

National Emergency Fund for Tourists in the Works

April 16, 2012



An airplane takes off from snow-choked Domodedovo airport. **Andrei Makhonin**

The government could require tour operators sending tourists abroad to contribute to a fund for emergency aid under new legislation currently being considered.

The legislation would require tour operators to contribute 0.1 percent their revenues, which next year could already reach up to 300 million rubles (\$10 million), enough to support about 15,000 tourists, Vedomosti reported.

"After the problem with Lanta Tur Voyage, when the direct personal intervention of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin was required, he gave the order to thoroughly work out legislation," the Prime Minister's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

In January, about 3,000 tourists were temporarily stranded in countries around the world after the company announced it was broke. Acting on orders by Putin to help the financially strapped company, the state-run VTB bank agreed to lend Lanta-Tur Voyage \$7 million.

Igor Rudensky, chairman of the economics committee in the State Duma where the bill is being discussed, said the second reading of the bill will be held April 24.

According to data from the Russian Travel Industry Union, about 14.5 million people traveled abroad from Russia in 2011.

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