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Russian Election Authority Officially Registers Putin's Candidacy in Presidental Race

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Vladimir Mashkov, co-chairman of the staff, artistic director of the Oleg Tabakov Theater, during the delivery of signatures in support of Vladimir Putin. **Andrei Lyubimov / RBC / TASS**

Russia's Central Election Commission (CEC) on Monday officially registered Vladimir Putin as a candidate in the March presidential election after his campaign submitted the required number of signatures endorsing his re-election bid.

Election authorities said Putin's campaign managed to collect some 315,000 signatures from citizens across the country while invalidating only 0.15% of the endorsements due to various errors.

Under Russian election laws, a presidential hopeful who intends to run as an independent candidate must collect 300,000 unique signatures endorsing his or her candidacy.

"The decision was unanimous," CEC head Ella Pamfilova said of Monday's announcement to

register Putin's candidacy.

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Putin is the fourth presidential candidate to receive official approval from CEC to run in the upcoming election, a race he is certain to win.

Going up against the Russian leader are candidates from the far-right Liberal Democratic Party, the Communist Party and the New People party, which all have representation in parliament and therefore they do not need to gather signatures of endorsement.

Meanwhile, questions remain as to whether CEC will approve the candidacy of pro-peace presidential hopeful Boris Nadezhdin, who last week announced he had gathered the requiste 100,000 signatures for candidates running from parties that do not hold seats in parliament.

Nadezhdin, who hopes to run as an independent candidate from the Civic Initiative party, has seen a surge of support in recent weeks, as long lines of Russians both at home and abroad have formed at his campaign's offices to endorse his election bid.

The deadline for submitting signatures to CEC is Jan. 31.

In the weeks since Putin announced that he will run for a fifth term in office, independent observers have noted violations in both his self-nomination as a candidate and the collection of signatures needed for him to appear on the ballot.

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