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Qatar 2022 World Cup official confirms summer event



A senior official for the 2022 Qatar World Cup again downplayed suggestions that the tournament should be moved from the fierce heat of summer for player and fan safety. Hassan al-Thawadi, general secretary of the Qatar 2022 supreme committee, told the Associated Press on Friday "we always knew about it ... we know there is an issue with the heat." "It's not like, people said this as we were like 'wow, we thought it was snowing in the summer.' But the point is that we are looking at solutions." The issue of whether the 2022 World Cup should be switched from summer to winter is one that refuses to go away and more than two years after Qatar was awarded the tournament in December 2010, it is now back on top of the global football agenda. Earlier in March, UEFA President Michel Platini said it was too hot to play football in Qatar in the summer and called for a move to cooler months, a stance that was backed Wednesday by UAE's Yousuf al-Serkal, a vice-president of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). Al-Thawadi, who was also the CEO of the 2022 bid team, said that Qatar would only change if the wider world wished it. "It is a debate within the football community. And at a certain point; somebody is going to have to make a decision. We have to take into consideration the overall consensus of the football community. Today, we are moving ahead with a summer World Cup, plain and simple." Qatari officials are nonplussed by Platini's statement that the tournament be moved to winter as the Frenchman voted for Qatar ahead of its bid rivals the United States, Australia, South Korea and Japan, when the FIFA Executive Committee made its decision in December 2010 in Zurich. "In the end, it's his opinion," said al-Thawadi. "He's a major pillar in world football. His views have to be taken into consideration. The nature of his vote, you'll have to ask him that but in terms of him asking for a winter World Cup, he wasn't the first person to mention it. "We always said that our bid was a summer World Cup, our cooling technologies are moving ahead, they are not limited to stadiums and that's important for people to understand. Fans will be able to enjoy a great atmosphere in the outdoors through the development of these technologies." As well as Europe's football chief, Sepp Blatter, the president of world body FIFA recently weighed in on the issue. In a recent interview, Blatter said that any move to switch must be initiated from the Qataris. He also said that such a request could result in a revote. Also in March, FIFA Secretary General Jerome Valcke suggested medical advice could be cited to justify a move to winter. Al-Thawadi denied that such maneuverings could put Qatar in a difficult position. "I'll say let that come as it comes. When the time comes, our position will be clear. Today, we are moving towards a summer World Cup. Everyone knew about the heat." Regardless, the fact that Al-Thawadi is currently campaigning around Asia as he stands for election to FIFA's Executive Committee has been seen by some as an attempt to safeguard the tournament from inside FIFA. It is a claim that is dismissed. "I am very confident about our bid and I don't need to be in the committee to protect it. We've got our legal position which is well-established and secure and our views are well-known and the initiatives that we are taking will vindicate themselves." To get on the committee al-Thawadi will have to defeat Sheikh Salman Bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa in a May election in Kuala Lumpur. Salman came close to defeating former Asian chief Mohamed bin Hammam in the same election in 2009 and is also running for the post of president of the AFC. "He is well-known in Asian football, he had a close run in 2009 and is an experienced campaigner in contrast to myself. If I did not believe I had something positive to contribute then I wouldn't run. I have a good chance as does Sheikh Salman." Al-Thawadi prefers to talk about the potential that Asia has and how the world's largest continent needs to have a bigger say in the governing of the world's favorite game. "Asia needs to be a voice. It needs to come to the table in FIFA as it has done so over the years but it needs to have more influence in the world of football but more importantly, Asia needs to develop itself and raise its football a lot more." "The World Cup in Asia makes it much