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Putin Ally Kudrin Steps Down from Audit Chamber

By AFP

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Alexei Kudrin **Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency**

A longtime ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Alexei Kudrin, stepped down Tuesday as the head of the country's Audit Chamber amid reports he will oversee the reconstruction of tech giant Yandex following sanctions over Ukraine.

Kudrin, a former finance minister who has a reputation of being an economic liberal in Moscow, has been in Russian politics since the 1990s.

The 62-year-old said he was "leaving the post of Chairman of the Audit Chamber" after "around 25 years in the public sector."

"Now I would like to focus on large projects that are related to the development of private initiatives in a broad sense, but at the same time have a significant impact on people."

He held the post since 2018, appointed after Putin was re-elected for a fourth term in the

Kremlin.

Last week, Russian state news agency TASS reported that Kudrin will be given a senior role in Yandex before the new year.

Related article: Putin Ally Alexei Kudrin Set to Run Tech Giant Yandex – Reports

"The decision has been taken," TASS quoted a source as saying.

Yandex — often dubbed the "Russian Google" — has a search engine and also provides Russia's main taxi and food delivery service.

It is registered in the Netherlands and has European, U.K. and U.S. subsidiaries, but the bulk of its business is in Russia and Russian-speaking countries.

Last week, its board of directors said it will weigh "options to restructure the group's ownership and governance in light of the current geopolitical environment."

It said this could include developing some of its services — including self-driving technologies, cloud computing and data labeling — "independently from Russia."

It added that the company "anticipates" that it will "in due course be renamed."

Yandex said it could "divest ownership and control of all other businesses in the Yandex Group," such as advertising, e-commerce and food delivery.

This summer Yandex said it was selling its search engine — the largest in the Russian-language internet — to the government-controlled VK group which owns the country's largest social network VKontakte.

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