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IGGL achieves milestone over laying Asia's largest underwater pipeline: CEO

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Asia's largest underwater hydro-carbon pipeline, below the river Brahmaputra connecting Jorhat and Majuli in Assam has been completed by the Indradhanush Gas Grid Limited (IGGL), the company's CEO Ajit Kumar Thakur said on Saturday.

The challenging task of laying a 24-inch diameter hydrocarbon pipeline beneath the mighty Brahmaputra river by Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) method was completed on Friday, marking the completion of a major milestone in the construction of the North East Gas Grid (NEGG) connecting North East India to the National Gas Grid.

The total length of the pipeline in this single HDD crossing is 4,080 metre across the main water channel of Brahmaputra river. This is the longest river crossing by any hydrocarbon pipeline of size 24-inch diameter and above in Asia and the second longest in the world, he claimed.

This one of a kind HDD river crossing was executed by intersection method, where two HDD rigs simultaneously started drilling from the two sides of Brahmaputra with intersection of the two drilling heads in the middle at 30 metre beneath the river bed. The laying of 4,080 metre pipeline section was completed by overcoming numerous hurdles faced mainly due to monsoon rains and flood, he said. The total length of HDD crossing across the Brahmaputra river considering all major and minor water channels is 5,780 metre.

The pipeline was laid in three separate HDD sections of length 1000 M, 4080 M and 700 M with the first and the third sections completed earlier. The next step will be tie-in of the three sections at two points, which will be located at 15 M and 8 M below Natural Ground Level (NGL).

"With the completion of Brahmaputra HDD, IGGL has achieved more than 71 per cent physical progress of NEGG Project and will be able to complete Guwahati-Numaligarh section of the project by February 2024", Thakur said.

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INSCO drags CCI to NCLAT over deal to buy Hind National Glass

Palak Shah
Mumbai

Independent Sugar Corporation (INSCO), led by billionaire NRI family the Madhvani Group, has dragged the Competition Commission of India (CCI) to the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) for passing an order without the requisite quorum.

To pass any order the CCI requires a minimum quorum of three members, including a chairman. But the Centre has not completed the process of appointing additional members and/or a chairperson since October 2022. Instead, it has extended the tenure of the acting chairperson, Sangeeta Verma, until further notice and there is another member — Bhagwant Singh Bishnoi.

On April 11, INSCO filed an appeal before the NCLAT stating that the CCI rushed with its order in favour of AGI Greenpac in the deal to acquire India's oldest glass-making company Hindustan National Glass and Industries (HNG). INSCO had earlier won the CCI clearance to acquire HNG when a full quorum of three members existed. But the CCI approval was given to AGI by the two-member CCI bench, that too on condition of modification at a later date. While the CCI, in this particular case, has invoked the 'doctrine of necessity', INSCO's appeal says the doctrine cannot be applied loosely. Also, the hurry in passing the order suggests that actions which would have otherwise not been permitted are made lawful by necessity

'SANS DETAILED PROBE'

INSCO also said the CCI "cannot justify reasons for invoking the ground of 'doctrine of necessity' for granting approval of the proposed combination of HNG-AGI without thorough investigation and enquiry into the effect of such combination on the market, stakeholders and on parties who had already filed objections with the CCI." Further, INSCO said it came to know about the CCI order as the share price of AGI started rising after the company informed the stock exchanges about the partial CCI order and yet did not mention anything about the 'modification' clause. Also, the appeal on the point of quorum is important since the CCI was examining complaints that stated that India's container glass market may yet again be monopolised if another large player is allowed to take over HNG.

In 2003, HNG itself had turned into a virtual monopoly in the container glass market when it acquired Owens Brockway, units of Larsen and Toubro in 2005 and Haryana Sheet Glass in 2007. INSCO pointed out that CCI had earlier rejected the application of the proposed combination of HNG-AGI when it was submitted by AGI under Form I and accordingly AGI had to revise its application under Form II of the Combination Regulations.

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Now in Assam, Asia's longest underwater hydrocarbon pipeline

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Guwahati: The government's efforts to make natural gas available in the North-East received a major fillip, with Asia's longest underwater hydrocarbon pipeline beneath the mighty Brahmaputra, connecting river island Majuli with Jorhat in upper Assam, completed by the Indradhanush Gas Grid Limited (IGGL).

The Herculean task of laying the 24-inch diameter pipeline by horizontal directional drilling (HDD) method was completed on Friday, IGGL CEO Ajit Kumar Thakur said on Saturday.

