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Governor of Russia's Oil-Rich Khanty-Mansi Region Resigns Ahead of Elections

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Natalya Komarova. **Vladimir Gerdo / TASS**

Natalia Komarova announced Thursday that she was stepping down after serving 14 years as governor of western Siberia's oil-rich Khanty-Mansi autonomous district, making her resignation the first in what are seen as regular cadre changes ahead of regional elections.

"I'm completing my work," Komarova, 68, said in a video address to residents of the region, which lies around 2,000 kilometers northeast of Moscow. "I made this decision, I'm moving to another job."

Later on Thursday, President Vladimir Putin tapped the mayor of Tyumen, Ruslan Kukharuk, to replace Komarova. Putin named five new acting governors this month to replace those he had promoted to federal office after assuming his fifth term in the Kremlin.

Khanty-Mansi is among dozens of Russian regions, as well as annexed Crimea, that will hold

gubernatorial elections in September.

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A former lower-house State Duma lawmaker for the ruling United Russia party, Komarova was appointed Khanty-Mansi governor in 2010 and re-appointed twice in 2015 and 2020. She was the third-ever woman to govern a federal subject in modern Russia.

During a meeting with constituents last fall, Komarova was accused by pro-war activists of "discrediting" the Russian military for saying "we didn't need" to invade Ukraine in 2022.

In January 2023, Komarova was caught on a hot mic boasting about an alleged corruption scheme involving state contracts. The regional administration denounced the widely circulated leaked video as an attempt to "damage the governor's image."

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