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Putin's Business Tsar Attacks Economic Lockdown

Poverty and starvation are as much a problem as the coronavirus, said Boris Titov.

April 27, 2020



Boris Titov, the president's business ombudsman. **Stanislav Krasilnikov / TASS**

President Vladimir Putin's "business tsar" has called for the government to end the economic lockdown and reopen the economy.

Boris Titov, the president's business ombudsman, announced Monday he will organize an online protest Friday calling for businesses to be reopened, as frustration at the government's economic response to the coronavirus grows throughout Russia's business community.

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"Yes, the coronavirus is a problem. But poverty and starvation are no less a misfortune. What

are we going to live on in a week? A month?" Titov posted on his Facebook page.

"I am convinced that it is time to reweigh everything. It is time to assess the danger as soberly as possible and allow those who observe sanitary conditions to work ... There are many of us, and the authorities will hear us."

The call follows a number of digital protests last week against the government's response to the coronavirus. In the southern city of Vladikavkaz, hundreds took to the streets against the self-isolation regime.

The country has been on partial economic lockdown since the end of March, with that order set to expire in a few days, unless Putin announces an extension.

Russia has reported more than 87,000 official cases of coronavirus. Authorities believe the peak of new cases could be reached in the middle of May. Despite the spread of the virus accelerating across Russia, observance of stay-at-home orders has been patchy and the government's support for shuttered businesses and people who have lost their jobs is significantly lower than in other heavily affected countries.

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