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State to Measure Shale Gas Reserves

By The Moscow Times

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A program commissioned by a federal ministry will measure Russia's reserves of shale gas.

Shale gas is a sensitive subject in energy circles because its emergence as a credible alternative to conventional natural gas is predicted to weaken the dominance of state-owned Gazprom, Russia's biggest company.

Gazprom has long denied that it considers shale gas a credible threat.

The document, produced by the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry, will be discussed during a government session Thursday.

"The development of shale gas envisages an analysis of Russia's shale deposits, the development of methods for revealing gas fields ... and the development of technologies for extracting shale gas," the program reads, Interfax reported Wednesday.

The widespread development of shale gas in the U.S. has made the country the biggest gas

producer in the world. And despite environmental concerns, European countries, including Poland and Ukraine, are seeking to tap their shale gas reserves.

Shale gas is extracted through a technique known as fracking, in which water infused with chemicals is pumped at high pressure into rock formations, splitting them open and allowing the gas to flow freely.

With demand for Russian gas falling in Europe, President Vladimir Putin appeared to signal in November that Russia should take shale gas more seriously.

"Politicians, experts and business are talking about a real shale revolution," Putin said during the opening of the Bovanenkovskogo gas field on Oct. 24. "We are simply compelled to take these trends into consideration."

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