

VTB Considers Mideast Demand for Its Shares

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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VTB said Wednesday that it was studying the potential demand for its shares from investors, including those in the Gulf, as the government plans a massive privatization drive.

Russia will open its most ambitious privatization program since the 1990s to foreign investors as it plans to earn at least \$29 billion through asset sales, including a 25 percent stake in state-run VTB.

"VTB ... is working with a wide range of potential investors and studying demand actively. As a part of our work with investors from the Persian Gulf we talked about possible options for investments into VTB, but no direct agreements have been achieved," VTB's press-service said by e-mail.

Sheikh Ahmad al-Abdullah al-Sabah, Kuwait Minister of Oil and Information, has told Russia Today that VTB has proposed to the oil-rich Gulf country to buy a stake in the bank.

"VTB has made us a commercial offer for the state of Kuwait to become the bank's shareholder," the minister said, RT reported.

Kuwait Investment Authority, a sovereign wealth fund, which manages state assets in the world's fourth-biggest oil exporter, was once a minor shareholder at Citigroup but sold its stake for a profit of \$1.1 billion in December 2009.

"I will propose to them [KIA's top management] to discuss investment opportunities with the bank's top management in detail and if it occurs that those investment opportunities are in line with the [KIA's] strategy than the corporation will make a decision accordingly," the minister said.

VTB, which plans to earn as much as 50 billion rubles (\$1.68 billion) in 2010 after a \$2 billion loss in 2009, has said it is seeking cornerstone investors to whom the government could divest some of its stake in the bank.

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