The completion of the Brahmaputra HDD marks a major milestone in the North East Gas Grid (NEGG) project, connecting the northeast with the National Gas Grid (NGG). Thakur said IGGL had now achieved more that 71% physical progress of the project and would be able to complete the Guwahati-Numaligarh section of NEGG by February 2024.

IGGL is implementing the 1,656-km-long NEGG natural gas pipeline project, being constructed at a cost of Rs 9,265 crore. The length of the pipeline across the main water channel of the Brahmaputra river is 4,080 metres. This is the longest river crossing by any hydrocarbon pipeline of 24-inch diameter and above in Asia and the second longest in the world, according to Thakur.

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RIL to Begin Gas Production from MJ Field in KGD6 Block This Quarter

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Mumbai: Reliance Industries (RIL) will shortly commission the MJ field in the eastern offshore Krishna Godavari D6 block, the company said in an earnings call on Friday.

The MJ field is the third and the last set of discoveries that RIL is developing in the KGD6 block and will account for 30% of India's gas production, giving RIL an upside in gas production.

"Testing and commissioning are currently underway. And we are happy with the progress; things are lining up. The subsea production system has been commissioned and now the entire field has been tested. We expect to commission the field this quarter and commence production," said Sanjay Roy, senior executive vice-president for exploration and production, RIL.

The field will be ramped up to achieve about 12 million standard cubic metres per day in this financial year

The field will be ramped up to achieve about 12 million standard cubic metres per day (mscmd) in this financial year.

RIL has already undertaken the fourth e-auction for sale of gas from KGD6 for 6 mscmd.

"This was quite a successful round. The price bid was Japan Korea Marker plus 75 cents, which is the highest bid that we have received through all the auctions," said Roy.

There were 29 successful bidders. The company is expecting to ramp up the production to a peak of about 30 mscmd, which will be about 30% of India's domestic gas production, and RIL will meet about 15% of India's gas demand.

The company has nearly 50 customers, including city gas distributors, power producers, fertiliser firms, refiners and steel, glass and ceramics makers.

RIL, which reported its fourth quarter earnings on Friday, said it has done significantly better than a year ago. Revenue from the oil and gas segment jumped 127% to Rs 4,556 crore for the fourth quarter and 120% for the full year to Rs 16,508 crore. Annual ebitda increased to an eight-year high of Rs 13,589 crore, up 149% year-on-year.

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Sluggish week ahead

CRUDE CHECK. Refrain from taking fresh trades

Akhil Nallamuthu
bl. research bureau


GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Crude oil posted a negative return for the first time in the last five weeks as prices dropped across the globe. The Brent crude futures on the Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) lost 5.1 per cent as it closed the week at $81.5 a barrel. Likewise, the MCX crude oil futures (May contract) was down 5.5 per cent as it ended the week at ₹6,398 per barrel.

The prices declined despite a draw down in the US inventories. According to the Energy Information Administration (EIA) data, the crude oil inventory dropped by 4.6 million barrels for the week ended April 14, versus the expected drop of much lower 0.4 million barrels. The economic growth concerns and the possibility of further rate hikes weighed on the prices as they can impact the demand for the energy commodity.

Technically, the prices fell off a crucial resistance level. Find analysis based on charts below.

MCX-CRUDE OIL (₹6,398)

The May futures of crude oil faced a stiff resistance at ₹6,800. Unable to move beyond this level, the contract saw a sharp fall over the past week. But currently trading at ₹6,398, there is a support at ₹6,300, which may arrest the fall temporarily. Subsequent support is at ₹6,000.

That said, the chart shows that the contract is now stuck within the key levels of ₹6,000 and ₹6,800. Unless either of these levels are breached, we cannot confirm the next leg of trend.

A breakout of ₹6,800 can lift the crude oil futures to ₹8,000. The upswing could even extend to ₹8,800. On the other hand, if the price slips below ₹6,000, the outlook can turn negative where we could initially see a quick fall to ₹5,500. A breach of this will open the door for a decline to ₹5,000.

Trade strategy: Stay on the fence for now as the risk-reward ratio is not in favour of taking trades on either side. Fresh trade can be considered based on how crude oil futures react to the levels at ₹6,000 and ₹6,800.

