The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Dvorkovich Gives Skolkovo, State Asset Updates

By Rachel Nielsen

March 20, 2012



Presidential economic adviser Arkady Dvorkovich sketched out new details for funding Skolkovo, opened another front in the battle against graft and updated the timeline for state asset privatization in a talk with reporters Tuesday.

Speaking ahead of the presidential modernization commission meeting planned for Wednesday, Dvorkovich said the government could add about 30 billion rubles (about $1 billion) over three years to the Skolkovo Technological Institute by forcing state companies to contribute, Interfax reported.

State companies with innovation programs formed under the commission "will need to transfer 1 percent of the volume of these programs to the target capital fund of the Skolkovo Technological Institute, and not Skolkovo as such," Interfax quoted him as saying.

The Skolkovo Technology Institute, or SkTech, is a joint venture of the Massachusetts

Institute of Technology and the government's embryonic innovation hub outside Moscow, the Skolkovo Innovation Center. The institute will be at the Skolkovo location near Moscow.

President Dmitry Medvedev's top economic adviser based his 30 billion ruble figure on the total annual value of innovation programs at state corporations, which he estimated as at least 1 trillion rubles.

SkTech is planning to spend $800 million on development and operations by 2018, Izvestia reported last month.

Dvorkovich also used Tuesday's briefing to air his views on revamping the benefits system for civil servants. Their benefits — including those for housing, medical services and cars for work — should be monetized, Dvorkovich said.

"I think it is possible, and I think it is necessary," he said, Interfax reported.

Vladimir Rimsky of anti-corruption organization Indem said the current system "is left over from the Soviet Union," when employees received perks set according to their jobs.

Calculating the value of civil-servant benefits and then adding that amount to their salaries would be a better system, in which they "receive the money with their salary payments and pay for benefits on their own," Rimsky said in a telephone interview.

Currently, there aren't any government calculations of the value of those benefits, Dvorkovich said, but such estimates could be made this fall for the next fiscal year.

Addressing another federal budget matter, Dvorkovich said state asset sales held up in 2011 will probably go ahead this year and there shouldn't be any hindrances to such sales, Bloomberg quoted Dvorkovich as saying.

Natalya Akindinova, director of the Higher School of Economics' Development Center, said "it's difficult to evaluate" whether that is a realistic timeline for selling shares in government companies. "It's a matter of political will," she said by phone.

Factors at play include the government's estimation of which companies can "operate independently and capably in private hands," Akindinova said.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/03/20/dvorkovich-gives-skolkovo-state-asset-updates-a13430