

# Demographics See Improvement

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The birthrate in Russia hit a post-Soviet high in August and mortality fell. **Alexandra Astakhova**

The Economic Development Ministry is proposing that the government sell land permits at tenders for investors that seek to build retail, office or industrial space, in order to streamline a cumbersome procedure that can take up to three years going from official to official, Minister Elvira Nabiullina said Tuesday.

Under the amendments that the ministry submitted for the second reading of a land-use bill going through the State Duma, municipal and regional governments would list available land plots online and organize electronic tenders should investors show interest in the plots, she said at a Presidium meeting.

"We hope the bill will be one of the most important steps to reduce administrative barriers for investment projects," Nabiullina said.

Health and Social Development Minister Tatyana Golikova reported a record birthrate figure last month. She said women gave birth to 173,200 babies in August, or more than in any other

month since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Golikova did not name the overall population dynamics so far this year, but said the mortality rate had declined 6.1 percent in this year's first eight months from the same period last year.

The slump in agriculture has been overcome, and the 2011 grain harvest can restore Russia's position as one of the leading grain exporters, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin told the government Tuesday, Interfax reported. "Today one can say with confidence that the slump in agriculture, which arose as a result of two years of abnormal heat and drought, has been overcome. The final grain crops are estimated at 90 million tons. The figure was 61 million last year and 96 million the year before last, but 90 million tons is a very good, indicative result," Putin said.

VEB will invest 2 trillion rubles (\$60 billion) in Russia's economy through 2015, Putin, who oversees the country's state development bank, also said at the government meeting.

That's equivalent to 2.8 percent of gross domestic product, he added.

Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin requested that Putin instruct the Federal Tariff Service to establish tariffs for the refueling services at all airports without alternative complexes.

"One of the key issues is the monopolization of the market for delivering fuel to airports. At a majority of Russian airports, operations are conducted by one refueling complex, which unilaterally dominates that market and supplies air carriers with a range of services with no alternatives," he said.

Regional differentiation is frequently unjustified, he said. Refueling an aircraft in Volgograd costs 5,000 rubles, but at Pulkovo in St. Petersburg 1,000 rubles and at Sheremetyevo 1,700 rubles.

Sechin requested that Putin order the Transportation and Economic Development ministries to speed up work on creating alternative refueling complexes at airports. He added that it is important to task the Transportation Ministry with ensuring sufficient fuel reserves at airports to permit uninterrupted operations for 10 days.

*(MT, Interfax, Bloomberg)*

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