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Secret Fifa payment to keep cheated Ireland quiet

World leaders prepare for crisis talks

Oliver Kay
Chief Football Correspondent
David Brown

Fifa paid more than £3 million in "hush money" to the Football Association of Ireland when the country lost a play-off for the 2010 World Cup finals after a handball by Thierry Henry, the France striker.

The secret payment — designed to stop Ireland suing over the unfair result — was revealed yesterday as the corruption scandal at football's governing body grew. One former executive admitted accepting World Cup bribes and another promised to reveal an "avalanche" of secrets that would engulf Sepp Blatter, the Fifa president.

The government announced that England was ready to host the 2022 World Cup if it was removed from Qatar. The White House said it "wouldn't be surprised" if the scandal was discussed at the G7 summit next week, even though tensions would be raised by any questioning of Russia's right to host the tournament in 2018.

Mr Blatter, 79, announced his resignation on Tuesday, four days after being re-elected despite the arrest of seven Fifa executives in a US corruption investigation.

The Football Association of Ireland (FAI) said yesterday that it had received the money from Fifa to avoid legal action over its failure to qualify for the World Cup fi-

nals in South Africa, but the payment could also lead to accusations that Mr Blatter's administration was trying to secure future support from Dublin.

During the game in Paris in 2009, Henry, the former Arsenal striker, stopped the ball going out of play with his hand before crossing for William Gallas to score. The match ended 1-1 with France progressing to the finals by winning 2-1 on aggregate.

The Irish football authorities and government unsuccessfully petitioned for the game to be replayed or for Ireland to be admitted to the World Cup in South Africa as a 33rd team.

Yesterday evening John Delaney, chief executive of the FAI, confirmed rumours of the payment. "We felt we had a legal case against Fifa because of how the World Cup hadn't worked out because of the Thierry Henry handball, also the way Blatter behaved... having a snigger, having a laugh at us," he said.

He did not explain on what basis the association could sue for a mistake by match officials, which are not uncommon. England lost a 1986 World Cup quarter-final after Diego Maradona's "hand of god" goal went unpenalised.

A Fifa spokesman claimed that in January 2010, to end any legal claims from the FAI, it had approved a \$5 million loan for the construction of a stadium in Ireland, which was due to be reimbursed if the country qualified for last year's World Cup in Brazil. He said: "Because [Ireland failed to qualify], and in view of the FAI's financial position, Fifa decided to write off the loan as per December 31, 2014."

Jim Boyce, the Northern Irish former

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Birthday wishes The Queen opened the WI's centenary celebrations at the Royal Albert Hall yesterday. Her speech was greeted with rousing cheers. Page 9

Middle-class children are starved over allergy fears

Danielle Sheridan

Middle-class children are suffering from malnutrition because their parents wrongly diagnose food allergies and put them on restrictive diets, scientists have said.

Home-testing kits that have no scientific basis were blamed for leading families to mistreat conditions, with many avoiding wheat, nuts, eggs or milk in the belief that they had an allergy when they were merely intolerant of certain proteins.

Half of shoppers are buying "free from" produce to treat their symptoms, experts said. However, the scientists, who included representatives from the British Society for Immunology, said that an intolerance was not an allergy. Sufferers can often still consume small amounts of the foods.

"It's a really strange phenomenon that, in the UK, we see the rise of conditions in children that indicate malnutrition in classes of people in society where you really wouldn't expect it," said Tracey Brown, director of the charity Sense about Science. "Parents are cutting out major food groups in their children, which is causing malnutrition in socioeconomic groups A to C [the middle classes]. That's a really worrying situation."

Speaking at *The Times* Cheltenham Science Festival yesterday, she noted a rise in "perceived allergies". "Our concern about allergy seems to outstrip the real clinical existence of it," she said. "You see varying rates of allergies between countries. We've seen tenfold increase of allergies but some of that is self-reported."

While many people interpret symptoms as allergic reactions, a study found that two in five people believed they had a food allergy, while in reality only half that number do. Ms Brown cited a study on the Isle of Wight, which found that 34 per cent of parents believed that their child had a food allergy, when in fact only 5 per cent had one.

Paul Seddon, consultant paediatric allergist at the Alexandra Children's Hospital in Brighton, said that invalid allergy testing risked inappropriate or harmful treatments for children. "I commonly see children who've been put on to unnecessarily restricted diets because their parents assume, in good

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Henry's handball put France through at the expense of Ireland



35-storey skyscrapers ... made out of plywood

The concrete jungle could be turning into a wooden forest (Valentine Low writes). After a century in which cities have sprouted towering columns of concrete and steel, a green building revolution has led to plans to build wooden skyscrapers 35 storeys high.

One architect has drawn up designs for the world's tallest timber building, in Paris, at 120 metres.

In London, one of the pioneers of the wooden movement is working on a ten-storey project that will provide 121 homes by October. "It is going to change the whole face of construction," Andrew Waugh, of architects Waugh Thistleton, said.

Made, essentially, out of plywood — albeit very thick plywood — the new generation of timber buildings include the dramatic proposal



for the 35-storey building in Paris, from the Canadian architect Michael Green. It is part of a competition called *Réinventer Paris*.

Another proposal, for a 34-storey building in Stockholm, has been put together by the architects Berg/CF Møller.

Mr Green said that wooden buildings caused less climate change, used renewable materials and should last 100 to 150 years — and it could be recycled. "One of the things that is so compelling about these materials is that when we take down an

old barn, we salvage the wood. The same is true of these buildings."

The buildings use materials including cross-laminated timber — layers of small wooden pieces glued and pressed together until boards are up to 18in thick. Mr Waugh said:

A 34-storey wooden tower block proposed for Stockholm. Inset, Michael Green's timber-built Design Centre in Canada

"The technology has come on in leaps and bounds over the past 20 years. We are talking about very solid, engineered timber."

He said the biggest argument for the use of wood over concrete was sustainability. "Cement is one of the biggest producers of greenhouse gases," he said. "More pollution comes from the production of cement than the whole of the airline industry."

Because the panels are pre-fabricated, the construction is much quicker than for a building using concrete.

"When they arrive on site, they are craned from the back of a truck, put in place and screwed down with cordless screwdrivers.

"We can build a timber building in 50 per cent of the time, for the same cost, using natural resources."

It is also a much quieter process, he said. "You can build a big building in the middle of a city and nobody can hear a thing, apart from the builders whistling."