The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Railways in Smoking Crackdown, Privatization Freeze

By Roland Oliphant

May 31, 2012



Activists gathering for a flash mob Thursday in downtown Krasnoyarsk, Siberia, to mark World No Tobacco Day. **Ilya Naymushin**

SOCHI — Smokers will find train journeys longer and a tad more frustrating as traditional indulgence of the habit is phased out on Russian Railways' passenger routes.

Russian Railways president Vladimir Yakunin told journalists in Sochi on Thursday that the company would work toward a total ban on smoking on suburban trains.

"I know there are people who are accustomed to it and can't go without smoking, but that doesn't mean other people have to suffer for it," Yakunin told journalists.

Smoking is already completely prohibited on the Aeroexpress services between central stations and Moscow's airports.

Yakunin's comments came on the same day police were taking their own measures to stamp

out smoking on the railways.

Transportation cops working on trains heading out of Moscow and regional stations, including Kaluga and Ryazan, were handing out candy in exchange for passengers' cigarettes Thursday.

The rather odd action by the Interior Ministry in the Central Federal District marked International No-smoking Day.

The move follows several measures in recent years to wean Russians off their beloved tobacco, including introduction of large European-style health warnings on packaging.

An alliance of small-business owners protested in central Moscow last month over Health Ministry plans to ban tobacco sales from kiosks.

Yakunin was speaking at the annual Russian Railways Conference in Sochi, where he is debating the future of a trans-Eurasian trade corridor between Europe and the Far East.

Further privatization of Russian Railways assets will be frozen for the time being because of the delicate global economic situation, Yakunin said Thursday.

"No one would sell anything now," Yakunin said, noting factors including the fall in the ruble. "Further privatization will depend on a clear and exact analysis of the market," he said.

Last year Russian Railways raised 125 billion rubles ($4.2 billion) from the sale of a 75 percent stake in the Freight One cargo company.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/05/31/russian-railways-in-smoking-crackdown-privatization-freeze-a15160