

Gazprombank Pulls Suits in Executive's Crash

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The  **Moscow Times**

Gazprombank has called off a series of defamation lawsuits it filed against bloggers and news outlets that reported a road accident in which the company's vice president's car severely injured a 2-year-old boy in April.

"The bank regrets what happened and will rely on an objective trial of this incident and will abstain from any actions concerning it until the final court ruling is issued," the company said in an e-mailed statement Thursday.

On April 22, a car carrying Gazprombank vice president Alexander Schmidt struck the child at a pedestrian crossing in the Novogorsk district, just outside Moscow to the north.

Bloggers accused Schmidt of ordering the driver to leave before seeing whether the boy had been hurt. Media reports said the boy suffered injuries to his kidney.

Schmidt publicly denied that his car struck the child, saying the boy simply fell in front of the vehicle. He also denied ordering his driver to leave.

On May 18, Gazprombank asked the Investigative Committee to open a criminal case against blogger Svetlana Robenkova who first reported the incident on May 11.

They also asked that cases be opened against other bloggers who reposted the information, on charges of inciting hatred against top managers of large Russian corporations, Robenkova wrote on her blog.

Days later Gazprombank filed defamation lawsuits in the Moscow Arbitration Court against Robenkova and other bloggers as well as against Novaya Gazeta publishing house, Rosbalt Media and Nikolai Uskov, editor of Mikhail Prokhorov's media group, Zhivi.

On Wednesday, a Moscow court suspended the driving license of Schmidt's driver, Oleg Alexeyev, for a year, after ruling him guilty of an administrative offense because he didn't provide help to the child his car had hit, RIA-Novosti reported.

Earlier Wednesday, a medical expert was unable to determine whether the child's injuries were a result of the car accident, Rapsi reported.

The Prosecutor General's Office has ordered city prosecutors to reopen a criminal probe into a deadly 2010 car crash involving the wife of former Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev, State Duma Deputy Alexander Khinsein said Thursday.

A source close to Nurgaliyev told Interfax on Thursday that the former minister's wife was in the passenger's seat of the Volkswagen that hit a Zhiguli on Kaluzhskoye Shosse, killing its driver and passenger.

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