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Russian Public Television Begins Broadcasting

By The Moscow Times

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Russia's first public television channel began broadcasting on Sunday, with live broadcasts available on the channel's official website and also freely available to viewers of cable, satellite, or IP-TV.

The channel, Russian Public Television, is a hallmark of Dmitry Medvedev's presidency and was created amid opposition protests in late 2011, with some saying it was a direct response to the protests.

Although the channel's general director, Anatoly Lysenko, has said the channel would not serve as a mouthpiece for the state or for the opposition, many critics have expressed skepticism that the channel would maintain a neutral stance, noting that it is almost entirely dependent on state funding. Its initial financing includes a government grant of 1.5 billion rubles ($48 million).

According to RIA Novosti, Lysenko called on viewers not to judge the new channel by its first day of broadcasts, saying the first day was merely a presentation of the channel and that many aspects of the programs were still being developed.

The channel's broadcasting began on Sunday at noon with a block of news, followed by the program "Big Country," dedicated to events in various regions of Russia. After a brief news release at 1 p.m., the channel aired the program "Non-Standard Model," about life in Russian villages.

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