

Business and Politics in the Muslim World

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Contents ***Page #***

Summary:.....3

Political news8

Gryzlov Says Putin-Medvedev Tandem to Rule After 2012

Criminal case instituted over attack on Shatura town mayor

Russia's Far East launches tsunami center

Boarding school teacher to face trial for beating up pupils

Manned BMD-2 vehicles paradropped for first-ever time

French naval ships to be sold to Russia with onboard gunnery

Russia allows Georgian Airways to make several Easter flights - FM

Russian Proton rocket carries American satellite to orbit

Police prevent unsanctioned meetings in Moscow, 70 detained

Georgian war memorial destroyed in Kutaisi to be rebuilt in Moscow

Moscow City Hall insists on official's innocence

Economic:.....15

Putin Presses Clinton for Lower Trade Hurdles

State Awards \$68.2M to Film Studios

Kiev Softening Stance on Pipelines

Fire in business centre in north of Moscow localized

Social news.....20

Suspected killer of wife, 2 daughters explains crime with large debts

Kamchatkan volcano belches out ash to 7 km above sea level

Late chief of Moscow City's firefighting service to be laid to rest

Minister offers public to take part in preparing new law on police

Dozens of license plates found in car driven by Moscow policeman

Moscow policeman suspected of illegal car confiscations

Human factor behind Tu-204 crash near Domodedovo airport

Boarding school teacher to face trial for beating up pupils

Human body fragments found at nationalist organization headquarters

Police open hooliganism case over shooting incident in Moscow metro

Summary:**Political:****Gryzlov Says Putin-Medvedev Tandem to Rule After 2012**

President [Dmitry Medvedev](#) and Prime Minister [Vladimir Putin](#) will continue ruling Russia in a tandem after 2012, when Medvedev's first presidential term expires.

Criminal case instituted over attack on Shatura town mayor

A criminal case was instituted over the attack on Shatura town mayor Valery Larionov, spokeswoman for the Moscow regional investigation department of the Prosecutor General's Office Investigation Committee Yulia Zhukova told. "The criminal case was instituted under Article 318 Part 2 of the Criminal Code for the use of violence dangerous for the life and health of a statesman," she noted.

Russia's Far East launches tsunami center

The Russian Far East opened a tsunami center in Vladivostok on Friday that will decrease the warning time from half an hour to one minute.

Boarding school teacher to face trial for beating up pupils

Deputy head of the Urulga boarding school in Russia's Baikal territory will face trial for beating up two pupils who breached discipline, a source in the Baikal territory prosecutor's office told.

Manned BMD-2 vehicles paradropped for first-ever time

BMD-2 landing assault vehicles together with personnel have been paratropped by IL-76 aircraft on Thursday, for the first-ever time in the history of Russia's Airborne Forces (ABF), during the current command and staff exercises of the 76th landing assault division of the ABF in Pskov Region.

French naval ships to be sold to Russia with onboard gunnery

French Defense Ministry has confirmed that if France reaches an agreement with Russia on selling the Mistral class helicopter carriers to it, they will be sold without onboard weaponry.

Russia allows Georgian Airways to make several Easter flights – FM

Russia has satisfied a request from the Georgian Airways for a series of charter flights between Tbilisi and Moscow during the Easter season

Russian Proton rocket carries American satellite to orbit

The Russian space vehicle Proton-M launched from Baikonur on Saturday has successfully put the EchoStar-14 American communication satellite into the planned orbit.

Police prevent unsanctioned meetings in Moscow, 70 detained

Activists of some political and public organizations attempted on Saturday to organise mass rallies not sanctioned by Moscow authorities. However, with appropriate professional actions, policemen prevented serious public order violations and ensured security for citizens.

Georgian war memorial destroyed in Kutaisi to be rebuilt in Moscow

The war memorial will be placed on the Alley of Glory behind the Great Patriotic War Museum at Moscow's Poklonny Hill. "The symbol of the future monument should be the

following thesis: we were together in the fight against fascism,” Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov said after consultations with members of the Georgian community and war veterans.

Moscow City Hall insists on official's innocence

The tough and uncompromising attitude of Alexander Ryabinin in reviewing issues and decision-making was the largest irritant for part of the business community, and among the so-called lobbyists. There often were libelous letters and threats against him.

Economic:

Putin Presses Clinton for Lower Trade Hurdles

Prime Minister [Vladimir Putin](#) demanded that the U.S. administration lower hurdles to Russian investment and offered U.S. Secretary of State [Hillary Clinton](#) a list of trade complaints during a meeting Friday.

State Awards \$68.2M to Film Studios

A state-run foundation will give eight studios \$8.5 million each, with bonuses possible for high-viewership films.

Kiev Softening Stance on Pipelines

The announcement could lead to a breakthrough in gas supply negotiations between Moscow and Kiev, which have been fraught with disputes in recent years, including two that disrupted supplies to Europe. Ukraine wants cheaper gas to take the burden off its reeling economy and deficit budget, and offering partial control of the nation's gas pipelines is one of Kiev's strongest bargaining chips with Moscow.

Fire in business centre in north of Moscow localized

At least 20 fire teams and two rescue detachments continue to work on the spot. No casualties have been reported. Fire-fighters rescued six people from the burning building. It is unknown yet if people may stay inside. The majority of companies do not operate on Saturday.

Social:**Suspected killer of wife, 2 daughters explains crime with large debts**

Irina Chernysheva and her two daughters, aged seven and fifteen, were found dead in a rented apartment at 73, Ryazansky Avenue, on Saturday morning. The three were shot in the head. A silencer was found in the waste duct. The husband was under suspicion, and the police checked his office nearby.

