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Russia's Gazprom-Media to Launch New Comedy TV Channel

By The Moscow Times

April 06, 2016



Russia's state-controlled broadcasting giant Gazprom-Media will launch a new television channel dedicated to a popular comedian contest known as KVN, the Interfax news agency reported Tuesday.

KVN-TV will begin broadcasting on June 1, the report said, citing a Gazprom-Media statement.

KVN — a Russian acronym for the "club of the funny and the quick-witted" — is a comedy show and contest, usually featuring student teams from various universities around the country. Participants compete by coming up with witty impromptu responses to questions posed by the opposing team, and by presenting brief humorous plays and songs.

The show gained a steady following in the country after it was first broadcast on Soviet television in the 1960s. Its popularity soared when participants began poking fun at the regime amid the easing of restrictions on freedom of expression under Soviet leader Mikhail

Gorbachev.

A number of KVN contest participants have gained nationwide renown and have gone on to become professional comedians.

KVN-TV will be launched by Gazprom-Media jointly with the show veteran host's association "Alexander Maslyakov and Co.," Interfax reported.

Original url:
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