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Kiriyenko Installs New Chief at Nuclear Power Consortium

By Yuriy Humber

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The country's nuclear sector chief, Sergei Kiriyenko, has asked the head of Rosenergoatom, Stanislav Antipov, to step down, as the consortium begins planned restructuring, a spokesman for Kiriyenko's agency said Thursday.

The top job at Rosenergoatom, which runs Russia's 10 nuclear power stations, will go to Sergei Obozov, currently the company's deputy director and head of the pioneering division that develops seaborne nuclear reactors.

Antipov, who had held his post for a year, will assume an advisory role to Kiriyenko at the Federal Atomic Energy Agency, according to agency spokesman Sergei Novikov. Under the changes, Alexander Lokshin, previously head of the Smolensky nuclear power station, becomes Obozov's first deputy, Novikov said.

"As Rosenergoatom gears up to be incorporated, a lot of complex legal and restructuring issues will come up," Novikov said by telephone, adding that Obozov would act as a "good crisis manager" during restructuring.

Industry insiders, however, said the changes were part of Kiriyenko's strategy to bring in known allies with a proven business-minded approach.

Formerly a federal official in Nizhny Novgorod, where Kiriyenko made his business and political career, Obozov later went on to be presidential envoy to the Volga Federal District. He arrived at Rosenergoatom last December.

"The sector is about to undergo major changes, and Kiriyenko's team wants its own men around, the can-do people who bring things to completion and have business acumen," said Gennady Pshakin, a nuclear industry expert at the Obninsk Institute of Physics and Power Engineering.

Obozov will act as "a trusted man" at a time when large investments will be pumped into the sector, said Vladimir Orlov, director of Moscow-based PIR Center, which monitors nuclear policy

Russia is currently working on increasing the proportion of its electricity generated by nuclear power.