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Kremlin Should Take The Lead on Rap Music, Not Close it Down, Putin Says

By Reuters

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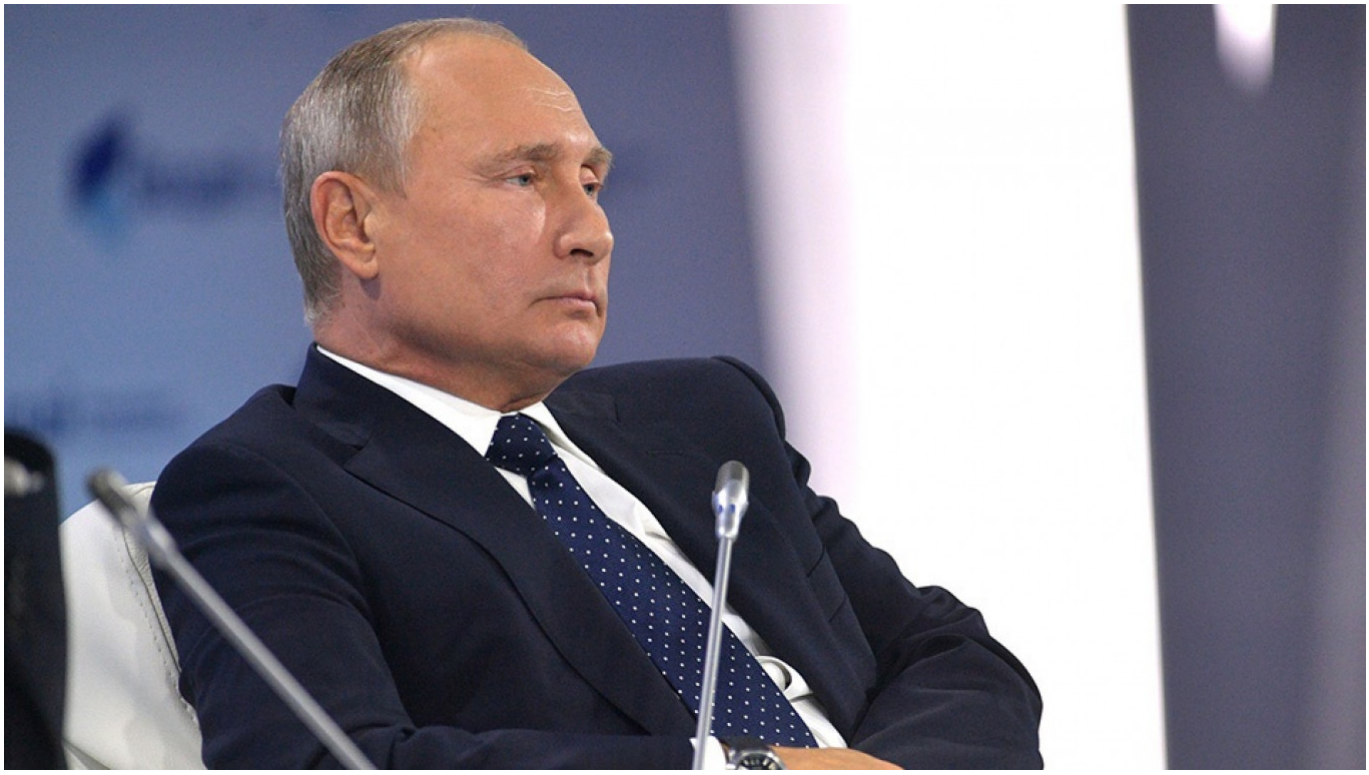

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Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Saturday the Kremlin should play a leading role in Russian rap music and in youth culture, rather than trying to shut it down.

His comments follow a spate of concert cancellations by venue owners and local authorities across Russia and the brief arrest of a popular rap artist, Husky. The crackdown has sparked considerable discussion in recent months, especially among young people.

Putin said such heavy-handed measures were often counterproductive, and suggested an alternative approach.

"If it's impossible to stop something, you've got to take charge of it," he said during a live broadcast of a meeting of his advisory council on culture and the arts.

"How to do this, how to take charge and guide in the necessary direction... That's the most

important issue," he said, adding that the question would be discussed further by members of his administration and the culture ministry.

Husky, who raps in Russian and whose songs have at times been critical of the government, said his concerts were under pressure because authorities objected to lyrics they found offensive.

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After his concert was cancelled in Krasnodar, in southern Russia, he tried to perform from the roof of a car instead, leading to his arrest for hooliganism.

His arrest and sentence to 12 days imprisonment led to a public outcry and the rapper was released early, thanks to the intervention of members of the presidential administration, the editor of state broadcaster Russia Today said on Twitter.

Putin on Saturday was responding to a statement about rap concert cancellations made by music producer and member of the advisory council Igor Matvienko. Among other suggestions, Matvienko proposed creating a parental advisory guidance system for concerts.

Addressing Matvienko, Putin said, "You said that rap (rests on) three pillars: sex, drugs and protests. Of all of these, drugs are the most worrying," Putin said. "They are the route to a nation's degradation."

Putin also addressed the question of how to regulate the musical genre's use of censorious language.

He said that he had talked about swearing with a linguist.

"She told me personally that it's a part of our language. It's just a question of how you use it," he said.

Matvienko also suggested guidelines on the use of swear words online and in the media, but Putin said this was a sensitive matter as such words are part of Russians' common culture.

Likening swear words to body parts, Putin joked: "we have all sorts of body parts, and it's not like we put them on display all the time, whether it's hot or cold."

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