

Anti-Doping Lab to Be Reformed, Mutko Says

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Following the provisional suspension of Russia's main anti-doping lab over the weekend, Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko said Monday that reforms would be made to bring the lab in line with international standards.

The problems at the Moscow Anti-Doping Center, the only laboratory in Russia approved by the World Anti-Doping Association, or WADA, come less than three months before the start of the Sochi Winter Games.

WADA announced Sunday that the Moscow lab was provisionally suspended for six months and given a Dec. 1 deadline to improve the reliability of its results. If the lab does not follow the recommendations of a disciplinary committee, it will not be allowed to provide testing facilities for February's Olympics, an embarrassing possibility for the Kremlin, which wants the Games to show off Russia as a developed and accomplished nation.

Mutko said Monday that his ministry, which runs the Moscow Anti-Doping Center, had received an official letter from WADA detailing the recommendations. He said one of the stated proposals was to have at least three international experts on staff at the center.

"Of course, the recommendations from WADA will be fulfilled," Mutko said at a Sports Ministry event, RIA Novosti reported. "These are labor issues — that's no problem at all."

"WADA systematically makes certain observations and proposals regarding anti-doping centers to improve the effectiveness of the laboratories," Mutko said.

The international anti-doping authority said in a statement Sunday that it was giving the Moscow facility a first deadline of Dec. 1 to bring in independent "quality management" experts to "allow everyone to be confident of the accuracy and reliability of results moving forward."

WADA said there was also a second deadline of April 1, 2014, when the lab must ensure that program of improvement has been "drafted, finalized, implemented and embedded."

"If the two above-mentioned conditions are fully satisfied within the specified deadlines [to which no extensions will be granted], then the above-referenced six month suspension of accreditation of the Moscow laboratory shall never come into effect," WADA said.

The International Olympic Committee announced last week that it would do more doping tests around the Sochi Games than any other Winter Olympics — nearly 2,500 in all. The Moscow lab is due to move some of its facilities to Sochi to handle those tests under Moscow's accreditation.

In response Sunday to WADA's announcement that the Moscow lab had been suspended, the IOC, said it guaranteed the "integrity" of the drug-testing program at the Sochi Olympics.

"The IOC is confident that all the necessary measures will be taken and the Sochi lab will be fully functioning during the Games," the IOC said in a statement. "The integrity of the Games-time testing program will remain unaffected by these developments, indeed it will be strengthened."

WADA is not the responsible medical authority for the upcoming Olympics but said it "strongly suggests" the IOC "consider appropriate action to ensure the complete integrity of all analysis" at the laboratory both in Moscow and the satellite facility at Sochi.

WADA regularly checks that its accredited labs are working properly by sending them "blind samples," samples meant as tests to ensure the lab is giving correct findings, and not false positives or false negatives.

Labs deemed noncompliant with WADA's standards can have their accreditation revoked, as has happened with the Rio de Janeiro lab that had been scheduled to test samples at next year's World Cup in Brazil. FIFA will instead have to fly samples from the football showcase to an accredited lab in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Should the Moscow lab have its WADA accreditation revoked, the host city will face having to cover the costs in order to fly samples to another lab under the host city agreement. Sochi

already has the highest price tag for any Olympics, summer or winter, with an estimated cost of \$50 billion.

Sochi also will be the most drug-tested games in Winter Olympics history, according to the IOC, which will spend \$1 million on pre-competition testing for Sochi and "many millions" on testing throughout the event, new IOC President Thomas Bach told the World Conference on Doping in Sport in Johannesburg last week.

Material from The Associated Press is included in this report.

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