The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Moscow’s Bad Traffic May Damage World Cup Hopes

October 11, 2011



Moscow's notoriously bad traffic might damage the city's hopes of hosting games in the 2018 World Cup.

FIFA chief Jerome Valcke, visiting Moscow on Tuesday as part of World Cup preparations, said he had major concerns about the traffic jams.

"I've only been to two Russian cities: Moscow and Saransk," Valcke said, when asked about specific problems facing the Russian organizers. "The first issue in Moscow is traffic — it's a nightmare."

He allowed, however, that six years might be enough time to remove the road congestion.

"But we're talking about 2018, so we have time to try to solve all the problems," he said.

Vitaly Mutko, sports minister and head of the Russian organizing committee, indicated that he would take traffic into account in deciding the host cities.

"Every city, be it Moscow [the largest] or Saransk [the smallest], has an equal chance to be selected," he said. "And no city is guaranteed World Cup status if it's not ready. Everything must be first class: the stadium, the airport, hotels, roads, all the infrastructure."

Mutko also said the World Cup would be played in 12 stadiums across 11 Russian cities. He said an announcement of the host cities would be brought forward several months, to October 2012, in order to give organizers more time to prepare for the 32-team football extravaganza.

"After the Moscow region dropped out last month, we still have 13 candidate cities and a total of 15 stadiums," Mutko, who is also a member of FIFA's executive board, told reporters following a joint meeting of organizing committee and FIFA officials.

"In the next few months, we will choose 12 stadiums in 11 cities that would host the tournament." Mutko declined to name the favorites.

The Russians are building 11 of the 12 World Cup arenas from scratch, but Mutko said several of the stadiums should be ready in a year or two.

"St. Petersburg should have a brand-new 69,000-seat stadium by the end of 2012, while Kazan will open its 45,000-seat arena in early 2013," he said. "And the Sochi stadium will host the opening ceremony of the 2014 Winter Olympics, so it should be ready on time."

Mutko also disputed the cost of renovation at Moscow's 84,000-seat Luzhniki Olympic stadium, which is a top contender to host the World Cup final and one of the semifinals.

Asked whether the price of 40 billion rubles ($1.27 billion) was justified, he snapped back: "40 billion? It's way too much, you could build two stadiums for that money.

"I think a new Wembley only cost 30 billion. I think whoever gave this figure must have had other things in mind," he said.

(Reuters, MT, AP)

Russia will begin enacting laws early next year to protect the rights of FIFA and its sponsors, FIFA said Tuesday.

FIFA requires host nations to guarantee tax exemptions and criminalize ambush marketing.

Russia "will fulfill all government guarantees" for the monthlong tournament, Mutko said in a statement released by FIFA in Zurich.

This is in contrast to 2014 host Brazil, where lawmakers are objecting to being "subservient" to FIFA. Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff met with FIFA secretary general Valcke last week to improve relations.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/10/11/moscows-bad-traffic-may-damage-world-cup-hopes-a10087