

Medvedev Lauds Local Car Design Potential

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A model showing off Lada's Xray concept car at a Moscow expo. **Igor Tabakov**

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev is sure the domestic automotive industry can make good-looking cars.

"But this will happen only when professionals are in charge. We will invite them here," he said at a meeting with students at the Siberian Federal University on Thursday.

The head of the government pointed out that the local auto manufacturing industry had developed in isolation for a long time, which was why vehicles here lagged behind so much in terms of design.

But the prime minister acknowledged that in the Soviet era all cars were sought-after.

"When I was a student at Leningrad State University, having any kind of Russian car was prestigious," Medvedev said.

He said his first car was the classic VAZ-2107, known in Europe under the names Lada Riva and Lada Nova.

"I was very satisfied with it then. It was a prestigious car," Medvedev said.

He also said that AvtoVAZ now makes more modern-looking cars and that "one can like them or not, but the main thing is that we have a choice in the market. You can buy a Russian-made car or a foreign brand car if you have enough money."

In October 2011, AvtoVAZ hired Steve Mattin, a graduate of Britain's Coventry University car design faculty, to be director of design. Prior to that, Mattin worked at Mercedes and Volvo. His arrival marked the first time the auto giant had hired a foreigner as its chief designer.

The Interior Ministry posted a tender for 750 Russian-made cars to be purchased under the state armaments program for more than 583 million rubles (\$19.3 million).

The tender was posted on the state procurement agency's website. The vehicles have to be made in Russia, but they can be foreign brands produced here.

They are meant to replace police officers' outdated vehicles. A press release on the ministry's website stated that its departments have only 77 percent of the number of vehicles needed.

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