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GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

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Stepping on the gas

Nalinakanthi V
bl. research bureau

OIL AND GAS. Why ONGC appears a good medium-term investment opportunity

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Investors with a two-to-three-year investment horizon can consider accumulating the stock of India's largest oil and gas producer, ONGC, on dips. We believe the new gas pricing guidelines announced by the Government to be positive for the company. Besides, the additional crude and gas output from new fields, particularly its new well at Krishna Godavari basin, should help the company sustain healthy growth over the next two years. At the current price, the stock trades 5.1 times its trailing twelve-month earnings and about 0.7 times its book value. The stock, at the current price, offers an impressive dividend yield of 6.75 per cent.

We believe ONGC to be a good medium-term investment opportunity for three reasons.

First, ONGC commands leadership position in India's oil and gas exploration industry, accounting for 68 per cent of the production — and for over two-thirds of the country's total gas production. Similarly, on a stand-alone basis, without including joint ventures, it accounts for 66 per cent of the country's crude oil produced as of April 2022-February 2023 production data released by PPAC (Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell). ONGC's production was at 16.88 million tonnes, as against total production of 25.49 million tonnes for the 11-month period ended February 2023.

The company also has the largest reserves of oil and gas in the country. As of April 2023, it has P2 reserves (proven and probable reserves) of 1221.48 million metric tonnes of oil and oil equivalent gas. In FY22, the company produced a total of 55.72 million metric tonnes. The current reserves are over 22 times its FY22 production. The company, through its subsidiary ONGC Videsh, has 32 projects ongoing in 15 countries and is looking to increase output from overseas assets from 15 million metric tonnes of oil equivalent to 40 mmtoe by 2040.

The new discovery of Vindhyan basin in 2022 will drive the long-term growth for ONGC.

Subsidiaries dragging consolidated performance

(in ₹ cr)

ONGC	Standalone		Consolidated	
	9MFY23	9MFY22	9MFY23	9MFY22
Revenue	1,19,224	75,848	5,20,762	3,75,843
EBITDA	65,324	43,551	59,941	60,171
Margin (%)	55	57	12	16

Second, the new pricing guideline for domestic gas is expected to benefit the company's natural gas business, by way of steady revenue and profit growth, over the medium term. Under the new policy, the gas realisation per mmbtu will be fixed at 10 per cent of the previous month's average basket price of crude for India. Old fields of ONGC, also called as nominated fields, will have a floor of USD 4 per mmbtu and a cap price of $6.5 per mmbtu. This is positive for ONGC given that in the last 7 years, natural gas prices have been in the range of USD 1.9 to about USD 3.7 per mmbtu with an average of USD 2.8 per mmbtu.

Also, the company's gas cost is estimated to be under USD 2 per mmbtu, and this should help consistent revenue and profit growth for the gas segment. Assuming total production of 22 billion standard cubic metre this year, the incremental revenue and operating profit accretion for every USD 0.5 increase per mmbtu, due to the new pricing guideline, will be about ₹3,630 crore.

Third, the new discoveries such as the KG-DWN-98/2 in the Bay of Bengal and the Cluster-8 marginal fields in the western offshore will add to the company's gas production beginning FY23-24. ONGC is expecting incremental gas production of over 5 billion cubic metre by 2026, from the FY22 production of 20.9 billion cubic metre, which is an increase of about 25 per cent, over the next three years. Interestingly, it will be able to get a 20 per cent premium on the gas price from this field, under the new pricing guideline. ONGC is also implementing the fourth phase of the redevelopment of its 5-decade old Mumbai High oil and gas fields, which will further augment oil and gas production. It has set aside ₹31,000 crore, for shoring up its energy exploration over the next 2-3 years.

Besides this, the company is also actively pursuing opportunities in the renewables space – it has signed an MoU with Greenko ZeroC Pvt Ltd for setting up a 1 million tonne green ammonia plant. It envisages scaling up its non-renewable energy production from the current 204 MW to 10 GW by 2030.

◉ ACCUMULATE

ONGC
₹159.55

◉ WHY

- Industry leader in oil & gas exploration
- Beneficiary of new gas pricing policy
- Good dividend yield

FINANCIALS

The company's strong balance sheet with a net debt to equity ratio of 0.42 times as of September 2022 lends more comfort and this has improved marginally from 0.44 times in March 2022. Being a consistent dividend payer, the stock's current dividend yield of 6.75 per cent is attractive given the volatility in the market. For the nine-month period ended the company grew revenue by 29 per cent to ₹520,762 crore. However, the profitability of the company was impacted by the losses in the Oil marketing and refining subsidiaries – Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL) and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals (MRPL) respectively, due to which the company reported a 27 per decline in net profit. While the standalone operating margin of ONGC is 55 per cent for 9MFY23, the consolidated profit margin was much lower at 12 per cent, thanks to the refining and marketing business losses.

