

Games, Tans Now Available at Prisons

January 17, 2011



Families of prisoners waiting to pass over care packages at the entrance to Butyrskaya prison in 2000.
Igor Tabakov

Inmates jailed in Moscow can now have chocolates, games and other gifts delivered straight to their cells with purchases made by family or friends via a new online store, the head of the city's prisons said.

Some will even be able to stretch out on tanning beds.

Viktor Dezhurov, head of the Moscow branch of the Federal Prison Service, said the new Internet shop had proved highly popular in the month since opening, averaging 180 orders per day.

"Inmates' relatives go to our web site. ... Our employees then fill out the order and deliver it to the jail cells within three days," Dezhurov said Sunday in an interview with Itar-Tass.

In addition to a wide range of food products — including fresh fruit and nine different types of cheeses — the web shop offers relatives a chance to send a copy of the Bible, the Quran or the Russian Criminal Code to loved ones locked in isolation. While 21 sorts of cigarettes are

available, alcohol is not.

The online store, currently serving pretrial detention centers in the capital, helps "save time and money," it boasts on its web site, Sizomag.ru, reached through a link on the Federal Prison Service's home page.

Online shopping will soon be extended to all the city's seven prisons, Dezhurov said.

Dezhurov also said Butyrskaya, a centuries-old Moscow prison notorious for its primitive conditions, will soon offer inmates a new perk: tanning beds.

Dezhurov said the tanning beds would be ready for observances of the prison's 240-year anniversary this year.

Dezhurov said the tanning beds were meant to compensate for inadequate sunlight in the cells. But inmates will have to pay 10 rubles (33 cents) a minute, a sizable fee in a country where the average monthly salary is well under \$1,000.

The prison's dismal conditions attracted wide attention in 2009 after the death of Sergei Magnitsky, a young lawyer who died of pancreas disease there after inadequate medical care.

Some 30,000 detainees each year pass through Moscow's pretrial detention centers, Dezhurov said.

(Reuters, AP)

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/01/17/games-tans-now-available-at-prisons-a4268>