

Sing Your Heart Out

International choral festival kicks off. Page 6



Will Work For Booze

'Slave' laborers given little choice. Page 3



Starbucks Plans On Hold

Chain delays openings until 2012. Page 4

CENTRAL BANK RATE

| | |
|------|-------|
| USD | 0,01 |
| | 30,21 |
| EURO | 0,03 |
| | 39,36 |

President Widens Powers Of The FSB

By Mansur Mirovalev
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MOSCOW — Russia has broadened the authority of the Federal Security Service, the KGB's main successor agency, giving it Soviet-style repressive powers in a move critics say could be used to stifle protests and intimidate government opponents.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev signed a law Thursday allowing the agency, known by its initials FSB, to issue warnings or detain people suspected of preparing to commit crimes against Russia's security — which could include participating in anti-government rallies. Perpetrators face fines or up to 15 days detention.

Like many past restrictions, the law was described as part of an effort to combat extremism. The bill, submitted to Russian lawmakers in April, followed twin subway bombings in Moscow that killed 40 people and reflected the Kremlin's dissatisfaction with critical media coverage of its anti-terrorism efforts.

A senior lawmaker said the law protects people from abuse by law enforcement officers.

"Officers of law enforcement agencies have long talked about the necessity of switching from investigating crimes to their prevention," Mikhail Margelov, the Kremlin-connected head of the foreign affairs committee in the upper house of Russian parliament, said in a statement. "The amendments do not turn FSB into a new edition of once-almighty KGB but protect Russian citizens from outrages by men in uniform."

Some of the law's articles, including ones that toughen control over media for "extremist statements" and allow FSB to publish warnings in the press, were removed or toned down following severe criticism from opposition and even Kremlin loyalists.

However, a lawmaker with the Communist Party, which remains the largest opposition force in Russia's rubber-stamp parliament, said the amendments did not change the law's repressive character.

"Despite all the promises to correct the most odious articles, by the second reading nothing has been changed in the text," Viktor Ilykhin told The Associated Press.

A Kremlin loyalist from a nationalist party praised the law for its "preventative measures."

"This is not a repressive law," Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, leader of the nationalist Liberal Democratic party, told Gazeta.ru online daily. "We're only talking about preventive measures."

Kremlin critics say, however, that the new measures could be used to violate the rights of opposition, and its obscure wording would leave the legislation open to interpretation.

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Medvedev Targets Kremlin's Olympian Graft

By Natalya Krainova
THE ST. PETERSBURG TIMES

MOSCOW — President Dmitry Medvedev has ordered Prosecutor General Yury Chaika to investigate possible Kremlin corruption linked to the 2014 Sochi Olympics — and issued the handwritten order on a copy of the opposition-minded newspaper Novaya Gazeta.

Novaya Gazeta on Wednesday published a photograph of Medvedev's order, dated July 20 and written on an Internet copy of a story that the newspaper previously printed about the corruption claims.

In the order, Medvedev told Chaika to investigate corruption allegations

against Kremlin official Vladimir Leshchevsky at the request of businessman Valery Morozov, who has accused Leshchevsky of extorting bribes in connection with construction for the Winter Olympics.

Moskonversprom chairman Morozov told Russian and British media in early June that he had paid 180 million rubles (\$5.7 million) in kickbacks to Leshchevsky, a deputy head of construction in the Office of Presidential Affairs, for winning a tender to reconstruct the Primorye complex at a sanatorium called Sochi and to draft a reconstruction plan for the Dagomys sanatorium. Both sanatoriums are affiliated with the Office of Presidential Affairs.

Leshchevsky has called the accusations unfounded and said Morozov was looking to avoid repercussions for violating the terms of his contract.

A spokesman for the Prosecutor General's Office said Wednesday that there would be no comment on Medvedev's order "until there are results" in the check into Leshchevsky's activities. He could not say whether the check was under way but added, "It has to be."

Leshchevsky was on vacation and unavailable for comment, said Viktor Khrekov, a spokesman for the Office of Presidential Affairs. He added that Leshchevsky, who has been on vaca-

tion for the past week, remained in his post in good standing.

