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Four new players to start to sell natural gas in Turkish market
Four new companies including Enerco and Avrasya Gaz, who awarded an import license from Turkey's Energy Market Regulatory Board (EPDK), are set to start selling gas in Turkey.

Four players, in addition to state-owned natural gas company Botas, will begin operating in Turkey's natural gas market on Wednesday, officials said.

The contracts to take over some distribution of imported natural gas in Turkey from state-owned Botas signed in 2007, will allow Enerco to sell 2.5 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas a year for 14 years and Avrasya Gaz to sell 500 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas for 13 years.

Shell and Bosphorus were the first two companies given the green-light from the EPDK for natural gas sales in Turkey.

Shell sells 250 mcm of gas annually, supplied by Gazprom, while Bosphorus sells 750 mcm of gas. Bosphorus plans to increase it to 6-7 bcm of gas a year.

Socar-Turcas, the owner of Turkey's petro-chemical company Petkim, has plans to bring 1 bcm of natural gas from Azerbaijan and Turkerler Group has applied to EPDK to import 10 bcm of gas from Iraq.

EPDK Chairman Hasan Koktas said the annual natural gas sales by these four companies would amount to $1.5 billion in 2009.

"Private sector share is expected to be around 10 percent in Turkey's natural gas consumption in 2009, but this share will grow in the future," he said.

Dismissing turmoil, Petkim moves forward
A climate of global uncertainty cannot stop Petkim, Turkey’s petrochemicals giant, from aiming high, according to the general manager of the recently-privatized company. Petkim has many exciting projects and is waiting for approval from the Energy Market Regulatory Agency to realize them, says Kenan Yavuz, the general manager

Petkim, a petrochemicals producer owned by Turkey’s Turcas and Azerbaijan’s Socar, is now involved in giant projects following its privatization last year.

Petkim has been preparing for its most exciting projects of the last 40 years, said Kenan Yavuz, general manager of Petkim. He requested for the bureaucratic process of its projects to be finalized quickly to move forward with the projects as soon as possible. Among the projects is a refinery worth $3 billion, which will create jobs for thousands of people.

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Petkim's owners Socar and Turcas applied to the Energy Market Regulatory Agency, or EPDK, to obtain a license to establish a new refinery right after the privatization procedure was concluded, said Yavuz. The decision makers in Turkey should also lend their full support to this investment, he said.

"We expect to see the positive results of our bureaucratic applications rapidly. There are two options. Either, my partners will establish a refinery here, and Petkim will grow with the raw material I acquire from that refinery, or I will disappear," he said.

"If a certain scale is not reached in order to keep up with the competition, one is bound to perish. I have to establish this refinery in order to secure competitive advantage. We will grow with this refinery. We will either be supported by all in our conquest, or Turkey will have to forget all about the petrochemicals industry," he said.

Meeting the demand

Socar-Turcas Joint Venture took over control of Petkim for 49 years, said Yavuz. Petkim currently meets its raw material demand via imports and a new refinery would remove the company's dependency abroad, he said. "We are awaiting EPDK's approval. We are conducting all the studies necessary to obtain the Environmental Impact Assessment, or EIA, document. Our engineering studies for feasibility and configurations are also ongoing."

A few years ago, Petkim used to obtain all of its naphta, a flammable liquid, from Tüpraş; however, as the firm halted production, Petkim has begun to import almost all of its naphta supply, according to Yavuz. "This project will enable us to meet Petkim's raw material demand as well as producing chemicals to meet Turkey's needs."

"Petkim, with its port, dam, water, electricity and steam, has a great infrastructure. That is a significant advantage. Our partners envisage an investment starting from at least $3 billion for this [refinery] project."

Petkim aims to meet 40 percent of the domestic market's demand by 2018, Yavuz said. The refinery construction and some other investments, which will be implemented through 2018, will enable employment opportunities for at least 10,000 people, he said. Once established, the factories will also require hiring at least 1,500 people to operate, he said.

"When everyone is concerned over uncertainties, we can speak about 2018. The crisis is temporary, and we have long-term strategic targets. In line with these targets, we have the projection to connect the Caspian and Aegean. The plan also includes the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, railway connection and Shah Deniz gas field project," he said.

Within the framework of the plan, the oil that reaches Ceyhan via the pipeline will be loaded to ships and then transferred to Petkim. "It will be processed here and reach domestic market as well as the world markets, which is why I deem this the most exciting project of the last 40 years," said Yavuz.

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As the long privatization process of Petkim finalized, the development helped provide jobs for 200 people, he said. Although there was no need for new employees at the time, Petkim hired new young technicians, who could be trained and put to use in the company's future investments.

Factory opponents hail court decision

Environmentalists have reason to celebrate in Yeşilüzümlü after a court in Muğla announced that Urantaş Cement is not permitted to build a factory in the scenic mountains just outside Fethiye.

"The villages of Yeşilüzümlü and İncirköy are finally saved from the destructive effects of this highly inappropriate industrial development," said Ali Kışlak, the protesters' spokesman and vice chairman of the Association for the Environmental Protection and Development of Yeşilüzümlü. The association fought an expensive battle to rid the valley of what they say is a dusty and disruptive business.

"We came together as a community and this gave us more power than as individuals. It is a lesson for us, Urantaş and others who are facing similar problems Ğ in Marmaris, for example."

Kışlak is now smiling after months of stress: Supporters are calling him to congratulate him and his committee for their victory. Can they relax at last? "Actually," he says, " this has had an enormous impact on the valley and made us more cohesive. We must keep and use the community spirit that the battle against the cement factory has created."

Turkey among top 20 in imports

Turkey ranked as the 20th country to have the biggest imports, according to a list by the World Trade Organization, or WTO. According to the list, last year global imports totaled $16.4 trillion, while Turkey accounted for 1.2 percent of this figure.

Ranking 20th in imports, the country could not make it to the top 30 in exports. Last year, Turkey exported $131 billion worth of goods and services.

Source: www.hurriyetdailynews.com