

WASIM IQBAL

TAPI gas line home section, Construction to begin by end of Jan 2020

ISLAMABAD: Construction activities on the proposed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline will start by the end of January 2020 on Pakistan section.

Sources said that the proposed date for inauguration of TAPI gas pipeline for Pakistan section was delayed due to ongoing Pakistan-India tensions on occupied Kashmir issue.

Amid tensions, some quarters raise some doubts on peace pipeline passing through Pakistan to India. However, Pakistan has assured Turkmenistan to let the pipeline pass through Pakistan to India despite tensions.

The construction work had already been started in Turkmenistan and is expected to start soon from Turkmen-Afghan border to Herat section, a government official said, adding that construction activities in Pakistan are set to kickoff during the first month of 2020. There has been tension between Pakistan and India on occupied Kashmir. However, this will not affect TAPI pipeline project, the official said.

This is peace pipeline project and promises connectivity between Central and South Asia. It will pass through war-torn Afghanistan to boost economic activity there and ensure peace and stability in the region. This project will also help connect two regions through road, rail and fiber cable network.

Interstate Gas Systems (ISGS) is working on some pipeline projects that also include TAPI, North-South Pipeline and Offshore Gas Pipeline. In addition, the company also plans to set up underground gas storages to ensure energy security through load management in the country.

The European banks and firms had been short-listed for provision of pipeline material and EPC contract. "TAPI Company is responsible for execution of this project; however, Pakistani companies are assured to get maximum share in the work for the activities within Pakistan," managing director of Inter-State Gas Systems (ISGS) said. He said that a delegation of TAPI Company will visit next month to review the progress of the project and finalize the plan for the construction activities. Pakistan and India would receive 1.3 billion cubic feet gas per day each.

The North-South Pipeline is another pipeline project being dealt by ISGS that will run from Karachi to Lahore to transport imported gas. At present, two LNG terminals are operational in the country and the government has allowed five more private sector companies to build LNG terminals at Port Qasim that would also require pipeline to pump gas from Karachi to Lahore. This project will be executed by a Russian firm on government to government deal under BOOT model wherein Russian firm will provide funding for this project. This project

has been delayed due to sanction issues but the work on it is being pursued now. “The intergovernmental commission (IGC) between Pakistan and Russia will meet soon to review project’s progress,” said an official.

He said that this project would be key to ensure transportation of additional LNG into the system.

Russian energy giant Gazprom wants to execute this project that will connect Pakistan to India, Bangladesh and then China from Russian gas sources in the Persian Gulf. Pakistan and Russia have already signed MoUs to conduct feasibility study of this project.

According to media reports, in a meeting between Russian President Putin and Indian Prime Minister Modi, the latter had assured the former that they had no objection on this project. However some quarters say that implementation of this project also depends on improved diplomatic relations between Pakistan and India. But the government authorities had ruled out doubts, saying that both TAPI and offshore gas pipeline projects are needed to meet energy demands of not only Pakistan but also this energy-starved region.

The ISGS also plans to build underground storages to store gas as strategic reserves. Asian Development Bank has committed to provide technical assistance to conduct feasibility study. “We had identified some depleted gas fields with huge storage capacity that could store gas,” the official said, adding that neighboring countries like Iran and India also have underground storages and Pakistan also needs storages for better gas.