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Russia's Buryatia Scraps Mayoral Elections in Capital City

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The Buryat regional assembly, known as the Khural, seen in session. **Parliament of the republic of Buryatia**

The Russian city of Ulan-Ude will no longer hold direct mayoral elections and instead select its local political leader through a council of electors, the regional assembly of Far East Russia's republic of Buryatia announced Thursday.

Buryatia head Alexei Tsydenov had first proposed the changes in January, arguing that the new model would breathe fresh life into large-scale development projects "without political pains in the neck."

"Instead of being elected in [direct] municipal elections, the mayor of Ulan-Ude will be elected by the municipality's representative body," said the Buryat assembly, known as the Khural.

Mayoral candidates will be submitted by a so-called "competition commission" based on unspecified contest results.

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The Khural, which is dominated by the ruling United Russia party, voted 54-6 in favor of abolishing direct mayoral elections in Ulan-Ude.

Both Governor Tsydenov and Ulan-Ude Mayor Igor Shutenkov are members of United Russia.

Following the move, direct mayoral elections now remain in only four Russian regional capitals, as well as the federal cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Over the past two years, the Siberian cities of Tomsk and Novosibirsk have scrapped their direct mayoral elections amid the Kremlin's push to tighten political control over the country's regions.

Ulan-Ude, which is located some 4,400 kilometers east of Moscow, had already scrapped direct mayoral elections in 2011, but they were returned four years later.

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