

## Coelho new Moroccan coach

RABAT, Oct 28: Former Portugal coach Humberto Coelho, who resigned after the Portuguese lost their Euro 2000 semi-final to France, has been appointed coach of Morocco, the Moroccan Football Federation (FRMF) confirmed Wednesday, reports AFP.

Coelho replaces former French-Polish coach Henri Kasperczak sacked on September 20 following a string of poor results.

Kasperczak replaced Frenchman Henri Michel last February but failed to bring success to the football-mad country and oversaw a humiliating 2-0 defeat at the hands of African minnows Gabon on September 2.

A statement issued by the FRMF Wednesday said that Coelho was elected unanimously after a six-hour meeting chaired by General Hosni Ben Slimane, FRMF president.

Coelho is expected here in the coming days to sign his contract.

## Asprilla loaned

RIO DE JANEIRO, Oct 28: Colombian international striker Faustino Asprilla has been loaned by Palmeiras to fellow Brazilian First Division side Fluminense till June this year, Fluminense said on Friday, reports AFP.

The 30-year-old Asprilla, under contract with Palmeiras till 2002, will join his teammates at the Rio de Janeiro club on Monday.

Asprilla, known as much for his discipline problems as for his creative football, left Palmeiras last month after being arrested drunk and having fired shots into the air in a public place in his home town of Tuluá in south west Colombia.

Negotiations with several Arab clubs did not work out and Asprilla returned to Palmeiras two weeks ago.

The former Newcastle player, who has been an international for 10 years, is one of the best ever strikers to come out of Colombia.

## Vilarinho Benfica's new chief

LISBON, Oct 28: Manuel Vilarinho, a 52-year-old businessman, has been elected president of Portuguese First Division club Benfica following a vote count Saturday from Friday's election, reports AFP.

Vilarinho received 62 percent of the vote by 21,804 club members against just 38 percent for his opponent, outgoing president Joao Vale, who had been in the post for three years.

Vilarinho has promised to boost the squad with two Brazilians - Fluminense playmaker Roger and Galatasaray striker Mario Jardel, who only joined the Turks in the summer after several highly successful seasons at Porto.

Former European champions Benfica are desperate to get back into the big time having won the last of their 27 Portuguese titles in 1994.

Last season they saw city rivals Sporting Lisbon win the crown.

Benfica are currently eighth in the table.

## Houllier hits back

LONDON, Oct 28: Liverpool manager Gerard Houllier has launched a furious attack on former Everton skipper Kevin Ratcliffe following a verbal assault on Nick Barmby in the build-up to Sunday's Mersey derby battle, reports AFP.

The former France boss is angry with Ratcliffe, now boss at Shrewsbury, for criticising Barmby's shock summer move from Everton to Liverpool.

And Houllier feels that such comments from Ratcliffe could raise security problems at Anfield for the match.

Houllier said: "I was disappointed in the attack on him by Kevin Ratcliffe. He's also a manager and this could happen to him."

There was no point in tackling the issue, which is a very sensitive one particularly regarding the security in the stadium. It was very unfair on the boy."

In Ratcliffe's column in a local newspaper, the one time Wales star claims that Barmby "deserves everything he gets" from Everton fans at Anfield.

It is the first time Barmby has had to face the supporters of his former club following the acrimonious 6-million-pound (9 million dollars) move across the city to Liverpool in the summer.

## Iraq fires its soccer fed

BAGHDAD, Oct 28: The Iraqi Football Federation has been disbanded following the national side's elimination in the Asian Cup, Baghdad media sources reported today, says AFP.

The team lost 4-1 Tuesday to Japan in a Beirut quarter-final and the performance was slated by the Iraqi press.

The head of the outgoing federation is Uday Saddam Hussein, eldest son of the Iraqi president and who is also president of the Iraqi Olympic Committee.



Chinese football officials celebrate becoming the hosts for 2004 Asian Cup after a meeting of the Asian Football Confederation in Beirut on October 27.

—AFP photo

## 2004 Asian Cup in China



BEIRUT, Oct 28:

China won the right to host the 2004 Asian Cup here Friday following a vote by the Asian Football Confederation executive committee.

Lebanon by the powerful west Asian block.

On winning the 2004 vote China's 18-strong delegation - who have been in Lebanon campaigning for their bid throughout the Asian Cup - burst into roars of delight.

Zhang Jilong, vice-president of the China Football Association, described the win as "totally deserved."

"It is time China staged the Asian Cup. We have a very good bid and we will put on an excellent tournament, we totally deserved this," Zhang said.

"Many people worked very hard for this," he said.

Peter Velappan, general secretary of the AFC, said China's size made it the logical venue for the showpiece Asian football tournament.

"China had the best bid and they had the most organised presentation," he said after congratulating the winning bidders.

I think with all the problems there have been in Lebanon - the problems with the stadia, the crowd figures, the promotion of the tournament inside Lebanon - a few people from west Asia who pushed for Lebanon last time maybe feel a bit guilty about what happened in 1996," he said.

Thailand officials were gracious in defeat.

"We applaud China and their bid, they did very well," said Viji Getkaew, president of the Football Association of Thailand.

Fears had been raised by opponents of the bid that the distances between the cities would make travelling for matches expensive and costly.

