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Ukraine Promises Gas Delivery to Europe Despite Stop to Russian Imports

By The Moscow Times

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Pipelines are seen at a gas compressor station in Sudzha in Russia's Kursk region.

KIEV — Ukraine expects to store enough natural gas for next winter despite cutting off imports from Russia and Russian flows crossing the country destined for Europe will not be disrupted, Energy Minister Volodymyr Demchyshyn said on Thursday.

State energy firm Naftogaz stopped buying gas from Russia's Gazprom on Wednesday after energy ministers from Kiev and Moscow failed to agree on quarterly prices.

"The suspension of deliveries will not affect the safety or transportation of gas [to Europe] ... or preparation for the new heating season," Demchyshyn said.

"Everything depends not on the presence of Russian flows, but on the availability of money [to buy gas]," he said.

He said Ukraine had been pumping about 60 million cubic meters of gas a day into storage

before it stopped buying from Russia and was likely to store about 18 billion cubic meters (bcm) by mid-autumn from its own supply and from Europe.

Ukraine currently has about 12 bcm of gas in reserve, Demchyshyn said.

Russian energy officials have said Ukraine needs to have at least 19 bcm of gas in storage to ensure stable gas transit to Europe in the winter, but Demchyshyn said that 16.6 bcm, the volume which Ukraine had last year, would be enough.

The European Union depends on Russia for around one-third of its gas and about half of that is piped via Ukraine.

Demchyshyn said that Ukraine did not plan to supply gas to eastern rebel areas this year and that Ukrainian gas consumption had decreased by 20 percent compared with last year.

Last year, Ukraine exhausted its reserves after supplying about 2 bcm of gas to separatist parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions that did not pay for the deliveries.

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