

Ivanov Says Russia's Natural Resources Are a Curse

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The country's natural resources, including its cash cow commodities oil and gas, are not a boon but a burden, presidential administration head Sergei Ivanov said Friday at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum.

"My personal opinion is that they [Russia's natural resources] are not a blessing but a curse. Because this blessing deprives us of all incentive to diversify," Ivanov told state-run English-language TV channel RT, formerly known as Russia Today, Interfax reported.

In his keynote address to the forum Thursday, President Vladimir Putin spoke about the need for Russia to move away from its dependence on sales of oil and gas, a reform also stressed by former President Dmitry Medvedev during his term in office.

Ivanov said he "could not promise" that Russia was fully ready for a second wave of economic crisis, citing the unpredictable ramifications for the country of a drastic fall in the price of oil.

"There are too many uncertainties, and we cannot precisely calculate all the consequences

of a possible sharp drop in the price of oil and a large-scale crisis in the euro zone. There are too many variable factors," Ivanov said.

At the same time, he noted Russia's \$512 billion in gold and foreign currency reserves, its Reserve and Welfare Funds, and said the country "managed" the crisis of 2008-09.

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