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BBC Russia Faces Lawsuit Over Story on Rosneft's Genetic Research With Putin's Daughter

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Maria Vorontsova, an endocrinologist who specializes in pediatric growth disorders, is widely rumored to be President Putin's eldest daughter. **TV Doctor / YouTube**

Rosneft says it will sue BBC Russia over its story on the Russian energy giant's plans to establish a genetic research center with President Vladimir Putin's alleged daughter.

Rosneft will work alongside the Russian government to pursue "accelerated development of Russian genetic technologies" through 2027, according to a government decree published in March. According to BBC Russia's report published Wednesday, Rosneft will invest between $500 million and $1 billion to develop a genetic research center possibly supervised by Maria Vorontsova, who is widely rumored to be Putin's eldest daughter.

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In a statement Wednesday, Rosneft said the BBC Russia report "contains an unfounded lie."

"The company will go to court to refute this false information, declare it inaccurate and be compensated for this damage to its reputation," its statement said.

Vorontsova, an endocrinologist who specializes in pediatric growth disorders, has been reported to be involved in Russia's development of genetic technology, including its development of controversial gene-editing technology.

The BBC cited three unnamed sources as saying that the new genetic center will focus on carrying out a full genetic analysis and sequencing of Russia's inhabitants.

"This is absolutely no secret — this is a big project," BBC Russia quoted Rosneft spokesman Mikhail Leontyev as saying about the center's establishment. Leontyev didn't confirm or deny Vorontsova's involvement in the project.

Putin has expressed aims to transform Russia into a world leader in genetic technologies, allocating nearly $2 billion toward genetic research in 2018.

The Russian president has never publicly confirmed or denied the identities of his children.

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