

Turkmen See Gas Line for Afghanistan

By [The Moscow Times](#)

November 06, 2011

The  **Moscow Times**

ASHGABAT, Turkmenistan — Turkmenistan expects soon to sign a long-delayed agreement to sell natural gas to Pakistan and India and has "no doubts" that an ambitious project to build a pipeline through Afghanistan will be realized, a senior energy official said Friday.

Oil and Gas Minister Bayramgeldy Nediroy said the proposed Turkmenistan to India pipeline, known as TAPI, would require 1 trillion cubic meters of Turkmen gas to be pumped over a 30-year period.

"Preparations are under way for the imminent signing of an agreement on the sale and purchase of natural gas," Nediroy told an international investment forum. "There are no doubts that this project will be realized."

He did not give further details about the signing or who the counterparts would be.

Turkmenistan, which has the world's fourth-largest natural gas reserves, wants to build the pipeline as part of its plans to diversify sales from Soviet-era master Russia to energy-

hungry markets in Asia and Europe.

The idea of the 1,700-kilometer TAPI pipeline was first raised in the mid-1990s.

A route that would run through Taliban heartlands in southern Afghanistan means that security will be a major challenge to the project.

Turkmenistan envisages that gas for the pipeline would be supplied by its South Iolotan field, ranked by British auditor Gaffney, Cline & Associates last month as the second-largest in the world behind Iran's South Pars deposit.

The auditor said South Iolotan contained between 13.1 trillion and 21.2 trillion cubic meters of natural gas.

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