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Think Tank: Social Problems Stirring Instability in Regions

By The Moscow Times

December 03, 2012



Social problems like the quality of local education and state of the utilities sector are causing growing instability in Russia's regions, a report by an influential think tank said Tuesday.

The report by the St. Petersburg politics think tank said that average estimates of regional stability have dropped from 7.05 to 6.90 points across the country since the October regional elections.

On the think tank's scale, 10 signifies stability and 0 instability.

The report, which assessed the situation in 83 regions, cited the utilities sector and education as major sources of concern that could lead to "social risks," Kommersant reported Tuesday.

But unrest is unlikely to result in broader support for the opposition, since opposition parties haven't presented a "bright agenda" to the electorate, Mikhail Vinogradov, head of the think

tank, told the newspaper.

In the report, the three most stable regions were the Penza and Ivanovo regions and the Mordovia republic, all of which received scores close to 9 points.

Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kalmykia were considered the least stable, garnering between 2.3 and 4.2 points, respectively, while Moscow and St. Petersburg's combined score dropped from 6.8 points in October to a current total of 6.6.

Among reasons for falling stability in Moscow, Kommersant cited a recent shooting spree by a legal adviser at a pharmaceutical company and Cossack patrols on central streets.

St. Petersburg's rating was influenced by a wave of recent scandals connected to the Gazprom-owned Zenit football club and a court case against pop legend Madonna for "spreading gay propaganda."

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