

Khalid Mustafa

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Pakistan to build underground strategic gas storages

ISLAMABAD: The government has initiated work to build gas storage initially for 11-12 days in various pockets of the country as currently Pakistan has no capacity to store even a single gas molecule.

"Pakistan's domestic gas production ranges between 3.8 to 4 bcfd and is importing 1.1 bcfd LNG totaling 5.1 bcfd against the immediate demand of the country that stands at 6 bcfd. By 2020 Pakistan will be having 1.3 bcfd gas from Turkmenistan through \$10 billion TAPI. The LNG in the open market gets cheaper in summer season and it surges a lot in the winter season."

Idea is, the official said, to store the imported gas in summer season at cheaper rates and utilise it in winter season for keeping the country energised and industrial activity intact. More importantly in case of disruption in LNG supply chain on account of any Tsunami in the sea or any reason, the gas storages will be used for industrial activities till the time the problem is vanished. He said that currently gas is stored in pipelines and we can say that pipelines are the gas storages. He said that the TAPI gas pipeline after becoming operational in 2020 can also experience any kind of disruption and in that case, such gas storages can bailout Pakistan.

The Inter-State Gas System (ISGS) headed by Mobin Saulat has geared up endeavours to materialise the gigantic task to build the underground gas reserves with an aim to ensure the energy security, a senior official of Petroleum Division told The News.

Spokesman for Petroleum Division Sher Afghan confirmed the development saying that building the gas storages is mandate of the Inter-State Gas System and this organisation is vigorously working on this task. He said that like oil storages for 20 days in Pakistan, the government wants the gas storages also as strategic gas reserves.

The official said that Pakistan has many such gas fields where the gas has been enormously depleted and there are the areas where in the imported gas can be stored. "Initially we have identified areas through the study conducted many years back for making the gas storages in the country," he said.

There are Bokhari and Kharewl gas fields wherein the government would first make the gas storages as strategic stock. "For this purpose, Pakistan has initiated interaction with an international company --Gazprom of Russia." The official said that a top delegation of Gazprom is due in the end of the current month of October.

Managing Director of the Inter-State Gas System (ISGS) Mobin Saulat said that USA has the gas storages for 10 years. "China and Japan has also built many gas storages and more importantly India has also erected the gas storages.