

Chinese President to Give Putin a Boost With Sochi Attendance

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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BEIJING — Chinese President Xi Jinping will attend the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Sochi, China said Monday, in a show of support for President Vladimir Putin, who has staked his political prestige on the success of the Games.

China's Foreign Ministry said that Xi would be in Russia from Feb. 6 to 8 for the opening ceremony.

Xi's decision to attend is a positive development for Putin, after U.S. President Barack Obama and his German counterpart Joachim Gauck both said they would not travel to Russia for the Games.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said this was the first time a Chinese leader had attended such a major sporting event overseas, and was a sign of the country's close ties with Russia.

"Mutual support is an important feature of China and Russia's strategic cooperation," Hong said, adding that Putin had attended the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

"This shows the close friendship between the two leaders. We hope that Russia can successfully hold this Winter Olympics," he added.

To ease fears over possible breaches of security, Putin has ordered safety measures beefed up nationwide after 34 people were killed last month in bombings in Volgograd. About 37,000 Russian personnel are providing security in the Sochi area.

Russia's human rights record has also come under close scrutiny, with Finland's Sports Minister Paavo Arhinmaki boycotting the opening ceremony over the country's "limitations in the freedom of speech or repressing of sexual minorities."

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