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Russian Gas Cut-Off Sparks More Blackouts in Breakaway Moldovan Region

By AFP

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This photograph taken on April 22, 2015, shows a part of a gas installation at a gas-pumping station on the gas pipeline in the small town Boyarka in the Kyiv region. Russia's Gazprom cut off gas to Moldova on Wednesday over a financial dispute with the Moldovan government in Chisinau, the same day a major gas transit agreement between Moscow and Kyiv to ship gas across Ukraine came to an end. **Genya Savilov / AFP**

The separatist Moldovan region of Transnistria ordered a second day of rolling blackouts on Saturday, as a shutdown in Russian gas supplies starved the pro-Moscow self-proclaimed state of energy.

The tiny breakaway republic bordering Ukraine has been unable to provide heating and hot water to its residents since Wednesday, when Moscow cut off gas supplies to Moldova over a financial dispute.

"In Transnistria today, January 4, there will be rolling blackouts for three hours," Transnistria's government said on Telegram.

Parts of the separatist region's largest city Tiraspol will again be cut off, as well as smaller towns and villages, it added.

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The region's pro-Moscow leader, Vadim Krasnoselsky, said Saturday the blackouts would have to be prolonged as the region runs out of energy supplies.

"Today it is three hours. Specialists insist on increasing the pauses in electricity supply from tomorrow to four hours," he said.

Transnistria's largest power station has already switched to burning coal.

Russia's Gazprom cut off gas to Moldova on Wednesday over a financial dispute with the Moldovan government in Chisinau, the same day a major gas transit agreement between Moscow and Kyiv to ship gas across Ukraine came to an end.

The one-two punch has plunged Transnistria into crisis, with most industry grinding to a halt and authorities urging residents to gather firewood to keep warm.

The thin sliver of land home to less than half a million has been de facto controlled by pro-Russian forces since the collapse of the Soviet Union but is internationally recognized as part of Moldova.

Moldova is a tiny ex-Soviet republic sandwiched between Ukraine and EU member Romania that aims to join the European Union, to the ire of Moscow.

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