

Scottish Premiership United victors in Dundee derby

GLASGOW, Dec 13: A goal two minutes from the whistle by Portuguese star Joaquim Ferraz handed Dundee United a 1-0 victory Sunday at Tannadice Park to claim the derby honours over city rivals Dundee in the Scottish Premier League on Sunday, reports AFP.

It was the second time Ferraz had broken Dundee's hearts as he also struck to win the opening day clash between the two sides.

Dundee had the most of the play but failed to punish a sluggish United display and it appeared neither side would find the way to goal in a match which seemed headed for a goalless draw.

Both teams looked badly short of goalscoring flair in a game sorely lacking in entertainment value even if it never wanted for commitment with some often frenzied tackling.

But with only a minute remaining, Ferraz found time and space on the left-hand side to surprise Dundee for the second time this campaign with a cruel late blow.

The fortunate victory gained Dundee United third in the table, but their hopes of a UEFA Cup berth surely still depend on who manager Paul Sturrock buys to replenish his forward line.

Dundee United again turned to youngsters Steven Thompson and Stephen McConalogue in attack to somehow fill the void left by Billy Dodds' departure to Rangers -- but both struggled to impress.

However Dundee defender Lee Wilkie was the main loser of the evening, suffering a nasty head injury which forced him to be carried off for checks after just 15 minutes.

Keegan knuckles down

LONDON, Dec 13: England manager Kevin Keegan started an intensive search across Europe Monday for top-class opposition to face in preparation for the summer's Euro 2000 finals, reports AFP.

Keegan has already ensured that a friendly against Brazil is virtually confirmed at Wembley on May 27.

He must also find a smaller country or even club side to provide a final pre-tournament warm-up on June 3, with Malta -- who have a vote on the 2006 World Cup host country -- being a distinct possibility.

However, after being drawn against Germany, Romania and Portugal in Sunday's finals draw in Brussels, Keegan knows that is team need to face formidable European opposition on May 31 just before the tournament begins.

Germany had been one potential opponent -- with the Netherlands being another possible candidate -- but the Germans have been ruled out after England were pitted against them just five days after being drawn together in the World Cup qualifying draw.

"We won't be playing Germany now I don't think! Now we've got the draw we'll try and fix up that last game for the end of May," said Keegan.

Raja lift African Champions' League

JOHANNESBURG, Dec 13: Outsiders Raja Casablanca of Morocco defeated Esperance of Tunisia in a penalty shootout on Sunday to become African champions for the third time, reports AFP.

The second leg of the Champions' League final finished 0-0 at the Al-Menzah Stadium in Tunis and the Moroccan triumphed 4-3 on penalties to qualify for the first world club championship.

Raja will play Corinthians from hosts Brazil, Al-Nasr from Saudi Arabia and seven-time European champions Real Madrid from Spain between January 5-10 in Sao Paulo.

The Cup Winners Cup holders Africa Sports Club of Cote d'Ivoire next month for the African Super Cup, a trophy that eluded them two years when they lost a shootout against Etoile du Sahel from Tunisia.

Dismissed even by their coach, Argentine Luis-Oscar Fullone, as no-hopers, Raja succeeded where five other Champions League opponents of Esperance failed this year by holding them goalless in Tunis.

