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S'pore and Russia to ink joint commission deal

■ **By JEREMY AU YONG**

SINGAPORE and Russia ties will take a leap forward today when a high-level joint commission is formally set up.

Mr Sergey Sobyenin, the Deputy Chairman and Chief of Staff of the Russian Federation, arrived in Singapore yesterday to complete the formalities of the deal.

Mr Sobyenin is to head the commission alongside Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, and they are scheduled to

sign a memorandum of understanding on the commission at the Istana.

They will then co-chair the inaugural meeting of the new body, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Separately, Singapore and Russia are also expected to ink a deal on investment promotion and protection.

The agreement creates a framework to protect their respective investors in the other country.

The inter-governmental commission was first discussed last November during a state visit here by Russian

President Dmitry Medvedev.

It is meant to explore and promote broad-based cooperation in a variety of fields, including the economy, trade, science and technology, education and culture.

It is also expected to help companies navigate the business environment in the two countries.

The setting up of the commission comes at a time when ties between the two countries are at a high.

Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew last week concluded his sixth visit to Rus-

sia in five years.

While there, he met many prominent Russian businessmen and discussed the challenges facing Russia's economy.

During his three-day official visit, Mr Sobyenin is scheduled to call on Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and MM Lee.

He will also meet Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan and attend the ongoing Russia-Singapore Business Forum.

The forum, the fifth such meeting, will end on Wednesday.