

Russian oil pipeline to China 'beyond doubt', Putin says

By [Global Research](#)

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If the project is implemented, and it is beyond doubt, it will make it possible to considerably increase the oil supply volumes from Russia to China,' Russia's Itar-Tass news agency quoted Putin as saying.

Putin was speaking at a Sino-Russian Industrial and Commercial Forum on Wednesday morning, where he and Chinese President Hu Jintao were among some 800 participants, Chinese state media said.

Hu urged the two sides to 'proceed from long-term perspectives and heed the other's interests' in energy cooperation, the government's official Xinhua news agency said.

Putin's statement may reassure Chinese officials who were worried by Russia's apparent lack of commitment to the pipeline project, after years of negotiations failed to yield a formal decision from Moscow.

The two sides signed several agreements on energy and trade on Tuesday, which Putin could lead to 'multi-billion-dollar contracts'.

He said Russia hoped to export 60 to 80 billion cubic metres of natural gas annually to China by pipelines from eastern and western Siberia.

On Wednesday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said construction of the oil pipeline, which would be a branch of Russia's main pipeline to its far east, 'will be launched in the coming months', Itar-Tass said.

'The feasibility study will be conducted jointly [by Russia and China] in an expeditious manner,' Lavrov was quoted as saying.

Energy minister Viktor Khristenko said construction of the oil pipeline would be completed before the end of 2008, the agency said.

If it is built, the pipeline will be a joint venture between the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and Russia's Transneft pipeline company.

Itar-Tass on Wednesday quoted Transneft director general Semyon Vainshtok as saying that China 'intends to provide a grant' for construction of the pipeline section inside Russia.

Putin also held separate meetings on Wednesday with Premier Wen Jiabao and Wu Bangguo, the official number two in China's ruling Communist Party.

He later left Beijing to visit the Shaolin temple in central China, which is famous as China's top martial arts centre and as the home of Zen Buddhism.

CNPC has imported increasing volumes of Russian oil by rail in recent years, as what it hopes will be an interim measure pending construction of the Russian oil pipeline.

The scheduled opening of an oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to China this year will allow it to raise imports of Russian oil to at least 15 million tons annually from this year, CNPC said.

Russia exported more than 8 million tons of oil to China last year, Putin said.

Bilateral trade was valued at about 30 billion dollars last year, and the two nations aim to increase trade value to between 60 billion dollars and 80 billion dollars by 2010.

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