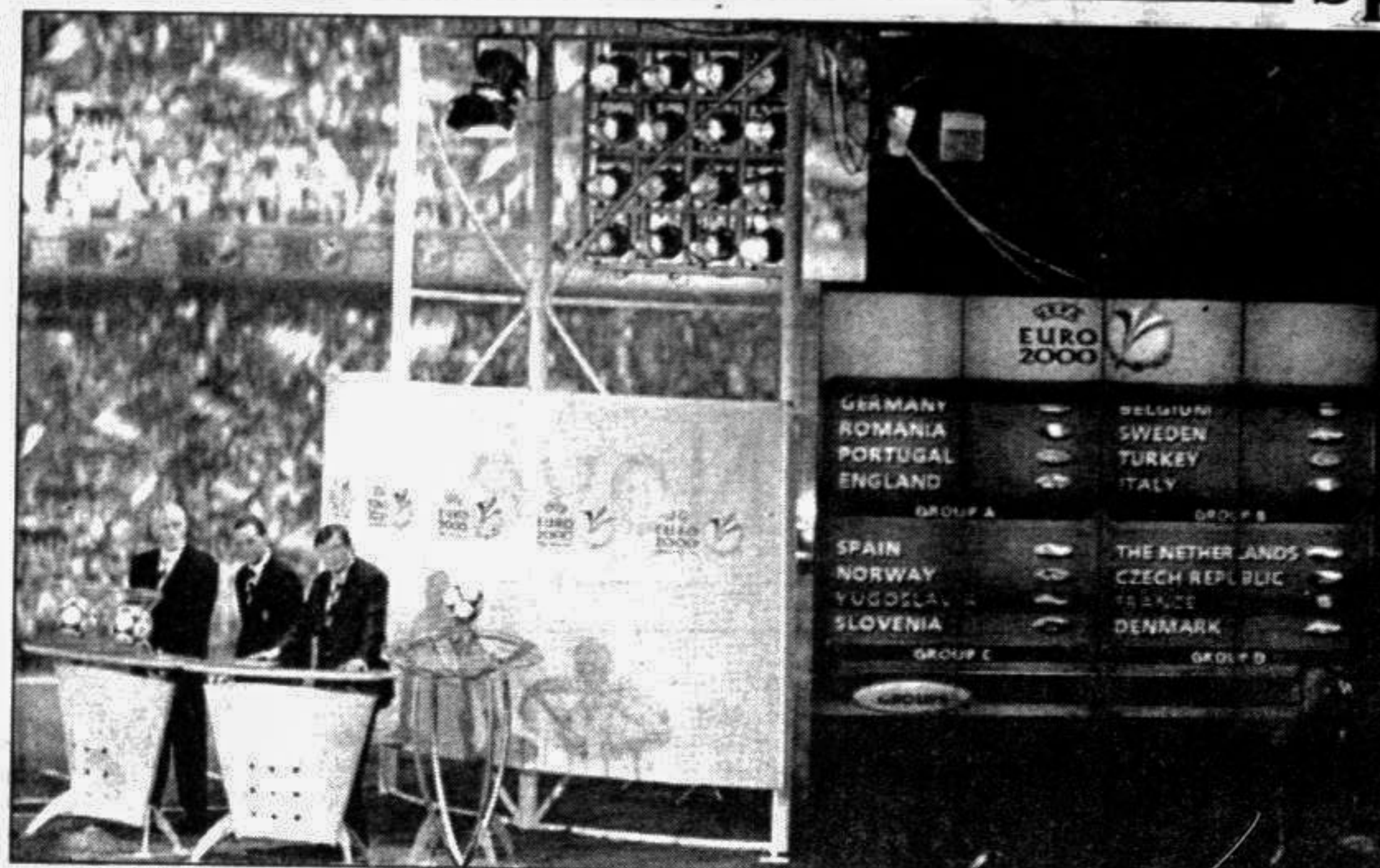
The Tunisians had scored two against Al-Mahalla of Libya, five against Al-Hilal of Sudan, three against defending champions ASEC of Cote d'Ivoire, five against Saint-Louisienne of Reunion and one against Dynamos of Zimbabwe.

Tradition also favoured star-studded Esperance as none of the six clubs held 0-0 at home in the first leg of previous Champions League finals survived.

Raja also needed penalties to succeed in 1989 against Mouloudia Oran of Algeria and in 1997 against Obuasi Goldfields of Ghana, and they maintained a Moroccan record of never losing a Champions League final.

Royal Armed Forces trounced Bilima of the Democratic Republic of Congo 6-3 on aggregate in the 1985 decider and Wydad Casablanca overcame Al-Hilal 2-0 in the 1992 final.

