

No Money for Russian Booker Prize

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The country's most prestigious literary award has warned that it may vanish because of a lack of funding.

Preparations for this year's Russian Booker Prize have been postponed indefinitely because no new sponsor has been found, the award's organizing committee said on its web site.

The decision was made during a board meeting of the Russian Booker Foundation on Wednesday, organizers said in a statement.

A five-year contract with the award's last sponsor, BP, expired in 2010, and negotiations with possible successors have so far not been successful.

The foundation's secretary, Igor Shaitanov, said the talks would continue. "If we find a sponsor, we will start the procedures [for this year's prize], but without one we cannot even accept nominations," he told Interfax on Thursday.

BP spokesman Vladimir Buyanov said the company had no plans to renew the contract. "The cooperation was very successful but it was made clear from the beginning that it would not last more than five years," he told The Moscow Times.

Founded in 1991 and styled after Britain's Booker prize, the award lists the likes of legendary Soviet poet Bulat Okudzhava and novelist Vasily Aksyonov among its winners. Last year's award went to former Cosmopolitan journalist Yelena Koliadina for her erotic novel "Flower Cross."

Previous sponsors include Open Russia, the charity run by Yukos founder Mikhail Khodorkovsky, and the Smirnoff Charity Fund.

Olga Slavnikova, who won the 2006 prize for "2017," a romance set in the Urals 100 years after the October Revolution, told RIA-Novosti on Thursday that she had no worries for the prize's future.

"It's like at the bus stop — you might miss one [bus], but they come all the time. So let's wait for the next bus," she said, adding that the organizers should be picky about the sponsor.

"They cannot take money from just anyone," Slavnikova said.

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