

Russian Version of 'Tumble' TV Show Denied BBC License

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The BBC denied the license because of the European Union's sanctions, Forbes Russia reported.

Britain's BBC Worldwide has declined to license the production of a Russian version of the "Tumble" television show because of Western sanctions imposed over the Ukrainian crisis, Forbes Russia reported Tuesday.

The Russian version of the show, which features celebrities competing in gymnastics, was to be produced by television company Red Square, owned by Arkady Rotenberg, for broadcast by pro-Kremlin Channel One, in which a 25 percent stake is held by financier Yury Kovalchuk, Forbes Russia reported.

Both businessmen have been sanctioned by Western countries due to their close ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

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reported, citing two unidentified individuals close to the administration of Channel One, and two unidentified employees of Red Square.

The Russian version of the show was to be hosted by Alina Kabayeva — former Olympic gymnast and State Duma deputy — who now heads a pro-Kremlin media holding, the report said. Kabayeva is rumored to have a romantic relationship with Putin, something both Putin and Kabayeva have denied.

The licensing news coincided with an address by Putin to Russia's regional leaders, urging them to promote athletics and fund sporting events, despite the country's economic downturn.

“The times aren't easy — although I cannot recall when they have been easy, there is never enough money in the budget — and the easiest thing that is usually done is cutting social spending, the spending on sports,” Putin said during a meeting with Russian athletes with disabilities, according to a transcript released by the Kremlin on Tuesday.

“I want to address the leaders of the Russian Federation's regions, so that they pay more attention to sports, helped athletes,” Putin said, adding he was “talking not only about Paralympic athletes, but about sports in general.”

The BBC refused to comment on the deal, but a spokesperson said the broadcasting corporation works with Russian media companies, but fully complies with the U.S. and European sanctions, Forbes Russia reported.

Without a BBC license, Channel One plans to produce its own show, titled “Bez Strakhovki” (“Without a Safety Harness”), in which participants will perform gymnastic events and acrobatic stunts, said WeITMedia company's chairman of the board, Timur Weinstein, Forbes Russia reported.

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