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Medvedev Hopes to Teach at Skolkovo One Day

By Olga Razumovskaya

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Skolkovo Foundation head Viktor Vekselberg escorting Medvedev during a review of the project on Monday. **Dmitry Astakhov**

President Dmitry Medvedev reiterated on Monday his desire to see Skolkovo become a new global brand name — possibly in part because he hopes to work there after retiring from the Kremlin.

Medvedev, a former university law professor, told the Internet-based Dozhd television channel that he would like to teach at the innovation hub one day.

"As for Skolkovo, no doubt, if everything there is working well, I would certainly like to teach there," he said, speaking in the channel's studio after a session of the presidential modernization commission.

"I would like to do that not only at Skolkovo but in other places as well because it seems to me

that any politician who has headed the state simply must speak about his experience, negative and positive," he said.

But Medvedev gave no indication on when he would like to start teaching. He said earlier this month said he would make a decision "fairly soon" on whether to run for a second term in the March 2012 election.

At the commission meeting, Medvedev lamented the lack of domestic and international awareness of Skolkovo and encouraged officials to try to get on the same page with technology and innovation partners.

Medvedev struck a familiar chord following last week's annual report to the State Duma by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who talked economy and populist measures, largely ignoring innovation in his speech.

He scolded Skolkovo Foundation management and the Education and Science Ministry for failing to adequately educate both the Russian and foreign communities about the importance and potential of the innovation hub to be built near Moscow.

Today less than 40 percent of Russians know what Skolkovo is, the president said, calling this number "unacceptable."

A recent poll by state polling agency VTsIOM indicated that 32 percent of Russians have a clear understanding of what Skolkovo is and only 2.6 percent consider it competitive to Silicon Valley.

"Skolkovo is not just some kind of get-together," Medvedev told the commission meeting, which took place at Digital October, a private technology and entrepreneurship center on the territory of the former Krasny Oktyabr candy factory, Interfax reported.

"It is a public project, the kind of project all of modernization should develop around, which is why citizens should have full knowledge of how these products are being financed. This information should be absolutely open and public," he said.

"It is of critical importance to promote Skolkovo abroad, where awareness of its existence is lower," Medvedev said, adding that he is making sure to mention the high-tech research facility during all of his international trips, and it is often met with great interest and enthusiasm.

The president's criticism came in response to a presentation by Skolkovo Foundation co-chairman and former Intel board chairman Craig Barrett, who said Skolkovo's recognition could be much higher if appropriate funds were allocated to promote it.

"We have, in fact, done it for free. We haven't spent any money on it yet," the president agreed.

Medvedev also cited lack of communication among research facilities, the government and academia as one of the main hindrances to promoting of the Skolkovo brand.

"I think the [Education and Science] Ministry should work and not sleep," the president said.

"You should work in earnest, [Education and Science Minister] Andrei Alexandrovich [Fursenko]. ... Maybe take some kind of stimulants," Medvedev said.

The comment was in stark contrast to Putin's address to the Duma, in which he spoke about the government's achievements in education, as well as its goals.

The Skolkovo innovation center will have 15,000 residents and will be housed in the Odintsovo district near the Moscow Ring Road between the Minskoye and Skolkovskoye highways. It will occupy 400 hectares of land.

Its construction will cost an estimated 100 billion rubles to 120 billion rubles ($3.6 billion to $4.3 billion) — enough to build two metro lines in Moscow — and is projected to be finished in 2015, with the first buildings coming online at the end of this year. According to Skolkovo Foundation projections, it should serve as a potential model for other small and medium-sized Russian cities.

According to the master plan drawn up by the French company AREP, Skolkovo will be made up of five villages, each corresponding to the five areas of innovative development of the Russian economy outlined by Medvedev: information technology, biomedical research, energy, space and nuclear research.

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