

Putin Calls For More Religion on TV

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Prime Minister Vladimir Putin meeting with a group of spiritual leaders at Moscow's Danilov Monastery on Wednesday. Putin has pledged \$118 million for the rebuilding of houses of worship and religious schools and is vowing more airtime on state-run television for religious programming. **Grigory Dukor**

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said at a meeting with religious leaders Wednesday that the "voice of the church" should have a greater presence on state-run television channels and that more TV programming should be devoted to religious topics.

Putin said that while some TV time is dedicated to religious issues, it is not enough.

The government should and will strive "to provide adequate representation in the informational sphere of the interests of citizens who tie their worldview to the values of orthodoxy and other traditional faiths," Putin said at a meeting with Orthodox Church head Patriarch Kirill and the leaders of other major Russian religious groups, Interfax reported.

The prime minister did not specify any concrete plans for providing more airtime for religious programming, but he cited poll numbers that said 71 percent of Russian citizens favor the creation of an Orthodox television channel.

Though Putin attended the meeting in his capacity as prime minister, Patriarch Kirill commented on what he judged to be the high likelihood that Putin will regain the presidency in next month's vote.

"We would like to hold a discussion with you as prime minister, but first and foremost as candidate for the position of president of our country, moreover with the candidate who has, of course, the best chances to turn that candidacy into the real position," the Orthodox Church head said.

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