

CNG association, transporters protest against gas outage

Due to gaps in the supply of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), the All Pakistan CNG Association along with transporters held a demonstration in front of the Sui Southern Gas Company's head office near Hassan Square on Wednesday.

Owners of all the CNG stations in the province along with cab drivers, rickshaw drivers and members of the Karachi Transport Ittehad participated in the demonstration. The protesters demanded of the relevant authorities to revive the old schedule of CNG supply in the province.

Due to a continuous non-supply of gas, the owners of the CNG stations are facing losses which stand at billions of rupees, according to All Pakistan CNG Forum chairman Shabbir Sulemanjee. "As many as 13,000 labourers working at different CNG stations have lost their livelihoods."

Talking to The News, he said that in last December and half of the January they had not received any gas supply to their stations.

"Every week for four to five days, there's no supply of gas," he said, adding that due to non-supply of gas, rickshaw, taxi and all other modes of transport were suffering. The Karachi Transport Ittehad along with all other associations of different transporters, he shared, were supporting them. "Due to non supply of CNG, the labour is unable to reach industries," he pointed out and added that more than 92 per cent of vehicles in the province were on CNG and could not be converted to petrol or diesel.

The reason, the federal government has resorted to non-supply of CNG, according to him, is that they want the transporters and the public to convert their vehicles from CNG to imported Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, according to him, there is "a continuous supply of CNG, whereas in Punjab mostly LNG available". Citing the Article 158 of the constitution, he said the province which produced gas was supposed to the lion's share of it. The Sindh alone, he said, produced 72 per cent of gas in Pakistan hence it should get the maximum supply.

Due to an interrupted supply, he said, a common man was also suffering. "As inflation has soared to double digits, the consumption of petrol monthly amounts to not less than Rs20,000 least for an average consumer. Whereas, those who use CNG, spends around Rs10,000 for their fuel." When asked about the next line of action, he said it was a token protest and if the federal government did not pay any heed to their issues, they could go for complete shutdown of CNG stations in the entire province.

Meanwhile, in a press statement, the SSGS said a discussion between representatives of the CNG associations and the SSGC management took place at the company's head office. The CNG sector delegation was led by the acting chairman of the association, Mohammad Tahir, and the SSGC team was led by its senior general manager distribution, Saeed Larik.

The association demanded of the SSGC to reconsider the schedule of CNG closure and make more volumes of CNG available to the outlets. The SSGC management maintained that currently the gas supply situation was quite grim due to short supplies from gas fields as continuous natural depletion in reservoirs was noticed. The SSGC shared how they were already facing shortage of gas to meet the requirement of the customers and this gap in demand and supply was further widen during the current extreme cold weather due to an increase in demand by the domestic sector.

The management informed to the association that the company was following the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) approved gas load management plan that places CNG at the end of the pecking order. "Nonetheless, due to the serious demand-supply gap, the management has been compelled to curtail gas to all sectors including CNG. Further the current system position was explained to the CNG association and the SSGC assured them that the SSGC would still do everything possible to restore gas supply to CNG sector since it is empathetic towards its concerns yet it has to follow the load management plan that prefers providing gas to sectors that do not have access to alternative fuel," the statement read.

The CNG associations, according to the press statement, understood the situation and dispersed peacefully.