

Russia Sets Forward Clocks for the Last Time

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Russia is permanently on daylight-saving time after people set their clocks ahead one hour early on Sunday under a decree from President Dmitry Medvedev.

Medvedev, who has already tinkered with time by reducing the number of the country's time zones to nine from 11, has said switching clocks back and forth is bad for health.

Scientific studies show more suicides and heart attacks occur immediately after a shift to daylight-saving time, and that switching clocks back and forth causes more pollution.

Russia has been grappling for decades with issues of time in a country that stretches across 10,000 kilometers and whose northernmost reaches see less than an hour of sunlight a day during the winter months. The first recorded time change occurred in July 1917, and after several time-change reforms, daylight-saving time was introduced in 1981.

A poll conducted in February indicated that about 60 percent of Russians support Medvedev's decision to permanently set Moscow's time four hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, RIA-

Novosti reported.

A Kremlin handout earlier this year, citing experts, said that depending on the region, the change would increase the amount of perceived daylight by 7 to 17 percent.

Russia's abolition of wintertime will, however, boost annual electricity consumption by 1 billion kilowatts per hour, or 0.01 percent of total usage, the Kremlin handout read, because mornings will be darker and people will need to use more energy.

"Since 1916, countries have, to one degree or another, been 'experimenting' with time, and I think the process is likely to continue," said Vladimir Krutikov, deputy head of the Federal Service for Technical Regulations and Measures, RIA-Novosti reported.

More than 100 countries, including the European Union and most U.S. states, use daylight-saving time. In ending the practice, Russia joins Japan, China, South Korea and the former Soviet republics of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Georgia in not changing clocks seasonally, Itar-Tass reported.

(Reuters, MT)

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