

Gas Talks on Putin's Agenda in China

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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BEIJING — China and Russia will discuss a proposed gas deal during Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's visit to Beijing, but a Russian official said Monday that no agreement would be signed.

Putin's two-day visit from Tuesday will be his first foreign trip since revealing plans to reclaim Russia's presidency. He could seek to narrow price disagreements that have stymied Russia settling a 30-year deal to supply China with up to 68 billion cubic meters of gas per year.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Weimin told a news conference that during the visit, Chinese Vice Premier Wang Qishan would hold a fresh round of energy cooperation negotiations with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin.

The tortuous gas negotiations have been a reminder that, despite frequent professions of brotherly goodwill between Moscow and Beijing, relations are held back by mutual distrust, especially on the Russian side, extending back to the Cold War.

Liu did not comment directly on any prospects for a gas agreement.

"Chinese-Russian energy cooperation is an important part of the two countries' strategic cooperation," he said.

"The meeting between Deputy Prime Minister Sechin and Vice Premier Wang Qishan will allow more thorough exchanges of views on energy cooperation," he added.

In Moscow, a senior government official said Putin had no plan to sign a gas pricing deal during his visit.

"The signing of the gas pricing deal is not planned at this point," Yury Ushakov, the government's deputy chief of staff, told reporters.

He said a delegation of officials, experts and energy sector executives, headed by Sechin, was already in Beijing to discuss a wide range of issues, including future gas supplies.

Russia wants to diversify its trade with China, which is expected to grow to \$100 billion in 2020 from \$59.3 billion in 2010.

"This is very important for us. Our exports are massive but are mainly resource-based. We are not happy with it. We will discuss measures to correct this," he said.

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