Raja will begin their defence of the cup next March against the winners of a preliminary round tie between Port Authority from Gambia and LPRC Oilers from Liberia.



Former Belgium star Paul Van Himst (L), Dutchman Johan Neeskens (M) and UEFA general secretary Gerhard Aigner during the draw of the Euro 2000 on Sunday. — AFP photo

No luck for joint hosts

England, Germany inseparable



BRUSSELS, Dec 13 (AFP): If England coach Kevin Keegan feels hard done by after being paired Sunday with eternal rivals Germany in the finals of Euro 2000 then he should spare a thought for counterparts Frank Rijkaard and Roger Lemerre, in charge of co-hosts Holland and world champions France respectively.

Certainly England's assignment -- they also play Portugal and Romania in Group A -- is a tough one. It came only five days after they were drawn alongside Germany in the qualifying section for the 2002 World Cup.

But Rijkaard, who makes his competitive debut as Holland coach in Euro 2000 and Lemerre, who had the unenviable task of succeeding World Cup winner Aimé Jacquet, both know their jobs are on the line in Group D.

The other two teams in that pool are the Czech Republic, runners-up in 1996 and with the best record in qualifying and 1992 continental champions Denmark. That pool will inevitably be dubbed "the Group of Death."

Both Lemerre and Rijkaard tried to play down their misfortune in being thrown in at the deep end in their first major tournament in charge.

Rijkaard, a key member of Holland's 1988 European Championship-winning team, said: "You always have to look very hard at your opponents, it does not matter who they are."

But the former Ajax and AC Milan midfielder is already under pressure following a dismal sequence of friendly results -- one win in 12 -- since he succeeded Guus Hiddink.

Lemerre too denied that he felt hard done by.

The man who was Jacquet's number two during that victorious France 98 campaign thought England's Group A was the most difficult pool.

He said: "Group A is a very difficult one. Our group is a very difficult one but I hope we can win it. Holland are playing at home, the Czechs are always difficult opponents and Denmark are always ambitious."

France may be world champions but they were less than impressive in qualifying, yet Lemerre remained upbeat.

He said: "Denmark (late replacements after Yugoslavia were thrown out for political reasons) did not even qualify for the 1992 tournament and they won."

England and Keegan, meanwhile, set their sights on another high stakes clash with Germany in the Belgian city of Charleroi.

It renews one of the keenest rivalries in football but with Romania and Portugal also in Pool A both England and Germany -- also rival bidders for the 2006 World Cup -- are guaranteed three tough matches.

England coach Kevin Keegan tried to play down any element of need to be the two former World Cup winners paired in Group A.

He said: "There are two teams that go through so I see no reason why both of us (England and Germany) can not go through."

"I would not talk about revenge but about a great game of football. I said to Erich (German coach Erich Ribbeck) 'Let the best team win.'"

With the individuals we've got like (David) Beckham, (Michael) Owen and (Alan) Shearer we have got a chance. "Romania beat us in the World Cup and I have a lot of respect for the Romanian team."

"Portugal are a great football side. Portugal play lovely football and that's what we are trying to do."

Keegan said Group D was his choice for "Group of Death". Ribbeck said he was wary of facing England.

"I wasn't exactly hoping for England. We will have to make a huge effort to land one of the top two places," Ribbeck said.

The two countries have a long standing rivalry that -- given the two countries have been on the opposite side in two World Wars -- has sometimes been tinged with animosity.

In the modern era that rivalry on the football pitch really began at Wembley in 1966 when England beat West Germany 4-2 in the World Cup Fi-

nal. The fact that England's crucial third goal scored by hat-trick hero Geoff Hurst was duobiously ruled to have crossed the line by Soviet linesman Tokif Bakhranov fuelled the controversy.

But since then the Germans have held the whip hand over England, progressing at their expense in the 1970, 1982 and 1990 World Cups.

