
PUTIN, PASHINIAN DISCUSS RUSSIAN GAS PRICE FOR ARMENIA

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07.04.2020

Azatutyun (6 April 2020)

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian telephoned Russias President Vladimir Putin on Monday to discuss the price of Russian natural gas for Armenia which Yerevan hopes will be cut due to economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

The sides discussed issues related to natural gas supplies to Armenia, read an Armenian government statement. It gave no details of the discussion.

A Kremlin readout of the phone call did not explicitly mention the gas issue. It said instead that the two leaders talked about their governments efforts to stem the spread of coronavirus and that Pashinian thanked Putin for assistance provided by the Russian side.

According to the Armenian statement, Pashinian was appreciative of Moscows decision to allow continued cargo shipments between the two countries despite the coronavirus-related closure of Russias borders.

Pashinian spoke to Putin one week after his government effectively asked Russias Gazprom monopoly to cut the price of its gas imported by Armenia. In a letter to Gazprom Chairman Alexei Miller, Deputy Prime Minister Mher Grigorian argued that international oil prices, which greatly determine the cost of natural gas, have fallen sharply over the past month.

Gazprom executives and Russian government officials have not yet publicly commented on new tariff negotiations requested by Yerevan.

The Armenian government appears to hope that a price cut will at least offset a major rise in domestic gas prices for households and businesses, which was formally requested by Armenias Gazprom-owned national gas distribution network on April 1.

The retail prices have remained unchanged since Gazprom raised its wholesale tariff for Armenia from \$150 to \$165 per thousand cubic meters in January 2019. This has translated into additional losses for the Gazprom Armenia network.

Pashinian also discussed the matter by phone on March 31 with President Aleksandr Lukashenko of Belarus, which is also heavily dependent on Russian gas. According to Lukashenkos press office, the two men agreed that the current gas prices set for their countries are inflated and do not correspond to international levels.

In televised remarks aired over the weekend, Lukashenko claimed that because of the collapse in oil prices Belarus is now paying more for Russian gas than European Union member states.

<https://www.azatutyun.am/a/30534345.html>

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