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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin to Shun Olympic Opening Ceremony

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Russian President Vladimir Putin will not attend the opening ceremony of this summer's Olympic Games in Rio de Janerio on Aug. 6, the Kremlin announced Monday.

Presidential spokesperson Dmitry Peskov did not comment on whether Putin would visit other events at the competition, saying that the call was Putin's personal decision.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC), which has been under pressure to ban the Russian team following reports of widespread state-sponsored doping, decided to allow Russian athletes to compete at the competition based on the approval of individual athletes by their independent sports federations.

Putin ordered the creation of an independent commission into doping on Friday, appointing Russian IOC delegate Vitaly Smirnov, as its chairperson.

Peskov said that the Kremlin welcomed the IOC’s decision, whilst underlining the need for

tighter cooperation between Russia and the IOC in order to draw a line under the doping scandal. “We hope that [Smirnov’s] commission will play a key role in this,” Peskov said.

The Kremlin also expressed its disappointment that the IOC had decided to refuse all Russian sporting officials, including Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko, accreditation for the games.

Russia has suspended a number of Sports Ministry officials implicated in doping allegations by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Sports Minister Mutko is to remain in his post, as he was not directly in the WADA report.

“Vitaly Leonontovich [Mutko] is to continue as Sports Minister of Russia. We absolutely regret this decision [to refuse officials accreditation],” Peskov said.

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