

### The Collina joke!

MILAN, Oct 24: Italian football chiefs Monday came to the defence of their referee Pierluigi Collina after the bald-headed official found himself on the receiving end of a joke by Milan's Zeman, the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, reports AFP.

Zeman, visiting Milan, had made a quip that Italian-Czech relations had been damaged by the fallibly-challenged whistle-blower's award of a decisive late penalty to Holland in a Euro 2000 clash with the Czech Republic at the Amsterdam Arena won 1-0 by the tournament co-hosts.

But the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) did not see the funny side and sternly rebuked the Czech head of government.

"The remarks of the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic can not be considered as the wisecrack of a fan, however much he wants it to be," said the FIGC in a communiqué.

"The FIGC wants merely to remind that the day after the game - after seeing the TV images - the technical team of UEFA deemed Collina's decision to be impeccable."

"And some days later, in the final assessment of the tournament, UEFA said Collina was the best referee in the European Championships."

Zeman, visiting Milan on Monday had made a quip at Collina's expense when he told an audience including the Mayor of Milan Gabriele Albertini. "We only have one serious conflict with Italy."

"I will say only that the referee Collina at Amsterdam did not prove to be up to the job. But since Mr Collina does not happen to be from Milan, I can not make a formal protest to the Mayor of Milan."

### Victims to fight racism

MILAN, Oct 24: Two of Italy's brightest football prospects have joined the fight against racism in Serie A.

Perugia's outstanding prospect Fabio Liverani and Inter Milan defender Matteo Ferrari, also captain of the Italian under-21 side, are both from mixed Italian-African backgrounds and believe they have a positive role to play in the promotion of tolerance, reports AFP.

Ferrari, born in Algeria of an Italian father and a Senegalese mother, spoke out about his treatment at the hands of fellow players.

"Last Saturday I was insulted," said Ferrari. "It happened during the game. I do not want to say who it was because I replied with an insult and it was all finished after 90 minutes. The player in question asked for my forgiveness."

Liverani, subject of a big money bid from Fiorentina that was turned down by his club, was outstanding in Sunday's 3-1 victory over Parma and - being the son of a father from Rome and a mother from Somalia - he believes he is in a better position than most to understand the problems.

Liverani, 24, is actively involved in a campaign by Perugia's fans to abolish racism from Italian football - even the hardcore element, the Ultras, are backing the plan with the slogan "Ultras yes, racism no."

Last week Lazio's Yugoslav defender Sinisa Mihajlovic was banned for two matches by UEFA for verbally abusing Arsenal's French midfielder Patrick Vieira during a Champions League match.

Mihajlovic denied the abuse was racist but admitted making reference to the player's colour. A sizeable minority of Lazio's fans, meanwhile, racially abused Arsenal's black players throughout the match.

### A Brazilian's dream

TOKYO, Oct 24: Emerson, fighting for his dream of representing Brazil in the World Cup, has emerged as a rising star by helping Consadole Sapporo secure a place in the J-League First Division next season, reports AFP.

The 19-year-old striker from Rio de Janeiro, whose real name is Marcio Emerson Passos, scored his 30th goal of the season to beat Shonan Bellmare 3-0 last weekend, out of total 66 goals Sapporo have scored in 36 games so far.

Their weekend victory was the club's 29th win against three defeats and four draws to secure the top two places in the Second Division league.

Sapporo, guided by former Japanese national team head coach Takeshi Okada, will return to the top league for the first time since 1998.

And Emerson is almost certain to become the top goal scorer as he has a nine-goal lead above his compatriot Will of Oita Trinita with only four more games left in the season.

"My goal was to join the First Division league. I'm glad we gained points. I never felt happier before than when I heard the whistle at the end of the game," said Emerson.

"My next goal is to play in the First Division league and make Sapporo a stronger team," added Emerson, who is being hailed as "the fastest forward in Japan."

Emerson represented Brazil for the junior youth, youth and under-20 teams and played for Sao Paulo FC last year before coming to Japan with his fiancée on a loan basis till January next year.

# A lot at stake for Lazio



PARIS, Oct 24: Lazio, who suffered defeat in the Italian league at Verona at the weekend, can make up for it with a European Champions League victory at home to Ukrainians Shakhtar Donetsk on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Lazio conceded a draw to Arsenal last week to see the Londoners qualify for the second phase and a win against Shakhtar would also see them through to the last 16.

