright majority among IOC's 89 voting members — the city with the fewest votes will be eliminated after each round in which there is no clear winner.

Prime Ministers Paul Keating of Australia and John Major of Britain were due in Monaco before Thursday's final presentations to the IOC.

Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller arrived Wednesday, installing herself on huge yacht in Monaco's port.

Sydney has tried to depict itself as the most stable and reliable host, as well as the candidate city preferred by most athletes.

John Coates, president of Australian Olympic Committee, noted that Australia had never boycotted an Olympics and was one of only three countries to participate in every Summer Games of the modern era.

"Australia is a peaceful and democratic society, free of terrorism, internal unrest and racial disunity," he said.

The chairman of Manchester's bid committee, Bob Scott, said the prospects for Thursday's secret balloting were "extremely difficult to read."

"We believe there will be many IOC members going into tomorrow's final presentations not finally or fully decided, or able to be shifted," he said.

"We think the final presentation will be crucial."

"All the hype that surrounds this event will have faded away and they will be faced with the real issues," Scott said. "We believe that Manchester will be very high in their thoughts and we believe we can win."

The Sydney delegation confirmed that it had conducted a poll of former Olympic gold medal winners indicating that 61 per cent favoured the Australian city for the 2,000 Games. Sydney officials decided not to release the poll, saying they might be accused of 11th-hour manipulations, but that didn't stop the British from complaining anyway.

"The most suspicious thing

you ever have is a poll you produce at the last minute," Gummer said. "If I were inventing a figure, this is about the figure I would invent."

At a posh sporting club away from the conference-center news briefings, the IOC continued closed-door work on various matters other than the 2,000 host city.

The IOC heard an upbeat report Wednesday from organizers of the 1994 Winter Games in Lillehammer, Norway, who said they could start competition immediately, except for the lack of snow.

The organizers acknowledged concern about possible protests by environmentalists regarding Norway's whaling industry.

"We are taking this seriously," said Gerhard Heiberg, president of the organizing committee. "We're taking all the necessary steps with the authorities... We hope it will fade away by the time of the Games but we are watching it very closely."

"But personally, I feel we should not give them support since the Chinese communists have used politics to intervene in athletic affairs, forcing us to change our formal title at the International Olympic Committee (from the Republic of China) to Chinese-Taipei," Tai said.

"Besides, Beijing has done all it can to stop Taiwan from joining international organizations, including the United Nations," Tai noted, saying, "For what they have done, I myself would feel it difficult to cast a vote in favour of them."

Taiwan takes Beijing's side

TAIPEI, Sept 22: Taiwan came out Wednesday in support of Beijing's bid to host the 2000 Olympics, but only from the point of view of racial camaraderie, a presidential spokesman said, reports AFP.

"For the love of all compatriots, we are happy to see that the Olympic Games can be held in Beijing in 2000," spokesman Raymond Tai said in a statement.

"But personally, I feel we should not give them support since the Chinese communists have used politics to intervene in athletic affairs, forcing us to change our formal title at the International Olympic Committee (from the Republic of China) to Chinese-Taipei," Tai said.

"Besides, Beijing has done all it can to stop Taiwan from joining international organizations, including the United Nations," Tai noted, saying, "For what they have done, I myself would feel it difficult to cast a vote in favour of them."

Sampras heads marquee names

PARIS, Sept 22: Wimbledon and US Open champion Pete Sampras heads the field as organisers on Tuesday announced the entries for the \$2.1 million Paris Open tennis tournament, reports AP.

All of the top 10 players are scheduled to play in the Nov 1-7 event at the Bercy Sports Palace on Supreme Court.

Last year, Boris Becker won his third Bercy title in the seven years of the tournament. He went on from there to win the ATP World Championship.



Argentine Gabriela Sabatini makes a backhand return during her first round match against Chinese Li Fang in the Nichirei women's tennis championship in Tokyo yesterday. Sabatini won 6-1, 6-2. — AFP photo