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Leadership Sounds Alarm Over World Cup 2018 Stadium Delays

By The Moscow Times

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Economic Development Minister Alexei Ulyukayev warned that the auditing of stadium projects has fallen behind.

Russia's leadership on Thursday warned that the country's preparations for the football World Cup in 2018 have fallen behind schedule due to a backlog in audits for stadium construction projects.

The buildup to the 2014 World Cup in Brazil has been racked by delays in stadium construction, and the same embarrassing fate could befall Russia if it does not get to grips with the problem.

Last week the Sports Ministry proposed getting construction under way without waiting for the audits to be completed, but the Economic Development Ministry rebuffed the idea, saying that the assessments are needed to prevent costs from spiraling out of control, Kommersant reported.

Seven of the 11 host cities need new venues, but the only stadium project to have been audited so far is the one in Samara, Economic Development Minister Alexei Ulyukayev said Thursday during a Cabinet meeting, the minutes of which were published on the government's website.

However, he said that said that his ministry and the Construction Ministry are working together to speed up the process and added that four of the other stadiums projects are currently being audited.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev also had gloomy news for the Cabinet, saying that a government investment program that targets large-scale infrastructure projects, including World Cup stadium construction, has fulfilled just 6 percent of its plan for 2014.

"Over the course of the year, within the framework of the Federal Targeted Investment Program, 830 billion rubles ($23 billion) must be spent on building and modernizing 2,000 facilities. As of today, we have only used 6 percent of this fund," Medvedev said.

He attributed the problem to an absence of documentation for the projects and a lack of reliable estimates for costs and demanded that the government takes steps to correct the issue.

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