Kamchatkan volcano belches out ash to 7 km above sea level

A belching of ash to the altitude of seven kilometers above sea level has been registered over the crater of the Shiveluch, Kamchatka's northernmost active volcano, experts at the regional affiliation of the Geophysical Service of the Russian Academy of Sciences said.

Late chief of Moscow City's firefighting service to be laid to rest

Moscow City bids final farewell Tuesday to the late Colonel Yevgeny Chernyshov, the chief of the firefighting service who died Saturday, March 20, while evacuating people from a blazing office building.

Minister offers public to take part in preparing new law on police

Russian Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev offered the public to take an active part in preparing the new legislation on police. Speaking to Militseiskaya Volna radio on

Wednesday, the minister noted that work was underway on the concept of the new law involving scientists, lawmakers, human rights activists and experienced police officers.

Dozens of license plates found in car driven by Moscow policeman

Road police in the Irkutsk region stopped a Toyota Land Cruiser driven by a policeman from Moscow. A search of the trunk of the vehicle found police uniforms, weapons and dozens of license plates of various provinces, as well as a considerable number of documents including fictitious orders for police to seize cars.

Moscow policeman suspected of illegal car confiscations

According to the available information, the detained police officer may be involved in the illegal confiscation of expensive European and Japanese cars (such as Lexus, Toyota Land Cruiser, BMW and Mercedes). Some of them are listed as missing, and some were illegally confiscated from the owners under fictitious documents.

Human factor behind Tu-204 crash near Domodedovo airport

Meanwhile, the chief of the Federal Air Transport Agency ruled out a theory that the air crash could be caused by an incident with the airplane on Sunday (then the cockpit was screened with smoke). Alongside, "The airplane had the sufficient fuel reserve and the engines were operating well until the crash landing," Neradko pledges.

Boarding school teacher to face trial for beating up pupils

According to investigators, having found the boys breaching the school's discipline, the teacher, Dmitry Vitkauskas, beat them up, striking one of the boys over the head with an empty one-litre glass bottle. Vitkauskas admitted his quit and will face charges on office abuse and neglect of his teacher's responsibilities.

Human body fragments found at nationalist organization headquarters

A head and hand fragments were retrieved from a fridge in the rented apartment. A murder case was opened. The police also found armaments, ammunition, handmade bombs, knives and nationalist books in the apartment.

Police open hooliganism case over shooting incident in Moscow metro

The Russian Prosecutor General's Office Investigation Committee metro department has opened a hooliganism case over the Friday shooting incident in Moscow.

Detail News:

Political news

Gryzlov Says Putin-Medvedev Tandem to Rule After 2012

Gryzlov speaking with Putin last week at a Security Council session. He skipped an online interview for the session.

"There can't be any contradictions in the Medvedev-Putin tandem by default. That is why they will work in this tandem after 2012," Gryzlov said in an online interview with the Gazeta.ru news portal.

Gryzlov was responding to some of the more than 3,000 angry questions and caustic remarks about himself and [United Russia](#) that had been submitted by readers over the course of a week.

The interview was initially scheduled for Wednesday, and Gryzlov — often described by critics as "the Android" for his low-key personality and perceived servility to Putin — faced sharp criticism when he decided to skip it at the last minute, citing a Security Council meeting on global warming.

Gryzlov also said Friday that a program called Clean Water to install water filters that he co-invented in buildings nationwide would go ahead despite criticism that his dual involvement as a patent holder and a lawmaker who decides the state budget marked a conflict of interest.

He said his critics in the media "serve the powers that do not want our citizens to live long, quality lives."

Gryzlov blamed unspecified foreign powers for growing anti-government street rallies, saying foreign money was being funneled through nongovernmental organizations to pay people to participate in the rallies.

"Here we get the taste of a color revolution," he said, referring to the nonviolent public protests that led to regime changes in Georgia in 2003 and in Ukraine in 2004.

Asked about his infamous statement that the Duma was not a place for discussion, Gryzlov complained that journalists had distorted his original appeal to stop parliamentary "battles" that sometimes resulted in fistfights.

Gryzlov dismissed suggestions that bureaucrats had forced citizens to vote for United Russia or had bought their votes during regional elections on March 14. He conceded that some bureaucrats had pressed their subordinates to vote, but he said they could not check whether the votes had been cast for United Russia, which he and Putin lead.

As for offering money for votes, as some media have reported, Gryzlov said this would be "too expensive."

Gryzlov praised United Russia — which is routinely accused of stifling any dissent — for "creating real powers" out of the Communist, Liberal Democratic and [Just Russia](#) parties — the only parties other than United Russia that have seats in the Duma. The Communist and Liberal Democrat parties are a decade older than United Russia, and their representation in the Duma and regional legislatures has dwindled as United Russia developed into the ruling party.

"We live in a beautiful state," Gryzlov said as he concluded the interview.

Criminal case instituted over attack on Shatura town mayor

Valery Larionov drove up at about 18.30 Moscow time on Thursday evening to his house in the village of Levoshevo, the Shatura district, two bandits came up to him and started beating him up. "The son ran up for help to his father, and the attackers were trying to escape. The mayor and his son detained an attacker. He is a 31-year-old local resident with previous convictions. The second attacker managed to escape, but he was identified. The search operation for him is underway," Zhukova said.

According to her, the detectives are investigating all possible theories behind the attack – from personal hostile relations to professional activities.

