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State-Run Search Engine to Launch in Spring

By The Moscow Times

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A state-run Internet search engine will be launched this spring, Alexei Basov, vice president of state telecoms company Rostelecom, said Wednesday.

Rostelecom plans to grab market share for the new search engine, called Sputnik, by making it the automatic preference in state companies and government departments.

In 2012, the state employed 25.7 percent of the working population, according to the Economic Development Ministry.

Russian media reported that Rostelcom was developing a state-owned search engine last October. Sputnik's development, for which Rostelecom went on a hiring spree from leading Russian internet firms, cost less than $42 million, Basov said.

The idea of creating a state search engine arose in 2008 after Russia's short war against

neighboring Georgia, opposition member of parliament Ilya Ponomaryov told Vedomosti. Seeing that the information rising to the top of existing search engines did not always chime with the government line, officials realized the desirability of an aggregator more amenable to the state's interests, Ponomaryov said.

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