

# Medvedev Proposes Fines of Up to 100 Times Bribe Size

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**The  Moscow Times**

President Dmitry Medvedev proposed on Wednesday increasing fines for officials caught taking bribes to up to 100 times the size of the bribe, part of measures to try to fight corruption.

Medvedev, like his predecessor Vladimir Putin, has made little headway so far in cracking down on corruption, which investors say is the biggest obstacle to doing business in Russia. Berlin-based graft watchdog Transparency International ranks Russia as the 154th most corrupt country out of 178.

"Russia's criminal code will set the fine for commercial bribery, the giving and taking of bribes, or the facilitating of bribes, at up to 100 times the size of the bribe," the Kremlin said in a statement.

No fine would exceed 500 million rubles (\$17 million), the bill said.

Any proposed amendment to Russia's criminal code must be approved by parliament, which is

dominated by the pro-Kremlin United Russia party that regularly rubber stamps any proposed legislation.

Russia is trying to woo foreign investors and diversify its economy away from oil and gas revenues, but many have called for tougher measures against corruption.

Medvedev's amendment will be one of the first concrete steps taken in his campaign to stamp out corruption.

State newspaper Rossiiskaya Gazeta reported last year that the size of the average bribe rose 25 percent in 2010.

Many Russians say paying bribes has become a regular feature in almost every sphere of life, from ensuring attention in the health care industry to getting better marks in university or evading fines by traffic police. Bigger bribes are paid by companies to secure contracts or other business.

The average bribe in Moscow is about \$20,000, business daily Vedomosti reported last week, nearly 20 times higher than in the rest of Russia.

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