

Brazilian club owners in thick soup

BRASILIA, Nov 30: Brazilian football club owners could be jailed for irresponsible behaviour, congressional inquiry heard. Alvaro Dias suggested yesterday, reports Reuters. "If a club president spends and spends and lands his club in debt, that would be a crime," he said. "He not even have to be guilty of corruption."

Dias said he was confident the investigation will provide sweeping changes in the chaotic national game. "I'm confident this will provoke radical changes in Brazilian football," he said. A second consequence, he predicted, would be that the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF), currently an independent body, could become publicly run.

The inquiry in Brazil's Senate is one of two which is probing the country's so-called "national passion" following a year of scandals, domestic chaos and poor results at international level. It is concentrating its investigations on club finances, the CBF and the actions of players agents.

It wants to discover whether clubs are paying taxes and what happens to the money paid to them when top players are transferred abroad.

Today, it is due to interrogate former national team Wanderley Luxemburgo, who has been accused by a former business associate of taking commissions on the sale of players.

A second investigation in the lower house is focusing on the relationship between the Brazilian national team and sponsors Nike. It wants to discover how much influence the sportswear giant has in the running of the team.

"Football moves millions of dollars and the nation loses because of bad administration in football," Dias said.

The Brazilian Football Confederation is a private entity but it is administering a matter which is of public interest. There is nothing which Brazilians get more passionate about than the national football team.

MU takes it for granted

LONDON, Nov 30: English Premiership leaders Manchester United are so confident of reaching this season's FA Cup final that they have already booked their hotel, British tabloid The Sun reported Wednesday, reports AFP.

United have reserved 25 rooms at the Vale of Glamorgan Country Club, close to the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff, where the final will take place.

The home of Welsh rugby will host the FA Cup final for the very first time as Wembley is being demolished to make way for a new 475-million-pound (665-million-dollar) national stadium, due to open in 2003.

United, who were heavily criticised for pulling out of last season's competition to take part in the inaugural World Club Championships in Brazil, have not yet kicked a ball in this season's FA Cup.

Premiership clubs will enter the competition in the first week of January, when the third round stage takes place.

United's hotel booking runs over four days and they are due to arrive on the Wednesday before the final on May 12, 2001.

A Millennium Stadium spokesman told the Sun: "They're obviously very confident of reaching the final."

Fans fined for ETA slogans

MADRID, Nov 30: Two football supporters were fined 1,300 US dollars for shouting slogans in favour of ETA, the Basque separatist group, during a one minute silence in honour of an ETA murder victim, reports AFP.

The Spanish football federation's Anti-violence Commission felt that the two had "incited violence" before Sunday's First Division match between Real Sociedad (Basque country) and Valladolid.

The two were also banned from all sports stadiums for a period of three months.

Rehagel taking over Austria Vienna

BERLIN, Nov 30: Otto Rehagel, the former coach of German side Kaiserslautern who resigned on October 1, is poised to join Austrian side Austria Vienna, according to German press reports Wednesday, reports AFP.

The president of Austria Vienna Frank Stenach recently offered the job of sports director to the 62-year-old Rehagel when Friedl Koncilia was fired following a series of disappointing results, according to German newspaper Sueddeutsche Zeitung.

Nicknamed "king Otto", Rehagel has already won three German league titles, twice with Werder Bremen (1988 and 1993) and once with Kaiserslautern (1998).

Austria Vienna currently sit third in the league table five points adrift of FC Tyrol.

EUROPEAN FOOTBALL SCENE

Nov 30 (Reuters): Inter Milan's awful run of form continued when they suffered one of their worst defeats ever in the Italian Cup while in Germany. Bayer Leverkusen's unbeaten run in the German Cup came to an end during Thursday's action in Europe.

ITALIAN CUP ROME: Parma thrashed Inter Milan 6-1 in quarter-final first leg match yesterday to hand Marco Tardelli's side one of the worst defeats in their history and compound a dismal start to the season.

Inter had not suffered a five-goal defeat since they lost a Milan derby in the same competition on January 8, 1998. They had not conceded six goals in any competition for years.

