The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Blatter Suggests Choice of Russia, Qatar World Cups Led to FIFA Problems

By The Moscow Times

May 29, 2015



FIFA President Sepp Blatter delivers an opening speech at the 65th FIFA Congress in Zurich, Switzerland, May 29, 2015.

ZURICH — Scandal-plagued FIFA may have avoided its current problems if Russia and Qatar had not been chosen as hosts of the next two World Cups, President Sepp Blatter said Friday.

"On Dec 2, 2010, here in Zurich, when we decided on the two World Cup hosts in one session, if two other countries had emerged from the envelope, I think we would not have these problems today.

"But we cannot go back in time, we are not prophets, we cannot say what would have happened," added Blatter, who did not elaborate on his comments.

Russia was chosen as the host nation of the 2018 World Cup and Qatar for 2022 at a single vote in Zurich in 2010.

Blatter also questioned the timing of Wednesday's arrest of seven soccer officials, including FIFA vice-president Jeffrey Webb, in a dawn raid on a luxury Zurich hotel.

They are being held in custody pending an extradition request to the United States where they are wanted on corruption charges.

"It's not good for all of this to emerge two days before FIFA presidential elections.

"I'm not going to use the word coincidence but there is a small question mark," Blatter, who is standing for re-election later on Friday, said in address to the FIFA Congress.

England, Spain/Portugal and Netherlands/Belgium were also bidding for 2018, while the United States, South Korea, Japan and Australia were Qatar's rivals for 2022.

FIFA launched an investigation into allegations of corruption in the process but found no grounds for re-running the vote.

Blatter, who has been heavily criticized for not doing enough to combat corruption in FIFA, is being challenged by Jordanian Prince Ali bin Al Hussein for the most powerful job in soccer.

His opening address was briefly interrupted by a female protester waving a Palestinian flag and shouting at Blatter before being removed. "Security, please," said Blatter when the protester burst in.

"Today, I am appealing to unity and team spirit so we can move forward together," he said.

"It may not always be easy but he we are here together today to tackle the problems that have been created. We are we are here to solve them."

He continued: "We are at a turning point. We cannot constantly supervise everybody that is involved in football.

"We have 209 national associations, six continental confederations, we have more than 300 million active participants, men and women, and with families and friends, we reach a figure of 1.6 billion people directly or indirectly touched by our game."

"It's a matter of trust, of commitment, of having the will to do it ... so let us believe, let's go for it, let's repair what has been dropped."

"I appeal to all of you to join us the executive committee and president, to put FIFA back on the right track and where the boat will stop rocking and go placidly into port."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/05/29/blatter-suggests-choice-of-russia-qatar-world-cups-led-to-fifa-problems-a46964