

Sochi Games May Not Need State Cash

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BERLIN — The Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics may not need help from state funds because sponsorship plans have exceeded expectations, games chief Dmitry Chernyshenko said Monday.

The Black Sea resort has an organizing budget of some \$2 billion that does not include infrastructure construction and improvement, worth several more billion dollars.

Sponsorship revenues have topped \$1 billion, making Sochi by far the most successful Winter Games organizing committee in that respect, and look likely to surpass Beijing's \$1.2 billion domestic sponsorship revenue mark for its much bigger 2008 Summer Games.

"It is true we have exceeded our [sponsorship] plans, but we have now established new plans," Chernyshenko said in an interview a day before the start of an International Olympic Committee coordination commission visit to monitor progress.

"We want to run the games without attracting public funds or government money," he said, days after organizers signed up Russian insurance company Ingosstrakh as their latest partner.

Sochi will also have revenues from tickets, the licensing plan and broadcasting rights.

Chernyshenko said more sponsorship deals were expected. "There are some more contracts in the pipeline, and we will have news on that soon," he said. "The licensing program has started, and we recently signed the contract for the post, stamps and coins."

Chernyshenko, a Sochi native who also led the successful bid, said construction was not a concern, despite the need to build almost all venues from scratch.

"From the construction perspective, the coordination commission will visit the Olympic park and see the growing number of venues," he said.

Construction in Sochi, which has been named Europe's biggest building site, has been a matter of concern for some time with the IOC urging organizers to stick to the timetable.

Chernyshenko said all venues would be completed by 2013 as planned and several, including the ice hockey stadium, were ahead of schedule.

International Ski Federation chief Gian Franco Kasper warned last week of possible "white elephants," saying Sochi had to make sure that there was a use for all the venues after the games.

Chernyshenko said Sochi was bidding to become a regional winter sports hub, investing far more than needed to just host the Olympics.

The biggest challenge for organizers lay in having the right personnel in place for such a big event, he said. "The major challenge is the people," he said. "We have to understand we are creating a new city with extended infrastructure and the proper workforce to maintain and operate. It is not only the competitions but also the hotels and so on."

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