Meanwhile, sources in the law enforcement agencies noted that, according to preliminary reports, an attacker is a member of an organized criminal group, and the attack was linked with the previous job of an official, who was engaged in land property management in the Shatura district.

Russia's Far East launches tsunami center

The center will monitor the sea across the whole Pacific coast of Russia through dozens of stations located in Primorye region, on Sakhalin and Kamchatka Peninsula.

The press service of the regional weather service told Tass the tsunami center is operating in a test regime so far to streamline computer software.

In the 20th century 5-meter high tsunami hit Russia's Far East four times causing major damage. However scientists warn 10-meter high waves may threaten the eastern coast of Primorye region because of major earthquakes close to the western coast of Japan.

Boarding school teacher to face trial for beating up pupils

According to investigators, having found the boys breaching the school's discipline, the teacher, Dmitry Vitkauskas, beat them up, striking one of the boys over the head with an empty one-litre glass bottle. Vitkauskas admitted his quit and will face charges on office abuse and neglect of his teacher's responsibilities.

On March 4, the territorial prosecutor's office said it had instituted criminal proceedings against another teacher of the Urulga boarding school. Olga Kurkina, also suspected in beating pupils, was accused of improper fulfilment of teacher's obligations and child abuse.

Prosecutors blame the Urulga boarding school administration for neglect of its obligations.

Manned BMD-2 vehicles Para dropped for first-ever time

The ABF spokesman, Colonel Alexander Cherednik, has told Itar-Tass, "At 10:00, Moscow time, the personnel and combat vehicles of the 76th Division were paradropped onto a landing site at Kislovo. Thirteen IL-76 aircraft of the Air Force paradropped 40

members of reconnaissance personnel, 14 vehicles, and about 120 servicemen of a paratroop company".

"The first IL-76 aircraft paraded about 40 scouts using steerable parachutes Arbalet (arbalest). Another five aircraft successively paraded 12 BMD-2 vehicles, one BMD-4, and one self-propelled antitank gun mount Sprut-SD, and yet another seven IL-76 planes paraded a paratroop company," Cherednik specified.

"The peculiarity of the parading was the landing of three BMD-2 combat vehicles together with personnel inside. There were three officers and three driver-mechanics inside the vehicles all in all--two men in each vehicle. The parading of the BMD-2 together with personnel inside was carried out for the first-ever time in the history of the ABF. The vehicles were paraded by means of a new parachute system, to which these exercises became the concluding phase of factory tests. This parachute system is yet to undergo joint State testing, after which it will be phase into service with the ABF," Colonel Cherednik said.

French naval ships to be sold to Russia with onboard gunnery

Defense Ministry spokesman Laurent Teisseire said the French position on the issue has been stated clearly by President Nicolas Sarkozy and talks have begun.

He recalled Sarkozy saying during Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's visit to Paris the Mistral will not have any weapons when sold to Russia.

Local analysts explain for this reluctance to sell those ships to Russia with a full set of military hardware because they have the most top-notch control and communications equipment

The second explanation is the "concern the U.S. Congressmen, as well as the Baltic countries and Georgia that the helicopter carriers may pose threat to their security.

Russia allows Georgian Airways to make several Easter flights - FM

Russia has satisfied a request from the Georgian Airways for a series of charter flights between Tbilisi and Moscow during the Easter season, the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

"The company's representatives contacted the Russian aviation authorities to request permission to allow several charter flights in connection with the coming Orthodox Easter holiday (April 4)," the Foreign Ministry said. "In view of the obvious humanitarian importance of such flights the Russian side satisfied the request."

“Earlier, the same Georgian air carrier was allowed to make Christmas time flights,” the Russian Foreign Ministry recalled.

Russian Proton rocket carries American satellite to orbit

EchoStar-14 separated from the Briz-M booster at 06:37 Moscow time, a Roskosmos Federal Space Agency source reported.

The satellite will take its place at a longitude of 119 degrees west in its geostationary orbit.

EchoStar based on the satellite platform LS-1300 was made by the Space Systems/Loral company for the American satellite operator EchoStar. It is designed for television signal transmission to 14 million TV spectators of the DISH Network American TV company.

The satellite is expected to work in orbit for 15 years. It weighs 6,384 kilogrammes. It is equipped with 103 Ku-band transponders.

The Proton-M rocket and the Briz-M booster are made by the Khrunichev state space scientific and production centre. The vehicle has three stages. Its launch weight is about 700 tonnes. The International Launch Services (ILS) company deals with marketing of Protons at the market of space services. The controlling stake in it belongs to the Khrunichev centre.

It was the fourth Proton-M launch this year, and the 355th in its history, a source at the scientific and production centre said.

For ILS it is the second in 2010 and the 58th since the beginning of the use of Protons in April 1996.

Police prevent unsanctioned meetings in Moscow, 70 detained

Moscow police have prevented unsanctioned meetings in the city, the head of the city police information department , Viktor Biryukov, told reporters on Saturday.

The first unsanctioned meeting took place at Pushkinskaya Square. Despite repeated warnings of the mayor's office and the police department, the organisers gathered about 200 people at the site, and about 100 Russian and foreign reporters came to cover the event. The demonstrators attempted to stage provocations with the use of fire devices, but the provocative actions were promptly stopped, and the offenders were detained. A total of 70 people were taken to police offices. The detained persons would be freed after the reports of the incidents were written, the spokesman said. The reports will be handed over to court.