Their victory on penalties in the 1990 tournament in the semi-final was repeated in the 1996 European Championships which made the victory all the sweeter for Germany as the match took place at the same Wembley Stadium where they felt they had been robbed 30 years earlier.

But the group is far from a two-horse race as Romania and Portugal are both formidable outfits.

Portugal coach Humberto Coelho said: "We are here to play football not to pick who we will play. It is normal that you will play good teams."

Spain's Group C will have a Balkan flavour with Yugoslavia, who saw off arch-rivals Croatia and Macedonia to qualify, being handed another grudge match with Slovenia although Norway also feature

in that group. Yugoslav coach Vujadin Boskov will also be duelling with two of his apprentices.

He coached Spain coach Jose Antonio Camacho in the Real Madrid side that lost the 1981 European Cup Final to Liverpool and also had Slovenia coach Srečko Katanec on his books when in charge of Italy's Sampdoria.

Boskov was keen to play down any suggestion that the Slovenia match could produce bad blood, saying: "It will be a great occasion against a team that has done exceptionally well to qualify."

Many believe Spain have the easiest pool but Camacho would have none of that.

He said: "The teams are quite even. We can not be happy or be sad but we just have to go ahead with every match."

Holland's fellow hosts Belgium open the tournament with a group B match with Sweden but have landed on their feet with Italy and Turkey their other opponents although the Italians are never to be discounted.

Italy coach Dino Zoff had no complaints about the draw, saying: "It's a balanced group. We'll be meeting the hosts, Belgium, a team clearly to be feared. Sweden who qualified for the finals in great style and Turkey, a very tough team -- as our club sides can testify."

Turkish club Galatasaray ousted AC Milan in the Champions League first phase and then Bologna in last week's UEFA Cup third round.

Turkish coach Mustafa Denizli told the Anatolia news agency that "we know it will not be easy -- but we will fight until the end and we have the chance to qualify for the next round."

Swedish coach Tommy Soderberg was cautious in his response, saying "it could have been worse."

Euro 2000 schedule

BRUSSELS, Dec 13 (AFP): Euro 2000 Finals' schedule following draw made here Sunday (all times GMT):

Group A (Germany, Romania, Portugal, England)

June 12 Germany v Romania (Liege 1600GMT)

Portugal v England (Eindhoven 1845)

June 17 Romania v Portugal (Arnhem 1600)

England v Germany (Charleroi 1845)

June 20 England v Romania (Charleroi 1845)

Germany v Portugal (Rotterdam 1845)

Group B (Belgium, Sweden, Turkey, Italy)

June 10 Belgium v Sweden (Brussels 1845)

June 11 Turkey v Italy (Arnhem 1230)

June 14 Belgium v Italy (Brussels 1845)

June 15 Sweden v Turkey (Eindhoven 1845)

June 19 Belgium v Turkey (Brussels 1845)

Italy v Sweden (Eindhoven 1845)

Group C (Spain, Norway, Yugoslavia, Slovenia)

June 13 Spain v Norway (Rotterdam 1600)

Yugoslavia v Slovenia (Charleroi 1845)

June 18 Spain v Slovenia (Amsterdam 1600)

Norway v Yugoslavia (Liege 1845)

June 21 Yugoslavia v Spain (Bruges 1600)

Slovenia v Norway (Arnhem 1600)

Group D (Netherlands, Czech Republic, France, Denmark)

June 11 France v Denmark (Bruges 1600)

Netherlands v Czech Republic (Amsterdam 1845)

June 16 Czech Republic v France (Bruges 1600)

Netherlands v Denmark (Rotterdam 1845)

June 21 Denmark v Czech Republic (Liege 1845)

France v Netherlands (Amsterdam 1845)

Quarterfinals

June 24 Amsterdam 1600: 1st Group A - 2nd Group B (E)

June 24 Brussels 1845: 1st Group B - 2nd Group A (F)

June 25 Rotterdam 1600: 1st Group D - 2nd Group C (G)

June 25 Bruges 1045: 1st Group C - 2nd Group D (H)

Semifinals

June 28 Brussels 1845: E - H

June 29 Amsterdam 1845: F - G

Final

July 2 Rotterdam 1800



Euro 2000 Group D managers (L-R) Denmark's Bo Johansson, French Roger Lemerre, Czech Republic's Jozef Chovanec and Frank Rijkaard of the Netherlands pose with the coveted trophy during the draw in Brussels on Sunday. — AFP photo

Pele's self assessment

BRUSSELS, Dec 13: With just 19 days remaining until the new millennium, Pele said here Sunday that he was the greatest sportsman of the century, reports AFP.

