PSG President charged with corruption over bidding process for 2019 IAAF World Championships in Qatar

23/05/2019

Paris Saint-Germain President Nasser Al-Khelaïfi, one of the most powerful men in sport, has been charged with corruption over the bidding process for the 2019 International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) World Championships in Doha, according to a French judicial official.

As reported by the *Associated Press*, the official said the preliminary charge of "active corruption" had been filed in mid-May.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he or she was not authorised to talk about the investigation publicly.

Al-Khelaifi is also the chief executive of Paris Saint-Germain, the Ligue 1 club owned by Qatar Sports Investments (QSI), the country's sovereign wealth fund, as well as chairman of television network beIN Sports, which has its headquarters in Doha.

He was recently elected by the European Club Association as club representative on UEFA's Executive Committee.

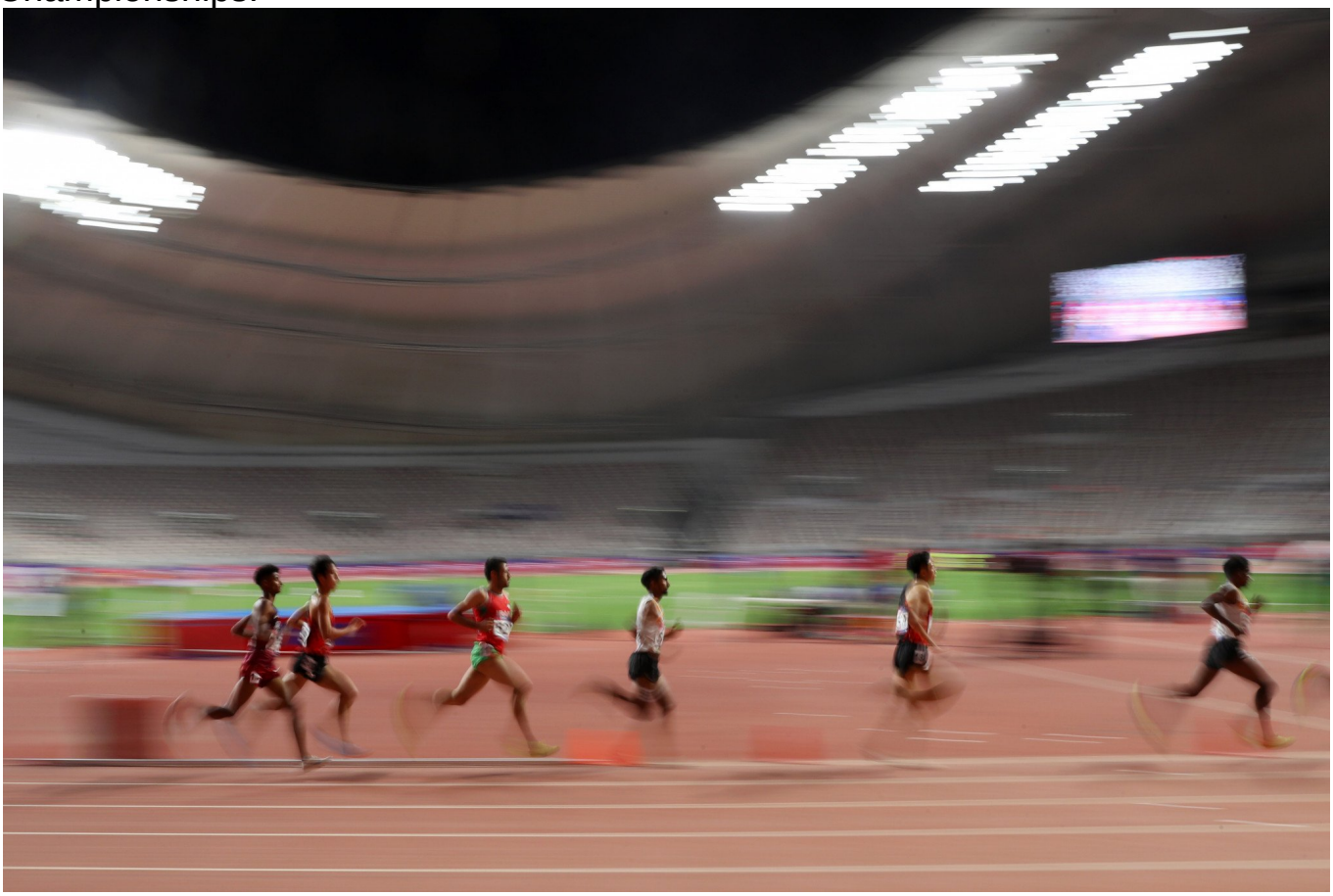
In March he was reportedly placed under the status of "assisted witness" by the