Besides, a group of drivers attempted to organise an action at the Garden Ring that could disrupt the traffic and cause jams and even accidents. Participants in the action gathered at Zubovsky Boulevard and intended to go in a column along the inner side of the Garden Ring. The drivers took the third and fourth lanes, moving at a low speed and hampering the traffic.

Police at the road were ready for such developments. They prevented the drivers from forming a column. The traffic along the Garden Ring was not halted. Some drivers who violated the regulations were stopped, and police wrote up reports against them for offences, including violation of the parking regulations.

Allowed meetings planned for Saturday in the city were held without serious violations. All the permitted actions ended without incidents. Order was ensured, and nobody was detained, Biryukov said.

The Moscow interior affairs department once again asks organisers of mass actions to inform authorities beforehand and receive permission to prevent conflict situations. Police will continue to take measures in accordance with the law to ensure security in Moscow and prevent illegal actions and provocations, the official noted.

Georgian war memorial destroyed in Kutaisi to be rebuilt in Moscow

The war memorial to Georgian soldiers perished in the Second World War destroyed in Kutaisi will be rebuilt in Moscow, the Mayor's Office said on Wednesday.

The future memorial will not be the exact copy of the 40-metre tall monument in Kutaisi. It will be 10-12-metre high.

The Mayor's Office also decided that the tender for the design of the future monument would be public and take place from April 1 to June 1.

Moscow City Hall insists on official's innocence

The Moscow City Hall said it is convinced of the innocence of head of the Moscow control department Alexander Ryabinin, who is a suspect in a criminal case over abuse of office powers.

"Ryabinin became head of the Moskontrol (Moscow control department) in 2006, when business and investment activity peaked before the crisis. The main objective of the new service is special control over the legitimacy of the city's business activities and absolute

prevention of criminal schemes," the City Hall press service told Itar-Tass on Wednesday.

"Under Ryabinin's guidance, Moskontrol became an effective body to counteract and prevent incorrect or illegal actions, and a fast barrier to various kinds of illegitimate initiatives.

"The Moscow administration is convinced of the high moral and ethical qualities of Alexander Ryabinin, otherwise, it would have never trusted him with post of head of the main control service of the Moscow government.

"Due to various circumstances, law-enforcement bodies have taken actions against a number of Moscow officials, as was the case with first deputy director of the Moscow government's property department Vladimir Avekoy and head of the finance department of the Moscow government Yuri Korostelyov. However, these probes have yielded nothing. It is likely that that the current probe will be as unavailing," the City Hall said.

On Tuesday, the Investigations Committee under the Prosecutor General's Office (SKP) announced it had opened a criminal probe against Ryabinin over "abuse of office powers that resulted in grave consequences."

Mikhail Khubutiya, an aide to the Moscow mayor, said the criminal case against the official is "an attempt to take revenge on a decent person."

"The report said the criminal case was opened over extortion, but, knowing this person, I'm confident he cannot play the role of extortionist; his turf is creativity, and people are squaring accounts with him after he didn't let them steal," Khubutiya said.

"Alexander Ryabinin is a decent official. I'm sure justice will triumph, and that he would not find himself hooked by an oligarch for manipulation.

"Knowing his character, he's likely to die in prison than agree to any scheme," the aide said.

Economic:

Putin Presses Clinton for Lower Trade Hurdles

Clinton and Lavrov, center, getting ready for a group photo after a meeting of the Middle East Quartet on Friday.

Putin told Clinton in public comments before the talks that trade between the two countries last year collapsed from \$36 billion to \$16 billion because of the global recession.

"This is a very low level and far from the possibilities," Putin said, according to [a transcript posted on his web site](#).

He complained that five Russian companies were subject to sanctions initiated by the State Department and that Cold War-era trade restrictions remained in place.

"Until now, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment is still in place," he said.

The restrictions, which prevent Russia from obtaining "normal trade relations" status, have been a bone of contention in Moscow's cumbersome negotiations to join the [World Trade Organization](#).

Putin raised WTO membership next with Clinton, saying talks were going in circles. "We have been negotiating for 17 years now. Just three questions remain. And we keep running around that triangle," he said.

The prime minister also said Russian firms investing in the United States needed more support from Washington, and he singled out [Norilsk Nickel](#) and [Severstal](#) as examples. "They need signals that they are welcome," he said, adding that this was also true for U.S. companies investing in Russia, like General Electric and Boeing.

The United States ranks eighth in terms of accumulated investment in the country, Putin said, adding that he wanted the figure to increase.

Clinton told Putin that in talks with President Dmitry Medvedev earlier Friday she had discussed the possibility for greater cooperation between Russian and U.S. technology companies.

Clinton called for reducing trade barriers and reiterated U.S. support for Moscow's WTO accession. She also discussed a potential Russian bid for a multibillion-dollar U.S. aerial-refueling fleet.

After the talks, Putin's deputy chief of staff said the prime minister thought that the much-discussed "reset" of mutual ties had already improved the atmosphere but not yet the substance.

"Now is the time for decisive change in the substantial part of our bilateral relations," Yury Ushakov told reporters, Interfax reported.

Ushakov also said Putin told Clinton that Moscow's WTO membership depends only on the United States. "He said that if there was political will in Washington, the problem could be solved," Ushakov said.

Moscow's WTO talks have been overshadowed by a brawl with Washington over U.S. poultry.

Russia, once the largest importer of U.S. chicken, barred the meat as of Jan. 1 after slashing the allowable amount of chlorine that producers can use as a disinfectant.

Russia's food safety watchdog said Friday that the country would start importing Thai poultry as an alternative, Bloomberg reported.

