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Medvedev Starts Implementing Presidential Orders

By Irina Filatova

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Medvedev chairing a meeting Saturday at which he set about implementing the president's numerous orders. **Yekaterina Shtukina**

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev assigned his acting First Deputy Igor Shuvalov to oversee the implementation of presidential orders Saturday and said work should start right away, without waiting for the new government to be set up.

That process is expected to start this week, with Medvedev making his ministerial proposals to President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday.

Shuvalov's appointment as a key person in charge of bringing presidential initiatives to life might indicate that he is likely to preserve his current position in Medvedev's new Cabinet, analysts said.

Speaking at the first meeting with government officials that he has chaired since taking office

last week, Medvedev outlined a range of issues he plans to focus on, which include orders he signed while still president and those issued by newly inaugurated President Putin on the day of his swearing-in.

Hours after he was sworn in for a third presidential term on May 7, Putin signed 13 orders aimed, among other things, at boosting the country's economic growth, increasing people's incomes, developing the labor market, developing the defense industry and improving the quality of public utilities, according to information on the Kremlin website.

"These orders set quite a rapid pace for the government's work," Medvedev said. "We have no time to prepare for the implementation of these orders. They must be fulfilled despite the difficult period of setting up new ... federal bodies of executive power — so we should start acting today."

The government must prepare and approve its work plan for the next six years and a forecast of the country's economic development until 2030 by Dec. 1, Medvedev said, adding that Cabinet ministers will also continue the work on fighting corruption, improving the tax and budget policies and creating a favorable business climate.

Concerning the privatization plan, he also said "things should be put in their final order."

Medvedev added that he would like Shuvalov to coordinate the work on these issues and hold a number of meetings with the government ministers involved.

The range of tasks that has been assigned to Shuvalov is in line with the level of the first deputy prime minister, and "it's highly likely" that Shuvalov will preserve this position in Medvedev's Cabinet, said Alexei Makarkin, deputy head of the Center for Political Technologies.

Being reappointed is the only possible option for Shuvalov, because all other positions would mean not only a reduction in rank but lowering his informal political weight, Makarkin said, adding that there have been just a few examples when one didn't automatically lead to the other.

One example is former Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov, a close friend of Putin, with whom he served in the Leningrad branch of the KGB.

Ivanov, who served as first deputy prime minister between 2005 and 2008, was demoted to deputy head of the Cabinet when Putin chaired the government in 2008, but as Putin's close ally he didn't lose his political significance after the downgrade, Makarkin said.

A reduction in rank for a government official belonging to Putin's close circle meant that this official was "kept in reserve" and could allow for a subsequent career promotion, but such a reduction under Medvedev, who is not as much of a political heavyweight as Putin, would be a "defeat," Makarkin said, pointing out that Ivanov had been upgraded to serve as the Kremlin's chief of staff in December.

Neither Putin nor Medvedev have had Shuvalov as part of their inner circle, so preserving a high formal status matters for him, Makarkin said.

Shuvalov will remain in the new Cabinet, although the area of his expertise has yet to be determined, Vedomosti reported earlier this month, citing an unidentified government official.

In Putin's Cabinet, Shuvalov oversaw the economy, including issues like budget policy, investment and privatization.

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