

Shuvalov Joins Chorus Calling for Khodorkovsky Pardon

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First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov said Thursday that he thinks former Yukos owner Mikhail Khodorkovsky should be pardoned, Vedomosti reported.

Shuvalov is the latest highly ranked government official to comment in recent days on the case of Khodorkovsky, who has been in prison since 2005.

President Dmitry Medvedev said Wednesday about Khodorkovsky, "His fate is a sad one. I sympathize with him."

Medvedev added that the president could only pardon a prisoner who had appealed to him, echoing remarks made last month by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who noted that Khodorkovsky first must admit his guilt before he can be granted amnesty.

Khodorkovsky's lawyer said Wednesday that his client would not admit guilt on the charges of embezzlement and money laundering brought against him in 2008 and therefore will not request a pardon from the president, RIA-Novosti reported.

Shuvalov's statement Thursday, made at the World Economic Forum in Davos, was supported by Troika Dialog board member Ronald Freeman, who said the Khodorkovsky case impacted investor sentiment about Russia.

"In the end, it's a question of investment attractiveness," Freeman said, Vedomosti reported.

"The decision would immediately give 10 percent. Why wouldn't Putin promise to pardon him after being elected?" Freeman said, without clarifying to what the decision would add 10 percent.

Presidential candidate Mikhail Prokhorov has promised, if elected, to free Khodorkovsky.

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