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World Cup Stadium's Cost in Nizhny Novogorod Rises After Billionaire Demands More Cash

By The Moscow Times

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Kazan Arena in Kazan, Russia.

The price tag for the 2018 FIFA World Cup venue in Nizhny Novgorod has been raised by 2 billion rubles ($55 million) after Gennady Timchenko, the sanctioned billionaire owner of the company set to build the stadium, demanded that the government revise its initial estimates.

Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko earlier said the planned stadiums in both Nizhny Novgorod and Volgograd should not cost more than 15 billion rubles — the amount spent on the Kazan Arena stadium in the Republic of Tatarstan, which has been used as a template.

But in an interview with ITAR-Tass this month Timchenko threatened to withdraw his Stroitransgaz construction company from the projects unless the figure was raised to 17 billion rubles, which he said was "the minimum needed to break even."

"There is no way that we can fit into the proposed cost sheet, and Stroitransgaz does not work at a loss," said Timchenko, who is a close ally of President Vladimir Putin and was one of the first Russian billionaires to be blacklisted by the U.S. and EU after Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine.

Timchenko's wish has now been granted. The main state expert review board has agreed to increase the funding for the 45,000-seater stadium in Nizhny Novgorod, according to the region's acting governor, Valery Shantsev, who posted a copy of the board's decision on his blog late last week.

Shantsev said preparation work on the stadium's construction site is already under way. It is not yet known whether the estimate for the stadium in Volgograd will also be raised.

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