Swedish coach Sven Goran Eriksson, sidetracked by the interest in him in England for the manager's job, is still not sure who to pick in attack though Chile's Marcelo Salas and Italian Simone Inzaghi are likely to feature.

Lazio however will be without Yugoslav defender Sinisa Mihajlovic, suspended for two matches after insulting Arsenal's black players, and Patrick Vieira in particular, in their match last week.

Vieira said Mihajlovic had called him a "monkey", but the Yugoslav retorted that his opponent had called him a "gypsy".

Lazio skipper Alessandro Nesta, speaking to Italian president Carlo Azeglio Ciampi on Monday, said: "I am sure we will recover and get ourselves out of the situation we have put ourselves in."

In the other group B game, Arsenal host Sparta Prague with the luxury of knowing they have already gone through. Arsenal will be without Gilles Grimaldi who earned a three-match ban for violent conduct after elbowing Lazio forward Diego Simeone, who needed six stitches to a cut near his eye.

Real Madrid, who have already qualified for the second phase, are set to field a reserve team against Sporting Lisbon in

group A. Coach Vicente Del Bosque is likely to rest many of the team beaten by Barcelona in the Spanish league at the weekend, including Portugal's Luis Figo and Raul.

Striker Fernando Morientes is back to fitness, however, and is likely to make the team. Manuel Sanchis, 35, who holds the Real record for matches completed in European, could start at the Santiago-Bernabeu stadium.

Portugal's Francisco Da Costa is back to fitness following torn knee ligaments.

Danish keeper Jesper Christiansen says he is not scared of making his Rangers debut in their most crucial fixture of the season so far - at Sturm Graz of Austria.

Victory over Graz in the Arnold Schwarzenegger Stadium will mean Rangers are through. If they lose they will have to rely on other results next week.

Rangers manager Dick Advocaat signed 22-year-old Christiansen without ever seeing him play, which is not so surprising when you consider his first-team career at Odense, spanned just 12 matches.

But already the goalkeeper has proved himself to be a confident character.

Christiansen gets his chance because of the injury to first-choice Stevan Klos of Germany.

Olympiakos can earn their qualification from group C should they win at home against already-qualified Valencia and Dutch side Heerenveen and Lyon of France draw.

Olympiakos are set to bring in Lambros Choutos in attack in place of Brazilian Luciano after he scored three goals on Sunday in a friendly match against a Greek Second Division club.

Midfielder Stylianos Giannakopoulos is set to replace Peter Ofori-Quaye of Ghana and defender Dimitrios Mavrogeorgis should come in for Christos Koutis.

Another footnote of the match is that whoever scores first for Real will earn the 500th ever goal by the club in European football.

In the other group A game, Rudi Voller has his first match in Europe as Bayer Leverkusen coach following the sacking of Christian Daum on Saturday for failing a drugs test.

Leverkusen meet Russian champions Spartak Moscow, who need just a point from their remaining two matches to earn a ticket for the second round.

Spartak should field a full-strength squad as none of their

players were injured or booked last week.

Monaco have just two injury worries for their group D match at home to Turkey's UEFA Cup champions Galatasaray. Defender Bruno Irles has a knock to his ankle and Congolese striker Shabane Nonda is suffering rib pain and both are doubtful to start.

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### WEDNESDAY FIXTURES

<b>Group A</b>
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) v Spartak Moscow (Rus)
Real Madrid (Esp) v Sporting Lisbon (Por)
<b>Group B</b>
Arsenal (Engl) v Sparta Prague (Slo)
Lazio (Ita) v Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr)
<b>Group C</b>
Olympiakos (Gre) v Valencia (Spa)
Heerenveen (Ned) v Lyon (Fra)
<b>Group D</b>
Monaco (Fra) v Galatasaray (Tur)
Sturm Graz (Aut) v Glasgow Rangers (Sco)

# Probe into Daum drama



COLOGNE, Germany, Oct 24: The Christophe Daum affair took a new twist on Monday with Cologne prosecutors launching an inquiry after the former Bayer Leverkusen coach was sacked for failing a drugs test, reports AFP.

Daum, axed by Leverkusen on Saturday, was also dropped by the national team whom he was due to take charge in June this year.

The affair was sparked off in Munich newspaper Abendzeitung which quoted Bayern Munich manager Uli Hoeneß as saying Daum took drugs. However a hair sample which Daum hoped would prove his innocence in fact did the opposite.

Public prosecutor Regine Appenroth said Daum was suspected of having broken the law on the possession of illegal drugs.

Daum left Germany on Saturday and is currently in Miami, Florida, according to German press reports.

