

Sumitomo, Mitsui Seek Rare Earths in Siberia, Governor Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Mitsui and Sumitomo, Japan's second- and third-biggest trading companies, have held talks with regional officials about niobium and scandium resources in Sakha, Sakha Governor Yegor Borisov said Friday.

Prices for rare earths, a group of elements used in products ranging from electric cars and laptops to guided missiles and satellites, have soared since July, when China cut second-half export quotas by more than 70 percent. China accounted for 97 percent of rare-earth output in 2009 and more than half of consumption, U.S. government data show.

Russia has the largest reserves of rare-earth minerals after China, though production is minimal, according to U.S. government data. The world holds about 99 million tons of commercially viable rare earths, with China and Russia accounting for 36 percent and 19 percent, respectively.

Global consumption of rare earths last year was about 124,000 tons, 10,000 tons less than production, a difference covered by stockpiles, the U.S. Congressional Research Service said in a Sept. 30 report. Demand will probably reach 180,000 tons next year.

With China continuing to restrict exports, Borisov said he's in talks with the Federal Subsoil Resource Use Agency about starting auctions for deposits as early as 2014.

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