

Turkmen Gas Deals Signed with India and Pakistan

By [The Moscow Times](#)

May 23, 2012

The  **Moscow Times**

Turkmenistan agreed Wednesday to supply natural gas to Pakistan and India, as it tries to free itself from reliance on gas exports to Russia.

The deals offer major economic benefits to all three countries but depend on building and defending a U.S.-backed pipeline across chronically unstable Afghanistan.

The route, particularly the 735-kilometer leg through the Afghan provinces of Herat and Kandahar, will need billions of dollars in funding. It presents significant security problems as the Western NATO alliance plans to hand control of Afghanistan to its own security forces by the middle of next year.

Turkmenistan's state gas company Turkmengaz signed gas sales and purchase agreements with Pakistan's Inter State Gas Systems and Indian state-run utility GAIL.

"The implementation of this project will give a powerful impetus to the social and economic development of all the participant countries," Turkmen Deputy Prime Minister Baimurad Hojamukhamedov said before the signing ceremony held in the resort area of Avaza on the Caspian Sea.

The idea of the TAPI pipeline, an acronym formed from the initials of the four countries through which it would pass, was first raised in the mid-1990s but construction has yet to begin.

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