The Brazilian legend also took a swipe at the modern game's highly-paid stars, whom he considers to be sporting mercenaries.

Few would question that the Brazilian legend is the greatest player in the history of football, the world's most popular sport.

And most would agree that Pele -- born Edson Arantes do Nascimento -- is one of a handful of sportsmen to dispute the title of the greatest in any sport. Heavyweight boxing legend Muhammad Ali and American athlete Jesse Owens are arguably his biggest rivals for that honour.

But Pele, here in Brussels for the draw for Euro 2000, was adamant he deserved the honour.

Asked who he would choose as his sportsman of the century, Pele replied: "I have to stay with Pele, no doubt."

"When someone has played for his country at 16, won a World Cup at 17 and scores more than 1000 goals they deserve it."

"Until you find someone else who has done that then it must be me."

Pele revealed that his own sporting idol was his father, who died last year. He played professionally for Atletico Mineiro in the Minas Gerais region of Brazil and his son quipped: "When I was young my goal was to score more than five goals in one half as he did. My father did it but I never managed to do it. I always matched myself against him."

59-year-old, born in Tres Coracoes in Minas Gerais, scored 1279 goals in a 20-year career with Santos, New York Cosmos and the Brazil national team. He was a part of three Brazil World Cup-winning teams, being the key player in the 1958 and 1970 victories although his participation was limited through injury in 1962.

He was the victim of brutal defending in both 1962 and the 1966 tournament won by England.

He also won two World Club Championships with his club side Santos.

Pele had a dig at some of the modern game's highly-paid stars.

He said: "We see that a player plays for Sao Paulo and then kisses the shirt when he scores. Then he moves to Corinthians or Santos and scores for them and he kisses the shirt again. He loves the club because he earns more money."

EURO TIDBITS

BRUSSELS, Dec 13: England's David Beckham will be the man to watch in Euro 2000 -- or at least that is what Pele thinks.

Asked who the best player in Europe was Pele opted for the Manchester United midfielder.

The 59-year-old also mentioned another Englishman Michael Owen, Portugal's Rui Costa and Spain's Raul as men to watch in Holland and Belgium next summer.

BELGIUM BRACED FOR TROUBLEMAKERS

Belgium has adopted extra judicial powers to deter potential troublemakers. Euro 2000 -- and co-hosts Holland have also pledged a strong security policy.

Belgium is particularly sensitive to the issue of crowd violence as the last time it staged a major European football, the 1985 European Cup Final between Liverpool and Juventus, 39 fans died after a wall collapsed because of a stampede largely caused by rioting Liverpool fans.

England's momentous Group A clash between eternal rivals England and Germany, to be staged in Charleroi, will be one potential flashpoint that the Belgians will be particularly keen to control.

BENELUCKY TO BE ALIVE

Euro 2000 mascot Benelucky will have problems enjoying the action when Belgium and Sweden kick off the Millennium tournament next June.

The mascot -- a cross between a Dutch Lion and a Belgian Red Devil -- had problems finding his way around the Brussels Parc d'Exposition where the draw was held.

The designer seems to have omitted holes for the eyes and the hapless inhabitant of the garish costume had to be led around the hall by a young assistant.

He will be hoping that things are put right in time for the start of the real action.

