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Russia Completes First Rail Bridge to China

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A freight train crosses the newly built Nizhneleninskoye-Tongjiang railway bridge due to open within a month. The first Russian-Chinese bridge to span the Amur River, it measures more than 2.2km in length, the Russian portion accounting for 309m. **Yevgenia Letta / TASS**

Russia has officially completed its section of the first rail bridge linking it to China on Wednesday ahead of the bridge's expected opening within the next month.

The Tongjiang-Nizhneleninskoye bridge, named after the cities on opposite sides of the Amur River that it now connects, was eight years in the making.

Construction began in 2014 as Moscow's worsening ties with the West shifted its sights eastward. China completed construction of its section, which makes up four-fifths of its entire length of 2,200 meters, in 2018, and Russia initially linked the bridge with China in 2019.

President Vladimir Putin’s envoy in Russia’s Far East, Yury Trutnev, highlighted the bridge’s renewed importance amid the fallout with the West over Russia’s war in Ukraine.

Trutnev called the Tongjiang-Nizhneleninskoye bridge a “key link” in Russian-Chinese cooperation “especially in the situation of new challenges from unfriendly countries.”

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Speaking at a ceremony marking the occasion Wednesday, Trutnev said the bridge would open a new export route, incentivize production and logistics hubs in Russia’s Far East, and improve the remote region’s transport accessibility.

But although Russia’s section only spans 309 meters, the opening of the Tongjiang-Nizhneleninskoye bridge has been regularly postponed is not expected to become fully operational until next month.

The project had to be revised due to the riverbed on Russia’s side deepening and its August 2021 launch was postponed due to Russian train station renovations, the state-run RIA Novosti news agency reported.

Trutnev said the Tongjiang-Nizhneleninskoye bridge is now awaiting its official opening until after China builds a disinfection facility, according to the government's Rossiiskaya Gazeta daily.

“I spoke with [Russian Foreign Minister] Sergei Lavrov, he said the full opening is expected within a month,” he said.

“We’re ready for the opening of the bridge crossing on the Russian side as soon as our Chinese partners announce the opening of theirs,” RIA Novosti quoted Trutnev as saying.

The bridge is part of China’s ambitious Belt and Road initiative, which Beijing funds to boost Eurasian trade. China’s northeast railway network can be connected with the Trans-Siberian Railway.

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