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Russia Lifts De-facto Ban on Ukrainian Imports

By The Moscow Times

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Russia has scrapped laborious extra customs checks on imports from Ukraine, Kiev said Tuesday, just days after applying them in a signal to its ex-Soviet neighbor to align itself more closely with Moscow.

Ukrainian politicians had said the extra checks were motivated by Russian concerns that Kiev was getting too close to the European Union as well as differences over trade and gas prices.

"The Russian side assured [us] that as of today, additional customs control procedures do not apply," the spokeswoman for Ukraine's Ministry of Revenues and Duties said, giving no more details.

Officials at the Russian Federal Customs Service declined to comment.

Ukraine's largest steelmaker, Metinvest, and brewer Obolon had said the extra border checks

were already hurting their operations.

Russia has made it clear that it wants Ukraine to join a Customs Union of ex-Soviet states rather than sign a free trade agreement with the EU, which Kiev hopes to do in November.

President Vladimir Putin's adviser on developing the trade union, Sergei Glazyev, said Sunday that the extra checks on Ukrainian imports were only temporary, but that there would be more such measures if Kiev signed the association agreement.

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