They have now lost nine of their last 10 matches at Parma, who are unbeaten in the Italian cup since June 1995.

The Milan giants, who have not won a domestic trophy for 11 years, were knocked out of the Champions League by Sweden's Helsingborg in August and are ninth in Serie A with just three wins from eight matches.

Parma's goals came from six players of six nationalities. Argentine midfielder Nestor Sensi (18), France's Johan Micoud (33), Colombian teenager Johnnie Montano (34) and Brazilian striker Amoroso (39) put the result beyond doubt well before halftime.

Uruguayan Alvaro Recoba then pulled a goal back for Inter before the break with a superb left foot volley from 25 metres.

But Inter's defence was still socking in the second half and Ghana's Stephan Appiah scored Parma's fifth in the 53rd minute after fine approach work from Montano and Amoroso.

Italian Luigi Sartor - a former Inter player - rubbed salt into his ex-side's wounds by adding a sixth in the 61st minute after a woeful misunderstanding between the visiting defenders.

Serie A champions Lazio were five minutes away from defeat against Udinese who went 1-0 up through Margiotta in the 47th minute.

But Yugoslav international Dejan Stankovic equalised in the 85th minute and Czech Pavel Nedved fired in the winner two minutes later.

GERMAN CUP BERLIN: SC Freiburg ended Bayer Leverkusen's unbeaten run with a 3-2 German Cup

third round win yesterday. Leverkusen, who had gone 13 competitive matches without defeat - the last four under the guidance of new coach Berti Vogts - opened the scoring through Brazilian Robson Ponte in the 23rd minute.

But mid-table Freiburg fought back to a penalty from Georgian Levan Kobiasvili in the 34th minute and an effort by Sebastian Kehl two minutes later to lead 2-1 at the interval.

Former Germany striker Ulf Kirsten put the league leaders back in contention in the 74th minute but three minutes later Freiburg's French striker Regis Dorn hit the winner.

"We played brilliant football for the first 30 minutes but then we helped our opponents with our own mistakes," said Vogts. "We can only blame ourselves but all things considered, Freiburg deserve to go through."

Schalke 04 reached the quarter-finals by beating Borussia Dortmund 2-1 - their

second consecutive victory over their Ruhr valley rivals after a 4-0 league demolition in September.

Giuseppe Reina put Dortmund ahead after three minutes, beating Oliver Reck from close range after the Schalke goalkeeper had failed to clear an effort from Lars Ricken.

Schalke equalised three minutes later with a superb header from a corner by Dane Ebbe Sand and went 2-1 up through Dutchman Nico Van Kerckhoven three minutes from the break.

Two goals from Mike Rietpietsch helped VfL Bochum thrash nine-man TSV 1860 Munich 5-0 in the other tie between first division clubs.

The Munich side were 1-0 down when they lost defender Marco Kurz for a second bookable offence in the 60th minute. Norwegian Erik Mykland followed him off for a vicious tackle on Yildray Basturk two minutes later.



Robson Ponte of Bayer Leverkusen (in the foreground) is in control against Freiburg's Zoubaier Baya during their German Cup clash at Freiburg on November 29. —AFP photo

French First Division

Clemente's winning start

PARIS, Nov 30: Crisis-ridden 1993 European Cup winners Marseille gave new coach Javier Clemente a 2-1 win on his debut over St Etienne - coached by another emigre from the Spanish league John Toshack - to lift themselves out of the bottom three on Wednesday, reports AFP.

A frenetic final 10 minutes saw former world player of the year George Weah give Marseille the lead only for Laurent Huard to level two minutes later, but another defensive error by Les Verts seconds later let in Brazilian striker Adriano for the winner.

"There are several things to work on but the three points will be important for morale," 50-year-old former Spanish national coach Clemente said.

At the other end of the table Bordeaux stayed top after drawing 0-0 with Bastia - their second successive scoreless draw - but only thanks to Lyon coming from 2-0 down to draw 2-2 with second-placed Sedan.