Segment-wise profitability

(in ₹ cr)

Segment	9MFY23	9MFY22
Revenue		
E&P		
Offshore	79,100	48,908
Onshore	39,902	26,777
Refining and marketing	4,47,481	3,26,794
Overseas	9,437	12,562
EBIT		
E&P		
Offshore	39,912	24,189
Onshore	9,879	3,080
Refining and marketing	-13,021	7,213
Overseas	1,788	4,492

RISKS

ONGC holds 54.9 per cent stake in oil marketing major HPCL and 71.63 per cent stake in MRPL. HPCL's performance has been a drag on ONGC's profitability particularly over the last nine months, as the company reported a net loss of ₹14,696 over the April-December 2022 period. Despite sky-rocketing crude prices and record refining margins, the losses on marketing of petrol and diesel as the Government chose to kept prices unchanged, took a toll on HPCL's performance. Now with the crude oil price in the USD 80 per barrel levels, any further increase in oil prices and inability to pass it on to consumers, can continue to strain HPCL's profitability. That said easing of inflation over the next few months and moderation in crude oil prices globally will be positive for HPCL. The windfall tax on crude, which is currently a negative, may be phased out should the crude prices moderate to USD 70 levels.

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Striking the balance

The decision of OPEC+ to cut oil production is reflective of its increasing alignment with emerging intergovernmental institutions like SCO vis-à-vis US-led Western blocs. India, to retain its secure position in terms of oil supplies, should make balanced choices

AUTHOR

DIPANKAR DEY

On April 2, OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) and its allies, including Russia, agreed to widen crude oil production cuts to 3.66 million barrels per day (bpd), or 3.7 per cent of the global demand. Saudi Arabia has announced a voluntary output cut of 1.66 million bpd on top of the existing 2 million bpd cuts (since October 2022). These cuts were made as a precautionary measure aimed at supporting market stability. The voluntary cut starts in May and would last until the end of 2023. The surprise announcement helped push up oil prices by USD 5 per barrel, within 72 hours, to above USD 85 per barrel. Nonetheless, it is argued that excessively high oil prices might be counterproductive for OPEC+ as they speed up inflation, including for goods the group needs to purchase. High crude prices would also encourage speedier production gains from non-OPEC members and investments in alternative sources of energy.

OPEC+

OPEC, formed in 1960 with the aim of fixing the worldwide supply of oil and its price, is a cartel of 13 oil producer countries namely: Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Algeria, Angola, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Libya, Nigeria, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Currently, OPEC nations produce around 30 per cent of the world's crude oil. Saudi Arabia is the biggest single oil producer within OPEC, producing more than 10 million barrels a day.

In 2016, when oil prices were particularly low, OPEC joined forces with ten other oil producers to create OPEC+. These countries were: Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, South Sudan, and Sudan. These new members included Russia, which also produces over 10 million barrels a day. Together, these 23 nations produce about 40 per cent of the entire world's crude oil, reports *BBC*.

OPEC+ has the economic capability to disrupt or enhance the supply of oil to substantial levels at any time, severely affecting oil prices. Experts believe that it can exert a substantial influence on the global oil market.

However, some of the top oil-producing countries are non-OPEC nations. This includes the United States of America, which is the number one producer, as well as Canada and China. But in the case of exports, OPEC countries like Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and UAE dominate the list. Russia — one of the members of OPEC+ — has emerged as the major producer and exporter of crude oil. Refer to the Table for details.

Petrodollar: the crude equivalent standard

Paying for oil in US dollars has been a nearly universal practice for decades since 1973 when the US dollar embraced crude oil as the new gold and migrated to the 'crude equivalent standard' from the 'gold equivalent standard' of 1944. Petrodollar or Petro currency refers to the US dollar traded for worldwide crude-oil exports. It facilitates the investment of export gains as the dollar is the world's reserve currency. US President Richard Nixon withdrew the dollar from the gold standard on August 15, 1971, because of stagflation and USA's dwindling gold reserves.

It may be recalled that in 1973, the US and Saudi Arabia entered into an agreement, and the US agreed to offer armed protection to Saudi Arabia and provide weaponry and other military supplies. In return, Saudi Arabia, the leader of the Arab region, and OPEC agreed to sell all oil in US dollars. Moreover, Saudi Arabia would recycle the surplus dollars into the American economic system using US treasury bills and bonds. By 1975, all OPEC members embraced the Petro currency arrangement, and consented to export oil in US dollars. As a result, the American currency got pegged, by default, to the crude oil price. If the crude price increases demand for the US dollar increases. Thus, the US dollar became the reserve currency for most central banks worldwide, as it was the chief currency needed for natural gas and oil trading, reported *Millennium Post*.

