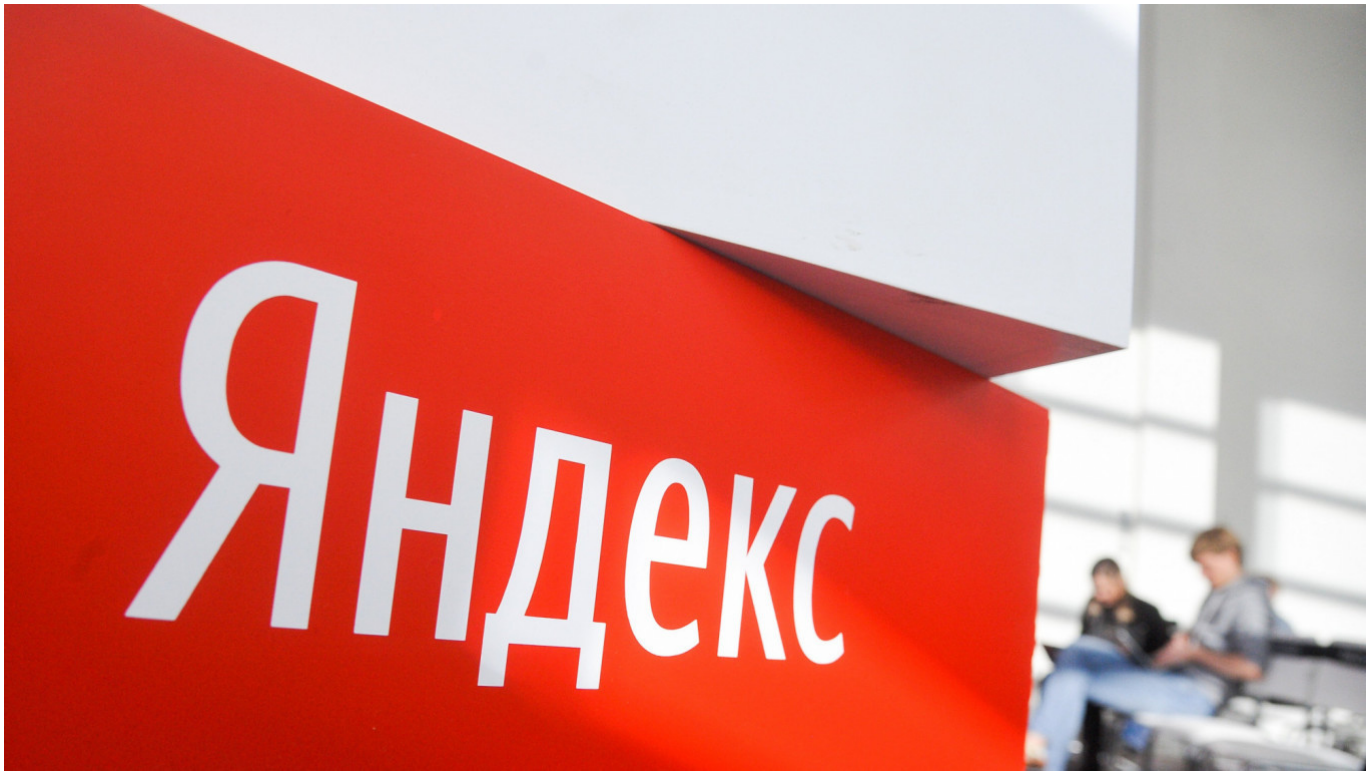
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Yandex Pulls Employees Out of Minsk After Office Raid – Reports

A minority of staff were brought to Russia, while others moved to dachas in the countryside, The Bell reports.

August 25, 2020



Yandex has relocated some of its 300 Minsk-based employees. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Russian internet giant Yandex has pulled some of its employees out of its local office in Minsk after the Belarusian security services raided its premises amid the ongoing unrest in the country.

Some of the company's Minsk-based staff were moved to Russia last week, and others who could not leave Belarus were relocated to country homes away from the capital, Russian news outlet The Bell reported Tuesday, citing two sources familiar with the situation.

Armed men in masks raided the offices of Yandex and ride hailing app Uber on Aug. 13, identifying themselves as members of Belarus' security services. Nobody was detained,

nothing was taken from the offices and no reason was given for the search, Yandex's press service said at the time.

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Sources told The Bell that the raid — which came just a few days after the disputed presidential election that has triggered the largest protests inside Belarus since the end of the Soviet Union — was an attempt to obtain data about passenger trips taken with Yandex Taxi.

Around 300 Yandex employees work in the company's Minsk headquarters, most of whom have been working remotely since the start of the coronavirus pandemic. The relocations to Moscow and the Belarusian countryside affect only a "minority" of the company's employees, The Bell reported.

It comes amid increasing uncertainty among the leaders of Belarus' technology sector. Following the elections more than 300 tech CEOs signed an open letter threatening to leave the country if violence against protestors continued. Temporary internet blackouts — often at times of protests — were also widely reported in the first days of the protests.

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