Two players were sent off - Steve Marlet, scorer of one of Lyon's goals, and Sedan's Brazilian central defender Oliveira.

Bordeaux, champions in 1999, lead Sedan by a point while Nantes moved up to second with an impressive 3-1 win, their fifth in six matches over

champions Monaco, who had captain Martin Djeto set off and are on a seriously bad run with five defeats in their last six.

Weah scored 10 minutes from time as Djemel Belmadi set him free after he had seized on St Etienne captain Jean-Guy Wallemme's wayward pass and the veteran Libertain striker outpaced the defence to shoot home.

Les Verts levelled through the unmarked Huard's header but then Marseille retook the lead after another dreadful error in the visitors defence and Adriano pounced to shoot into the net from close range.



Sedan's Pius Sielenu Ndiefi (R) and Edmilson of Lyon fight for possession during their French First Division encounter on November 29. —AFP photo

Sedan striker Pius N'Diefi, who had missed several chances in the first half, took advantage of a mistake by Lyon defender Serge Blanc to slot home for his third goal of the season soon after the break.

Cedric Monnet doubled the lead - his sixth of the season - five minutes later seizing on another defensive error to shoot past Gregory Coupet into the far corner.

However, Lyon struck back with 20 minutes to go as newly-capped French international Marlet, a second-half substitute, seized on a terrible error by Sedan defender Luis Satorra to shoot home from five yards out.

Lyon's Brazilian striker Sonny Anderson sealed a gutsy comeback with a close-range shot to give Lyon only their 10th point at home this season.

Nantes playmaker Eric Carriere scored the opener with his second of the season to set the French Cup holders on their way to their first home win over Monaco since 1993.

Monaco keeper Jean-Marie Aubry - in for the dropped

Stephane Porato - kept the ailing champions in the match with a point-blank save from Viorel Moldovan five minutes from half-time.

Monaco played a bit better in the second-half and grabbed a deserved equaliser through Swedish midfielder Pontus Farnrud as he shot home from the edge of the area after Nantes failed to clear the ball.

However, Moldovan regained the lead for the Canaries a couple of minutes later when Stephane Ziani's superb pass inside the area let him free and he had no trouble shooting past Aubry.

Ziani, however, sealed the

Rivaldo Reconsiders

BARCELONA, Nov 30: World player of the year Rivaldo is prepared to play for Brazil again despite his threat two weeks ago to end his international career, reports Reuters. "Now, after thinking about it in the cold light of day I can reassure everyone that if I am selected by the manager I will play for Brazil," Rivaldo said in an interview on pele.net, the official web page of the former Brazilian World Cup star.

"I want to win the World Cup with Brazil - that is my ultimate dream." The Barcelona forward has said he would reconsider his international future after a 56,000 crowd in Sao Paulo chanted insults at him during Brazil's 1-0 win over Colombia in a World Cup qualifying match earlier this month.

Newcastle's Kieron Dyer (R) scores against Birmingham City during their English League Cup match at Birmingham on November 29. —AFP photo

Romario gets benefit of doubt

RIO DE JANEIRO, Nov 30: Brazilian authorities cancelled 55 different traffic fines against soccer superstar Romario after lawyers said some of the violations were committed by robbers who stole his silver Mercedes-Benz, local media reported Wednesday, reports AP.

In addition to canceling the 55 fines - totaling almost 12,000 reais (6,300 dollars) - authorities also erased the corresponding black marks in Romario's driving record, saving Vasco da Gama's star attacker from having his driver's license suspended, the Extra newspaper reported.

Romario's lawyers filed 55 separate appeals to earn the 34-year-old his legal victory in traffic court, the newspaper said. The lawyers said Romario didn't receive rapid notification of some fines as required by Brazilian law.

They also presented evidence that some violations were committed by robbers who stole Romario's Mercedes station wagon in a September holdup at a Rio traffic light.

All their arguments were well founded, Police Col Paulo Afonso was quoted as saying. "It's a lawyers' thing. I'm sure Romario doesn't know that much about traffic laws."

