

Putin Tells Games Organizers to Work Through Holidays

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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SOCHI — President Vladimir Putin urged the organizers of the 2014 Winter Olympics on Thursday to work through Russia's long annual New Year holiday to ensure Sochi is ready on time for the Games.

After inspecting facilities in the Black Sea resort, where some roads are still being completed and construction equipment is strewn across the city, he said there was still work to be done before the Games open on Feb. 7.

"It is not only evident to us, but to all observers too, that tremendous, high-quality work has been done," he told officials involved in organizing the Games. "There are things that need to be accomplished, perfected at the final stage."

"The New Year holidays are approaching," he added. "For you and those working on Olympic sites, the New Year will come after the Paralympic Games end on March 17. For you, the New

Year will be on March 18."

Russia comes to a virtual standstill between Dec. 31 and Jan. 8, with the main family celebrations on New Year's Eve, a tradition that dates to the Soviet era. Many Russians now also celebrate Orthodox Christmas on Jan. 7.

Putin has staked his personal political prestige on staging a successful Olympics and the Games are expected to cost about \$50 billion. During a trip to Sochi in September, he criticized failures and delays in preparations.

Putin said that construction work should be finished on time, including that of the main Fisht stadium where the opening ceremonies will be held, and which Putin is expected to visit Friday. It has not yet been opened.

Some roads near Olympic sites are still being paved and various buildings are still fenced off and surrounded by construction equipment.

13 official sites are being built, including a stadium that can house 40,000 people, plus facilities for ice hockey, skiing, snowboarding and skating. About 120,000 visitors are expected during the two-week Games.

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