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Rogozin Proposes Renaming Far East

By The Moscow Times

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NOVOSIBIRSK — Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said Friday that the country should rename its Far East region because the current name makes no sense.

Rogozin said that the name led to absurd situations, such as when residents of the eastern city of Vladivostok say that their native region is the Far East. "But how can it be 'far' for them?" the outspoken official said.

"I don't understand the phrase 'Far East,'" he said during a technology development forum in Siberia's Novosibirsk. "This is our near and dear east. It's our Pacific zone. That's what we should call it: the Pacific region. Or maybe some other name."

Rogozin described Siberia and the Far East as regions that will be key to Russia's "superpower status" in the 21st century.

The ongoing construction of the Vostochny space launch center in the Far East's Amur Region is the first step toward making the region the center of Russia's aerospace industry, said

the deputy prime minister, who is responsible for overseeing the defense and space industries.

"Next year we should complete all work on the first stage of the launch pad, effectively moving all our rocket and space industry eastward. European [Russia] is not the place for it," he said.

Russia's Far East comprises nine regions with a total area of 6.2 million square kilometers, or more than a third of the country's territory.

However, the region accounts for just 4.36 percent of the population and has lost 1.8 million inhabitants (more than one fifth of its residents) since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

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