Ranieri rings the changes at Chelsea

LONDON, Nov 30: Chelsea's Italian coach Claudio Ranieri on Wednesday dismissed assistant coaches Ray Wilkins and Graham Rix in a major shake-up of the backroom staff, reports AFP.

After a dismal run that has seen the west London club slip to 14th in the Premiership, the under-fire Italian has shown his ruthless streak for the first time by relieving Wilkins and Rix of their duties.

The move demonstrates Ranieri's concern at a disappointing run of results since his arrival in England, not only in the league but also in the League and UEFA Cups, where the expensively-assembled team suffered early exits.

It is believed that the Italian felt that the coaching staff were creating divisions in the camp and were hindering the creation of a new team spirit after the departure of Gianluca Vialli.

Ranieri made the decision to act after Saturday's 2-1 defeat at Everton.

England's '66 heroes to launch club

LONDON, Nov 30: England's 1966 World Cup-winning team have joined forces once more to launch their own club, reports AFP.

The '1966 Winners Club' will be strictly limited to 1966 members and will cost 1,966 pounds (2,949 dollars) to join.

Scottish Premiership Celtic held by hibs

GLASGOW, Nov 30: Celtic suffered a huge hangover from their weekend Old Firm drubbing to Rangers, but still came away from second-placed Hibernian on Wednesday with a share of the points in a 0-0 draw, reports AFP.

Following Sunday's 5-1 humiliation at Ibrox, all eyes were on how Martin O'Neill's Scottish Premier League leaders would react, but on this showing the need for reinforcements is urgent, reports AFP.

Celtic's lack of strength in depth was clearly apparent as they were without Alan Stubbs, Paul Lambert, Morten Wieg-horst and the suspended Alan Thompson, and they looked desperately short of ideas as they struggled to even hit the target.

In contrast Alex McLeish's side have been the surprise package this season and with veteran former French international Franck Sauze - a member of Marseille 1993 European Cup winning side - at the back they frustrated Chris Sutton and Henrik Larsson, although without managing to trouble Celtic themselves.

The Parkhead side, who face Dunfermline at home on Saturday, will now be feeling the pressure with Rangers 13 points behind and with two games in hand.



Newcastle's Kieron Dyer (R) scores against Birmingham City during their English League Cup match at Birmingham on November 29. —AFP photo

English League Cup

A Liverpool blitzkrieg

LONDON, Nov 30: English international striker Robbie Fowler hit a hat-trick on Wednesday to take Liverpool storming into the quarter-finals of the English League Cup with an 8-0 hammering of Stoke City at the Britannia Stadium, reports AFP.

While Sheffield Wednesday, Birmingham and Fulham were scoring notable shock victories over Premiership opposition, Liverpool redressed the balance in some style when they made their class tell in a merciless humbling of Division Two Stoke.

Liverpool's German defender Christian Ziege set the club on their way with a goal in the sixth minute - and Czech Vladimir Smicer, German Markus Babbel and England's own Fowler all joined in the first-half fun.

Then the Finn Sami Hyyppa, Danny Murphy and two more goals from Fowler, including a penalty completed the rout to dish out a second knockout blow in a matter of days for Stoke, who last week went out of the FA Cup at the hands of non-league Nuneaton.

Liverpool will have to dig deeper, though, if they are to make it into the last four - because they now face Fulham who got the better of a five-goal thriller with Derby at Craven Cottage.

A match that looked tough to call beforehand between the First Division leaders and Premiership strugglers remained in doubt until French hitman Louis Saha came up with his second goal and the match-winner in the 90th minute.

Derby forward Malcolm Christie had put the Rams in front before the quarter-hour mark. But Saha brought the hosts level 15 minutes later, and US international midfielder Eddie Lewis made it 2-1 to Fulham in the 39th minute.

It was all square again though when Derby captain Darryl Powell provided the match with its second equaliser on the stroke of half-time, only for Saha to pop up in the dying seconds as extra-time beckoned.

Sheffield Wednesday made the most of the break from their travails at the bottom of Division One by handing out an unexpected beating to West Ham.

