Russian Energy Minister Contracts Coronavirus

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Alexander Novak **Kremlin.ru**

Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak has tested positive for coronavirus, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said Tuesday.

Novak is at least the fifth Russian cabinet member to contract Covid-19 since the outbreak hit the country in March. He had been set to accompany Mishustin on a working trip to Russia's Far East this week when he learned of his diagnosis after arriving.

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"He flew in [to the Far East] and then flew back to Moscow without ever taking part. God grant him health," Mishustin said, according to Interfax.

An Energy Ministry official told the RBC news website that Novak is asymptomatic and will continue to perform his duties remotely. He will join an upcoming ministers' session of oil-

producing countries via videoconference.

An entire pool of journalists covering Mishustin's Far East trip was also sent back to Moscow after some of them tested positive for Covid-19.

In addition to Mishustin, Culture Minister Olga Lyubimova, Construction Minister Vladimir Yakushev and Science and Higher Education Minister Valery Falkov have all come down with Covid-19.

Deputy Prime Minister and presidential envoy to the Far East Yury Trutnev tested positive and went into isolation last week.

News of high-level officials who came into close contact with President Vladimir Putin testing positive for Covid-19 sparked fears that the president himself was at risk of getting infected. Putin's spokesman, who was hospitalized with the coronavirus in May, has said that the president tests regularly for Covid-19.

Russia has confirmed some 930,000 coronavirus cases, the fourth-highest caseload in the world.

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