With the emergence of the new world order, the Eurasian bloc, led by China and Russia, is now challenging the near monopoly of the USD.

Reasons for production cuts by OPEC+

Two factors primarily influence the global oil price: geopolitical developments and economic events that can lead to changes in oil demand and supply levels, which ultimately determine the price. Analysts have identified at least four major reasons why OPEC+ has decided to cut output, reports *Reuters*. These are:

Apprehensions about weak global demand: It is feared that a global recession could lead to lower oil prices. Worries of a fresh banking crisis have led investors to sell out of risk assets such as commodities with oil prices which fell to nearly USD 70 per barrel from near an all-time high of USD 139 in March 2022. Russian deputy prime minister Alexander Novak said that the Western banking crisis was one of the reasons behind the cut, along with "interference with market dynamics", a Russian expression to describe a Western price cap on Russian oil.

Punishing speculators: It is believed that the cut will punish those who bet on the oil price decline (short sellers). In 2020, Saudi Energy Minister warned traders against betting heavily on the oil market, saying he would try to make the market jumpy and promised that those who gamble on the oil price would face disastrous consequences.

Seeking higher price: Many analysts believe that OPEC+ was keen to put a floor under oil prices at USD 80 per barrel while UBS and Rystad predicted a jump back to USD 100. According to Goldman Sachs, OPEC's power has increased in recent years as US shale responses to higher prices have become slower and smaller, in part because of pressure on investors to stop funding fossil fuel projects.

OPEC vs NOPEC: America has lost its historical grip on OPEC, as its main ally Saudi Arabia, the leader of OPEC, has aligned with China. For decades, the USA has been trying to counter OPEC by threatening legal action against its members through an initiative named NOPEC — the No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels (NOPEC). Several attempts to pass NOPEC legislation in the US Congress have long worried OPEC's de facto leader Saudi Arabia. It may be recalled that in 2019, Saudi Arabia threatened to sell its oil in currencies other than the dollar if Washington passed a version of the NOPEC Bill, which would undermine the dollar's status as the world's main reserve currency. But the tension between Washington and Riyadh reached a flashing point when the NOPEC Bill was passed by a Senate committee with 17-4 votes on May 5, 2022. The Bill is intended to protect US consumers and businesses from engineered oil spikes. If signed into law, the US attorney general would gain the option to sue the oil cartel or its members, such as Saudi Arabia, in federal court. However, it is unclear exactly how a federal court could enforce judicial antitrust decisions against a foreign nation.

Table: Five Top Oil Producers and Exporters in 2021

Country	% world production	OPEC/OPEC+/ Non-OPEC	Country	% world exports	OPEC/OPEC+/ Non-OPEC
USA	19.8	Non-OPEC	Saudi Arabia	16.5	OPEC
Saudi Arabia	11.3	OPEC	Russia	8.3	OPEC+
Russia	11.3	OPEC+	Canada	7.5	Non-OPEC
Canada	5.8	Non-OPEC	Iraq	7.3	OPEC
China	5.2	Non-OPEC	UAE	7.1	OPEC

SOURCE: HTTPS://WWW.INVESTOPEDIA.COM/ARTICLES/INVESTING/012216/HOW-OPEC-AND-NONOPEC-PRODUCTION-AFFECTS-OIL-PRICES.ASP

India and Iran may use the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation platform to revive their oil trade

Another reason for the production cut could be to avenge the International Energy Agency's (IEA's) decision to release oil stock in 2022, which IEA claimed was necessary to bring down prices amid fears of sanctions that would disrupt Russian supply. The United States, which released most stocks, said it would buy back some oil in 2023 but later ruled it out. JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs said the US decision not to buy back oil for reserves might have contributed to the move to cut output by OPEC+ countries.

Impact on India

The voluntary cuts by countries in the oil cartel are set to start in May and last till the end of 2023. Both Saudi Arabia and Russia will trim oil production by 500,000 barrels per day until the end of this year while other OPEC members like Kuwait, Oman, Iraq, Algeria, and Kazakhstan also reduce output. Reduced supply is likely to push the crude prices to USD 100 per barrel. Countries heavily dependent on imported oil, like India, Japan, and South Korea, are likely to be severely hit.

