

3 Groups Vie For Kerimov's Uralkali Stake

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Three groups are still eyeing tycoon Suleiman Kerimov's stake in potash producer Uralkali, Vedomosti reported Monday, citing a high-ranking official and a source close to Kerimov.

Speculation that Kerimov has been trying to sell his stake has mounted since Uralkali triggered a row with Belarus by pulling out of a cartel that controlled 40 percent of the world's potash market, a row which the Kremlin is eager to repair.

A duo of investor Vladimir Kogan and an Arabic state fund, plus a second pairing of billionaire Vladimir Evtushenkov and partner Mikhail Gutseriyev, are still eyeing Kerimov's 21.75 percent stake in Uralkali, the official said.

These two groups have already received approval from the Kremlin to proceed, the source close to Kerimov said.

The third potential buyer is tycoon-turned-politician Mikhail Prokhorov, according to the person close to Kerimov and a source at a state-owned bank.

Allies say Kerimov himself values the company at \$20 billion and would like to sell his stake to Prokhorov if the latter is able to win official backing. Uralkali has a market value of about \$15.5 billion now, Reuters data estimates.

VTB bank is ready to finance the deal if the buyer is able to provide 30 percent of the cash, the official said. The Arabic state fund may also provide Kogan with about \$1 billion for a deal, he added.

Evtushenkov and Gutseriyev had previously denied plans to buy a stake in Uralkali. Kerimov's investment vehicle Nafta and Gutseriyev's RussNeft declined to comment Monday.

Onexim group, which manages Prokhorov's assets, and Evtushenkov's oil-to-telecoms conglomerate Sistema were not available for immediate comment.

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