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PUTIN CLAIMS SUCCESSOR MUST BE ‘YOUNG BUT MATURE’

BY DAMIEN SHARKOV
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Russian President Vladimir Putin has opened up about who he envisions succeeding him, saying that whoever leads the country after him must be “young enough but mature,” in a rare insight into Kremlin succession plans.

Putin was appointed acting president in 1999 and has been the most influential Russian politician since, serving as president for two consecutive terms, including a stint as prime minister in 2008. He then controversially assumed the presidency again in 2012. His close ally, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has also previously served as president, however it is unclear if he will still be Putin’s choice to succeed him after he takes a back seat.

Speaking to Bloomberg, Putin said he had not decided if he would stand for re-election for the fourth time, once his current term runs out in 2018.

“I could take part in elections or I may not,” he said according to the official transcript by the Kremlin. “If I do not take part, then another head of state will be appointed, another Russian president and then citizens themselves will decide who they need to vote for.”

Putin, 63, has previously said he has not decided if he wants to spend another six years in the Kremlin, after his current term runs out. However, he dropped further hints that he and his inner circle have put in place a succession framework.

“I would like to highlight that in any case we are obliged to think about how we, and when I say ‘we’ I mean myself and members of my team in the government and the presidential administration, we must consider the future development of the country politically, internally and economically.

“That is why we are now working on a strategy of developing the economy, more than anything, of course, developing the economy after 2018,” he added, referring to Moscow’s recent decision to pass the next three annual budgets in one fell swoop this year.

Putin explained the move was intended to offer continuity to any future leaders, “while the job of the future president, the future government, will be to either agree or disagree and correct them or suggest something new entirely.”

When asked about his recent reshuffle of regional leaders and the head of his administration, Putin said he envisioned his successor would be younger.

“I presume the future leader should be sufficiently young but mature,” he stated. “Wherever the system of rule is presidential, to a considerable extent people vote not so much for a party but for the presidential candidate. This is the case practically everywhere, which is why in that regard there is nothing unusual in the situation of our country