

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg meet Tuesday for talks on the Arctic, amid growing international interest in the region's vast energy resources.

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"Our countries are northern, Arctic. The region's development depends how we carry out a coordinated position on the development of the Arctic," Medvedev told Stoltenberg at his residence outside Moscow.

"We have a shared interest in developing our opportunities on the European gas market," Stoltenberg said through an interpreter, before the start of closed-door talks with the Russian leader.

Russia and Norway are the first- and second-largest exporters of natural gas to Europe, respectively, and they share a short land border while also angling for energy resources believed to lie underneath the icy Arctic Ocean.

The Kommersant newspaper reported that a focus of the talks would be how to divide up a huge 175,000 square-kilometre (68,000 square-mile) stretch of the Barents Sea which could contain over 10 billion tonnes of hydrocarbons.

Russia has lately sought to strengthen its claim to disputed parts of the Arctic, sparking a diplomatic tug-of-war with the other states in the region, Canada, Denmark, Norway and the United States.

The region is believed to hold vast oil and gas reserves, and energy firms have been eager to develop it as older fields are depleted and as global warming is expected to melt large portions of the polar ice caps.

Russia and Norway in Arctic energy discussion

Written by AFP / The Swedish Wire

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In 2007 Norway's StatoilHydro energy group won the right to help develop the huge Shtokman gas field off Russia's northern coast, becoming one of the few foreign energy companies to win a foothold in Russia in recent years.