On a more positive note, the government said it might lift import duties on foreign-made passenger jets, including those produced by Airbus and Boeing, when a customs union with Belarus and Kazakhstan begins to function on July 1, Vedomosti reported Friday.

Clinton, who was in Moscow for negotiations in the Middle East Quartet under the auspices of the United Nations, was originally not expected to meet with Putin because he was traveling. The talks in Putin's Novo-Ogaryovo residence were later tacked to the end of her schedule, giving the impression that Putin had left it unclear whether he would receive her. It was their first official contact since Clinton became secretary of state last year.

During talks with Medvedev and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Clinton failed to reach any breakthrough on the two most salient bilateral issues, negotiations over a successor to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and U.S. efforts to impose sanctions against Iran.

Clinton said Geneva-based treaty negotiations were "nearly finished" and that both sides hoped to sign the new treaty early next month. "We hope to have a signing ceremony ... in early April," she said in an interview with Bloomberg TV posted on the State Department's web site.

Clinton and Lavrov refused to say Friday where the signing would take place, and Ushakov merely said it would take place in Europe.

Kommersant reported that Moscow had pushed for Kiev as a symbol for the new Ukrainian government's pro-Russian course but Washington opposed the idea and the signing would take place in Prague.

On Iran, Putin told Clinton that sanctions were possible but warned that they might not solve the problem and were maybe even counterproductive, Ushakov said.

Putin managed to irritate Clinton on Thursday when he announced that Russia would launch Iran's Bushehr nuclear reactor this summer.

State Awards \$68.2M to Film Studios

Eight major production companies will get 250 million rubles (\$8.5 million) each from the state to make movies this year, the foundation awarding the subsidies said Friday.

The announcement was the first major distribution of money to the film industry since the Culture Ministry lost most of its oversight of the process last year.

The ministry had come under fire for inefficiency as Russian movies continued to yield the top box-office spots to Hollywood blockbusters and some state-funded flicks never even made it into theaters.

Sergei Tolstikov, executive director of the Federal Foundation for the Social and Economic Support of Cinematography, announced the winning studios after a meeting Friday chaired by Deputy Prime Minister [Alexander Zhukov](#).

The companies slated to get budget funds are STV; director Nikita Mikhalkov's Trite; Cinema Direction; Central Partnership; Igor Tolstunov's production company; Art-Pictures, co-owned by director Fyodor Bondarchuk; Bazelevs, owned by director Timur Bekmambetov; and Rekun, he said.

Mikhalkov, who heads the Russian Cinematographers' Union, is among the foundation's board of trustees, as are Zhukov, Culture Minister Alexander Avdeyev, presidential aide Vladislav Surkov and Sistema chief executive Vladimir Yevtushenkov, RIA-Novosti reported.

Prime Minister [Vladimir Putin](#) criticized the industry in November while chairing a government meeting on cinematography, setting in motion a shakeup of how the state awards funds to filmmakers.

"Most likely, the movie industry's problems don't lie in the amount of funds and tax preferences it gets. The main problem is the management of these resources, the ability to create a competitive product, to gain a domestic and international audience," Putin said.

The government decided to increase its funding of the industry by 55 percent in 2010, Avdeyev said at the time.

In December, the foundation was asked to disburse 2.8 billion rubles in 2010, and a new mechanism to distribute the cash was worked out under the guidance of Zhukov.

The Culture Ministry was left with 849 million rubles to support children's, art-house and experimental cinema, Tolstikov said.

The foundation also has 300 million rubles to award bonuses for movies that attract more than a million viewers, he said. The remaining money will go to the production of socially important movies.

The system will be operational for two years, after which new recipients will be selected based on criteria approved by the foundation.

"We should concentrate on distinct criteria, there shouldn't be subjectivity. The criteria should be transparent for everyone," Zhukov said, Interfax reported.

Tolstikov said the criteria were developed by the company Movie Research and include cinema and television viewers' ratings of the movies, participation in major film festivals, awards and prizes received and production companies' experience.

Box-office receipts will not be considered because the number of theaters varies from year to year, Movie Research head Oleg Ivanov said, Interfax reported.

The [Audit Chamber](#), which oversees budget spending, said earlier Friday that it would monitor the foundation's work.

Last year's box-office receipts from 78 movies produced in Russia were \$176 million in the Commonwealth of Independent States, down 16.8 percent from \$211.5 million in 2008, according to the data from Russian Film Business Today magazine.

Kiev Softening Stance on Pipelines

Ukraine's new government is close to completing work on a bill that would let [Gazprom](#) and European Union companies join the country in operating its vast gas pipeline network, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister [Andriy Kluyev](#) said Friday.

"It's no secret that we're currently in active contact with, first of all, our Russian colleagues," Prime Minister [Mykola Azarov](#) told reporters Friday, referring to the prospects of changing the terms of the gas trade. "Our goal is to revise the unfavorable contract that is in place."

He said state energy company [Naftogaz Ukrainy](#) would have to pay the bulk of the country's gas bill for March, with the budget contributing a "maximum of 10 percent." He

said earlier in the week that the bill would be \$700 million, or 15 percent higher than in February.

Later this week, Ukrainian Fuel and Energy Minister Yuri Boiko is to hold talks on the gas trade with his Russian colleagues.

Ukraine's government is facing the painful prospect of having to cut spending by 20 percent in the next four months, compared with the same period a year earlier, largely because of the huge bill it will receive for gas imports, Citigroup said in a note to investors Friday.

