

Turkmen in Gas Accord With China

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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China signed an agreement to increase natural gas supplies from Turkmenistan, even as it continues negotiations with Gazprom to buy the fuel.

President Hu Jintao signed the deal with his visiting counterpart Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Weimin said at a briefing in Beijing. Supplies will increase 25 billion cubic meters a year, bringing the annual volume to 65 billion "in the near future," state-run China Daily said, citing the Turkmen president.

Liu Wei Jiang, Beijing-based director of the international department at China National Petroleum, declined to comment on the agreement when reached by telephone. CNPC is the nation's biggest oil company and the nation's importer of Turkmen gas.

China, the world's biggest energy user, has relied on gas supplied via pipeline from Turkmenistan the past two years and wants to ramp up imports by securing Russian deliveries. It has been in talks with Russia for a decade to construct pipelines, and the two sides have delayed signing a pact as they wrangle over how much China will pay for the fuel.

Turkmenistan may sell China an additional 20 bcm a year of gas, or a 50 percent increase from the 40 billion it plans to supply by 2015, the country's First Deputy Prime Minister Baymurat Hojamuhamedov said in March.

Chinese imports from Turkmenistan were 12.3 bcm in the first 10 months of this year, according to data published on Nov. 16 by the National Development and Reform Commission, the Asian nation's top economic planner.

Turkmenistan has sent more than 18 bcm of gas to China so far, CNPC said on its web site Wednesday. The Central Asian country started deliveries in December 2009.

Belarus is ready to sign a new contract on Nov. 25 setting prices on natural gas supplies from Russia and approve selling its stake in Beltransgaz, BelTA news service announced, citing First Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Semashko, Bloomberg reported.

Belarus will sell 50 percent of the national pipeline operator Beltransgaz to Russia for \$2.5 billion, Semashko said. Gazprom already owns 50 percent of Beltransgaz.

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