Morozov applauded Medvedev's order and said it "may become the decisive moment" in his firm's battle with Kremlin officials.

"This has to nudge the consciences of the officials who are torturing us," Morozov said by telephone.

In ordering the investigation, Medvedev is seeking to fulfill a promise made soon after he assumed office "to reinforce the role of the media in the fight against corruption," said Kirill Kabanov, head of the National Anti-Corruption Committee, a nongovernmental organization.

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Four Play

Moscow OMON riot officers aim their pistols during a training demonstration on Wednesday that included storming a bus and a building with mock hostages. Forecasters are predicting that temperatures will fall over the weekend, with highs of 27 degrees Celsius.

Budding Artists Seek Inspiration From Petersburg

By Shura Collinson
STAFF WRITER

Ten British schoolchildren visited St. Petersburg this week as part of a program for budding artists organized by British portrait painter Alexander Talbot Rice.

The artists have been attending lectures and anatomy classes at the Repin Institute of Arts as well as visiting the city's celebrated museums, including the Hermitage and the Russian Museum, to get acquainted with Russia's cultural heritage.

Talbot Rice, whose subjects have included Queen Elizabeth II, the Duke

of Edinburgh and the Pope, organized the trip with the aim of fostering the young artists' talent by exposing them to great works of art and new techniques and methods.

The artist spent two years studying at St. Petersburg's Repin Institute of Arts, including under Mikhail Pimanov, after hearing of the prestigious school while studying in Florence.

"I heard about the Repin Institute, which has an almost mythical reputation among European artists," he said at a presentation of the program and young artists held Tuesday at HSBC bank, the event's sponsor.

"I turned up at the director's office without an invitation, and said I wanted to study there. Thanks to the education I received at the Repin Institute, when I returned to Europe I was able to pursue a successful career as an artist."

Having made a name for himself painting members of the British royal family and other eminent figures, Talbot Rice — whose father told him to "get a proper job" when he resolved to become an artist — decided to set up a program to help nurture young talent.

"I felt I had the opportunity to help young artists who are passionate

about art but might otherwise not be able to pursue a career in fine art," he said.

The artist held a competition among schools in Wales within a 15-mile radius of Dinefwr Castle — the artist's ancestral home. From about 8,000 students, 100 of the best pieces of work were selected, and 50 schoolchildren were chosen to interview.

"From 50, we selected these 10 exceptional young people," said Talbot Rice. "It was my belief that if I could expose these young people to centers of artistic excellence at an early age,

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Portrait painter Alexander Talbot Rice (r) pictured with a group of Welsh schoolchildren at HSBC Bank on Tuesday. FOR SPT

ART

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then they'd be able to understand the rich language of art, and this would enable them to also pursue a career in fine art."

St. Petersburg is not the first European center of art the Welsh students have visited. Last year, they were taken on a trip to Florence, where Talbot Rice spent five years studying and teaching art.

"I've been trying to expose the students to some of the great works you have here at for example the Russian Museum, and also of course to an understanding of anatomy and

of the Russian technique of drawing, which means drawing in mass rather than in line, as well as getting them to appreciate the psychology of the Russian portrait," he said.

Talbot Rice said he would like to set up a similar scholarship program in Russia, visiting schools in St. Petersburg to select students who are serious about pursuing a career in art.

"I'd like to try to identify exceptional young people who we can then bring back to Wales to celebrate Anglo-Russian relations and fulfill the purpose of art, which is I think a universal language. In this way, we can perhaps create a cross-pollination of ideas," he said.

Fifteen-year-old Elleni Meliou, one of the competition winners, said it had been "absolutely amazing" to come to St. Petersburg.

"I'm really impressed by the architecture," she said. "We've had anatomy lessons and been taught the Russian method of drawing through mass, which consists of using three tones at the beginning, and is in complete contrast with what we did in Italy, which was using lines and measurements.

"I find this to be a more expressive kind of art," she said. "There's more emotion, you can see that in the way that Russians do portraits; they seem to capture something in the eyes."

GRAFT

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But Kabanov said Kremlin officials, not including Medvedev, have formed "a well-organized system that can protect itself and prepare run-around replies to the president and the prime minister, deluding them."

