

PM orders crackdown on illegal gas connections

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan state-run gas companies losses due to gas theft, leakages and other technical issues are Rs45 billion, Prime Minister Imran Khan was informed here Wednesday.

In a high-level meeting on controlling wastage of natural gas that was presided over by Prime Minister, it was informed that SNGPL's unaccounted for gas (UFG) is currently 11 percent while SSGC's is 16 percent. The losses of these companies due to UFG add up to around Rs45 billion.

Khan directed the authorities to carry out immediate crackdown against illegal gas connections and also take punitive actions if workers of these companies were found as facilitators in these illegal activities.

The premier was informed gas theft in these companies is Rs19 billion, leakages Rs11.25 billion and another Rs14.5 billion are other annual losses of these two companies. Secretary Petroleum gave in detail briefing on steps so far taken for controlling this issue.

Prime Minister said that ultimately, gas consumers face the burden of these losses due to whatever reasons these companies are accumulating.

Administrative inefficiencies and system shortcomings are always faced by consumers in the shape of high gas prices, he said. He said that it is unacceptable to burden the consumers for the mismanagement and inefficiencies by the companies. Khan directed that all-out effort should be taken to control the losses and improve the efficiencies.

He also expressed concern over illegal gas connections taken from main gas pipelines that could also cause some possible accident.

Federal Finance Minister Asad Umar, Petroleum Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan, Information Minister Chaudhry Fawad Hussain, secretary Finance, Secretary Petroleum, MD SNGPL and MD SSGC attended the meeting. In another meeting on privatisation of state-owned companies and assets, Prime Minister said that previous governments have pushed the country to the mire of debt.

A country that is spending around Rs7 billion a day on repayment of installments of already taken loans, in such a situation, not bringing the unprofitable assets and idle properties under use is beyond understanding.

He said that bringing thousands of acres of public idle land under use, would not only reduce financial deficit of the government but also boost the development. He said that the government would take action against those public servants who are not providing details of the government properties.

Khan said that with the government's permission to the construction of multi-story high-rise buildings, it would not only solve the residential issues but also provide space for businesses.

Prime Minister directed that rules and regulations under the government policy for the construction of multi-story high-rise buildings should be finalised as soon as possible.

Secretary Privatisation briefed the premier regarding privatisation of LNG-based power plants including 1223 megawatts Baloki Power Plant and another 1230MW power station at Haveli Bahadur Shah, SME bank, Jinnah Convention center and government's shares in Mari Petroleum and sale of Lakra power plant.

Federal Finance Minister Asad Umar, Information Minister Chaudhry Fawad Hussain, privatization Minister Muhammad Mian Soomro, Prime Minister's spokesperson Nadeem Afzal Chun, Secretary privatization, Secretary Petroleum, Chairman CDA and other officials attended the meeting.

Israr Khan