

In Quotes: Putin Speaks on State of the Nation

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The Russian president's annual address to lawmakers comes amid brewing tensions abroad and jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's failing health. **Mikhail Metzel/TASS**

Russian President Vladimir Putin is addressing the nation in the annual speech to the Federal Assembly as tensions brew at home and abroad.

The Russian president's address to lawmakers and regional heads comes hours before planned nationwide protests in support of hunger-striking Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, whose failing health in prison has drawn worldwide concern.

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Putin's address also comes amid heightened tension with Ukraine, dissatisfaction at home over stagnating incomes and rising inflation, the coronavirus pandemic, new sanctions from the U.S. and growing pressure from the international community over allegations of spying and election interference.

Here's a look at the key quotes from his address:

Coronavirus

- “Along with a naturally great anxiety, I personally had a firm conviction that we would overcome all trials [of the pandemic]. Having rallied together, we were able to work ahead of the curve. The number of beds in hospitals has increased more than fivefold. ... For the enormous work of people in all regions, I want to thank you from all my heart.”
- “The three coronavirus vaccines developed in Russia are a direct embodiment of our country’s growing scientific and technological potential.”
- “I'm appealing to all citizens of Russia: Get vaccinated. This will allow the formation of herd immunity by the fall.”
- “There's no other way to defeat the pandemic.”
- “There are still many unresolved issues in healthcare, human and technological. The entire healthcare system in Russia needs to be built on a new technological base.”
- “Everyone should have the opportunity to get vaccinated. Once again, with the appeal: Get vaccinated. This is the only way we will block this terrible virus.”
- “World healthcare is on the verge of a real revolution, and we cannot miss it. The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of telemedicine and new approaches. Our task is to put such technologies at the service of our country's citizens, but also to solve current problems. There should be no queues in hospitals, no difficulties with diagnostics and obtaining prescriptions.”

Climate change

- “We must respond to the challenges of climate change and create a carbon recycling industry.”
- “We need to adapt the housing and utilities system, infrastructure and the agro-industrial complex to climate change, to create a system of strict control over carbon emissions.”
- “Greenhouse gas emissions should be lower in Russia than in the European Union over the next 30 years.”
- “We cannot allow climate catastrophes like the one in [Norilsk](#).”
- “If you make a profit from nature, clean up after yourself.”
- “I also propose to earmark environmental payments going to the state budget and direct them toward eliminating accumulated damage.”

Tourism

- “As soon as the epidemiological situation allows, we will lift existing restrictions and millions of tourists will arrive from all corners of the world. The task is specific: allow [people

from] most countries to obtain electronic visas remotely, without unnecessary formalities, within four days.”

Foreign policy

— “If someone uses an arrogant and selfish tone, Russia will always find a way to defend its position.”

— “This is turning into some kind of sport — who can say something negative about Russia the loudest.”

— “We behave in a restrained, modest manner. Oftentimes we do not respond to outright rudeness; we want to have good relations. We are not looking to burn any bridges.”

— “I hope no one will think of crossing so-called ‘red lines’ against Russia, which we ourselves will define in each separate case. Russia’s response will be symmetrical, fast and tough. The organizers of any provocations threatening our core security interests will regret their actions more than they've regretted anything in a long time.”

— “It seems that everyone is already accustomed to the practice of imposing illegal, politically motivated sanctions, attempts to impose their will on others by force.”

— “But now this practice is degenerating into something more dangerous — for example, an attempt to organize a coup in Belarus and an attempt to assassinate this country's president. ... The West is silent on this matter.”

— “You can have any position on Lukashenko's policies, but staging a government coup and planning the assassination of a head of state is too much.”

Defense

— “Russia once again urges its partners to discuss issues related to strategic weapons, possibly to create an environment of conflict-free coexistence.”

Demographics

— “The demographic crisis of the 1940s and 1990s is hitting us now. The preservation of the Russian people is our highest national priority.”

— “Russia will always defend and defend traditional values that have been forgotten in a number of countries.”

— “In 2030, the average life expectancy should be 78 years. We will not change our strategic goals in this area. This is a daunting task, especially since the coronavirus has not yet been completely defeated. We see how dramatically the situation is developing in other countries. We need to keep the line on all frontiers of the fight against coronavirus.”

— “Our goal is to reach a steady growth of the Russian population.”

Economic support

- “The main thing is to ensure the growth of citizens' real incomes,”
- “The pandemic has exacerbated problems of social inequality and poverty around the world. We are faced with rising prices. It is impossible to rely only on targeted, directive measures. This leads to empty shelves, as was the case in the late 1980s. Now, even at the peak of the epidemic, we did not allow this. With the help of market mechanisms, it is necessary to ensure price containment.”
- “I call on the government to take measures to help low-income families with children by July 1.”
- “In Russia, single-parent families will receive a payment of 5,650 rubles (\$73) for each child from 8 to 16 years old.”
- “We need to help women who are expecting a baby and are experiencing financial difficulties. It is very important for the expectant mother to feel the support of the state so that she can keep the child. To help women in difficult financial situations who are expecting a child ... I propose a monthly payment of 6,000 rubles (\$78) per month.”
- “Families with schoolchildren will receive 10,000 rubles (\$130) per child.”
- “It was impossible to avoid budget cuts [last year] altogether. To support the creation of new jobs, the state will stimulate business. I'm instructing the government to submit additional measures to support small and medium-sized businesses, including in the tax area, within a month.”

Culture and education

- “Sometimes I am surprised to open school textbooks. It's as if it was not written about us. Who writes, who overlooks educational instruction like this? Amazing. They'll just write anything there.”
- “1.63 trillion rubles will be allocated for civil scientific research in Russia until 2024.”

Funding for tests, vaccines

- “Russia must be ready to develop test systems and vaccines within four days in case of a new dangerous infection.”
- “We must have a reliable shield for sanitary and biological safety. We need to have a full range of vaccine manufacturing capabilities. In the event of a dangerous infection, Russia should be ready within four days to create effective test systems, and as soon as possible our own vaccine. These tasks must be solved by 2030.”

Regions

- “By July 1, the government must submit proposals to increase the regions' independence and financial stability. First of all, the regions need help with high levels of commercial debt.”
- “All regional commercial debt that exceeds 25% of their own income will be replaced by

budget loans with maturities until 2029.”

— “By 2023, we plan to allocate regional infrastructure loans in the amount of at least 500 billion rubles. When granting them, we will be guided by the principle of fairness.”

— “I propose to restructure the budget loans that were provided to the regions last year to implement measures to combat the epidemic. The maturity of such loans expires in two months, on July 1. I propose to prolong them also until 2029.”

— “We need to be guided by the principle of equity [...] We will support the regions that have followed a balanced debt policy: the less debt they have, the more infrastructure loans they will receive.”

Infrastructure

— “I propose to extend the Moscow-Kazan high-speed highway to Yekaterinburg in three years.”

— “The towns and regions in between should also become a part of this infrastructure development.”

— “Thus, by 2024, taking into account the high-speed route from St. Petersburg to Moscow and the Central Ring Road, high-speed roadways will reach from the Baltic Sea to the Urals.”

This story is being updated.

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