

Russia's Easy-to-Reach Mineral Deposits Nearly Depleted, Minister Says

September 12, 2024



A uranium mine in Krasnokamensk, Zabaikalsky region. **Igor Yagubkov / zavodphoto.ru**

Large and easily accessible mineral deposits in Russia are nearly depleted, the head of Russia's Natural Resources Ministry [said](#) Wednesday.

“Geologists are forced to move further and further into the Arctic and difficult-to-reach regions of the Far East and Siberia,” Natural Resources Minister Alexander Kozlov said during a meeting with President Vladimir Putin.

“Only 35% of the Far East and 45% of Siberian territories have been explored by geologists,” Kozlov was quoted as saying by the RIA Novosti news agency. He said that those areas show “potential” for future mining exploration, echoing [comments](#) Putin made last week at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok.

Kozlov also [warned](#) that deposits of critical minerals like uranium, chromium, manganese, titanium, fluor spar, tungsten and aluminum at current mining sites, many of which were developed during the Soviet era, are projected to last only another five to 15 years.

He cautioned that the current low levels of mineral exploration could lead to a significant production decline across the industry, noting that “almost all profitable reserves in Russia are already under license.”

Environmental experts, speaking to the independent environmental outlet Kedr, [expressed concerns](#) that future mineral exploration in fragile regions like Russia’s Arctic would likely be carried out without sufficient environmental safeguards, potentially leading to serious ecological damage.

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