

Putin Says Russian Officials 'Can't Afford' 10-Day Holiday

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Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev attend a meeting with members of the government in Moscow, on Dec. 25, 2014.

President Vladimir Putin has urged government officials to work over the lengthy New Year's holidays, saying they "cannot afford" to take the time off amid the country's economic crisis.

Much of Russia comes to a standstill during the 10-day official holidays that run from New Year's Day until after Orthodox Christmas. With weekends factored in, most of the country's employees will be off until Jan. 11 this year — but not government officials, Putin told a Cabinet meeting Thursday.

"This is holiday season, which is a long period in our country, and people have the right to relax: the depressing autumn and winter period is quite long here and people could certainly use some extra holiday time," Putin said, according to a transcript published on the Kremlin's website.

"However, the government and its various structures cannot afford such extensive holidays,

at least not this year," he said.

"We have to coordinate the work of all ministries and agencies, and coordinate them with the Presidential Executive Office, with the Central Bank, and keep everything under control," he said.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev seemed to agree with the president's assessment of the situation, saying that the "amount of problems in the economy is substantial, but not all of them are due to external pressure and the drop in oil price," in comments to Izvestia.

"There are [also] internal problems, which we are obliged to solve," he was quoted as saying.

Western sanctions against Moscow for its alleged meddling in Ukraine and low prices for oil – Russia's key export – have contributed to the Russian ruble's recent nosedive and a subsequent rise in inflation, prompting fears of a tough year ahead.

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