

Turkmenistan to Boost Energy Supplies to China

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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BAGTYYARLYK, Turkmenistan — Turkmenistan opened a natural gas compression station Monday, enabling the energy-rich Central Asian nation to significantly boost the volume of its deliveries to energy-parched China.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov said the station would be able to pump up to 60 million cubic meters of gas daily.

China is set to become the largest buyer of gas from Turkmenistan over the coming years as a pipeline linking the two countries, through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, reaches full capacity. Deliveries began earlier this year and are expected to hit 40 billion cubic meters in 2015.

The opening came as China and Russia signed a raft of energy deals, including on increasing natural gas exports to Beijing. Gazprom, Russia's state-controlled gas producer, said it

expects to be able to supply China with 30 billion cubic meters of gas annually starting in late 2015, but a final agreement has not yet been signed.

Russia used to have a stranglehold over gas supplies from this isolated former Soviet nation, but Turkmenistan has increasingly sought out other potential clients.

"In addition to supplying Russia, China and Iran, we are also taking concrete measures to accelerate progress in the construction of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan and India pipeline in concert with the member countries of this large-scale project," Berdymukhammedov said at the ceremony in the town of Bagtyyarlyk, near the border with Uzbekistan.

Russia appeared to have cornered the market for Central Asian gas exports in 2007, when it sealed a deal to build a new pipeline along the Caspian coast that would have markedly boosted supplies. That project has fallen by the wayside, however, as Moscow's readiness to buy Turkmenistan's increasingly expensive gas has waned.

The European Union has also lobbied actively for Turkmenistan to supply the planned Nabucco pipeline, a major project that would bring Caspian and Central Asian gas to Europe, bypassing Russia.

While the West and Russia have worked only tentatively at getting those projects off the ground, China made a dramatic entry into the competition for Central Asian gas last year, with a new pipeline joining it with Turkmenistan opening in December.

According to data recently released by the state-controlled China National Petroleum Corporation, China will import around 17 billion cubic meters of gas from Central Asia next year.

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