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Some Foreigners Face Mandatory Russian-Language Tests

By The Moscow Times

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Foreigners who work in certain sectors will be required to pass a basic Russian-language test under a bill that the State Duma approved Tuesday in a key second reading.

The legislation, which appears to be aimed at migrants from other former Soviet republics but applies to all foreigners who enter Russia without a visa, would introduce the language tests for people working in residential housing and utilities, and retail trade and services.

The head of the Federal Migration Service, Konstantin Romodanovsky, called the measure practical and rejected the idea that it was discriminatory.

"This kind of norm is not discrimination," he said, Interfax reported. "Knowledge of the official state language is necessary to ensure that migrants are comfortable living in the country and that they have legal literacy and can defend their rights."

He added that the legislation would "reduce the risk of possible social tensions."

Migrant workers are commonly looked down on by people who think they are stealing Russian jobs, even though the low-paying work they do, such as cleaning yards, is shunned by many Russians.

The bill needs to be approved by the Duma in a third and final hearing before it can be approved by the Federation Council and signed into law by President Vladimir Putin.

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