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State to Fund Local Media

By The Moscow Times

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BRUSSELS — Communications Minister Igor Shchyogolev said Tuesday that the government would take over funding for regional media outlets in a bid to wean them from the control of local authorities, a year before State Duma elections.

President Dmitry Medvedev last week ordered regions to sell off assets including the media to help fund post-crisis spending and clean up local government. The proposal has met resistance from some governors who view state ownership of the media as an important political tool, especially ahead of the December 2011 Duma vote.

Shchyogolev said the federal government could step in with funding for regional media in what he described as a "transition period" to ease them from dependence on local authorities and toward privatization. "The state would like to support the [regional] media during the transition period until they become financially independent, so that they do not depend on regional interests," he said.

(Reuters)

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