

Putin Pledges \$8Bln for Coal Industry

By [The Moscow Times](#)

January 24, 2012



Putin took time during his swing through the coal heartland of Kemerovo to meet with young judo enthusiasts.

KEMEROVO — Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, standing for election in a March presidential vote, pledged \$8 billion in development aid for the coal industry during a visit to a major mining region, a hotbed of political protest in the past.

He said Russia would spend 252 billion rubles (\$8.17 billion) on coal industry development by 2030 as part of an overall 3.7 trillion ruble investment program that will be driven by the private sector.

"The overall development of the economy, honorable colleagues, and the increased effectiveness of the coal sector ... allows us to draw up such large scale plans," Putin said.

The Kuznetsk Basin (Kuzbass) is Russia's largest coal-producing region, mining 192 million tons in 2011, or 57 percent of Russia's total output of 336 million tons.

Tensions flared in the region as recently as May 2010, after more than 60 miners died in a series of methane gas explosions at coking coal miner Rospadskaya's main mine.

The prime minister met with local officials and executives in Kemerovo, the Kuzbass's administrative center, as part of a three-day trip to Siberia and other provinces.

He also met with relatives of the deceased from the 2010 accident and pledged to spend about 500 million rubles in federal research and development funds on mine safety this year.

"The funds will be spent on the development and introduction of modern mine-rescue and individual protection equipment," he said.

Putin also said Russia should boost coal exports to Asia, where demand is surging.

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