

## LEADERS SPARTAK FACE TOUGH MOSCOW DERBY TEST

**MOSCOW:** Russian Premier League leaders Spartak Moscow will face a stern test of their title credentials when they face fierce city rivals Lokomotiv in a Moscow derby clash tomorrow. Spartak have got off to a superb start to the campaign as they look to win the title for the first time since 2001, winning four and drawing one of their opening five games.

A 2-0 win at Anzhi Makhachkala last time out-despite the second-half sending-off of Andrey Yeshchenko-ensured that they went into the international break two points clear of reigning champions CSKA Moscow at the top of the table.

"I was really happy with our performance in what was a very important match," said Italian coach Massimo Carrera.

"It wasn't easy at all after we were reduced to 10 men but we showed good fighting spirit to withstand the pressure. But I'm confident that we can play even better."

Former Juventus and Atalanta defender Carrera previously worked under Antonio Conte at Juve and with Italy before becoming assistant to Dmitry Alenichev this summer at Spartak.

However, he was promptly promoted to the role of coach when

Alenichev resigned after Spartak's shock elimination from the Europa League at the hands of AEK Larnaca of Cyprus a month ago.

Having no European commitments could help Spartak in the long run, especially with CSKA preparing for the start of a Champions League campaign. Lokomotiv, who are unbeaten but have drawn four of their five games, bolstered their squad before the transfer window closed with the signings of forward Igor Portnyagin and Russian international midfielder Igor Denisov. "We needed some fresh blood to boost competition for places throughout the squad," Lokomotiv

head coach Yury Semin told media. "And we've solved this problem."

CSKA travel to Germany to face Bayer Leverkusen in their opening Champions League group game next Wednesday, but first they entertain third-placed Terek Grozny on Saturday in the first official match at their new 30,000-seat CSKA Arena. "It's really nice to get your home ground at last," CSKA manager Leonid Slutsky said.

CSKA have scored just four times in five league outings but Slutsky is hopeful giant Ivorian summer signing Lacina Traore will soon start to make an impact as his fitness improves. — AFP

## ALL EYES ON MANCHESTER AS JOSE, PEP LOCK HORNS

**LONDON:** The eyes of the world will be on Manchester this weekend as Jose Mourinho and Pep Guardiola bring their bitter feud to the Premier League for the first time.

Any derby between Manchester United and Manchester City is guaranteed to be an explosive affair, but the presence of sworn enemies Mourinho and Guardiola should ensure the animosity levels are higher than usual today.

With City top of the table and United just behind them in third after both won their first three league games, there was already more than local bragging rights at stake in a showdown between two sure-fire title contenders.

Even City midfielder Fernandinho's boast that "this game is big, man. It's a game that stops the city" doesn't do justice to a fixture reported to be the richest match in football history with over £600 million (\$790 million, 708 million euros) of world-class talent on parade. Yet, despite the presence of Paul Pogba, David Silva, Zlatan Ibrahimovic and a host of other stars, it's the action on the Old Trafford touchline that will be must-see TV for millions around the world as United manager Mourinho and City boss Guardiola lock horns for the first time in three years in the 17th instalment of their acrimonious rivalry.

The sight of Mourinho and Guardiola gesticulating and exhorting their players signals the resumption of a complicated relationship that has turned increasingly ugly since they first met at Barcelona two decades ago.

Mourinho's constant jibes at Barcelona boss Guardiola during his time at Real Madrid undoubtedly got under the Spaniard's skin, but the Portuguese coach's record of just three wins in their 16 meetings is a significant blemish on his otherwise glittering CV.

Although Guardiola has come out on top seven times against Mourinho, he goes into the derby at a significant disadvantage following City striker Sergio Aguero's three-match ban for elbowing West Ham United's Winston Reid.

Leroy Sane could deputise for Aguero, who had already scored six times this season, after the Germany winger returned from the hamstring injury that delayed his debut after his £37 million (\$48 million, 43 million euros) move from Schalke.

### SUPER-FAST

Guardiola must also decide whether to give a debut to Chile goalkeeper Claudio Bravo, who arrived from Barcelona to replace the exiled Joe Hart, or stick with stand-in Willy Caballero.

"I've played in derby games in Germany but this should be a great match and one I'm really looking forward to, especially because Pep Guardiola is taking on Jose Mourinho," Sane said.

Aguero's absence will make it even harder for City to break a defence marshalled by Ivory Coast centre-back Eric Bailly, who has caught the eye of United goalkeeper David de Gea since his pre-season move from Villarreal.

"Bailly was a great signing, he's come in and surprised us all very quickly," De Gea said. "I remember when I first came to England and, trust me, it can be hard early on but he's flying."

"He is physical, strong, technically confident and super-fast."

At the Emirates Stadium, Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger could give debuts to deadline day signings Shkodran Mustafi, a £35 million Germany defender from Valencia, and Lucas Perez, a £17 million Spanish forward from Deportivo La Coruna, as the Gunners face Southampton. — AFP

## BLATTER UNDER NEW PROBE OVER SALARIES AND BONUSES

**ZURICH:** Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter and ex-secretary general Jerome Valcke, already banned from football for ethics violations, are facing a fresh investigation, this time over the salaries and bonuses they received in office.

FIFA's ethics committee said its investigators had opened formal proceedings against both men, along with former finance director Markus Kattner, for possible ethics violations which included "bribery and corruption".

The suspected violations were "in the context of salaries and bonuses paid to Mr Blatter, Mr Valcke and Mr Kattner as well as other provisions included in the contracts of these three individuals," it said.

They are also suspected of having breached rules on general conduct, loyalty, conflicts of interest and "offering and accepting gifts and other benefits." Blatter, Valcke and Kattner could not immediately be reached for comment. They have previously denied wrongdoing.

Blatter has said his earnings were in line with top officials from professional sports leagues around the world. Soccer's global governing body is attempting to recover from the worst graft scandal in its history which has seen 42 people, including former FIFA executive committee members, indicted in the United States since May last year.

Criminal investigations are also under way in Switzerland, where FIFA has its headquarters. FIFA said in June that an internal investigation revealed that the three officials had received 79 million Swiss francs (\$81 million) in compensation over five years, calling them "massive payouts".

FIFA's lawyers Quinn Emanuel, which conducted the investigation, said the evidence revealed a coordinated effort by the three to "enrich themselves through annual salary increases, World Cup bonuses and other incentives."

The sums received by the trio included 23 million Swiss francs in



**JERUSALEM:** File photo, FIFA President Sepp Blatter attends a press conference in Jerusalem. The FIFA ethics committee said yesterday it opened formal proceedings against Blatter, former secretary general Jerome Valcke and former finance director Markus Kattner over million-dollar payments in their contracts. — AP

"special bonuses" for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, while Blatter and Valcke got a total of 14 million francs in bonuses for the 2014 World Cup in Brazil and 15.5 million francs for the 2018 World Cup in Russia, the firm said.

Blatter, 80, who led FIFA from 1998 until 2015, has already been banned for eight years, later to be reduced to six following an appeal.

The ban was imposed for ethics violations related to a payment of 2 million Swiss francs that FIFA made to then European soccer boss Michel

Platini with Blatter's approval in 2011 for work done a decade earlier.

He has taken his case to sport's highest tribunal, the Court of Arbitration for Sport, and is awaiting a verdict. Valcke was fired in January and has since been banned for 12 years, reduced to 10 on appeal, for ethics violations which included using FIFA expenses for sightseeing trips and destruction of evidence.

Kattner, who took over as acting secretary general after Valcke's dismissal, was fired by FIFA in May. — Reuters