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Medvedev Says to Cash In on Kyoto

By Roland Oliphant

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Satellites could monitor where your rubbish ends up under a new initiative supported by President Dmitry Medvedev.

The plan is to tackle the growing problem of illegal landfill sites — the latest initiative in the government's growing interest in trash.

"The very high profitability of the landfill business and its criminalization is hindering the development of recycling," Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov told a meeting of the government's modernization committee at Medvedev's Gorki residence Monday, according to Interfax.

The answer would be to attach Glonass navigational devices to rubbish trucks to make sure they didn't end up at illegal landfill sites.

Medvedev also voiced support for renewable energy and called for public transport to adopt electric and hybrid vehicles to reduce emissions in cities.

He slammed Russia's record on carbon trading and renewable energy. Referring to renewable energy, he told the meeting that "we're not only greatly inferior to our European partners in this field, we haven't yet done anything at all," according to the transcript on the Kremlin's web site.

Medvedev's forthright support of renewables is in contrast to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who has expressed doubts on the issue. He once questioned the use of windmills because they "disturb moles."

Non-hydro renewable energy currently accounts for less than 1 percent of energy production, and the government has set a goal of raising that to 4.5 percent by 2020.

Medvedev also urged business to take greater advantage of the incentives provided by the Kyoto Protocol, which expires at the end of 2012.

"We're not using these opportunities properly. We need to prepare proposals for reinvestment of funds received" in energy saving and environmental projects, he said.

Under the convention, Russian businesses can set up energy-saving projects in Russia, financed wholly or partly by outside investors, and sell the resulting "carbon credit" to businesses in third countries.

Relatively few projects have been registered so far because of the complicated tender system established by Sberbank, which the government appointed to administer the program, said Alexei Kokorin, director of the energy and climate program at WWF Russia.

Russia ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2004 after several years of resistance in exchange for EU support for its WTO bid. But it has since shown reluctance to live up to its commitments and argued against its extension when it expires in 2012.

Russia will also ratify the Espoo Convention, which requires countries in the European area to consult with one another on environmental impact before starting major construction projects, according to a document released after the meeting.

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