The Moscow Times
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Putin Slams Officials Over Election Promises

By Irina Filatova

September 17, 2012



President Putin meeting with government ministers in Sochi to discuss federal budget plans.

President Vladimir Putin slammed government officials Tuesday for failing to implement the decrees containing his election promises, with the regional development minister and the labor and social services minister coming under fire.

Putin said he had discussed the assignments with almost all ministers, but there had been major failures in the fulfillment of some of his orders.

For example, Putin said, the Regional Development Ministry had not submitted proposals on promoting the development of the Far East and Siberia, while the Labor and Social Services Ministry had not provided its plans on introducing new human resources principles for higher education institutions.

The implementation of other orders, like improving the living conditions of families with

many children, has started only on paper, he said at a meeting on the federal budget for 2013 through 2015 in Sochi, according to a transcript on the Kremlin's website.

Putin called on Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to reprimand Regional Development Minister Oleg Govorun and Labor and Social Services Minister Maxim Topilin for failing to fulfill his orders.

"I won't do it myself because of subordination," he said, meaning that ministers report directly to Medvedev. "But I'll approach the head of the Cabinet about the need to reprimand the regional development minister and the labor minister. Nothing personal, I want you to know it," he said at the meeting, adding that a minister should bear personal responsibility for the industry he or she oversees.

Medvedev is preparing proposals on how to penalize the ministers, his spokeswoman, Natalya Timakova, told RIA-Novosti on Tuesday.

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

The documents are largely based on Putin's election promises, whose implementation might be too high a burden for the budget, according to the estimates by some analysts.

Putin also criticized the draft federal budget for the next three years submitted by the Finance Ministry, saying that it won't allow the government to put his election promises into practice.

The draft, which was published on the ministry's website Tuesday, envisages gradually increasing social welfare and defense spending by 2015 and cutting expenses on education, health care, culture and economy.

Although acknowledging that the bill's implementation is a challenging task, Putin said that enforcing his orders would be impossible if the draft is approved in its current form.

He expressed surprise that the document doesn't take the pension reform into account.

"How do you calculate the budget for next year and the following year without solving one of the key tasks of the economy?" he said at the meeting, referring to the pension reform. He added that the draft budget should focus primarily of the efficiency of budget spending.

Putin said that the government should maintain a balanced budget, adding that a tight budget policy is necessary, given the tough financial situation in the world.

"A tough and responsible budget policy undoubtedly yields results," he said.

But if it is not enforced properly, its results will be negative, he added.

Putin said, however, that Russia appears financially stable compared with other European countries, which are mired in the debt crisis.

The Finance Ministry revised its forecast for next year's budget deficit, which is expected to stand at 0.8 percent of the gross domestic product, down from the initial forecast of 1.5 percent of GDP, according to the bill.

The budget deficit might reach 0.2 percent of GDP in 2014 and decrease to 0.01 percent of GDP the following year, the bill said.

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