Owen Morrison's strike on the half-hour gave Wednesday a winning platform, and Tony Crane gave them the breathing space they needed to earn a last-eight meeting with Birmingham, irrespective of a goal

from West Ham's Frank Lampard. Birmingham booked their date with Wednesday when they became the other Division One side to eliminate Premiership opposition.

Newcastle were the fall guys going down 2-1 at St Andrews where Michael Johnson settled matters with the winner in the last minute.

The visitors were given an early lead by Kieron Dyer when the England midfielder struck just before the quarter-hour.

But striker Dele Adebola brought the Blues right back into it with the equaliser in the 31st minute, and Johnson came up with the clincher just before the final whistle.

There was another tough Premiership-First Division struggle between Manchester City and Wimbledon at Maine Road.

In the end City won 2-1 to get the better of the First Division side who were one of the teams they replaced in the top flight for the start of this season.

Joe Royle's team can now look forward to taking on fellow Premiership newcomers Ipswich in the next round, after goals from strikers Paulo Wanchope and Shaun Goater helped them fight back after going a goal down to the south London club's Andy Roberts.

WORLD FOOTBALL BRIEFS

Nov 30 (AFP): World football briefs on Thursday.

HURT AMORUSO MAY LEAVE

GLASGOW: Lorenzo Amoroso's agent has indicated that Dick Advocaat's decision to strip the defender of the captain's armband could result in him leaving Ibrox, reports AFP.

Angelo Cascella claims the Italian has been left "hurt" by the decision to hand the skipper's role to Barry Ferguson at the height of Rangers' crisis.

Now he believes the move will play a big part in whether Amoroso decides he has a future at Ibrox - despite a man-of-the-match performance against Celtic.

"Lorenzo was great on Sunday and showed his true qualities," Cascella told the Daily Record.

"In my opinion he should return as the captain now. He has accepted the decision of the club but he is not happy and his pride is hurt. This will be important to Lorenzo when he decides his future."

AUSTRALIA PULLS OUT OF CATALONIA MATCH

SYDNEY: Australia withdrew Thursday from a pre-Christmas friendly against Catalonia in Barcelona.

As the match was not a full international, Soccer Australia said they could not have invoked FIFA regulations to ensure that the best players were released by their clubs.

Australian officials feared that the gains made in the impressive 2-0 win over Scotland

in Glasgow earlier this month would have been frittered away if a weak Socceros lineup was assembled to play Catalonia.

"We obviously don't want to do the wrong thing by ourselves, or by the Catalan Federation, by not playing our best possible team on such an important occasion for their federation," said national coach Frank Farina.

The match on December 22 was to have celebrated the centenary of the Catalan football federation.

WITHE IN CHARGE FOR WC QUALIFIERS

BANGKOK: Peter Withe, the British coach who steered Thailand to victory in the Tiger Cup, has been assured he will remain in charge of the national side for the World Cup qualifiers.

Football Association of Thailand secretary Worawit Sompachanyasit said Withe and manager Virat Charpanich would remain at the helm in the run up to the 2002 tournament.

The decision has been made because their work has been outstanding," he said.

The players who clinched the Tiger Cup trophy earlier this month with a 4-1 whitewash over Indonesia have not gone away empty-handed either.

On Wednesday they pocketed 135,000 baht (4,017 US) each as a reward for their win, which confirmed their status as Southeast Asia's soccer kings after they first won the Cup in 1996.

Football Association president Vijit Getkaew told the Bangkok Post Thursday that the win was a great boost for Thai soccer.

"Everywhere I go, people have praised the Thai team's performance," he said.

In the World Cup qualifying tournament, which will be held over two legs next May, Thailand are in Asian Group 5 with Lebanon, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

Lebanon, which Thailand drew 1-1 against at the Asian Cup earlier this year, are picked as the team to beat in the draw.

"If we can get a draw against Lebanon in Beirut we will have a good chance to progress," Vijit said.



Celtic's Swedish international Henrik Larsson (C) being tackled by Frank Sauze (L) of Hibernian during their Scottish Premier League fixture in Edinburgh on November 29. —AFP photo