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Putin Plans Alcohol Tax Cuts After Siberian Poisoning Tragedy

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Russian President Vladimir Putin is preparing to slash taxes on alcohol in a bid to curb demand for cheap vodka "substitutes" such as perfume, aftershave and bath tinctures, the Interfax news agency reported Wednesday.

The Kremlin has asked officials to present their plans by March 31, 2017.

Putin's order follows a mass poisoning in the Siberian city of Irkutsk earlier this week.

The victims, aged 25-50, are believed to have consumed boyaryshnik — a bath lotion made from hawthorn berries, which is often used as a vodka substitute for its high alcohol content.

As of Wednesday, Dec. 21, 62 people had died from methanol poisoning.

The mayor of Irkutsk has declared a state of emergency in the region, and has ordered law enforcement officials to inspect all retail outlets currently selling boyaryshnik.

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