

Gazprom Will Dance While Other State Firms Sit Out the Christmas Party

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The state corporation holiday fete is an increasingly endangered species. **Vladimir Filonov**

Wintry Moscow will see a rare burst of Eastern color this week as the employees of state-run energy giant Gazprom dress up in saris and turbans for their annual holiday party, Vedomosti reported Monday.

Wednesday's Indian-style gala and concert will be modest, a Gazprom spokesman said, in an apparent response to President Vladimir Putin's recent call for temperance in state corporations' spending on holiday celebrations.

Putin said at a conference of the All-Russia People's Front on Dec. 5 that the employees of state corporations should pay for their own office parties rather than using company funds.

Alexander Brechalov, the president of business lobbying group Opora Rossii, had noted earlier that millions of rubles were set to be spent on state corporations' holiday parties, including 53

million rubles (\$1.6 million) by Russian Railways and 15 million rubles by military contractor Almaz-Antey.

Russian Railways head Vladimir Yakunin responded with an announcement on his LiveJournal blog Friday that members of the company's board of directors would personally pay to participate in this year's festivities.

About 1,000 external guests have also been invited to the event, however, and the company has declined to comment on who will foot the bill to wine and dine them.

Almaz-Antey responded in a statement that it was actually its subsidiary, the Raspletin engineering bureau, that intended to spend 14.5 million rubles on the holidays. The plans have now been cancelled, and the subsidiary's director is to face an internal investigation, the company said.

Thirteen major state corporations, including Rosneft, Rostelecom, Alrosa, VTB, VEB and Sberbank, have all publicly said they were not funding office parties this year.

Other corporations will still bankroll events but are looking to economize, some by unconventional means. Rusnano employees may be surprised to find themselves serenaded by their own vice chairman Vladimir Avetisyan's blues band performing renditions of Eric Clapton hits.

Despite the zealous response, Putin was simply expressing a personal opinion, the president's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

A written order to abstain from funding holiday parties would violate corporate legislation, Peskov added.

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