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## Belarus asks Gazprom to review gas prices for 2010

*Saturday, 14 Nov, 2009*

RIA Novosti cited Mr Sergei Sidorsky Prime Minister of Belarusia as saying that Belarus has handed over to Russian energy giant Gazprom a package of proposals concerning reduction of gas prices for 2010.

Mr Sergei Sidorsky said Belarus has a right to demand equal gas prices for Russian and Belarusian consumers. He said that "We should point out that when the joint enterprise was created and 50% of Beltransgaz shares were sold to Gazprom, we agreed on equal profitability. He added that Belarus has a legal right to negotiate on the issue, taking into consideration the slump in [global] gas prices."

He also said Belarus has so far fulfilled its gas payment obligations towards Russia.

Earlier, the Belarusian authorities asked Gazprom to maintain gas prices for 2010 at the current level. However, Gazprom head Mr Alexei Miller said the prices would be raised in accordance with a contract, signed by Gazprom and the Belarusian Beltransgaz company in 2006.

A dispute between the two countries over payments for Russian gas took place in June when Gazprom demanded Belarus pay USD 244 million in gas debts and warned that supplies could be cut if the sum was not paid. Belarus said it had been paying for Russian natural gas supplies in full and dismissed reports of Gazprom demand for payment.

The debt arose due to differences between contract and average prices. In the first quarter Belarus paid USD 250 per 1,000 cubic meters, but by the end of the year this figure should have dropped to under USD 100. In line with verbal agreements the price should average out at USD 150 per 1,000 cubic meters.

Mr Vladimir Semashko Belarusian First Deputy Prime Minister then said that the government expected Russian gas prices to reach USD 166 per 1,000 cubic meters on January 1, 2010 if oil prices remain around the USD 70 per barrel mark this year. The rate is still well below the average rate Russia charges European Union countries for its gas.

In 2007, Gazprom bought half of Beltransgaz shares for USD 2.5 billion.

(Sourced from RIA Novosti)

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