## Troussier doesn't buy it



BEIRUT, Oct 28:

Japan's charismatic French coach Philippe Troussier played down his side's favourites tag for Sunday's Asian Cup final here on Saturday, declaring that there were reasons why the Saudi Arabians should be instead, reports AFP.

The 45-year-old, known as the 'white witch doctor' for the success he enjoyed in a nine year stay in Africa, admitted the only remedy for Japan to counter this was to stick with their offensive game-plan which has brought them 20 goals in five matches.

"Finally and most importantly no Far Eastern team has ever won the trophy when it has been played in the Middle East," he added.

However, Troussier, who praised his players for their professional play throughout the tournament, said that there was one particular quality in the Japanese that was reassuring to him.

"It is true sometimes I complain the players are not emotional but it is I can see also a strength," he said.

"Because they do not get stressed like European players do prior to a big match and sometimes I believe they don't even know that they have a match the next day as they are in 1992 to seal their first crown."

"Sure we beat them 4-1 in the first round and that is useful but it is clear one shouldn't consider it an advantage," the former Cote D'Ivoire, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and South Africa coach said.

"Firstly this is a final and it is 50-50 no team starts with more of a chance than the other.

"Secondly the Saudis have changed their coach, thirdly

## Hitzfeld likes the idea



BERLIN, Oct 28:

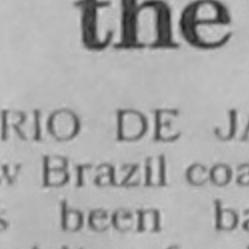
Bayern Munich coach Ottmar Hitzfeld is warming to the idea of becoming German coach, although his club have insisted he will not be leaving until at least 2003, according to Monday's edition of Der Spiegel news magazine, reports AFP.

"When you have as much experience as I do of being a club coach the job of national coach can represent an entirely new challenge," Hitzfeld told Der Spiegel.

"I would no longer have 60 matches a year to cope with but only ten. But each of those ten would be decisive ... ten matches a year is about enough when you're getting on a bit," said Hitzfeld, who lifted the European Cup with Borussia Dortmund three years ago.

Daum was sacked as Bayer Leverkusen boss last weekend after failing a drug test and the German Football Federation immediately withdrew their offer for him to take over the national side next June.

## Leao pays the price



RIO DE JANEIRO, Oct 28:

New Brazil coach Emerson Leao has been banned from his first match in charge, reports Reuters.

Leao was handed a 20-day suspension by a Brazilian disciplinary commission for insulting the referee during a domestic match with his club Sport Recife.

The volatile coach was sent off after the incident, which happened before Leao took charge of the national squad last week.

The commission said the suspension would include Brazil's home World Cup qualifier against Colombia on November 15.

Leao, Brazil goalkeeper at the 1974 and 1978 World Cups, replaced Wanderley Luxemburgo, sacked in September after poor results with both the Olympic and senior teams.

## Bergkamp thankful

LONDON, Oct 28: Dennis Bergkamp here Friday thanked Arsenal's fans for making him feel wanted at the English Premiership club, reports AFP.

The Dutchman claimed earlier this week he had been shown "a lack of respect" by the club over contract negotiations.

But Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has moved quickly to make sure the striker's demands are being listened to, while Bergkamp admits he was touched by the fans' show of support for him during the Champions League 4-2 win over Sparta Prague.

The 31-year-old came on as a second-half substitute, and even while he was warming up to come on to Highbury fans chanted his name.

"I must thank the fans for their backing at this time," Bergkamp told his website.

"I've had a lot of e-mails and messages of support, and the ovation I received on Wednesday was just incredible."

"I must admit I wasn't sure what would happen. But I got massive support, and it was without meaning to be dramatic - very emotional for me. I've seen and been through a lot in my career, but that was a big moment."

Bergkamp revealed: "I'm much happier now after the problems with my contract negotiations earlier in the week. To me, the situation is much clearer now."

"Mr Wenger has spoken to me and Mr (David) Dein, Arsenal vice-chairman has spoken with my agent. Hopefully, we'll sort out the situation soon. At least we're talking and on the same wavelength."

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## ZZ picks up 5-game ban



NYON, Switzerland, Oct 28: Juventus' midfielder Zinedine Zidane has been suspended for five matches for head-butting a German player, European football's governing body UEFA said here on Friday, reports AFP.

But this time there was no comeback for Zidane after Kientz received a fractured cheekbone and concussion, putting him out of action for two weeks, as a result of the clash.

Zidane was in contrite mood earlier.

"What can I say? I am supposed to set an example to young players. So Tuesday's incident sits badly with that.



ZINEDINE ZIDANE

The Frenchman, star of the 1998 World Cup-winning squad as well as the Euro 2000 championship side, had feared at least a three-match ban after he head-butted Hamburg's Jochen Kientz during the Italian side's 3-1 Champions League home defeat by the Germans last Tuesday.

But UEFA made an example of him as they clamped down hard for what was a second offence.

Zidane, whose red card was the tenth of his career, was also dismissed against Spanish Primera Liga champions Deportivo La Coruna at the Stadio delle Alpi earlier in the tournament.

UEFA reduced his ban on that