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Russia Defends Health Check Law for Foreigners

By AFP

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Denis Grishkin / Moskva News Agency

The Kremlin on Friday defended new legislation requiring foreigners in Russia to undergo health checks every three months, after the law drew the ire of the business community.

The legislation set to go into force at the end of the month will require foreigners present in Russia for more than three months to pass a litany of medical exams — including for HIV, syphilis, tuberculosis, leprosy, drugs and Covid-19 — every quarter.

They will also have to submit their fingerprints and biometric data to the authorities.

The only people exempt from the new regulations are diplomats, citizens of Belarus and children under six.

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"The president, you know, is in favor of creating the most comfortable conditions for foreign businesses here — for investors and foreign specialists," Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"However, there are certain rules," he said.

"But if problems arise, we will react," he added.

On Thursday, the Health Ministry said that tests would not actually have to be done every three months, despite language in its decree accompanying the law saying the medical certificates would be valid for three months.

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The new legislation will allow the government to keep closer tabs on foreigners in the country, as authorities expand surveillance and data collection.

It has sparked protests from a host of foreign business organizations in Russia, including the American Chamber of Commerce and the Association of European Businesses.

The new law also threatens hundreds of thousands of migrant workers from ex-Soviet Central Asia who are essential to the Russian economy.

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