

World Cup 2010 scores its first goal

The 2010 South African World Cup is already a major commercial success, four years ahead of the event.

So said Danny Jordaan, chief executive of the Fifa World Cup 2010 Local Organising Committee, at a conference on the role of local government at 2010 in Ekurhuleni on Monday.

He said the funding target of \$2-billion (about R13-billion) - the biggest in Fifa's 100-year history - had already been reached and major sponsors had already deposited their money into Fifa's bank account.

"This shows huge confidence in South Africa and dispels the fears that many critics had about the ability of an African country to raise the funds.

'The money is in the bank as we speak'

"The money is in the bank as we speak - they didn't wait until later on to see that we were achieving our targets. It is now up to us to make it an organisational success," he said.

The total budget for the event is R3,1-billion.

Jordaan said there had been much frustration at the fact that South Africa was forced to keep silent on its achievements so far because of the upcoming World Cup in Germany.

"It has been a question of 'no news is bad news'. But after July 10 we will be at liberty to disclose information," he said.

In the meantime, work is progressing on all fronts. Three new pieces of legislation have been passed.

These are: the 2010 Fifa World Cup Special Measures Act for local government,

which addresses operational issues; the Special Measures Financial Act covering, among others, VAT, tax, customs and excise, and work permits; and the Ambush Marketing Act, to protect the official sponsors from having their advertising space hijacked.

Billions of people will watch the games on television.

Jordaan asked cities hosting the games to ensure that they established "fan parks".

"There will be a shortage of tickets for the games because there are a limited number of seats in the stadiums. It is going to be a huge challenge, but cities should set up facilities with big screens where people can watch matches."

He said cities could expect to have special decorations on their streets with Fifa branding, as well as concession stores.

He also warned that cities should ensure they had enough police and security staff to cater for both the games and local residents. This applied to public transport as well.

Additional buses should be brought in from neighbouring municipalities and countries as well, if necessary, as was done in Europe.

"We cannot run the games to the detriment of local ratepayers," he said.

The World Cup would bring many opportunities, especially in the hospitality industry, with 450 000 people having to be fed over 43 days.

The biggest challenge, however, would be finding a winning team.

"It is all very well to have state-of-the-art stadiums, but not a losing team. People come, after all, to see soccer.

"This is going to be a big challenge. Currently our top goalscorers are scoring 10 goals a year, while the likes of Pele scored 1 000. We have to address this as a matter of urgency," he added.

Another major benefit of the tournament would be the opportunity it provided to send messages to other African countries.

"Sport is a promoter for messages of democracy, TB, HIV and Aids, politics, education, human rights and human resource development, including skills training," said Jordaan.

"We need to stage a world-class event to show the world there is no difference between Africa and 'world class'.

"We have already achieved financial success ahead of time. Now it is up to us to deliver on an organisational level," he said.

Of the nine cities hosting the event, six attended the conference to talk about their state of preparedness for the event. The City of Johannesburg, eThekweni (Durban) and Cape Town failed to attend.

This article was originally published on page 3 of The Star on May 30, 2006