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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Starts Drawing Up Lockdown Exit Plans

Putin's spokesman said the situation will become "easier" in June.

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Russia's economy has been partially closed since the end of March. **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

Russia will begin drawing up lockdown exit plans to switch the economy back on, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said Monday.

In a meeting with ministers, Mishustin ordered various government departments to start working out how businesses could get back to work once the coronavirus pandemic becomes less severe, news site RBC reported.

"As the situation changes for the better, it will be necessary to consider the phased lifting of restrictions on the activities of individual organizations and individual entrepreneurs," he said, asking his subordinates to come up with concrete plans by Friday.

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Russia shuttered most non-essential businesses at the end of March after the coronavirus outbreak accelerated, with additional restrictions such as stay-at-home orders being rolled out by regional authorities.

Russia's consumer watchdog Rospotrebnadzor, which has played a leading role in response to the virus, previously outlined how hairdressers and beauty salons could be opened following the lockdown — a process that would mandate disinfections of premises, regular temperature checks for employees and a potential ban on over-65s.

The government looks likely to extend the nationwide non-working period until at least the middle of May and Dmitry Peskov, President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, said he expects the situation with the coronavirus to become "easier" in June. Russia reported more than 6,000 new infections on both Sunday and Monday, and is now the ninth most-affected country in the world, overtaking China in the official number of cases.

Meanwhile, as the lockdown continued, individual sectors and businesses continued their lobbying drive to secure additional support by the government. Russian daily Vedomosti reported Monday that ministers are pushing for IT companies to be the latest sector offered tax holidays to help them deal with the economic fallout of the virus.

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