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Nurgaliyev Promises Regular Police Performance Reports

By Herbert Mosmuller

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Regional, district and precinct police officials nationwide will report on their performance to the public at regular open meetings starting in June, Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev said Wednesday.

The development, implemented a part of an ongoing police reform, aims to improve transparency in the notoriously corrupt force, the minister said in an interview on Police Wave radio. A transcript of the interview is available on the ministry's web site.

Ministry-drafted plans for the public meetings envisage the chiefs of regional police speaking before the public annually, district officials reporting every six months, and heads of precincts once every three months, Nurgaliyev said.

Time and place of the meetings will be decided by local legislatures, which will ensure that events are not scheduled for workdays so more people can attend, Nurgaliyev said.

Police officials will report on their detective work and collaboration with civil society institutions, he said, without elaborating. Reports will then be made available online.

"It will also be possible to voice a complaint or, perhaps, a thank-you," Nurgaliyev said.

Michael Pashkin, head of an independent police trade union, said by telephone that the change would only add a burden to police precincts.

He agreed that police needed to improve transparency but said the meetings would likely be sabotaged by overworked and underpaid policemen on the ground, who would only give the public runarounds instead of serious reports.

The police reform, ordered by the Kremlin last year, went into effect in March. The extensive reform, which is still being implemented, aims to decrease corruption by, in part, slashing the police force by some 200,000 officers, to 1 million.

All Interior Ministry employees have to take re-evaluation tests by June to determine whether they are allowed to stay on the force. This includes top brass, up to Nurgaliyev himself, though it remains unclear whether he has already taken his test.

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