

Kyrgyz Premier Sees Gas Network Sale to Gazprom by End of March

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Kyrgyzstan expects to reach a final agreement on the sale of its natural gas network to Russian gas export monopoly Gazprom by the end of this month, Kyrgyz Prime Minister Zhantoro Satybaldiyev said Tuesday.

Kyrgyzstan, a Central Asian nation of 5.5 million, is keen to modernize its decrepit Soviet-era network of natural gas pipelines and ensure stable supplies of the fuel from neighbors Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

The two ethnically Turkic nations cut gas supplies to Kyrgyzstan for a few weeks during harsh winter frosts last December due to its failure to pay the mounting gas bills.

Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev said in December that Gazprom had wanted to buy 100 percent of Kyrgyz state gas firm Kyrgyzgas.

He said at the time that he would not object to such a sale but denied media reports that Kyrgyzstan could sell its gas network to Gazprom for a symbolic price of \$1.

"The process of negotiations is under way, and I hope that during March we will finish it," Satybaldiyev said in an interview. "Only technical issues have remained to be resolved."

"Our experts have already met in Moscow, and now we will host such a meeting on March 18 and 19." Satybaldiyev gave no details.

Under Atambayev, Kyrgyzstan, which neighbors China and hosts both Russian and U.S. military air bases, has embraced Russia's plans to strengthen its economic foothold in the mountainous nation.

About a million Kyrgyz citizens work abroad, mainly in Russia, sending home cash remittances that help keep afloat the cash-starved economy.

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