


There will be gas load-shedding in winter: minister

 epaper.brecorder.com/2020/08/21/1-page/848592-news.html

August 21, 2020

TAHIR AMIN

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy Omar Ayub Khan on Thursday warned that the country's natural gas production was declining rapidly, and there would be gas load shedding in the coming winter, as Sindh the top gas-producing province, would not have additional gas to supply to the other provinces.

"Total demand for gas in the country is up to 7.5 billion cubic feet, while the production is 3.5 billion cubic feet. The rest is imported and provided with subsidy, which also increases the circular debt," said the minister, while briefing the Senate Functional Committee on Less-Developed Areas.

The committee met under the chairmanship of Muhammad Usman Khan Kakar here on Thursday.

The minister informed the committee that there would be gas load-shedding in the coming winter as well due to the decline in local gas production and increase in demand, and all the provinces had to decide together on gas shortage.

"Until the next year, Sindh will not have gas to give to anyone."

He said that all the issues had been discussed in the Council of Common Interests (CCI).

A conference will be held in Islamabad soon in which the chief ministers and experts from all the provinces will also participate, and a consensus strategy will be adopted, after which, the report will be submitted to the CCI.

The committee chairman said that the decision of the GIDC had come and it was better that the government could solve the gas problem of the less-developed areas with this amount.

At this, the federal minister said that there was a list of projects for which the money would be spent.

Kakar said that gas coming out of the Balochistan province goes to rest of the country.

Balochistan province consists of less-developed areas, where people are very poor and therefore, a resolution was passed in the Upper House that different slabs of gas rates should be made for Balochistan province and subsidy should be given to the people but it was not implemented.

Members of the committee said that there is a joint family system in Balochistan province, and many families are living in one house.

More than one meter should be allowed in the houses.

On which, the chairman OGRA told the committee that it is the job of the federal government to fix slabs or rates.

The people of Balochistan should get subsidy and the problem can be solved with Rs5 billion in subsidies.

Kakar said the problem may be solved by adding this issue to the agenda of the technical experts' conference.

He said gas should be provided to the people of Balochistan province on subsidy, which is strongly recommended by the committee, and the committee also directed to implement the resolution passed by the Senate as soon as possible.

The committee meeting reviewed the issue of regularising 13 engineers from Balochistan province.

Kakar said the matter was also raised in the Petroleum Committee.

These engineers should be regularised under Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan package.

Federal Minister for Energy Omar Ayub said that these engineers had moved the court.

They should withdraw their cases from the court, after which they would be made permanent.

The committee discussed the issue of setting air mix plant for Balochistan.

The committee was informed that the matter regarding installation of air mix plant was raised in the ECC.

The CCI has decided that all LPG air mix plants already approved by the ECC on which work has not yet started, except two operational air mix plants in Awaran and Bella, and the one near completion in Gilgit, installation of all air mix plants should be stopped.

Chairman of the committee said that a gas pipeline was requested for Sherani, Muslim Bagh, Musa Khel, Loralai, Zhob, Qila Abdullah, Khuzdar, and other areas, then an air mix plant was promised, and the land was provided for it.

Now it is being said that the cost of the plant is high.

The secretary petroleum said that earlier matters were decided in Islamabad.

For the first time, the provincial government of Balochistan has also been included in the consultation for those projects.

It is better to use gas cylinders to meet the energy needs of these areas.

On which, the chairman of the committee said that double standards should be stopped.

Air mix is cheaper for the area of the chief minister, and it is expensive for other areas.

A province should get equal rights.

The MD SSGC said that consultation is under way in the Planning Commission, and the decision will be taken by the board, and would be implemented.

The Deputy Chairman Planning is working on it.

The chairman of the committee said that the survey conducted by the agency was also incorrect.

Population has been shown less, and gas consumers should also include shops.

Senator Sarfraz Bugti said that such a mechanism and strategy should be adopted, which would benefit the region for the next 50 years.

To the next meeting, the functional committee summoned the deputy chairman of the Planning Commission and the concerned agencies to find a solution to the problem.

The committee recommended installing air mix as soon as possible to facilitate the public.

The committee sought details from OGRA, Ministry of Petroleum and companies, of concessions in Dera Bugti and other areas, and details of expenditure incurred on CSR including expenditure on security.

The committee was informed about the 413 km gas network in Malakand Division and PATA 72 percent work has been completed, and the rest is being expedited.

The project will be completed by 2021.

The functional committee decided to write a letter to Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani and Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser regarding inclusion of Senate members in the CSR committee.

Regarding the provision of job security to teachers by the PMCL Company in Balochistan, Bugti said that the issue has been raised in the Petroleum Committee that teachers and staff had a problem of job security. A mechanism should be devised to provide job security to teachers as long as the company is working. The Balochistan government should also own these schools and give a chance to the existing teachers.

The committee summoned the concerned DC, provincial secretary Education Balochistan, Mari Petroleum Company, and a representative delegation of the affected

teachers in the next meeting.

Today's meeting of the committee was attended by, senators, Kulsoom Parveen, Fida Mohammad, Anwar Lal Din, Sardar Mohammad Shafiq Tareen, Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti, Maulvi Faiz Mohammad besides Minister for Energy and Petroleum Division Omar Ayub, Secretary Petroleum, MD Sui Northern, MD Sui Southern, Additional Secretary Ministry of Finance, Chairman OGRA, Head MPCL, and other senior officials.