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Ukraine Faces Huge Winter Gas Shortfall, Minister Says

By The Moscow Times

September 11, 2014



Ukraine needs an additional five billion cubic meters of natural gas to get through the coming cold season without difficulties, the country's Deputy Prime Minister Volodymyr Groisman said Thursday.

Ukraine relies heavily on Russia for gas imports but Moscow halted them in mid-June in a dispute with Kiev over pricing. Kiev has turned to European Union countries to help compensate for the shortfall.

European operators said Russia's gas monopoly Gazprom reduced gas supplies to Poland and Slovakia in recent days. Gazprom says it is pumping supplies according to contracts.

"We will face a deficit of five bcm," said Groisman, whose country is embroiled in a dispute with Russia over a conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The Ukrainian government will try to offset the shortfall by lowering heating temperatures for residential users, by reducing supplies to industry and by replacing gas with other kinds of fuel, the minister added.

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