Source: AFP



Active athletes, who were elected new International Olympic Committee members, (L-R) American Bob Ctvrtlik, Canadian Charmaine Crooks, German Roland Baar, Kazakh Vladimir Smirnov, Ukrainian Sergei Bubka, Italian Manuela Da Centa and Norway's Johan Olav Koss line up for photographs after the election in Lausanne, Switzerland on Sunday. — AFP photo

IOC okays all reforms

LAUSANNE, Switzerland, Dec 13 (AP): IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch smiled for the first time all weekend as he delivered the message the members longed to hear: The crisis is over.

"The problem we faced at the beginning of the year -- today we will say this problem is solved," Samaranch declared Sunday, then to bring the historic session to a close.

The International Olympic Committee ended a two-day assembly Sunday by adopting the final pieces of a reform package that officials hope will help restore public confidence in the group.

The session ended with the 100 delegates approving the most contentious of the 50 reforms: A ban on member visits to cities bidding for the games. Such perks were the root cause of the bribery allegations that threatened to topple the IOC earlier this year.

The reforms, all passed by overwhelming majority, were completed exactly one year after Swiss executive board member Marc Hodler triggered the biggest crisis in IOC history by blowing the whistle on Olympic corruption.

The scandal, centred on Salt Lake City's winning bid for the 2002 Winter Games, resulted in the expulsion or resignation of 10 IOC members.

Also enacted over the weekend were structural reforms establishing an age limit of 70 for new members and renewable, eight-year terms of office. The IOC also approved the appointment of 15 athletes, elected by their peers, as full members. Ten were installed Sunday.

"We promised to the world (we would) change, and we are delivering this change," Samaranch said. "The new millennium will see a new International Olympic Committee."

But first, Samaranch will have to convince critics in the US Congress that the changes are not just cosmetic.

The 79-year-old Spaniard will appear Wednesday before the House Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, which has been examining the issue of vote-buying in the Olympic bidding process.

Rep. Fred Upton, who will chair the hearing, welcomed the reforms but said he wants assurances they have substance.

"These reforms are an important first step toward returning some of the luster to the Olympic rings," the Michigan Republican said. "But we must make sure that these reforms do indeed have the teeth behind them to bring about real and lasting change."

Wednesday's hearing will give a chance to thoroughly review them, to ensure they're worth more than just the paper they're written on," he added.

"To make sure the mistakes of the past are not repeated, close supervision will be necessary not just for the coming weeks, but for many months to come."

Passage of the reform package was deemed crucial before Samaranch's Washington trip. Congressional leaders have threatened to strip the IOC of its tax-exempt status if it fails to make significant reforms.

Samaranch was cautious when asked about the hearing. He said he had no particular message for Congress and will merely answer questions.

Among those accompanying him to the hearing will be Anita DeFranz, an American IOC vice president.

"I hope (the reforms) will go down well in Congress," she said. "I hope they will look at all the work that was accomplished in 12 months -- I'm proud of what we've done. I think we ought to get credit for it."

But some members, annoyed at what they view as US political interference, think Samaranch shouldn't be going to Washington.

"You are the president of the IOC and are accountable only to the Olympic family," Greek member Lambis Nikolau said. "We have no lessons in morals to receive from anyone."

Sunday's session was dominated by debate on the issue of visits, the heart of the Salt Lake scandal.

Investigations showed members and their families were showered with more than \$1 million worth of cash, gifts, scholarships, free travel and other favours by the bid team.

Two proposals were on the table: One stated that visits are "not necessary" and the other allowed for tightly regulated visits organised and paid for by the IOC.

Thirty-six members spoke during the 2-hour debate. A number of them complained that a ban on visits would signal that the IOC didn't trust its own members.

"Our honour is at stake," said Austrian member Philipp von Schoeller.

Samaranch replied: "I trust the members 100 per cent." Samaranch then ignored parliamentary procedure to ensure he got his way. Instead of asking for a vote on the proposed ban, he announced: "Those in favour of visits, raise their hands."

Only 10, including Britain's Princess Anne, did so. There was one abstention.

Source: AFP

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