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Sepp Blatter to meet with Brazil leader

Associated Press

TOKYO -- FIFA president Sepp Blatter plans to meet with Brazil's head of state to discuss concerns over the country's preparations for the 2014 World Cup.

FIFA officials have repeatedly said preparations for Brazil 2014 are behind schedule. FIFA secretary general Jerome Valcke has told Brazilian lawmakers that the pace had to be stepped up, saying, "We are late, we can't lose a day."

Blatter expressed his concerns on Saturday following a meeting of FIFA's executive committee on the sidelines of the 2011 Club World Cup.

"The executive committee is worried about that," Blatter said. "I will myself take up the World Cup in a presidential level and in the first or second month of next year I will go and meet the head of state."

Valcke reported on the status of preparations for the 2014 World Cup during the Dec. 16-17 meetings in Tokyo and noted that the general World Cup Bill, which comprises the necessary government guarantees regarding the organization of the event, has yet to be enacted by the relevant authorities.

"Clearly, we are concerned that we have not received the confirmation of the general World Cup Bill," Blatter said.

Blatter also said that Ricardo Teixeira, the 2014 World Cup organizing committee president, has asked for a leave of absence until the end of January.

Blatter also reiterated his desire to publish a document naming soccer officials who took millions of dollars in kickbacks from World Cup broadcast deals.

The BBC has reported that the document implicates former FIFA president Joao Havelange and Teixeira. Havelange resigned as an IOC member earlier this month.

FIFA postponed the publication of the document because "legal measures taken" by a party involved in the 10-year-old ISL scandal prevented it from releasing the court papers during the executive committee meetings in Tokyo.

"The executive committee and myself would like to open the file as quickly as possible," Blatter said. "FIFA needs to lay the ISL issue to rest, it's unfortunate we can't open it now but I am hoping the Swiss court will allow us to open the file in early 2012. We cannot go to the past, we can only clarify it."

FIFA also announced the list of members of the Independent Governance Committee, a committee

aimed at cleaning up world soccer's governing body and headed by Basel University professor Mark Pieth.

The list has nine members, including Sunil Gulati, president of the U.S. Soccer Federation.

Non-soccer members include Michael Hershman, president and CEO of the Fairfax Group, and Peter Goldsmith, who served as attorney general in the United Kingdom from 2001 to 2007.

At an October executive committee meeting, Blatter said the panel would consist of up to 18 people, half from soccer, half from politics, law and civil society.

In other developments, FIFA decided that the 2013 and 2014 editions of the Club World Cup would be held in Morocco after the 2012 tournament in Japan.
