

Medvedev Warns Against APEC Delays

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Medvedev visiting the Pallada training ship while inspecting APEC preparations in Vladivostok on Thursday. **Dmitry Astakhov**

RUSSKY ISLAND, Primorye Region — President Dmitry Medvedev warned officials on Thursday over delays in building a \$1.3 billion bridge to a remote island that Russia is racing to turn into the showcase site of a 2012 Asia-Pacific summit.

The 1.9-kilometer bridge is to link the port city of Vladivostok to Russky Island, a barren former military base where Russia is to host the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, or APEC, summit on Sept. 1, 2012.

Some contractors warned in the past that harsh weather in winter, when temperatures dip below minus 30 degrees Celsius and winds are strong, posed a risk to the construction schedule.

On a visit to the island, where 12,000 workers are building summit venues, Medvedev said Russia's reputation was on the line. "Please make sure nobody has to blush or blanch," he told officials.

The summit will spotlight Russia's interest in a powerful regional role and start a series of international events including the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, which the Kremlin hopes will improve the country's image and attract investment.

Russia is balancing its interests in its biggest trade partner Europe, where growth is slow and a debt crisis rages, with growing attention to booming Asian economies from which demand for its raw materials is expected to rise.

Medvedev said the pace of construction of the bridge, which is to have the longest central span and highest pylons of any in the world, left no time for unexpected work. He said contingency plans must be made to get guests to the summit.

Regional Governor Sergei Darkin assured him the bridge would be finished by May 2012. "People should be responsible. I hope that promises made to the president will be fulfilled," Medvedev said.

Medvedev flew in a helicopter over the bridge's 321-meter pylons as workers from French firm Freyssinet, a subsidiary of Vinci, and Russia's SK Most handled cables below.

Construction on the island, now home to just over 5,000 people, is expected to cost Russia \$23.8 billion. The summit venue will later be converted into a university campus.

High-profile state-sponsored construction projects often draw corruption allegations, but Medvedev said Russky Island was a rare exception. "In the last several years this is the only construction site in Russia where the de-facto expenditure did not exceed the planned one," he said.

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