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Moscow Sends Money to Cash-Strapped Russians Stuck Abroad as Virus Grounds Flights

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The first funds will be handed out to Russians abroad as soon as Monday, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said. **Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency**

The Russian government will on Monday begin sending money to its nationals stranded abroad, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin announced as countries including Russia have shut borders and grounded flights to stop the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

Mishustin said the cabinet has allocated 500 million rubles ($6.3 million) for the Foreign Ministry to help Russians abroad until they are able to return home. The ministry estimated last week that 25,000 Russian nationals were awaiting repatriation.

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"Not all of them can handle the costs of temporary accommodation on their own. Of course,

they need emergency assistance," Mishustin said in a video conference with his deputies.

He added that the recipients will see an undisclosed sum in their bank accounts within 48 hours of filing for aid. The first funds will be handed out as soon as Monday, he added.

Russia, which has also closed its land and air borders to fight the global pandemic, last week capped arrival numbers to 500 people per day in Moscow and 200 in other cities to handle the influx. By Saturday, Russia suspended flights returning its nationals from abroad and vowed to resume them on Monday.

Mishustin urged only those Russians who want to return to file for repatriation on the government's public services website, citing past cases where returning flights were nearly empty due to no-shows.

Russia has confirmed 6,343 coronavirus infections and 47 deaths as of Monday. Around the world, the virus has infected more than 1.2 million and killed almost 70,000 people.

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