Alexei Makarkin, an analyst with the Center of Political Technologies, said the president sought to show that he respected the media and opposition voices while underlining his desire to fight corruption "without double standards."

Novaya Gazeta deputy editor Sergei Sokolov said Medvedev was "sick that his orders are not fulfilled." Medvedev selected Novaya Gazeta for his first interview to a Russian newspaper as president.

Moskonversprom first complained about Leshchevsky in June 2009 to the Interior Ministry's economic crimes department, which recorded Leshchevsky receiving a bribe from the firm and handed the recording over to the Investigative Committee, which said it saw no crime in Leshchevsky's actions, Moskonversprom general director Irina Morozova said in late January in the first of three complaints to Medvedev, a copy of which is posted on Moskonversprom.ru.

In reply to Morozova's January letter, Medvedev ordered Chaika to investigate Leshchevsky, but prosecutors brought no charges against Leshchevsky despite confirming the corruption allegations, Morozova said in her second letter to Medvedev in May.

The second letter went unanswered, and Moskonversprom published an open letter to the president in early June, seeking disciplinary action

against Leshchevsky and his colleague Sergei Smirnov for continuing to "put economic pressure" on the firm.



MOROSKONVERSPROM

In March, construction workers at a Moskonversprom project in Sochi told The St. Petersburg Times that they had not been paid in months and were forced to pawn their belongings for food. Morozova denied the allegations at the time, saying the strikers were part of a campaign to discredit his firm for the sake of local construction companies.

Moskonversprom had also been building housing for Sochi residents relocated because of the construction for the Olympics, before state corporation Olimpstroy said it broke off the contract with the firm in early June over Moskonversprom's "failure to abide by the contract terms, such as labor conditions."

Moskonversprom has worked with the Office of Presidential Affairs since 2003, Morozova said in one of her three letters to Medvedev.

Further complicating matters, two unidentified Sochi police officers on Monday beat up one of Moskonversprom's directors, Andrei Shurpyak, and forced him to sign documents that said a developer, Sochiremstroy, had carried out construction on a residential complex for displaced Sochi residents, while the work in question had not been done, Morozova said in an e-mailed statement.

Morozova said the incident was part of an attempt by the police to open a criminal case against Moskonversprom on orders from unidentified senior officials.

A Sochi police spokesman said he could not immediately confirm Morozova's account.

Spanish Star Choreographer Joins Mikhailovsky Theater

THE ST. PETERSBURG TIMES

The internationally renowned Spanish choreographer Nacho Duato has been appointed creative director of the Mikhailovsky Theater ballet troupe. He was previously at the helm of the National Spanish Dance Company.

"Once Duato said he was giving up that job, he was invited to take charge of four or five ballet companies around the world," RIA Novosti reported. "He decided on the Mikhailovsky Theater, and said this was the best place, as well as a step forward for him."

Duato started out as a ballet dancer before moving on to choreography in 1988. He has choreographed ballet productions at the most prominent theaters around the world.

The choreographer is due to start at the Mikhailovsky on Jan. 1 next year.

"I will start working in St. Petersburg with energy and enthusiasm. It is a challenge for me," Duato was quoted by Agence France Presse news agency as saying.

According to the Mikhailovsky Theater's press office, Duato's contract will last for five years, with the possibility of extending its duration. Duato also nurtures plans to hold a modern dance festival at the Mikhailovsky Theater in spring 2011.

Duato was born on Jan. 8, 1957 in Valencia. He began his dancing career at Stockholm's Cullberg Ballet in 1980, and the following year, Jiri Kylian invited Duato to the Netherlands Dance Theater, where he was promoted to the position of choreographer in 1988. Duato's works have been staged across the globe by some of the finest companies, including the American Ballet Theater, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, Deutsche Oper, the Finnish National Opera, Stuttgart Ballet and the Australian Ballet.

"Engaging an internationally known choreographer at the peak of his strength and talents is incredibly significant, not only for the Mikhailovsky Theater, but for Russian ballet as a

whole," said Vladimir Kekhman, the general director of the Mikhailovsky Theater.

