

Blatter to open broadcast centre

JOHANNESBURG: FIFA President Sepp Blatter will this morning officially open the R978-million International Broadcasting Centre (IBC) situated near the Johannesburg Soccer City Stadium.



The world class facility is expected to house more than 500 broadcasters who will transmit World Cup images to billions of viewers in over 214 countries across the world. The South African Broadcasting Corporation remains the official broadcaster of the tournament.

Meanwhile, the Organising Committee (OC) and FIFA say despite a few logistical challenges, South Africa was ready to host the world's biggest sporting showpiece.

The OC held its last board meeting in Johannesburg on Tuesday ahead of the crucial opening match on 11 June.

The board promised to attend to concerns by some international journalists that their equipment was still stuck at the customs division of local airports. LOC CEO Danny Jordaan promised to personally attend to the matter. Jordaan also confirmed that the controversy surrounding the Velmore Grande Hotel which will accommodate the Germans in Tshwane has been resolved.

On Tuesday, Tshwane mayor Gwen Ramakgopa announced that after a rigorous process including meetings with the hotel's owners and a looming court action, the hotel had been granted a temporary occupation certificate, allowing it to operate until the end of October.

The City of Tshwane and police had earlier this year declared the hotel "unsafe" because it did not comply with building regulations. This raised questions on whether the German team would continue to use it. "We are satisfied because we have been informed that matter has now been resolved," Jordaan said.

FIFA General Secretary Jerome Valcke said a meeting had also been held to discuss ways of minimising traffic at Soccer City during the opening match next week. This follows the reported chaotic situation during the Nedbank final at Soccer City and the two rugby matches played at Orlando Stadium. Some spectators had reportedly arrived at the stadium only to watch

the second half of the game due to traffic.

But Valcke said the City of Johannesburg had since presented "a very good" plan to address the problem. "After seeing their plan I am convinced traffic will be minimised," said Valcke. Fans have also been urged to arrive at the stadium early. The opening ceremony starts at 2pm and all dignitaries and spectators are expected to be seated by 1pm. At least 50 heads of state and government are expected to attend the ceremony.

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