The quick drafting of the bill — in less than a month since President [Viktor Yanukovich](#) took office — may be a sign of how desperately Ukraine needs to cut a deal.

Kiev's current supply contract was negotiated by former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, who lost to Yanukovich in a tight presidential vote last month and has bitterly opposed the consortium plan as a threat to Ukraine's national interests.

Fire in business centre in north of Moscow localized

Fire teams have localised the fire in a business centre on Khutorskaya 2nd Street in the north of Moscow, spokesman for the Moscow regional emergency situations department Yevgeny Boblyov .

“The fire has been localised. There is no threat of spreading the fire,” he said.

The fire engulfs 800 square metres. The smoke and the smell of burning continue to spread in neighbourhood units.

Police stopped traffic because of the fire.

No possible causes of the fire are available. It is known that the personnel was banned to smoke in the building.

Prefect of the Northern administrative district Oleg Mitrol arrived on the ground.

Social news

Suspected killer of wife, 2 daughters explains crime with large debts

Yuri Merkind seized on suspicion of killing his wife and two daughters explained the crime with large debts, head of the Moscow department of the Russian Prosecutor General's Office Investigation Committee Anatoly Bagmet told .

“He said he had large debts and decided to kill the wife and daughters before committing suicide so that the creditors did not bother his family. There was no suicide because the killer ran out of cartridges,” Bagmet said. “The suspect really had a business and very large debts. Detectives will check his borrowings and expenditures.”

The suspect will be checked for sanity, Bagmet said.

Merkind, 51, surrendered to the police in Vladimir. “He was carrying a non-lethal gun remodeled to fire 9-millimeter live rounds and confessed of the murder in southeastern Moscow,” Bagmet said.

There is information that he might have been seeking rounds in Vladimir.

A criminal case was opened. If found guilty, the man may spend life in custody.

There has been a series of incidents with non-lethal weapons in Moscow.

The Russian Prosecutor General's Office Investigation Committee metro department opened a hooliganism case over the Friday shooting incident in Moscow.

Policeman Alexander Kurochkin pulled the trigger of a non-lethal gun at the Timiryazevskaya metro station, senior assistant head of the Investigation Committee Moscow office Sergei Marchenko told Itar-Tass.

The policeman punched a man's nose and injured with non-lethal rounds two women standing on the platform, he said.

This Tuesday the Moscow Tverskoi Court has authorized the arrest of Sergei Karpetsov, an unemployed resident of the Moscow region with a criminal record who shot a policeman from a non-lethal gun on Red Square.

“The court ordered custody of Karpetsov, born in 1976, on suspicion of using violence against an officer,” Moscow City Court spokesperson Anna Usachyova told Itar-Tass.

Karpetsov jumped over the fence and tried to get inside the Lenin Mausoleum on Red Square at about 1:30 p.m. Moscow time on March 15, a source at the Prosecutor General's Office Investigation Committee told Itar-Tass earlier. A police sergeant tried to stop the man, but he hit the officer in the face and fired a non-lethal round. Other officers seized the perpetrator.

"It appeared at the police station where the man was taken that he had been wanted for assault and robbery since 2007," Gennady Bogachyov from the city police department told Itar-Tass.

The non-lethal gun was unregistered, he added.

A Peruvian citizen was wounded on March 7 from a non-lethal gun, as he and two fellow citizens had a brawl with a driver. The incident occurred near a restaurant in northwestern Moscow late at night.

"Three drunken Peruvians and a 22-year-old Russian girl were trying to catch a cab but none stopped. The Peruvians tried to force a Mercedes driver to give them a lift. The driver refused, and the brawl started. The driver pulled out a non-lethal gun and fired several rounds. One of the foreigners was injured lightly. He was taken to hospital. Once the medical aid was given, the Peruvians had to visit a police station and to explain the brawl. They refused to report on the driver," a police source told Itar-Tass.

Another police source told Itar-Tass that the injured man was a student of the Moscow Lomonosov State University.

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The incident happened on Khoroshevskoye Highway at about 2:30 a.m. Moscow time, the department said. "A police patrol seized the man and brought him to the nearest police station."

The drunken man was identified as a 20-year-old staff member of the Southern Tushino police department. "The internal security department of the northwestern administrative district took up the case," the department said.

“The media claimed that the officer had tried to take hostages. There is no confirmation to these reports so far,” department representative Anatoly Lastovetsky said.

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President Dmitry Medvedev criticized the uncontrollable selling of non-lethal weapons in Russia. “No one knows what happens to these guns and how they are used. Such weapons are sold to anyone, former convicts, people under investigation or mentally unstable individuals,” the president said.

He ordered Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev to develop stricter rules for handling non-lethal weapons. “Other types of weaponry in Russia are strictly regulated, but these weapons, which may cause serious injuries or even death, are not being regulated well enough. You must correct this mistake and submit your proposals within ten days,” Medvedev told Nurgaliyev.

Kamchatkan volcano belches out ash to 7 km above sea level

The exuding of ash does not pose any risks for nearby population centers, as no data on the fallout of volcanic dust there has been reported.

The belching was not seen visually and scientists drew a conclusion that it had taken place on the basis of information from seismic observation stations located in the vicinity of the volcano.

They registered “a surface seismic event at the volcano” having a four minutes’ duration.

The Shiveluch has the elevation of 3,283 meters and the highest point of its activity, the Young Shiveluch, is located at the elevation of 2,800 meters.

The volcano’s basis has a diameter of 45 kilometers to 50 kilometers. It occupies an area of no less than 1,300 sq kilometers.

The Shiveluch is one of the biggest volcanic structures in the Kamchatkan volcano land.

