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Russia cuts off gas exports to Finland in symbolic move

росія символічним кроком припиняє експорт газу до Фінляндії

росія припинила експорт газу до сусідньої Фінляндії в суботу, що стало дуже символічним кроком, який стався лише через кілька днів після того, як північна країна оголосила про своє бажання приєднатися до НАТО і ознаменувала, ймовірно, кінець майже 50-річного імпорту Фінляндією природного газу з росії. Заходи, вжиті російським енергетичним гігантом «Газпром», відповідають попереднім заявам після відмови Гельсінкі платити за газ в рублях, як того вимагав президент росії володимир путін від європейських країн після того, як росія вторглася в Україну 24 лютого.

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/russia-cuts-off-gas-exports-to-finland-in-symbolic-move-1.5913653>

Russia halted gas exports to neighbouring Finland on Saturday, a highly symbolic move that came just days after the Nordic country announced it wanted to join NATO and marked a likely end to Finland's nearly 50 years of importing natural gas from Russia.

The measure taken by the Russian energy giant Gazprom was in line with an earlier announcement following Helsinki's refusal to pay for the gas in rubles as Russian President Vladimir Putin has demanded European countries do since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24.

The Finnish state-owned gas company Gasum said that "natural gas supplies to Finland under Gasum's supply contract have been cut off" by Russia on Saturday morning at 7 a.m. local time (0400 GMT).

The announcement follows Moscow's decision to cut off electricity exports to Finland earlier this month and an earlier decision by the Finnish state-controlled oil company Neste to replace imports of Russian crude oil with crude oil from elsewhere.

After decades of energy cooperation that was seen beneficial for both Helsinki -- particularly in the case of inexpensive Russian crude oil -- and Moscow, Finland's energy ties with Russia are now all but gone.

Such a break was easier for Finland than it will be for other European Union nations. Natural gas accounts for just some 5% of total energy consumption in Finland, a country of 5.5 million. Almost all of that gas comes from Russia, and

is used mainly by industrial and other companies with only an estimated 4,000 households relying on gas heating.

Gasum said it would now supply natural gas to its customers from other sources through the undersea Balticconnector gas pipeline running between Finland and Estonia and connecting the Finnish and Baltic gas grids.

Matti Vanhanen, the former Finnish prime minister and current speaker of Parliament, said the effect of Moscow's decision to cut off gas after nearly 50 years since the first deliveries from the Soviet Union began is above all symbolic.

In an interview Saturday with the Finnish public broadcaster YLE, Vanhanen said the decision marks an end of "a hugely important period between Finland, the Soviet Union and Russia, not only in energy terms but symbolically."

"That pipeline is unlikely to ever open again," Vanhanen told YLE, referring to the two parallel Russia-Finland natural gas pipelines that were launched in 1974.

The first connections from Finland's power grid to the Soviet transmission system were also constructed in the 1970s, allowing electricity imports to Finland in case additional capacity was needed.

Vanhanen didn't see Moscow's gas stoppage as a retaliatory step from Russia to Finland's bid to join NATO but rather a countermove to Western sanctions imposed on Moscow following its invasion of Ukraine.

"Russia did the same thing with Finland it has done earlier with some other countries to maintain its own credibility," Vanhanen said, referring to the Kremlin's demands to buy its gas in rubles.

Finland shares a 1,340-kilometre (830-mile) with Russia, the longest of any of the EU's 27 members, and has a conflict-ridden history with its huge eastern neighbour.

After losing two wars to Soviet Union, in the Second World War, Finland opted for neutrality with stable and pragmatic political and economic ties with Moscow. Large-scale energy cooperation, also including nuclear power, between the two countries was one of the most visible signs of friendly bilateral ties between former enemies.