

Russian oil deliveries fundamental for Mazeikiu Nafta refinery – Lithuanian PM

VIENNA. APRIL 23. INTERFAX CENTRAL EUROPE – Russian crude oil deliveries to the Lithuanian oil refinery Mazeikiu Nafta should be restored through the Druzhba pipeline, Lithuanian Prime Minister Gediminas Kirkilas told Interfax Central Europe on Monday.

"We have to find the best solution – and Russian deliveries must be part of the best solution," Kirkilas said on the sidelines of the Europe-Russia Forum in Vienna.

Kirkilas suggested earlier Monday that Lithuania conditions the start of the European Union-Russia partnership and cooperation agreement talks on Russia repairing the Druzhba oil pipeline to Mazeikiu Nafta, the only oil refinery in the Baltic States.

Russia cut off supplies through the pipeline in July 2006, blaming the disruption on technical problems. The supplies have not yet been restored, with the country's pipeline operator Transneft suggesting the repair of the ageing pipeline might be impossible.

Mazeikiu Nafta, which Poland's top refiner PKN Orlen agreed to acquire in May 2006, has relied on tanker deliveries since July. It remains unclear when or if Russia, which openly criticized the sale of Mazeikiu to the Polish firm, will restore pipeline deliveries. The refinery now has to import oil through its oil terminal in Butinge, 90 km away.

PKN Orlen plans to buy an oil terminal in the Lithuanian sea port of Klaipeda and link it to its Lithuanian refinery Mazeikiu Nafta.

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