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Here's What You Missed From Putin's Visit to Yandex

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Arkady Volozh and Vladimir Putin **Kremlin Press Service**

President Vladimir Putin's highly-anticipated visit to the headquarters of Russia's tech giant Yandex was timed to coincide with the company's upcoming 20th anniversary on Sept. 23.

Even though the Yandex headquarters were evacuated shortly after the visit following an anonymous bomb threat, Putin's jaunt into the belly of Russian tech went off with only minor hitches.

Here's what happened:

No Bathroom Breaks

The news website Meduza cited a Yandex source as saying that, half an hour before Putin's arrival, employees were banned from getting up from their seats, even to go to the bathroom.

Employees were also allowed not to show up to work on Thursday at all, the unnamed source

said.

Disgruntled Staff Member Shown the Door

At least one employee, Alexei Sokirko, who turned up was turned away at the door. Sokirko said on Facebook that he was sent home because he is on a Federal Guard Service (FSO) "blacklist."

Meduza cited a user discussion on the IT-website Roem.ru in which Sokirko had suggested he would "spit in his face" if he saw Putin in the office.

Casual Thursday

The Bell outlet cited its own sources as saying that the Kremlin recommended Yandex employees not dress up in order for the visit to be "as close to real life as possible."

"Putin should be surrounded with young and optimistic faces," the Kremlin instructed, according to the Bell.

Cats and Workplace Abuse

Komsomolskaya Pravda special correspondent Dmitry Smirnov tweeted a video clip of Putin talking to Alisa, the artificial intelligence robot at Yandex.

When a Yandex staffer asked Alisa who the future president of Russia would be, she said she "didn't have enough information." Yandex engineers told Putin they originally had stuffed Alisa with

Russian classics, but she became depressed, "sounded like a 13-year-old" and "drove people crazy."

Komsomolskaya Pravda reported that Putin then asked the machine: "Are they mistreating you here?"

When Alisa replied "I'll take it into account," Putin quipped "She refuses to answer."

Putin then asked what Alisa was doing, and she replied, "Looking at recent pictures of cats on Yandex. Cats are the best!"

Drive, He Said!

Putin was also given a demo of a driverless car that seemed to fall flat. Putin neither got in behind the wheel nor sat in the passenger's seat, but just stood on the side, watching as the car started, turned a corner, and then stopped.

"It wasn't entirely clear if this was how it was planned or if it diverted from the program," Komsomolskaya reported. Even so, for the first time in Russian history, the newspaper said, the head of state could see the realization of the Russian people's dream since the time of Alexander II, a "self-driving carriage."

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