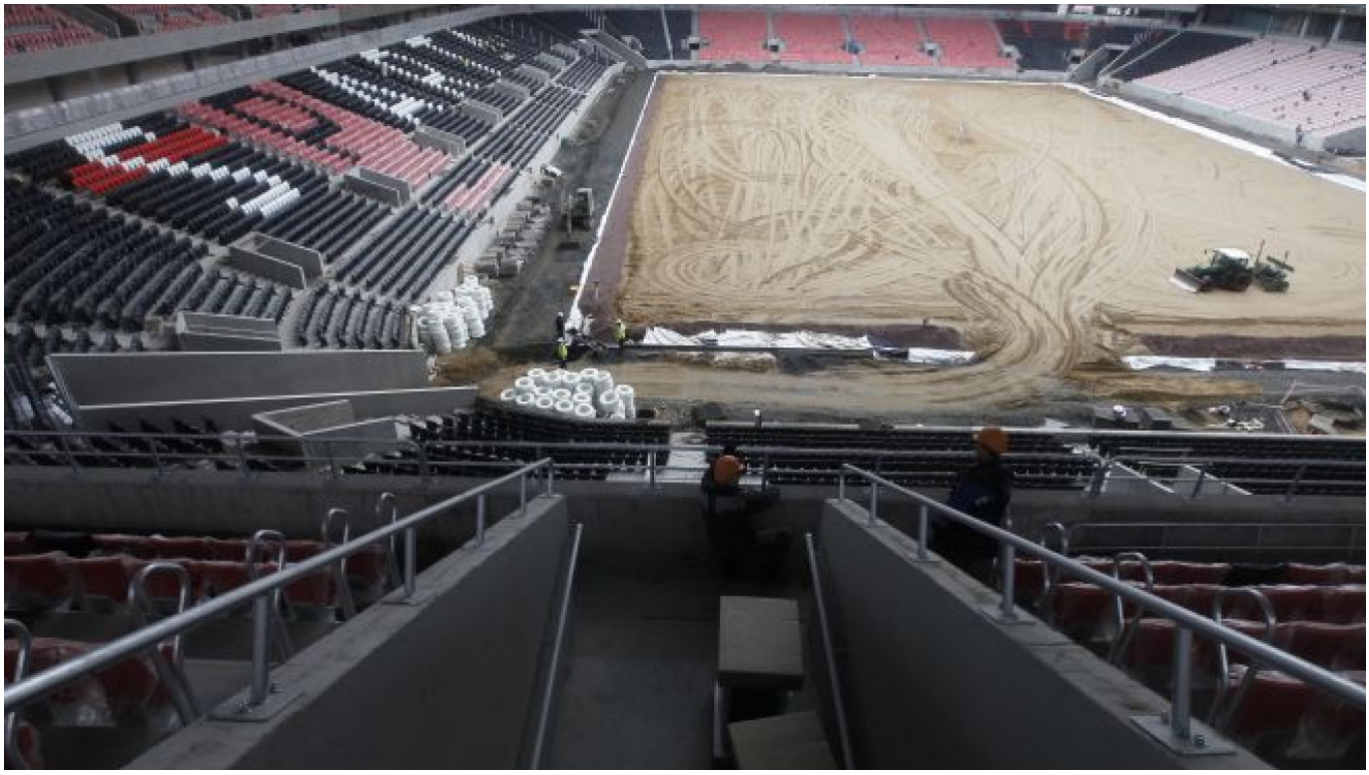
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Blatter Says FIFA to Reassess Stadium Plans for 2018 World Cup in Russia

By The Moscow Times

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The Otkrytiye Arena, Spartak Moscow's new home, has been designated as one of the venues for the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter has thrown an unexpected seed of doubt into Russia's preparations for the 2018 World Cup, saying FIFA will discuss the possibility of reducing the number of stadiums to be used there in four years' time.

Two days after Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko gave media detailed background about Russia's plans for their World Cup, which involves 12 stadiums in 11 cities, Blatter implied that they could be re-examined.

"It's a footballing country, but we will have meetings there in September to see if 12 is the right number and even if they could be reduced to 10."

His comments came as a complete surprise to Alexei Sorokin, the chief executive officer of the

Russian Organising Committee who told reporters: "This is the first I have heard about it, we know nothing about this."

Blatter, speaking at his final media briefing following Germany's win over Argentina in Sunday's final, said a FIFA delegation would visit Russia to discuss plans for their finals in September.

Blatter described the Brazil World Cup as "very, very special" giving it a mark of 9.25 out of 10 but said he was troubled that it cost in the region of $11 billion to stage.

"It is obvious the World Cup has taken such a dimension that the organization is a hard work for the organizing country and also for the FIFA," he said.

"FIFA is looking at 2018 now and we are in discussions on what is the ideal number for the organization and to keep it in such a manner that it is feasible, reasonable and controllable.

"We are not going to be in a situation as is the case of one, two or even three stadiums in South Africa where it is a problem of what you do with these stadiums," Blatter said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was in Rio de Janeiro for Sunday's World Cup final and held talks with Blatter while he was in the Brazil capital.

Mutko told reporters on Saturday that the country had allocated $20 billion — $9 billion more than Brazil — to staging the tournament.

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[Russia Looks Ahead to 2018 World Cup]

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