At this moment, the volcano displays weak or moderate eruption periods lasting from several months to two to three years.

The periods of its activation were registered in 1980 to 1981 and 1993 to 1995.

The last eruption ranking among disasters occurred in November 1964.

The Shiveluch activated again in 2001, with a growth of the extrusive cupola – a towering of viscose lava -- evidenced in its crater.

Geophysical services and agencies keep the giant under permanent watch.

Late chief of Moscow City's firefighting service to be laid to rest

Col Chernyshov was 46 years old. He was promoted to the position of commander of the firefighting service in 2002 but in spite of his commanding position he continued taking part in all the rescue operations personally.

He had the practice of taking personal responsibility for the actions of his subordinates and subjected his own life to physical risks rather than the lives of fellow-firemen who worked side by side with him.

Following a requiem service in the Trinity Cathedral of the St Daniel’ s monastery at 08:00 hours Wednesday, Col Chernyshov will be buried at Mitino cemetery in the west of Moscow. It is there that a compound commemorating the firefighters who died while performing their professional duties at the Chernobyl nuclear plant has been built.

Buried on the memorial compound are 28 firefighters who helped eliminate the aftermath of the world’s largest non-military nuclear accident.

Colonel Chernyshov personally took part in the elimination of more than 250 large-scale fires, including the ones at the Ostankino television tower in 2000, at the Manezh racing course building near the Kremlin in 2004, at the national cancer clinic on Kashirskoye

Shosse avenue, at the Dyaghilev night club, and just a few days before his tragic death, at the Opera night club.

He said in a televised interview some time ago: “They often ask me, well, you’re a Colonel and so why do you get there yourself? You’ve no one else to send there? But I took responsibility for people’s lives in a place stricken by fire as of the moment we began to rescue them.”

In the accident that would take away his life, Col Chernyshov entered a blazing office building on Vtoraya Khutorskaya Street to evacuate the people.

Some parts of the building had been ablaze and emanating open flames and a thick smokescreen could be seen everywhere. On the upper floor, Col Chernyshov was trapped by the collapsing roof.

The last words other firemen heard him say over the radio were ‘I’m running out of oxygen.’

All in all, six people were rescued in the blazing building.

“Zhenya went through many situations where he could die,” his friend Igor Kruglikov, the chief of the Center for Emergency Situations Control said. “Once he was working in a building where the collapse of different elements began, and he had to get out of there through the roof.”

Russia’s Minister for Emergency Situations and Civil Defense, Sergei Shoigu, to whom the country’s firefighting service reports, offered deep condolences to Col Chernyshov’s family.

He called his death a great loss, saying Col Chernyshov was a professional of the highest degree who loved his profession.

Condolences to Colonel Chernyshov’s family and fellow-firemen came from the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Kirill.

He indicated that the late chief of the city’s firefighting service had been a deeply believing man who sought to lead a life designated by the Gospels.

“His /Col Chernyshov’s/ very death provided evidence of his commitment to Jesus Christ’s stipulation that ‘No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends’,” Patriarch Kirill said.

“Yevgeny Nikolayevich truly fulfilled his human duty to the end – he paid his life for rescuing five people from a building swept by fire,” he said. “May the Lord account for this deed as for a righteous act and give eternal peace to his soul.”

A street in Moscow may be renamed after Colonel Yevgeny Chernyshov, sources at the prefecture of the city's Northern Administrative District said Monday.

A proposal has been made to Mayor Yuri Luzhkov to rename either Vtoraya Khutorskaya Street where the ill-fated business center is located or Beskudnikovsky Boulevard where Col Chenyshov lived together with his wife and son.

Minister offers public to take part in preparing new law on police

In drawing the new legislation, the authors are analyzing international experience. "We're hoping to finish the concept this spring, whereupon it will be put on the interior Ministry's website. Citizens will be able to familiarize themselves with it and express their opinions," Nurgaliyev said underlining that "each voice will be heard and taken into account."

"We know there'll be arguments and criticism, and are ready for it. The main thesis of the new law is not citizens for police, but police for citizens. A person should be sure that upon coming to a police station he will meet an officer who is open for talk, considerate and kind-hearted," the interior minister said.

The new legislation, along with a detailed list of the main kinds of police activities and rights and duties of police officers, will spell out a mechanism of the interior bodies' accountability to the population, Nurgaliyev said.

According to the interior minister, the norms of the old law "on police" have become obsolete and hamper their work.

The effective law "on police" was adopted in 1991, but at that time, it was another state, another time and responsibility, and any law must conform to the reality.

"This law has been effective for two decades, and become obsolete. For example, it states that if a person is in the street without IDs, police must bring him to a police station to establish his identity. It is unnecessary at present, car patrols have computers, while foot patrols have palmtops, so they can ascertain the identity of the citizen on the spot within a few minutes, using police databases," Nurgaliyev said.

At the same time, he warned against the quick drawing of the new law, noting that it should not be prepared on the surge of emotions following the recent police violence incidents.

At of now, more than 200 laws and enactments regulate police activities. "This often provides the opportunity to adjust norms, and drawbacks are rectified by additional Interior Ministry resolutions," he said.

The draft concept of the new law will be prepared by April 1. Next, a special working group will take over the work on the legislation. It will be coordinated by the organizing committee, led by Deputy Interior Minister, State Secretary Sergei Bulavin.

Earlier, Nurgaliyev said that restructuring of police bodies was underway. The Interior Ministry designed an entirely new system to select, educate and train candidates for police work. Special attention is paid to the measures to improve the social protection of police personnel.