National Financial Prosecutor's Office for alleged "corruption" and "aggravated money laundering" in relation to Doha's bid for the IAAF World Championships.

At the heart of the investigators' suspicions are two bank transfers, French newspaper *Le Monde* has reported.

These money transfers were allegedly made on October 13 and November 7 in 2011 for a total amount of $3.5 million (£2.8 million/€3.1 million) to a company located in Senegal, Pamodzi Sports Consulting, which is owned by Papa Massata Diack, the son of former IAAF President Lamine Diack.

These payments were provided for in a Memorandum of Understanding with Pamodzi Sports Consulting that Oryx Qatar Sports Investments pledged to purchase sponsorship rights and television rights for $32.6 million (£25.8 million/€29.3 million) provided that Doha was awarded the 2017 IAAF World Championships.



Khalifa International Stadium will host the 2019 IAAF World Championships in Doha ©Getty Images

It is claimed that Oryx Qatar Sports Investments is not part of QSI and is owned jointly by Al-Khelaïfi and his brother Khalid.

Doha was overlooked for the 2017 IAAF World Championships – which were awarded to London – but in November 2014 was chosen to host this year's event ahead of rival cities Barcelona and Eugene.

In Switzerland, Al-Khelaifi has been under investigation since 2017 for allegedly criminally bribing the former FIFA secretary general Jérôme Valcke to buy television rights to World Cup tournaments in 2026 and 2030.

Al-Khelaifi has denied the allegations.

It comes just a day after it emerged that beIN Sports chief executive Yousef Al-Obaidly is facing allegations of "active corruption" over Doha's bid for the IAAF World Championships.

Al-Obaidly, a Board member of Paris Saint-Germain and QSI, has been under investigation since March, along with Lamine Diack, *Agence France-Presse* (AFP) reported.

Investigating magistrates in Paris are considering charging Al-Obaidly with having participated in the negotiation of bribes, it has been claimed.

Lamine Diack is expected to act as a key witness in the matter and will be charged with "passive corruption", *AFP*reported.

Al-Obaidly has denied the claims.

beIN Sports chief executive Yousef Al-Obaidly, pictured with former French President Nicolas Sarkozy ©Getty Images

"I voluntarily attended an appointed meeting as part of a preliminary investigation,"

Al-Obaidly said in a statement sent to *insidethegames* by his lawyer.

"The allegations raised are not only utterly baseless and unsubstantiated, but they have been – quite remarkably – leaked to the media.

"For the avoidance of any doubt whatsoever, the allegations are completely and categorically denied and will be vehemently challenged using the full force of the law.

"It would not be appropriate to say anything further."

Earlier this week, *AFP* reported that Diack and Papa Massata may go on trial in a separate matter, for allegedly obstructing sanctions against Russia for doping in return for payments.

Prosecutors have recommended Diack, President of the IAAF from 1999 to 2015, be tried for corruption and money laundering.

In another case, Tsunekazu Takeda has been forced to announce he will resign as President of the Japanese Olympic Committee and stand down as a member of the International Olympic Committee after he was implicated in a vote-buying scandal linked to Tokyo's successful bid for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

It involved a Singapore company called Black Tidings associated with Papa Massata Diack.

This year's IAAF World Championships are due to take place at Khalifa International Stadium between September 27 and October 6.