A former German international, 46-year-old William Hartwig, said he was certain Daum had taken drugs. "He did it that's for certain. I know," he said in an interview with German radio.

A task force by German football federation (DFB) is due to meet on Tuesday to examine the case. Bayern Munich vice-president Karl-Heinz Rummenigge heads the task force, which also comprises representatives from the main Bundesliga clubs.

Ecologist Christa Nickels, head of a German government anti-drug commission told the German press on Monday there was a lot of hypocrisy in the Daum case.

"In all sectors of society, people take drugs. To start decrying the drugs problem after the Daum case, as if we knew nothing about drugs and had only just found out, is irrational. There have always been



Interim Bayer Leverkusen coach Rudi Voller overseeing his charges practise on October 23. Voeller is also the interim coach of the German national team. —AFP photo

drug takers among high level athletes and football coaches.

"The discussions at the DFB have really bothered me. There has been speculation and manoeuvres, clearly motivated for political reasons before the new national coach is chosen. You get the impression it's all about power."

"That's annoying." Shares of Germany's largest energy company RWE, which chose Daum to promote their

image, dropped on Monday in the wake of the affair.

Meanwhile, new Bayer Leverkusen coach Voller, also the German national coach, is preparing his side for their Champions League match against Spartak Moscow on Wednesday.

Voller, who was already on Leverkusen's staff, was given the coach's job at Leverkusen after Daum's sacking.

# Anglo-German musical chairs



LONDON, Oct 24 (Reuters): Few jobs in world soccer come bigger than that of the England manager.

Managing Germany may just be one of them.

This week, however, both hot-seats are vacant, with two caretakers left to paper over the cracks.

The England job, a poisoned chalice ever since the team's World Cup victory 34 years ago, claimed its latest casualty earlier this month when Kevin Keegan walked out.

"I feel I fall short of what is required in this massive job," he had announced with painful honesty after his team's 1-0 defeat - to Germany - in their opening 2002 World Cup qualifier.

Keegan, booed off the Wembley turf by the same fans who had demanded his appointment, may have been partly right. His lack of tactical acumen and coaching know-how long been the target of criticism.

with foreign players and managers increasingly dominating the English scene - go hand-in-hand with unrelenting media scrutiny.

At least Frenchman Arsene Wenger, one of the favourites to replace England caretaker manager Peter Taylor, would know what to expect, after four years in charge of UEFA Cup finalists and 1999 English premier league runners-up Arsenal.

Significantly, only one of the bookmakers' three favourites for the job, Roy Hodgson, is an Englishman.

England have always liked to bracket themselves as a European soccer superpower with the Germans.

Their international records, however, bear no comparison. The Germans also expect a lot from their team, and with good reason.

They have won three World Cups while reaching six finals, and appeared in three other

semifinals. England boast one semifinal finish to go with their sole cup success.

In European championships, Germany have won three of five finals as well as recording one other semifinal finish. England's roll of honour is limited to two semifinals.

Until the weekend, Christoph Daum had been pencilled in to step into the Germany job next July. He was due to replace caretaker Rudi Voeller, who had stood in following Erich Ribbeck's ignominious Euro 2000 departure.

But when Daum failed a drugs test following persistent rumours about his private life, he was immediately released, first by his club Bayer Leverkusen, then by the German federation.

On Monday, the English Football Association (FA) and its German counterpart (DFB) were considering their next moves. Many of Europe's top managers, doubtless, were waiting for the phone to ring.

Wenger, ironically, had been linked with the German national side in May and had been quoted in the press as saying that he could imagine himself coaching the team one day.

So, Germany or England? Both are big jobs and both carry massive expectations.

### Hughes joins Blackburn

LONDON, Oct 24: Blackburn Rovers of the English First Division signed former Manchester United striker Mark Hughes on an initial contract of 18 months the Press Association reported Wednesday, reports AFP.

The Wales manager and former international forward has joined from Everton on a free transfer.

Rovers manager Graeme Souness does not believe Hughes' duties for Wales will affect his performances and the Scot has placed his new signing straight in the squad for Thursday night's First Division match against Tranmere.

Rovers chief executive John Williams said: "Mark has joined in training this morning and will play against Tranmere if selected."

The striker situation at Ewood Park is at crisis point with Matt Jansen, Nathan Blake and James Thomas all injured.

Souness has only two fit strikers available, in Craig Hignett and Egil Ostenstad, and has been linked with many players recently.

