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Railway to Invest $34M in Renovations

By Olga Solovyova

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Russian Railways rents the area around its Moscow stations for 1 ruble. **Vladimir Filonov**

Russian Railways will invest more than 7 billion rubles ($34 million) in reconstructing railway stations this year, including 4.3 billion rubles for the reconstruction of stations in Moscow, the state-owned company said Sunday.

"We plan to finish four railway stations this year: Leningradsky, Paveletsky, Rizhsky and Savyolovsky," said Dmitry Pisarenko, head of communications for the stations department at Russian Railways. "And we plan to finish another four next year: Belorussky, Kievsky, Kazansky and Yaroslavsky," he added.

The company plans to spend more than 1 billion rubles on each Moscow station, Pisarenko said. Then it will spend 1.7 billion rubles on 56 railway stations in the regions.

Kursky Station, renovated in 2008, is serving as a model for this investment project.

"It is a model of what a modern station should be," he said.

The railway station reconstruction program is expected to be completed in 2015.

Russian Railways and the Moscow government signed a contract in April 2011 under which the railway rents the squares surrounding the stations for 1 ruble per year.

"Before, the railway station ended at the doorstep, and there was nothing we could do about all those bizarre kiosks near the station," Pisarenko said.

Kiosks near Komsomolskaya Ploshchad — home to Leningradsky, Yaroslavsky and Kazansky stations — have been removed.

"It is important to show that we are acting legally. All kiosk owners knew that their agreements could be canceled unilaterally," he said.

The reconstruction program also addresses both the stations themselves and the areas surrounding them.

The company plans to create parking for 1,050 cars. A two-level parking facility for 400 cars will be built at Kazansky Station.

"We plan to allow 20 minutes' free parking, then charge 250 rubles an hour," Pisarenko said.

As for Sheremetyevo and Domodedovo airports, prices start from 100 rubles an hour.

Russian Railways will choose management companies to operate the parking facilities.

"We are going to make our stations comply with all contemporary requirements — no worse than in Europe, maybe better," Pisarenko said.

Russian Railways expects its freight load in March 2012 to grow to 3.45 million tons per day, 2.8 percent higher than in March 2011, Interfax said Monday, citing vice president for commercial activities Salman Babayev.

Babayev also said the Transportation Ministry informed the company that the ministry would ask it to reduce the number of passenger trains to Sochi to accommodate the greater flow of freight to the city in connection with the upcoming Olympic Games there. Babayev said the railway agreed to raise its scheduled freight shipments to Sochi from 12 million tons to 15 million tons.

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