
Gas summit kicks off in Moscow

People's Daily Online, China - 18/1/2009

A summit gathering Russian, Ukrainian, EU and other leaders began here Saturday in a new push to end the gas dispute between Moscow and Kiev that has left millions of Europeans without heating in the depths of winter for more than a week.

Those attending the talks included Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, EU Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs and Czech Industry and Trade Minister Martin Riman.

Armenia's president, the prime ministers of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Serbia, as well as officials from Turkey, Slovakia and Bosnia and Herzegovina also joined the meeting.

Earlier in the day, Tymoshenko had a brief meeting with her Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, who just returned from a visit to Germany and also attended the Kremlin talks. The two premiers were expected to continue their talks later Saturday.

While EU spokesman Johannes Laitenberger has described the talks as the "last and best chance" to resolve the gas crisis, Medvedev said at the start of the meeting in the Kremlin that efforts to settle the crisis had so far yielded no results.

"We'll do everything to resolve the current crisis," Medvedev told delegates attending the summit.

The Russian leader hoped the meeting would set up a permanent mechanism to ensure the uninterrupted transit of Russian gas to Europe via Ukraine.

Russia cut off gas supplies via Ukraine to Europe on Jan. 7, one week after it halted supplies to Ukraine over the price of Russian gas Kiev buys.

Russian gas giant Gazprom reopened its taps to Europe on Tuesday morning under a three-way agreement signed by the EU, Ukraine and Russia, but no gas reached Europe.

Russia accused Ukraine of blocking the gas flow, while Ukraine argued that Russia's choice of the gas route was technically "unacceptable."

Source:Xinhua
