

Russia's Houses of Parliament Set for Long-Awaited Move

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The lower house, or State Duma, is on Okhotny Ryad in the heart of Moscow.

In a move aimed at easing central Moscow's nightmarish traffic congestion, Russia's two houses of parliament will be relocated to a new hub slated to be built in northwest Moscow, news agency RIA Novosti quoted a spokeswoman for the lower house's speaker, Sergei Naryshkin, as saying.

The lower house, or State Duma, is on Okhotny Ryad in the heart of Moscow, while the upper house, or Federation Council is about a kilometer away on Ulitsa Bolshaya Dmitrovka. The central location of the parliament buildings and Russian ministries is a thorn in the side of the city's motorists, who are often forced to stop by traffic police to let Russian lawmakers get to work without delay.

Plans to relocate the two houses have been on, and then off, the table for years. But last week a decision was finally hammered out during a meeting between representatives of various

government departments, the presidential administration and Moscow's City Hall, Naryshkin's spokeswoman Yevgenia Chugunova was quoted as saying Friday.

President Vladimir Putin and both houses backed a new location in the Nizhny Mnevnik neighborhood, Vladimir Resin, former head of architecture and construction in Moscow under ex-Mayor Yury Luzhkov, told the Moskovsky Komsomolets newspaper.

Many government officials live in the affluent Rublyovka neighborhood, just beyond the city limits to Moscow's northwest, meaning a short commute to nearby Nizhny Mnevnik.

Resin, now a Duma deputy for the United Russia party, also told the paper that sports facilities and residential buildings would be constructed near the new center.

In 2012 then-President Dmitry Medvedev proposed setting up a parliamentary hub in New Moscow, the extensive region to Moscow's southwest that was added to the capital's territory in 2012. However, the idea of stationing the parliaments beyond the Moscow Ring Road, the massive highway that encircles the city, proved unpopular among lawmakers and the idea was rejected.

In 2011, the Vedomosti business daily quoted an unidentified City Hall official as saying that the state legislature's new nucleus would be built on the site previously occupied by the Rossiya Hotel, on the bank of the Moscow river near Red Square. But last year plans were announced to turn the deserted lot into a \$200 million park instead, with New York-based firm Diller Scofidio Renfro winning the tender for its design in last November.

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