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Putin to Attend 2022 Beijing Olympics — Minister

By AFP

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Roman Pilipey / EPA / TASS

Russian President Vladimir Putin will travel to China for next year's Winter Olympic Games, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Thursday, while Moscow remains under penalties for state-sponsored doping.

"Putin with delight has accepted the invitation of Xi Jinping to visit the Winter Olympic Games in February 2022," Lavrov said during a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Tajikistan.

The highest court in sports last year banned Russia from international competitions for two years as punishment for its state-backed doping program at the 2014 Olympic Winter Games in Sochi.

However, some Russian athletes are allowed to compete as neutrals — without using the

Russian flag or anthem — if they can prove their doping record is clean.

Russian officials, including Putin, are also banned from attending international competitions unless invited by the head of state of the host country.

Lavrov said he hopes Putin and Xi can meet in person and that Russian and Chinese athletes "will once against demonstrate their high sporting and personal qualities", according to the TASS news agency.

More than 300 Russian competitors took part in this year's summer Tokyo Olympics as neutral athletes.

They brought home 20 golds, ranking fifth in the medals tally.

The 2022 Winter Olympics will be held from February 4-20 in China's capital Beijing and in the neighboring Hebei province.

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