

New Perm Governor Vows to Upgrade Infrastructure

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Former Regional Development Minister Viktor Basargin, who was appointed as Perm's next governor over the weekend, has promised to improve the region's infrastructure.

President Dmitry Medvedev replaced the governors of Perm and Yaroslavl on Saturday, continuing a shuffle that has seen a dozen regional leaders dismissed since December.

"We will give our full attention to investment projects that will develop the region," Basargin said Monday, stressing that he was most interested in projects involving transportation and the supply system.

Basargin, whose appointment needs to be confirmed by the regional legislature, will replace Oleg Chirkunov, who had governed Perm since December 2005 and whose current term was to expire in 2015.

He and Yaroslavl Governor Sergei Vakhrukov both left their posts voluntarily, according to statements posted Saturday on the Kremlin website.

Medvedev had criticized Vakhrukov, appointed in December 2007, at a meeting Friday of the ruling United Russia party for his choice of a candidate in the recent Yaroslavl mayoral election who lost to an opposition-backed candidate.

The president complained that Vakhrukov had chosen businessman Yakov Yakushev to run for United Russia instead of former Yaroslavl Deputy Mayor Sergei Yastrebov, who had won the party's primary vote.

Yakushev lost the April 1 election, garnering 27.8 percent of the vote compared with 69.6 percent for municipal lawmaker Yevgeny Urlashov, who had the support of the political opposition.

On Saturday, Medvedev appointed Yastrebov as acting Yaroslavl governor.

In recent months, Medvedev has also relieved of their posts governors from the Vologda, Arkhangelsk, Volgograd, Primorye, Saratov, Murmansk, Omsk, Kostroma, Smolensk and Moscow regions.

In his final televised interview as president on Thursday, Medvedev said more than 50 percent of regional leaders have been replaced over his time in office and that even when official statements indicated that they resigned of their own free will, sometimes they were fired.

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