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Danish Queen Reviews Pumps and Circumstances During 5-Day Tour

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Danish Queen Margrethe II, in pink, visiting the Grundfos factory in Istra. **Vladimir Filonov**

ISTRA, Moscow Region — Elaborate orchestration marked the visit of Queen Margrethe II of Denmark, clad in a bright pink suit and matching pillbox hat, to a new facility at Danish pump-making giant Grundfos' factory in the Moscow region on Wednesday.

All female attendees to the event were instructed to wear skirts and all men slacks or suit pants. Reporters were prohibited from photographing the queen from behind.

The factory's administration found a worker to satisfy the Danish royal protocol of talking to the commoners, said Grundfos spokesperson, Olga Borisova. Andrei Livitsky, 22, who works on the assembly line putting together firefighting pumps and speaks some English, was strategically pushed toward the queen during the factory tour to answer a question she posed.

But another kind of preparation is in the works for the queen's planned Thursday visit

to Rockwool, a Danish factory that makes insulation materials in Zheleznodorozhny, a town 12 kilometers southeast of Moscow.

Local opposition activists hope to use the publicity of the visit to bring attention to corruption in the town and the pollution from the factory.

Over the years, scores of letters were written to the city administration, the police and the courts, but all in vain, said Georgy Udaltsov, a Zheleznodorzhny businessman and anti-corruption activist. Occasional contract killings are evidence that criminals continue to run the town, he said.

"We need to be heard," he said.

Activists from opposition group Our Town Zheleznodorozhny, of which Udaltsov is a member, delivered a letter stating their grievances to the Danish Embassy in Moscow. They will also try to give the letter to the queen during her visit to the factory.

"The situation in Russia is such that it is not easy for honest people to find support and protection from the authorities. That is why we are asking for your help," reads the first paragraph of the letter, published on the opposition group's web site, nash-zheldor.org.

The letter goes on to ask the queen to pass the message on to President Dmitry Medvedev.

The Zheleznodorozhny government got wind of the protesters' intent and began an intimidation campaign, Udaltsov said. Tactics included cutting phone lines and verbal threats, he said.

Queen Margrethe II has been visiting Danish businesses and attending signings of important business deals on her official trip to Russia that began Monday and will last until the end of the week. The queen is accompanied by her French-born husband, Prince Henrik, and their oldest son, Crown Prince Frederik. The queen last visited the country during Soviet times, in 1975.

The royal visit saw several major contracts aimed at modernizing the Russian economy inked between Russian ministries and Danish companies, Interfax reported.

The royal family will visit St. Petersburg next and attend a Russian-Danish business forum there. They will attend a ceremony where Danish shipping giant Maersk will sign deals with several Russian companies, The St. Petersburg Times reported Wednesday.

Russia is an important and a fast-growing business partner for Denmark, said Carsten Bjerg, global president of Grundfos.

The country has now become the third-largest market for Grundfos products, up from the 28th spot it held 13 years ago, said Viktor Dementyev, general manager of Grundfos Russia. The company, which invested more than $140 million in Russia so far, has plans to expand and build more facilities in the surrounding area, Bjerg said.

The Zheleznodorozhny activists do not intend to disrupt "an important visit to develop business," their web site said. Instead they plan to "share the pain" with newspaper

and television correspondents. According to the activists' web site, they are keeping the location of the demonstrations a secret because they fear for their own safety.

Rockwool's press service was warned in advance that demonstrations are planned.

"It is a strange situation. ... We are distancing ourselves from it," said Alla Serebryakova, head of Rockwool's press service.

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