On December 24, 2009, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed a decree on measures to perfect the activities of interior bodies. The head of state called the document "the beginning of a serious reform of the Interior Ministry."

The first crucial move is to optimize the structure and personnel of the Interior Ministry.

The number of police should decrease by 20 percent within the next two years. Public security police will be funded only from the federal budget starting from 2012.

On January 12, Medvedev issued another decree setting the legislative groundwork for the functioning of police while taking into account the optimization of its structure.

The president said at a meeting of top Interior Ministry officials in February that he would personally supervise the reform of the Interior Ministry. His latest decisions are to cut the number of police personnel directly controlled by the Interior Ministry by half and enhance the responsibility of those who are staying.

Dozens of license plates found in car driven by Moscow policeman

Road police in the Irkutsk region stopped a Toyota Land Cruiser driven by a policeman from Moscow. A search of the trunk of the vehicle found police uniforms, weapons and dozens of license plates of various provinces, as well as a considerable number of documents including fictitious orders for police to seize cars.

"The car was carrying a detective of the Vostochnoye Degunino precinct, Moscow, and a driver clad in police uniform. A check confirmed that the driver is not a policeman," the regional department of the Investigations Committee under the Prosecutor General's Office (SKP) told Itar-Tass on Wednesday.

"They can be involved in the illegal confiscation of expensive European and Japanese cars. These cars might have been confiscated for subsequent legalization and resale," the SKP said.

A criminal case has been opened.

Moscow policeman suspected of illegal car confiscations

A criminal case has been opened in Russia's Irkutsk region against a Moscow policeman, who is being checked for involvement in illegal confiscations of hundreds of expensive foreign cars in Siberia.

"The department of the Investigation Committee for the Irkutsk region is investigating a criminal case against a Moscow detective from the Vostochnoye Degunivo precinct. Criminal proceedings were opened over abuse of office powers," an SKP official said.

"In March, a Toyota Land Cruiser was stopped in Irkutsk. It was carrying a detective of the Vostochnoye Degunivo precinct. A search of the trunk found bags containing dozens of car license plates of different Russian provinces and testing equipment.

"A considerable amount of documents have been confiscated, including fictitious instructions to confiscate cars in a number of Siberian and western regions of the country. Investigators also found police uniforms and weapons.

"Judging by the confiscated documents, the scheme involved over a hundred of business class vehicles," the SKP said.

Human factor behind Tu-204 crash near Domodedovo airport

The human factor is behind the crash of an airliner Tu-204 near the Domodedovo airport, chief of the Federal Air Transport Agency Alexander Neradko believes.

"For me the causes (of the airliner crash – Itar-Tass) are obvious, but I cannot make them public before the end of the investigation. The human factor is behind the crash. We should investigate what made the crew get down lower than the maximum admissible altitude under such bad weather conditions," he told the Moskovsky Komsomolets

He noted that the incident, by all appearances, can be considered as "a crash landing in the controlled flight." "Some 80% of all air crashes in the world have these causes. These incidents are called "killers in the aviation," Neradko stressed.

The airliner Tu-204 belonging to the Aviastar TU air company en route from Hurghada (Egypt) to Moscow without passengers has made an emergency landing on March 22 in the woodland belt area, 1.5 kilometers away from the runway of the Domodedovo airport. All eight crewmembers sustained various injuries in the air crash and were hospitalized.

Boarding school teacher to face trial for beating up pupils

Deputy head of the Urulga boarding school in Russia's Baikal territory will face trial for beating up two pupils who breached discipline, a source in the Baikal territory prosecutor's office told Itar-Tass on Thursday.

On March 4, the territorial prosecutor's office said it had instituted criminal proceedings against another teacher of the Urulga boarding school. Olga Kurkina, also suspected in beating pupils, was accused of improper fulfilment of teacher's obligations and child abuse.

Prosecutors blame the Urulga boarding school administration for neglect of its obligations.

Human body fragments found at nationalist organization headquarters

Police have found human body fragments at the headquarters of the NS-VP nationalist group in Pikalyovo, Leningrad region, a source at the Northwestern Federal District Department of the Russian Interior Ministry told .

Police open hooliganism case over shooting incident in Moscow metro

Policeman Alexander Kurochkin pulled the trigger of a non-lethal gun at the Timiryazevskaya metro station, senior assistant head of the Investigation Committee Moscow office Sergei Marchenko told Itar-Tass.

The policeman punched a man's nose and injured with non-lethal rounds two women standing on the platform, he said.

There has been a series of incidents with non-lethal weapons in Moscow.

This Tuesday the Moscow Tverskoi Court has authorized the arrest of Sergei Karpetsov, an unemployed resident of the Moscow region with a criminal record who shot a policeman from a non-lethal gun on Red Square.

“The court ordered custody of Karpetsov, born in 1976, on suspicion of using violence against an officer,” Moscow City Court spokesperson Anna Usachyova told Itar-Tass.

Karpetsov jumped over the fence and tried to get inside the Lenin Mausoleum on Red Square at about 1:30 p.m. Moscow time on March 15, a source at the Prosecutor General’s Office Investigation Committee told Itar-Tass earlier. A police sergeant tried to stop the man, but he hit the officer in the face and fired a non-lethal round. Other officers seized the perpetrator.

“It appeared at the police station where the man was taken that he had been wanted for assault and robbery since 2007,” Gennady Bogachyov from the city police department told Itar-Tass.

The non-lethal gun was unregistered, he added.

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