Hughes is the only player to have won four FA Cup-winners medals in the 20th century and in 1998 he was awarded an MBE for services to football.

### Zanetti's injury woes continue

MILAN, Oct 24: Inter Milan's Argentinian midfielder Javier Zanetti is facing almost two weeks on the sidelines after picking up an injury during Saturday's 3-0 defeat at Udinese, the club's press spokesman Sandro Sabatini revealed on the Italian First-Division side's website Monday, reports AFP.

That was only Zanetti's second game back in action after a three-month spell on the sidelines after injuring himself in his country's World Cup qualifying match with Brazil.

But an examination by Inter club doctor Franco Combi Monday revealed a severe strain to his right calf muscle and Zanetti will be unable to train for a week and is unlikely to play before the Serie A match at Verona on November 5.

There was better news for Inter's Turkish striker Hakan Sukur who trained normally Monday after missing the Udinese match through injury and Sukur could even make the UEFA Cup match with Vitesse Arnhem on Thursday.

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### Man City blank Southampton

LONDON, Oct 24: Manchester City secured their second away win of the season after beating Premiership strugglers Southampton 2-0 at the Dell on Monday, reports AFP.

Two clinical strikes from Paul Dickov and Danny Tiatto sealed the victory and kept the heat on Southampton boss Glenn Hoddle.

Dickov put the visitors in front in the 38th minute and Tiatto made things safe when he crashed home the second on the break moments before the full-time whistle.

George Weah's brief spell at Maine Road was a distant memory as Dickov produced a superb strike to put City ahead.

It was Dickov's form which kept Weah out of the team and persuaded the Liberian superstar to abandon City less than three months into a two-year contract.

In the first game since Weah's high-profile exit, Dickov doubled his Premiership tally with his second goal in successive games.

Jeff Whitley split the Southampton defence seven minutes before the break, and Dickov exploded into the space before sliding a precision finish past the despairing dive of home keeper Paul Jones.

Tiatto broke quickly to thump home the second in stoppage time and end Saints' hopes of finding an equaliser.

Southampton's Trond Solvedt (R) and Manchester City's Paulo Wanchope fight for possession during their Premiership clash at Southampton on October 23.



Southampton's Trond Solvedt (R) and Manchester City's Paulo Wanchope fight for possession during their Premiership clash at Southampton on October 23. —AFP photo

# Lee a 'Lion King' anyway



BEIRUT, Oct 24 (AFP): South Korean striker Lee Dong-Gook is known as 'The Lion King' but nobody - including Lee himself - seems to know exactly why.

Lee was the pride of South Korea here on Tuesday after scoring the golden-goal which dumped pre-tournament favourites Iran out of the Asian Cup in the quarter-finals.

But while Lee has been the cat's whiskers so far at the Asian Cup - joint top scorer with four goals from four matches - the mystery of his moniker remains.

Italian sprint cyclist Mario Cipollini is known as the 'Lion King' for his shaggy mane of blondish red hair.

And Jamaican sprint legend Merlene Ottey was dubbed the 'Lion Queen' after prowling 60 metres back down the track after false-starting at the 1997 World Championships.

The origins for Lee's earning of the sobriquet are unclear. "I'm not sure why I got the

name. I don't really know," said Lee.

Most seem to favour the simple theory that Lee rose to footballing prominence at around the same time as the Walt Disney flick of the same name was being screened in Korean cinemas.

Whatever the reason for the nickname, Korean coach Huh Jung-Moo isn't fussed as long as Lee can keep roaring on the pitch.

"He's an excellent player," said Huh in the wake of Korea's dramatic 2-1 victory on Monday. "He can score a goal just when it is needed."

But whether Lee will be in the hunt for more goals in the Asian Cup is uncertain.

Lee, 21-year-old, the subject of an approach by Italian Serie A side Perugia earlier this year, has been suffering from a long-term knee injury and is doubtful for Thursday's semi-final.

He only played on Monday after rising from the substitutes bench 17 minutes from time, coming on to play a part in one goal before hammering in the

110th minute winner.

"I am happy that I scored," said Lee. "We conceded the first goal but no-one thought we would lose, so every player fights until the last minute. My knee is still a problem but I will do my best to recover."

Korea play the winners of Tuesday's Saudi Arabia-Kuwait quarter-final in the last four.

