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Energy Crisis Grips Abkhazia After Russian Investment Deal Scrapped

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Men chat on the Promenade of Muhajirs in Sukhum, Abkhazia. **Dmitry Feoktistov / TASS**

An energy crisis has gripped the Moscow-backed breakaway Georgian region of Abkhazia following opposition protests that helped bury a controversial Russian investment deal.

Local authorities have begun enforcing rolling blackouts, suspended schools and cut off internet access to conserve power.

Abkhazia's authorities announced last week that Russia had suspended financial aid to the cash-strapped region, days after its leader resigned and lawmakers voted to scrap the controversial Russian investment deal.

"It's extremely difficult for us to control the situation without Russia's financial support," Abkhazia's de-facto leader Badra Gunba said Thursday.

Abkhazia, which relies on Russian energy supplies as well as its own hydropower plant, introduced 10 hours of daily power cuts starting Monday. Abkhazia will have four hours and

40 minutes of electricity available in the mornings and afternoons, according to the schedule, with uninterrupted supplies between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m. local time.

Abkhazia's energy security response center is expected to declare an energy emergency later on Tuesday.

Related article: Abkhazia Votes to Scrap Russian Investment Deal After Mass Protests

The response center also announced a region-wide internet shutdown from midnight to 7 a.m. local time Tuesday, citing the need to "combat cryptocurrency miners."

Authorities have suspended school from Wednesday to next Tuesday to conserve power.

Russia has not publicly commented on Abkhazia's claims that Moscow unilaterally withheld 1.8 billion rubles (approximately $18 million) in funding.

Media previously reported that Russia was now selling electricity to Abkhazia at market rates after the region failed to fulfill its commitments, which included ratifying the Russian investment deal.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday that Moscow was "in regular talks" with its partners in Abkhazia over both the Russian aid and the scrapped Russian investment deal.

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