**Spurs focus on saving season after Conte departure**

LONDON, MAR 28: Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy admits the Premier League club have a "fight" on their hands as they scramble to save their season after Antonio Conte's turbulent reign came to an end.

The Italian's departure appeared almost inevitable after his extraordinary post-match rant following a 3-3 draw at bottom club Southampton earlier this month.

But Sunday's divorce by "mutual agreement", with just 10 Premier League games remaining, is a gamble by the Spurs hierarchy, who are desperate to secure a place in the lucrative Champions League next season.

Tottenham are fourth in the Premier League table but are just two points ahead of Newcastle having played two games more -- finishing in the top four guarantees entry into Europe's elite club competition.

Cristian Stellini, Conte's assistant at Spurs, will take charge for the rest of the campaign, with former midfielder Ryan Mason working as his deputy.

With the club out of all cup competitions, at least Stellini can afford to put all of his eggs in one basket.

"We have 10 Premier League games remaining and we have a fight on our hands for a Champions League place," Levy said in a club statement issued late on Sunday.

"We all need to pull together. Everyone has to step up to ensure the highest possible finish for our club and amazing, loyal supporters."

The writing appeared to be on the wall for Conte when he tore into his "selfish" players after they let a 3-1 lead slip against Southampton, saying they did not want to play under pressure and criticising the club's culture.

The 53-year-old's contract was set to expire at the end of the season and he had remained coy over the prospect of extending his stay in north London.

During his 16-month reign Conte portrayed Tottenham's problems as beyond his control, subtly hinting at frustration with Levy's transfer policy without explicitly condemning him in public.

But he was criticised by fans over his perceived conservative tactics, despite having impressive attacking riches at his disposal including Harry Kane and Son Heung-min.

A total of 11 full-time managers have been appointed since Levy succeeded Alan Sugar as chairman in 2001 but the club have won just one trophy in that time -- the 2008 League Cup.

Conte was widely regarded as a serial winner when he arrived in November 2021, having won league titles at Juventus, Chelsea and Inter Milan.

In his first season he guided the club to an impressive top-four finish, coming from behind to pip north London rivals Arsenal to Champions League qualification.