

Of Romario

BARCELONA, Dec. 30: Romario's reported move to either Italy or Brazil has caused a wave of Romariomania here, according to sports daily *Sport* on Thursday, reports AFP.

Barcelona striker Romario, currently in Brazil on holiday, has however scotched talk of a move to Italy. "I will only go to eat pizzas and pasta. The day I leave Barcelona, I will go back to Brazil," Romario said.

Barcelona fans are almost desperate for the club to hold on to him, *Sport* further reported.

Romario, one of the stars in Brazil's fourth World Cup triumph in July, was set to meet the Flamengo Club president on Thursday.

But the approximate 12 millions dollars Flamengo would need to buy Romario, under contract at Barcelona till July 1996, could be a major stumbling block.

According to *Sport*, Massimo Moratti, who is about to take the reins of Inter Milan, said he was ready to buy Romario or Bulgarian teammate Hristo Stoichkov.

Moratti would be ready to let go of Dutch international Dennis Bergkamp, who interests Barcelona coach Johan Cruyff, for five million dollars. Moratti also suggested he would pay Romario a two-million-dollar annual salary, still according to *Sport*.

Romario has not lived up to his reputation following World Cup victory. Apart from a lower standard on the field, Romario also angered Barcelona officials after returning 23 days late for training at the start of the season. Cruyff then fined him 2,700 dollars.

Zoff still rates Gascoigne highly

ROME, Dec. 30: Lazio president Dino Zoff hopes that Englishman Paul Gascoigne can put his injury problems behind him in 1995 and finally prove himself in Italian soccer, reports Reuter.

"We're waiting for him, basically he's our (Roberto) Baggio," Zoff said in an interview with the Daily Corriere Dello Sport published on Thursday.

Gascoigne, who has not played since breaking his leg in a training accident last April, has suggested he would like to return to England at the end of the season but Zoff said that he still has a role to play at Lazio.

"Paul is an extraordinary talent, the best in the world if he's fit and in the mood," Zoff added.

Gascoigne, 27, has made just 39 league appearances since joining Lazio from Tottenham Hotspur more than two years ago.

The injury-plagued Englishman is hoping to return to action in March.

HK's fate in C'wealth Games Fed hands

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec. 30: It is for the Commonwealth Games Federation to decide whether Hong Kong can participate in the 1998 Games even though it will no longer be a British colony, an official said Friday, reports AP.

Hong Kong will be handed over to China in 1997, effectively disqualifying it from the Games, which bring together Britain and its past and present colonies, known as the Commonwealth. The Games are held once in four years.

The federation, whose officials are drawn from member countries, could give Hong Kong observer status or accept it as a full participating state, said Hashim Ali, the executive chairman of Sukom Ninety Eight Ltd, a company formed by the government to organize the 1998 Games in Malaysia.

Hashim was talking to reporters after accepting Telekom Malaysia Ltd as one of the official sponsors for the Games, which he said will cost 150 million ringgit (drs 58.6 million) to 170 million ringgit (drs 66.4 million) to organize.

Sukom has so far received sponsorship pledges worth 43 million ringgit (drs 16.8 million), he said.

He said all 67 member nations are expected to take part in the games, drawing a record 6,000 participants.

Huistra leaves Rangers

GLASGOW, Dec. 30: Rangers winger Pieter Huistra is leaving the club to sign for Japanese side Hiroshima in a 350,000-pound (525,000-dollar) deal, reports AFP.

The Dutch international was put on the Ibrox transfer list earlier this season because of the UEFA rule that restricts clubs to playing three foreigners in European competitions.

Ironically the move comes just as Huistra is enjoying an outstanding spell. "Rangers have been good to me but I am now looking forward to this fresh challenge," he said.



The Duchess of York shares a private moment with her daughters, Princesses Beatrice (L) and Eugenie, as they prepare for a skiing session in Klosters, Czech Republic on Dec. 29. The Duchess arrived on Dec. 28 for her annual winter break with her children. — AFP photo

Kim, Samaranch's successor?

SEOUL, Dec. 30: The man tipped to become the next president of the International Olympic Committee is a hero in his native South Korea for pushing the national martial art of taekwondo into the world arena almost single-handed, reports Reuters.

Kim Un-Yong, now IOC vice president, is credited with becoming a career diplomat, says he still hasn't decided whether or not to bid for the IOC presidency. "But I believe it is about time for the end of the western world's hegemony in taekwondo as an official Olympic sport. We are proud of him."

Kim, who once dreamed of becoming a career diplomat, says he still hasn't decided whether or not to bid for the IOC presidency. "But I believe it is about time for the end of the western world's hegemony in taekwondo as an official Olympic sport. We are proud of him."

Kim, who speaks six languages, is credited with uniting some 30 divisive taekwondo factions into a national organisation. In 1973, he set up the World Taekwondo Federation, based in Vienna.

South Koreans, meanwhile, are sure that Kim will take up the top job at the IOC.

"His name itself is a good visa," says taekwondo master Kim Boo-Haeng. "He has been well accepted in the international sports community. If he can keep that up, we South Koreans will be proud of ourselves again and be able to celebrate his inauguration as IOC president."

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