"Today you can count on the fingers of one hand the number of the world's master choreographers — meaning choreographers with their own, fresh dance idiom who think in choreographic images. The opportunity to work under such a master is both a privilege and a responsibility: Our troupe will take on the style, idiom and choreographic vision of a great artist whose work is set to shape the future of international ballet."

Kekhman said he hopes that Duato's work in Russia will serve as a catalyst for fostering home-grown young choreographic talent in Russia.

"It is no secret that as things stand, we have, to all intents and purposes, no new big names," he said.

FSB

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"It's an ugly law with obscure formulas," independent political analyst Yulia Latynina said.

"In case a drunken FSB officer is shooting at you, and there have been many such cases, you might end up getting jailed for 15 days for merely trying to escape."

The opposition has accused the Kremlin of turning Russia into a Sovi-

et-style police state, and many Russians say they have experienced or fear abuse at the hands of FSB officers. Government critics say corruption among the FSB and other agencies stifles business activity and stunts the economy.

Some rights activists say the law simply legalizes practices FSB officers have been using for years.

"I don't think it adds anything to what the FSB has been doing without any laws," former Soviet dissident and head of the Moscow Helsinki group

Lyudmila Alexeyeva told AP. "But it's very sad when a law approves the outrage of such a dangerous service as FSB."

The legislation continues a trend under former President Vladimir Putin, who has been blamed by the opposition and the West for rolling back Russia's democratic reforms of the 1990s.

The former KGB officer and FSB head allowed the security services to regain power and influence at the expense of Russia's democratic institutions.

Khabarovsk Court Bans YouTube for 'Extremism'

By Alexandra Odyonova
THE ST. PETERSBURG TIMES

MOSCOW — A Far East court has banned YouTube and four other web sites for "extremist" content in a ruling that promises to raise new worries about free speech.

The Internet is widely recognized as the last uncensored media in Russia, and the ruling nudges the country toward the likes of Iran and Pakistan, which have blocked YouTube.

Incidentally, the court's decision also bans videos by President Dmitry Medvedev.

The Komsomolsk-on-Amur City Court said Rosnet, a Khabarovsk region Internet provider, must block three online libraries — Lib.rus.ec, Thelib.ru and Zhurnal.ru — as well as YouTube.com and Web.archive.org, which stores archived copies of old and deleted web pages.

YouTube.com was banned for the nationalist video "Russia to Russians," which was ruled extrem-

ist by a Samara court in November and subsequently placed on the Justice Ministry's federal list of banned extremist materials.

The other four sites contained Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf," blacklisted by an Ufa court in March.

Once added to a list of extremist materials, a book or video can only be removed by another court ruling. The list, first published in July 2007, has since swelled from an initial 14 items to 686.

Judge Anna Aizenberg passed her verdict on YouTube on July 16, but the decision was only made public on Wednesday, when Rosnet filed an appeal.

The provider said it has proposed several ways to filter the illegal content without blocking access to the entire web sites, but the court has ignored all alternatives.

"Not a single one of our employees supports or condones extremism," Rosnet said in a statement.



AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL ELECTION 2010

Saturday, 21 August 2010

You can vote before polling day either in person at the Australian Embassy in Moscow from **9 August 2010**, or by applying for a postal vote.

If you opt for a postal vote, we recommend you apply as soon as possible.

For information about voting in Russia and CIS visit the Embassy's website:

www.russia.embassy.gov.au.

You can also contact the Australian Embassy in Moscow by email moscow-consular@dfat.gov.au or telephone + 7 495 956 6070.

For information about your enrolment to vote or general election information contact www.aec.gov.au, call + 61 2 6271 4411 or email info@aec.gov.au.

WEATHER

FRIDAY 5:34
SATURDAY 5:37
SUNDAY 5:39
MONDAY 5:41

FRIDAY 10:34
SATURDAY 10:31
SUNDAY 10:29
MONDAY 10:26

FRIDAY
HIGH 23, LOW 18
SUNNY

SATURDAY
HIGH 27, LOW 19
SUNNY

SUNDAY
HIGH 26, LOW 18
SUNNY

MONDAY
HIGH 26, LOW 17
RAIN