

England will recall that fateful day

LONDON, Mar 4: English football is due to pay a mark of respect to the victims of the Hillsborough tragedy who died 11 years ago, England's Football Association (FA) said on Friday, reports AFP.

On Saturday April 15, English Premiership matches will kick off at 3.07pm as a tribute to the 96 Liverpool fans who died on that day in 1989, crushed to death during the FA Cup semi-final against Nottingham Forest.

There will also be a minute's silence before the start of matches on the anniversary. Football League clubs will also be showing their respect for the dead of English football's worst tragedy.

It was at 3.07pm on April 15 1989 that the semi-final was halted and the full extent of the tragedy at the Leppings Lane end of Hillsborough began to emerge.

The announcement follows a proposal from the FA for the anniversary to be marked in a significant way.

Senior FA officials were recently in touch with representatives of the Hillsborough relatives before making their proposal to the clubs.

The FA's executive director David Davies said: "The Hillsborough tragedy shocked football throughout the world."

Lothar dwells on playing in Dubai

MUNICH, Mar 4: Bayern Munich's German international hero Lothar Matthaus, who will move to New York outfit MetroStars on March 10, is considering playing in Dubai after his stint in the States, he told Saturday's edition of *Die deutsche Zeitung*, reports AFP.

Matthaus said: "Perhaps I will stay longer in the United States but perhaps I will also do something totally different like for example go to Dubai, who have made me a very good offer."

Today Matthaus will play Stuttgart in what is likely to be his 46th and last Bundesliga match before he goes to the States.

But West Germany's 1990 World Cup winning captain and former FIFA world-player-of-the-year was only thinking about the future when he said: "New York will be a luxury for me. Of course I could say to myself: You could have stayed three more months at Bayern until the end of the season. But I have made my decision and I will stick to it."

More than just any game



SARAJEVO, Mar 4 (AFP): An honourable draw between two football clubs from the southern Bosnian town of Mostar, played out at Sarajevo city stadium, is being seen here as a step towards reunifying the bitterly divided city.

Muslim Velez of Mostar and Croatian Zrinjski drew 2-2 in a friendly game Wednesday in Sarajevo, after US ambassador to Bosnia, Thomas Miller, took the kick-off.

It was the first match between the two Mostar teams since the beginning of Bosnia's 1992-95 war.

"We shared the scores as we share power in the city (Mostar)," said one of Velez's supporters who would not give his name.

While broadcasting the match, Bosnian television ran a slogan saying that the game was a step towards the unification of the city.

Divisions in Mostar started in 1993 following the start of the war between Croats and Muslims. More than four years after the war ended, power in the city remains equally shared between the wartime enemies.

This game should have been played in Mostar," the veteran Velez goalkeeper, Enver Maric, was reported saying in the Sarajevo daily *Dnevni Avaz*.

I would like to believe that this game is a sign of a better life in Mostar," Maric added.

Velez supporters saw the game as a result of the political change in neighbouring Croatia where hardliners lost power in January polls, for the first time since the first free elections in 1990.

During the match they shouted the name of the newly elected moderate Croatian president Stipe Mesic.

Several hundred Velez supporters from Mostar, decked out in the club's red strip, came to Sarajevo to watch the game.

Velez, which was among the

ten best clubs in the former Yugoslavia lost its home stadium in the war. Their Bjeli Brijeg stadium remains under Croatian control.

"Now that the late Croatian president Franjo Tudjman is gone, we expect to play in Bjeli Brijeg soon," said Necko, a Velez supporter who came to Sarajevo to watch the game.

Fans of Zrinjski, founded during Bosnia's war, were not seen at the game.

If the game had been played in Zagreb (Croatia), Velez supporters would not have come either," Necko said.

The two teams were to meet in 1999, but the game was can-



NOSTALGIA: Superstar Ronaldo (L) and Jose Henrique (R) of Sao Cristovao Youth Soccer Club shake hands during the Brazil and Inter Milan striker's visit to the Rio club on March 3. Ronaldo began his career with Sao Cristovao.

—AFP photo

Sir Stanley cremated



STOKE-ON-TRENT, England, Mar 4 (AFP): One of England's greatest footballers Sir Stanley Matthews was cremated here Friday after an estimated 100,000 mourners in his hometown of Stoke-on-Trent had turned out to say farewell to their most famous son.

That number of people would have filled Wembley when Matthews was a player although the capacity of the na-

tional stadium has since been reduced.

The cremation followed a religious service -- the coffin was borne into church by four more English footballing legends: 1966 World Cup winners Sir Bobby Charlton and Gordon Banks, former England forward Nat Lofthouse and another legendary former England winger Sir Tom Finney.

And the people of Stoke were allowed to bid farewell to Sir Stanley with the cortège taking a long and winding route including a trip around the perimeter of Stoke's Britannia Stadium and a visit to the site of Stoke's now demolished former home the Victoria Ground, where Matthews starred as a player.

It also passed his former school in Wellington Road where Sir Stanley had started playing football, using coats for goalposts. On one occasion he was given sixpence by his headmaster for scoring eight goals for his school team in a 13-2 win.

Matthews died last week in hospital after a short illness at the age of 85.

His career was remarkable for many reasons. He won 54 England caps, was named 1956 European Footballer of the Year and, perhaps most remarkably, retired still at the top of his profession at the age of 50 in 1965 -- no other leading player has come close to that landmark.

That year he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II -- in those days a virtually unprecedented honour for a sportsman.

In retirement Matthews was something of a globetrotter. He coached in places as far apart as Malta and the South African township Soweto where he was known as the 'black man with a white face'.

A moving moment during the funeral service at St Peter's Church came when his grandson Matthew Gough read the famous poem "If" by Rudyard Kipling.

Several hundred Stoke fans had been allowed to fill the gallery of the Church and draped their scarves in Stoke's red-and-white colours over the balcony but 100,000 were estimated to have lined the funeral route.

It is a measure of his standing in his home town that so

many people turned out to bid farewell to a player.

Local resident Ellen Garside, 50, said: "It's a very sad day for the inhabitants of Stoke. Sir Stanley was synonymous with Stoke, we had him in our skin as if he was like a King. I don't think we would grieve as much even if the Queen had died."

Stoke is part of the conurbation of towns known in England as the Potteries, which have built their wealth on the china industry since the industrial revolution.

Sir Stanley was also briefly manager of the other professional club in the Potteries, Port Vale.

But whether names such as Josiah Wedgwood may be famous to connoisseurs of fine porcelain and china it is doubtful whether any of the pioneering craftsmen had the worldwide recognition of Sir Stanley.

It is perhaps a measure of the standing of Sir Stanley that the two clubs for which he starred -- Stoke and Blackpool -- have sunk into lower division obscurity in the intervening years.

The faded banner tied to the railings outside Stoke's modern Britannia Stadium summed up perfectly how the fans felt about the so-called Wizard of Dribble -- "We luv you, Stan."

The thousands of Stoke City fans were dressed in their Stoke shirts and scarves, to pay their final respects to Sir Stanley Matthews.

Leading American comedian Nick Hancock, himself a Stoke City fan, claimed Sir Stanley had done more to put the region on the map than even the famous potteries.

"When you went abroad and said you were from the Potteries, people would say they'd never heard of that," he said.

"But when you said Sir Stan, they everyone had heard of him."

"I've been to Iran, and my wife is Iranian, and that's happened."

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