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Moscow Plans Coronavirus Surveillance for Foreigners – Kommersant

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Moscow, which accounts for two-thirds of all cases, is already tracking its estimated 1,700 housebound coronavirus patients with mild symptoms through a specially designed app. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Moscow is planning to track foreign tourists' movements through smartphone geolocation for coronavirus prevention after Russia reopens its national borders, the Kommersant business daily reported Thursday.

Russia shut its borders indefinitely last month as its number of Covid-19 cases began growing exponentially, with more than 10,000 confirmed infections and 76 deaths as of Thursday. Moscow, which accounts for two-thirds of all cases, is already tracking its estimated 1,700 housebound coronavirus patients with mild symptoms through a specially designed app.

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Moscow City Hall could sign a contract with a vendor that would provide daily updates on

tourists' movements using their SIM card data, Kommersant cited an unnamed City Hall source as saying.

"The system should help track residents who have potentially come into contact with foreigners and contain the virus hotbeds," a second source familiar with the plans was quoted as saying.

Russian tech giant Yandex is said to be among the candidates for the surveillance contract. "The company already sends various [geolocation] data, including traffic flows, to the authorities," one of Kommersant's sources was quoted as saying.

City Hall is already buying what is said to be anonymous location data from Russia's top telecom operators. None of Russia's big three telecom operators commented on Kommersant's report.

Moscow's transportation department denied current plans to develop the surveillance system but confirmed that it was evaluating the costs of "on-demand geo-analytical reports."

Last month, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin ordered a cellphone geolocation tracking system that would inform users if they had come into contact with infected persons.

Privacy advocates have criticized Russia's surveillance measures as draconian.

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