

Post-Olympics Sochi Gambling Zone Under Discussion

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The  **Moscow Times**

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and top executives have discussed establishing a gambling zone in Sochi to help recover investors' soaring expenditures on construction for the 2014 Winter Games, news reports said Thursday.

The idea was raised during a meeting Monday in Sochi where participants reviewed the city's readiness for the upcoming Games, whose cost of more than \$50 billion is the highest in Olympic history.

Kommersant reported Thursday that Medvedev himself proposed creating a gaming zone in the Krasnaya Polyana resort and special tourism areas in Sochi, citing a state official and two construction company executives present at the meeting.

The prime minister also formed a committee for developing measures in support of the Games' investors, with Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Kozak, who oversees preparation

for the Games, tipped as a possible committee head, the participants said.

Kozak's spokesman Ilya Dzhus confirmed that a committee had been created but declined to specify its assignments.

Medvedev's spokeswoman Natalya Timakova later denied that Medvedev had proposed creating the zones and said the idea came from "a member of the banking community," RIA Novosti reported.

A state official present at the meeting said Sberbank CEO German Gref actually proposed the zones, Vedomosti reported.

The idea of establishing a gambling zone or special economic zones in Sochi has been under discussion for the past two years, two state officials told the newspaper.

Investors are lobbying the proposal and Kozak even brought the idea to President Vladimir Putin's attention in 2012, but the president did not support it, one official said.

In 2012, Krasnodar region Governor Alexander Tkachyov publicly opposed creating a gambling zone in Sochi.

The Krasnodar authorities are still against establishing either gambling or special economic zones in Sochi as they are focused on developing the region's Azov City casino and wary of reducing revenue to the state budget, the other official said.

Gambling has been prohibited across Russia since 2009 with the exception of designated gaming zones in four regions: Kaliningrad, Altai, Primorye and Krasnodar.

All three of Russia's functional casinos are located in the Krasnodar region.

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