

Electronic Cards Approved

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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President Dmitry Medvedev approved on Wednesday a program unveiled at the Feb. 28 meeting of the economic modernization and technological development commission for the introduction of a so-called universal electronic card, Interfax reported, citing the Kremlin press service.

The program calls for the plan for the card's introduction to be completed by May 1. By June 1, the software development should be underway to make the card functional. By Dec. 25, there should be a legal framework for the use of the card to receive government and insurance benefits and as a driver's license and identification card.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin is responsible for the program overall. The presidential representatives in federal districts will create a database to support the card. Local authorities have until Sept. 1 to approve plans to create infrastructure to support the card. (MT, Interfax)

Industrial Output Slows

Industrial production unexpectedly slowed in February as declining disposable incomes eroded consumer demand and investments failed to spur growth, the State Statistics Service said Wednesday in a statement.

Output at factories, mines and utilities rose an annual 5.8 percent after increasing 6.7 percent in January. Consumer prices rose an annual 9.5 percent last month, sapping disposable income and curbing retail sales. Real disposable income fell 5.5 percent in January.

Manufacturing output advanced an annual 10 percent in February, down from 14 percent in January, the statistics service said. Output at mines and energy companies grew 3.2 percent, compared with a 3.5 percent gain in January. Production at utilities was unchanged in February from a year earlier, after falling 3.4 percent in January.

(Bloomberg)

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