

Ecclestone defends Blatter, supports Putin

FIFA plunges into new corruption scandal

BERLIN, Oct 17, (Agencies): Already reeling from the accusations surrounding the attribution of the 2018 and 2022 World Cup competitions, FIFA has been plunged into a new scandal relating to the 2006 edition.

Although vehemently denied by the German Football Federation (DFB), corruption claims made by Spiegel weekly newspaper on Friday would have felt like yet another body blow in the annals of world football's governing body.

On top of the Swiss investigation into the attribution of the 2018 World Cup to Russia and the 2022 tournament to Qatar, and the surrounding bribery scandal that has seen 14 people arrested by American and Swiss authorities, now Spiegel have claimed that votes for the 2006 edition were bought.

It's another mess that FIFA can ill afford with its president Sepp Blatter having already been suspended for 90 days due to suspicions a two million Swiss franc (\$2 million, 1.8 million euros) payment he made to UEFA counterpart Michel Platini was not above board.

Platini has also been suspended for the same period by FIFA's independent ethics committee, as well as the organisation's secretary general Jerome Valcke.

Spiegel claimed on Friday that the DFB had borrowed 10.3 million Swiss francs in 2000 from the now-deceased former CEO of German sportswear giant Adidas, Robert Louis-Dreyfus in order to buy the votes of four Asian members of FIFA's 24-strong executive committee.

Germany won the bid to stage the 2006 World Cup ahead of South Africa by 12 votes to 11, with one abstention.

Spiegel claimed the DFB then transferred 6.7 million euros (the equivalent exchange rate for the borrowed Swiss francs at the time) to a FIFA account in 2005 to reimburse Louis-Dreyfus.

The DFB preempted Spiegel's claims by issuing its own statement on Friday admitting they had made that last pay-



Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian midfielder Lucas Moura (right), vies with Bastia's French defender Julian Palmieri during the Ligue 1 football match Bastia (SCB) against Paris (PSG) on Oct 17, at the Armand Cesari Stadium in Bastia, on the French Mediterranean island of Corsica. (AFP)

ment to FIFA, but said their internal investigation had found that "the payment was not connected with the awarding" of the 2006 World Cup.

German media have jumped on the story, however, with popular daily Bild running the title: "Was the 2006 World Cup bought?"

Meanwhile, Formula One supremo Bernie Ecclestone has defended Sepp Blatter's record as FIFA president and questioned why the 79-year-old Swiss should have to step down from the scandal-mired soccer body.

In an interview with state-funded Russian TV network RT, the 84-year-old also declared himself the "best supporter" of Russian president Vladimir Putin, spoke out against democracy and said he was "not very enthusiastic about America".

"I don't think he should ever have stepped down," Ecclestone said of Blatter, who has been in office for 18

Ibrahimovic double leads PSG past Bastia

Rafael rescues draw for Lyon at Monaco

PARIS, Oct 17, (AFP): Zlatan Ibrahimovic's second-half brace guided Paris Saint-Germain to a 2-0 victory at Bastia on Sunday as the reigning champions extended their unbeaten start to the campaign.

Ibrahimovic slotted home the opener on 72 minutes at the Stade Armand Cesari after he was set up by Edinson Cavani despite the Uruguayan being offside in the build-up.

The Swede then netted his second of the contest seven minutes from time as Paris registered their fourth straight league win and avenged last season's shock 4-2 defeat in Corsica.

It was a far from convincing performance from Laurent Blanc's men but the result provisionally moved Paris eight points clear at the top with nearest challengers Angers and Caen in action later on.

Goalkeeper Salvatore Sirigu made his first start of the season in place of the injured Kevin Trapp, while PSG were also without Blaise Matuidi due to suspension as well as injured duo Marco Verratti and David Luiz.

Meanwhile, Angel di Maria was rested ahead of Wednesday's Champions League clash at home to Real Madrid with Adrien Rabiot and Benjamin Stambouli handed starts in central midfield.

Javier Pastore's diving header that

years and been suspended for 90 days amid the worst corruption scandal in FIFA's history.

"And I don't think he should have ever been challenged.

In related news, Sepp Blatter, suspend-

Best of the Rest

Conmebol take rights control:

The South American football confederation has taken over the management of sponsorship and rebroadcast rights for the 2016 Centenary Copa America, the confederation (Conmebol) said on Friday.

The move sidelines Argentine company Datsa and removes another obstacle to hosting the tournament in the United States.

"Conmebol and Datsa have agreed to rescind all the commercial rights that Datsa had for the sale of sponsorship and rebroadcasts associated with the Centenary Copa America," a Conmebol statement said. (RTRS)

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Orlando, San Jose wins:

Orlando City kept its playoff hopes alive with a 2-1 home win against New York City on Friday, with Cyle Larin scoring twice in an 8-minute span in the second half.

The Florida club has won five straight games to move within a point of sixth-place Montreal for the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. Orlando has one game while Montreal has two, and the Canadian club can seal its spot if it wins at New England on Saturday.

San Jose also boosted its playoff chances with a 1-0 home win against Sporting Kansas City, moving into a three-way tie for fifth place in the Western Conference. (AP)

'Successful'

Everton great Kendall 'dies'

LONDON, Oct 17, (AFP): Former Everton player and managerial great Howard Kendall has died at the age of 69, the Premier League club announced on Saturday.

Kendall played for Everton as a midfielder in the 1970s and had three spells as manager at Goodison Park, including a six-year stint in the 1980s that was the most successful period in the club's history.

"It is with great sadness that the club has learned of the passing of Howard Kendall," Everton announced on their website, without disclosing a cause of death.

"The most successful manager in the history of the club and one of the greatest players to pull on the Everton jersey. He passed away in hospital in Southport this morning at the age of 69, surrounded by loved ones.

"The thoughts of everyone associated with the club are with Howard's family at this difficult time and it would be appreciated if everyone could respect their request for privacy."

"If I run away now and let everything fall, then I denigrate myself," Blatter told RROT, a regional broadcaster based in the canton of Valais.

"That's my goal, that I can lead the Congress."

skipped wide of the post on 20 minutes represented the visitors' best chance in a fairly uneventful first half.

Meanwhile, former Manchester United defender Rafael salvaged a 1-1 draw with an 85th minute equaliser for Lyon at ten-man Monaco in Ligue 1 action on Friday.

The 25-year-old right-back, who spent

seven years at Old Trafford and won three Premier League titles, came to the rescue as Monaco failed to hang on to their 39th-minute lead.

"I'm happy to get the goal but we're a bit disappointed that we didn't push on and get the win," said Rafael.

"The goal will give us some energy for

ended president of soccer's world governing body, FIFA, said he aimed to return to office in time to hand over power to a successor to be elected at a special congress in February.

Blatter, 18 years in office, was sus-

ended for 90 days amid the worst corruption scandal in FIFA's history. He had previously announced he was standing down but had hoped to retain his post for the formal handover, asserting his innocence of any wrongdoing.



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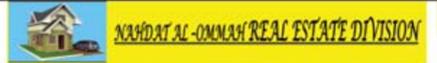
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