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Putin Blasts Officials Over Discussing Disagreement in Public

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President Vladimir Putin at a recent meeting with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

President Vladimir Putin has reprimanded officials for discussing government issues in the mass media and suggested that those who oppose government policy had better leave their posts.

The president was speaking Thursday at a meeting of the Strategic Initiatives Advisory Board when he was asked about a contentious bill restoring investigators' power to open tax cases, which Putin personally submitted to the State Duma in October.

Putin said that he and his colleagues would work through the issue but then criticized the behavior of certain unnamed officials who voiced opposition to the proposal in public.

"I will be forced to remind them that there is a set practice for resolving issues before appearing in the mass media. It is understood that if someone doesn't agree with something,

as Kudrin did in his time — he left [the government] to join the expert community," Putin said, according to a transcript on the Kremlin website.

Alexei Kudrin, a long-time friend and adviser of Putin's, left his post as Finance Minister in 2011 following a spat with then-President Dmitry Medvedev over hikes on defense spending.

While Putin did not specify who he plans to "remind" of their loyalties, prominent opponents of the bill include the Economic Development Ministry and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, who initially repealed investigators' authority to open tax cases as president in 2011.

Medvedev publicly opposed the proposal this week, saying that the number of tax cases opened is no indicator of the effectiveness of law enforcement, and urged lawmakers to think carefully before passing the bill, Vedomosti reported.

The number of tax cases opened has decreased drastically since 2011, a fact that the Interior Ministry and other proponents of the bill say represents a drop in the effectiveness of law enforcement and a blow to the federal budget.

In an open letter to Putin last week, prominent members of the business community including ombudsman Boris Titov attributed the drop to a decline in the number of illegitimate prosecutions.

Billionaire and leader of the Civil Platform party Mikhail Prokhorov publicly joined the growing opposition to the bill on Friday at a meeting organized by the business association Delovaya Rossia.

"We believe that it is a dangerous tendency and propose beginning to collect signatures against this initiative. We hope to collect 100,000," Prokhorov said.

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