The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Bridge Linking Crimea to Russia Pushed Back Another Year

July 07, 2016



Construction on a state-funded railway bridge linking the Crimean peninsula with the Russian mainland has been delayed a year until December 2019, the Meduza news website reported Thursday.

According to the original plans, the section of the bridge for road traffic would be opened in December 2018, at which point work would begin on the rail section. No announcements have been made about the new opening date for the road section, Meduza reported.

The opening date for the railway section was originally set for June 2019 and a new opening date has not been indicated.

The construction of the bridge has hit problems since building work began. Forbes reported last month that funding for the bridge's construction had been suspended. Stroigazmontazh, the company building the bridge, belongs to the billionaire Arkady Rotenberg, a close associate of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The company's management sent requests to the Transport Ministry and the Russian road authority, saying that construction work could not be finished on time due to payments being withheld.

Russia's Transport Ministry said that the delay in payments related to the contract being brought under the management of the Treasury. Russia's road authority announced that the whole budget allocated to the project had already been given to Stroigazmontazh.

The Russian government has set aside 228 billion rubles ($3.5 billion) from the federal budget for the bridge over the Kerch Peninsula, connecting Crimea with Russia's Krasnodar region. When completed, the bridge will measure roughly 19 kilometers.

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