

Record Snowfall Prompts New Year Jokes

March 24, 2013



Plows clearing Manezh Square during record-breaking snowfall Monday. More than a third of March's average precipitation had fallen on the city by the afternoon, diverting flights and bringing traffic to a standstill. A top meteorologist said such snowfall happens once in 30 to 40 years. **Igor Tabakov**

Russians are known to celebrate the Old New Year, an informal holiday marking the start of the new year on the Julian calendar, on Jan. 13, extending the festive winter mood for two weeks.

But with yet another heavy snowfall blanketing the capital on Monday, some Muscovites were seized by the holiday spirit even now, with April just around the corner.

"I look out the window and can't help but think, 'Sheesh, it's the new year soon,'" opposition leader Alexei Navalny tweeted Monday morning.

The snowstorm, which began Sunday morning, was a less joyous occasion for many drivers and airline passengers. More than a third of March's average precipitation fell on the city by Monday afternoon, bringing traffic to a standstill and diverting 13 flights overnight.

On Monday morning, the heavy snowfall created chaos on the roads, with 20 kilometers of bumper-to-bumper traffic on the Moscow Ring Road, Interfax said. Traffic jams occurred on other major thoroughfares as well.

The Emergency Situations Ministry warned that the snow would reduce visibility on roads and cause other hazards, raising the risk of accidents and injuries.

Overnight, 13 airplanes headed for Sheremetyevo Airport north of Moscow and Vnukovo to the city's west were diverted to Domodedovo Airport in the southeast because they were unable to land in the snowstorm.

Top meteorologist Roman Vilfand said that such unusually cold weather occurs in March once in 30 to 40 years, RIA-Novosti reported.

Weather forecasters said light snow would continue overnight and into Tuesday. Partly sunny skies are expected the rest of the work week, with no more snow.

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