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Moldova Declares State of Emergency Over Gas Crisis

By AFP

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Gazprom

Moldova declared a 30-day state of emergency Friday in an effort to secure the ex-Soviet country cheaper natural gas from Europe after traditional supplier Moscow hiked prices.

The country of 2.6 million people wedged between Romania and Ukraine gets gas from Russia via its pro-Russian separatist region of Transnistria and Ukraine.

Gazprom has hiked prices from $550 per thousand cubic meters last month to $790 this month – a level Deputy Prime Minister Andrei Spinu said was "not justified and not realistic" for Europe's poorest country.

"We face a critical situation," Prime Minister Natalia Gavrilita said Friday.

She told parliament Moldova would be seeking supplies from EU countries and thanked Romania and Ukraine for already supplying some gas.

While Gazprom and its daughter company Moldovagaz last month agreed to extend their existing contract for supplies until Oct. 31, Gavrilita said Moldovagaz "is not keeping its word."

The company is not providing the required volumes of natural gas, she said, with Moldova receiving a third less than usual for October.

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The prime minister said Moldova and Gazprom were continuing negotiations but that the ex-Soviet country has "no confidence" in the success of the talks and "must take action" or be "left without gas."

The month-long state of emergency gives Moldovan utility company Energocom the power to secure gas from other countries.

The country's gas shortages come amid skyrocketing gas prices that some in Europe have blamed on Moscow not providing additional supplies to put pressure on the continent.

Some experts say Russia has boosted prices as pressure on Moldova for electing a pro-European president in Maia Sandu last year, who has said she wants to fold the breakaway region of Transnistria back into Moldova.

The country has long been divided over closer ties with the European Union or maintaining relations with Soviet-era master Moscow.

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