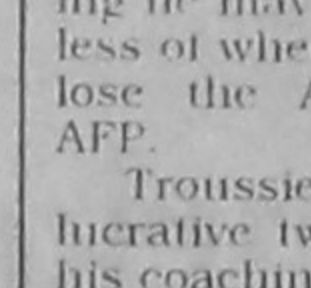
With or without Lee, beleaguered Korean coach Huh - who tendered his resignation after the Olympics only to have it refused - has plenty of reason to approach the semi-final with confidence.

The Koreans, who had only sneaked into the last eight by finishing as one of the two best third placed teams, came up with the goods when it mattered to beat Iran.

Huh's tactic of packing the midfield and man-marking Iran's Asian footballer of the year Ali Daei worked to perfection.

"I tell the players to keep going until the final whistle, that they should never give up," he said.

# Troussier sparks off a storm



BEIRUT, Oct 24: Japan coach Philippe Troussier has reignited speculation over his future, hinting he may quit his job regardless of whether his team win or lose the Asian Cup, reports AFP.

Troussier - who signed a lucrative two-year extension to his coaching deal on September 8 which will see him take charge of Japan for the 2002 World Cup - said he is now unsure of his future plans.

The 45-year-old Frenchman, known as the 'white witch doctor' for the magic he wove during a nine year stay in Africa, said merely guiding Japan through the first round of the 2002 World Cup would not satisfy him.

"If we win the final I am going to sit back and assess the situation," he said.

"I don't really think hanging around another two years just to coach them into the second round with a win and a draw is enough of a challenge."

Besides who remembers the name of the coach that got Nigeria into the 1994 second round? he added.

Troussier, who took over the Japanese post after the last World Cup, also admitted he didn't think he was good at taking them onto the next stage - they "needed to reach in their

climb up the footballing ladder.

"I think I am very good at taking on teams who are at an apprentice stage and are not at ease with each other," he said.

"So I would be good at the moment for say the England or Brazil teams but not for the French one because they are already at another level and I am perhaps not the best person for teams that have succeeded."

"So it will be I think with Japan if we take the trophy.

"For me I will have done the job I feel I can do but will not be able to take them on from there... whereas someone like Arsene Wenger would be, although I don't think he could do the job I do with teams that are in a middle of a crisis," he added, referring to the Arsenal coach who has been constantly linked with the Japan job during Troussier's reign.

Troussier said for him winning the Asian Cup was a personal challenge.

"It is true that despite my success in Africa I never won the African Nations Cup so for me personally winning here will be important," he said.

"Besides I've seen the trophy and it is really beautiful although I didn't dare touch it I hope to on Sunday though!" he added.

Troussier, whose proudest moment came when he took poverty striker Burkina Faso to the 1998 African Nations Cup semi-finals where they led

ongo 4-1 only to lose on penalties, also revealed some of the frustrations of coaching Japan.

"I sometimes wish the players would be a bit more emotional," he said.

"If this had been an African team and they had enjoyed the results they have had here (won two drawn one) they would be singing and climbing up ladders with joy."

"With the Japanese players all I detect is sadness and a feeling that three weeks is too long to be away from home and they want to get back there as soon as possible," he added.

He also took issue with his federation who allowed a technical committee to observe matches and pass their commentaries on without even consulting him.

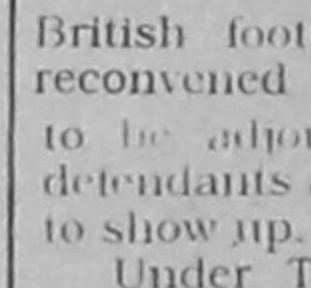
"I don't even know who sits on this committee and passes these comments on," he said.

"Fortunately they don't turn up to watch training but nevertheless their comments could have a negative effect on morale."

"It's not so much them I take issue with it is more with the Federation for allowing such a reality to exist."

"I said to them the Federation if they wanted to get involved in selecting the team then they should also assume responsibility for the results. But they replied no it is for you to assume that responsibility!"

# Court adjourns case



ISTANBUL, Oct 24: The trial of 20 Turks charged with involvement in the stabbing to death of two British football fans in April reconvened here Monday only to be adjourned after several defendants and witnesses failed to show up, reports AFP.

Under Turkish law, defendants who are not held in custody are not obliged to appear in court.

The two British fans - Kevin Speight, 40, and Christopher Loftus, 36 - were fatally stabbed during street clashes ahead of a European Cup tie on April 5 this year between Galatasaray and Leeds United.

The trial will resume on November 28, when the court hopes to be able to hear the cases of four of the accused who have yet to appear before the courts.

The Police must summon those charged, but they have no obligation to appear in court, Sukri Alpars