

Inflated gas bills: PM asks gas companies to reimburse excess amount to consumers

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has directed the gas companies to pay the excess amount back to the gas consumers what they have charged from them in their gas bills of December 2018.

The premier also directed the authorities to take action against those responsible for sending inflated and excessive gas bills to consumers.

These directions came from the prime minister while chairing a high-level meeting on Tuesday with the minister for finance, petroleum and other top officials of the ministries in which the initial inquiry report was presented. In the report, it was noted that 30 percent of the gas consumers had been issued the inflated gas bills. After getting the report, the prime ministers ordered the gas companies to reimburse the amount what they had charged in excess.

However, he also asked the ministers and officials to continue the further inquiry of the matter as to reach to the real responsible who caused inconvenience to the gas consumers and get more facts regarding the issue.

It is worth mentioning that after the complaints from the domestic consumers, the prime minister took notice of the matter early this month, terming it unjustified to put unnecessary burden on the consumers. He directed the federal minister for petroleum to conduct an inquiry into the matter immediately.

Subsequently, a four-member committee headed by Additional Secretary (Policy) of the Petroleum Division Sher Afgan Khan was constituted and notified by Petroleum Division. The committee submitted its initial report to the premier in the meeting and discussed it in detail, however, further inquiry into the matter would continue, a senior official said.

The Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCoE) on February 6 had also decided to conduct an independent audit of the billing for December 2018 through external auditors in addition to the inquiry on excessive billing already been conducted by the Petroleum Division.

In the CCoE meeting, Mian Asad Hayauddin, additional secretary in-charge of the Petroleum Division, gave a detailed presentation to the committee on the recent billing exercise of the gas sector. There has been an overall increase of eight percent in the consumption pattern of the consumers falling in the lowest consumption slab.

Out of the total 6,400,000 gas consumers, only 92,000 fall in the sixth and seventh (highest consumption slabs) who have been particularly adversely affected by high gas bills.

Israr Khan