

Olympic Committee Requests Turning Clocks Back for 2014 Winter Games

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The  Moscow Times

The International Olympic Committee, or IOC, has asked the government to turn clocks back one hour so that European television viewers can enjoy the 2014 Winter Olympics with a two-hour time difference instead of three, a news report said Wednesday.

The request was made by Jean-Claude Killy, the committee's point man for the Sochi games, in a letter to Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Kozak, who is overseeing the Olympics, Izvestia reported. The newspaper said that it had obtained a copy of the letter, sent in late December.

Killy said in the letter that a decision should be made before an international broadcasters' meeting scheduled for the end of February.

The IOC request puts extra pressure on Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to nix one of the most wide-ranging reforms of his presidency, which ended last year. In 2011 the country abolished daylight-saving time, better known as summer time, by not switching clocks back

in the fall.

The switch to "eternal summer time" has become closely associated with Medvedev and has not proven to be very popular. Critics say it introduces an extra hour of darkness on winter mornings and makes it harder for businesspeople and stock market traders to coordinate their work with Western time zones. The opt-out from daylight-saving time also regularly creates confusion because time differences change by one hour between summer and winter.

The government has so far resisted calls from State Duma lawmakers to abolish the time reform, pointing to opinion polls that suggest that there is no majority in favor of that.

But a government source told Izvestia that it would be hard to ignore the IOC on this matter. "It is one thing when deputies, ministries or public organizations ask this. It is a totally different thing when the International Olympic Committee raises this because of the global community's interest in television coverage for the most important event in four years," the anonymous source was quoted as saying.

The report also quoted an unnamed source "close to the IOC" as saying that Killy had raised the issue with President Vladimir Putin at a meeting in Sochi in December. "I think the president will give way to the IOC and soon issue an order to solve the problem," the source said.

Putin has said in the past that he would not oppose abolishing the reform but that it was up to the government.

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