

Valediction forbidding mourning

MONTE CARLO, Monaco, Sept 24: Sydney was the right choice for the 2000 Summer Games, but China would be welcome to bid again for the role of host, the president of the International Olympic Committee said Friday, reports AP.

The Chinese tried to stretch out a hand of friendship, but they were portrayed differently... I felt a sense of siege coming here.

Sydney prevailed primarily because it won over the supporters of the two European contenders eliminated in the second and third round of voting, Berlin and Manchester.

Also, the Australians had developed excellent contacts within the IOC during unsuccessful bids by Brisbane and Melbourne for the 1992 and 1996 Games.

In the first round of Thursday's balloting, Beijing got 32 votes, Sydney 30, Manchester 11, Berlin 9, while Istanbul was eliminated with 7. In

the second round, it was Beijing 37, Sydney 30, Manchester 13 and Berlin dropping out with 9. In the third, it was Beijing 40, Sydney, 37, Manchester 11.

One of the IOC's 89 voting members, David Sibande of Swaziland, left the meeting room after the second round, reportedly summoned by home by his government. Samaranch said new rules might be drafted to prevent such departures, which in this case could have resulted in a tie vote.

Wu Jianmin, senior spokesman for the Beijing delegation, suggested China might try again for the 2004 Games.

"We're going to think about it," Wu said. "In life you cannot succeed the first time in everything. This is Beijing's first bid. Many cities bid several times."

"We are not discouraged, because we Chinese have a tradition: if you succeed, don't be cocky; if you fail, don't be disheartened. We will keep on participating in the development of the Olympics."

Asked about the future, Samaranch replied, "I will not push China to bid for the Games again — it is their own decision. But if China is bidding again, we will be happy. It is a very important country."

Samaranch reported that Brazilian and Argentine officials had contacted him about seeking the 2004 Summer Games. But he said there was interest from many other possible contenders as well.

Some IOC members felt 2000 was to soon for China to get the Games.

"I think Sydney didn't just win it because of the merit of the bid," said Kevan Gosper, an IOC vice president from Australia. "The question wasn't: Do you go to China? The question was: Do you go now? It was a matter of timing that favoured us."

Wei said China gained stature, even in defeat.

"Our most significant accomplishment here was that we made outside people understand Chinese people and culture," he said. "China used to be a mystery. Through the bidding process we succeeded in enhancing people's understanding."

But he indicated the Chinese wouldn't quickly forgive efforts by US congressmen to block Beijing's bid because of human rights issues.

"Certainly, very many Chinese felt very angry about that," Wei said.

Anticipating a hometown Games, China had been beefing up its sports programme, complementing its champion divers with record-shattering women runners and a host of other new stars. Following the IOC rebuff, its officials vowed to intensify the drive for gold medals at the Atlanta Games in 1996.

Australia also expects a sports boom.

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