India is the third largest oil consumer in the world and has been purchasing Russian oil at a steep discount since sanctions were imposed on Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine. India imports 85 per cent of its crude oil consumption, and its crude oil imports rose by 8.5 per cent in February, compared to the same period last year. Analysts fear that if the oil price goes up further, even the discounted Russian crude will start to hurt India's growth, reports *CNBC*.

Russia has emerged as the single-largest supplier of crude oil which is converted into petrol products at refineries. India's imports from Russia jumped about five times to USD 41.56 billion during the April-February period of FY2022-23. India's imports of crude oil from Russia soared to a record 1.6 million barrels per day in February and are now higher than combined imports from traditional suppliers Iraq and Saudi Arabia. India buys more than one-third (around 35 per cent) of its imported crude from Russia. In February 2022, before the start of the Russia-Ukraine war, Russia's share in India's crude imports was negligible.

Iraq — the second largest oil source for India — supplied 9,39,921 barrels per day (bpd) of oil in February while Saudi Arabia supplied 6,47,813 bpd of oil. The UAE overtook the US to become the fourth-largest supplier at 4,04,570 bpd. As per a report by *The Hindu*, the US supplied 2,48,430 bpd, down from 3,99,914 bpd in January. India sources crude oil from 39 countries. The rise in Russian imports has been at the expense of Saudi Arabia and the United States. Oil imports from Saudi fell 16 per cent month-on-month and that from the US declined by 38 per cent.

With the end of US waivers that allowed the import of crude from Iran without sanctions, India stopped buying oil from Iran in FY19. In the immediate years before the ban, Iran was India's third-biggest source of crude oil. Between FY07 to FY09, Iran was the second-biggest source after Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, after Iran's exit, India filled the void by importing oil from the US, the country which initiated the sanctions. Iran may make a comeback as a major oil partner for India.

In May 2022, India bought Russian oil at a discount of USD 16 a barrel. Though the discount was reduced and was at USD 14 a barrel in June, USD 12 a barrel in July, and USD 6 a barrel in August, India is estimated to have saved over Rs 35,000 crore by importing cheap Russian crude between February and November 2022, reports *MoneyControl*.

The Hindu reported that almost a quarter of the Russian imports are now paid in UAE's dirham. India's largest lender State Bank of India has a nostro, or foreign currency, account in Russia. Similarly, many banks from Russia have opened accounts with Indian banks to facilitate trade. Bank of Baroda and Axis Bank have handled most of the dirham payments.

In an interesting development, Bangladesh and Russia have recently agreed to use Yuan to settle payment for a nuclear plant that Moscow is building in Bangladesh, reports *Reuters*. Under the agreement, Bangladesh will settle payments with Russia via a Chinese bank. Russian beneficiaries will reportedly receive the funds through China's Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS), established in 2015, since many Russian banks have been cut off from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT) system.

India's oil security

Thanks to its partnerships with BRICS and SCO, India is in a secure position in terms of oil supplies. It is reported that the next edition of the BRICS Summit in August could put in place a mechanism for transition to trade settlements in national currencies among member states. Now the BRICS nations — Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa — are setting themselves up as an alternative to existing international financial and political forums. These countries, which house over 41 per cent of the world's population, are trying to position themselves as representatives of the Global South, providing an alternative model to the G7 which is an "informal forum" of heads of state of the world's most advanced economies, founded in 1975. Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, Canada, the US, and the European Union are members of G7.

India is already buying crude from Russia in local currency. Recently, China and Russia have also agreed to trade in local currencies. India-China trade for 2022 climbed to USD 135.98 billion – a rise of 8.4 per cent over the USD 125-billion mark a year earlier, reports *The Wire*. Despite the tension along the border, data released by the commerce ministry showed, China overtook the US to return as India's largest trade partner, with USD 11.49 billion worth of goods traded in July 2022, underscoring the country's growing reliance on its northern neighbour.

Recently, Brazil and China have deepened their cooperation on Yuan settlement as the alternative to the US dollar in cross-border trade and investment. Last week, China's largest commercial bank, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), processed the first cross-border Yuan settlement in Brazil at its local branch there, marking another significant step in the Yuan's globalisation, reports *Global Times*. The joint statement made during Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's state visit to China last week mentioned the signing of multiple bilateral agreements, most of which were on trade, technological and agricultural cooperation. Both Presidents have vowed to deepen cooperation in various fields under the BRICS framework, reports *CGTN*.

SCO is the other platform that can be properly used by India, which will ensure a secure supply of crude oil in a turbulent time. Launched in Shanghai in June 2001, the SCO has eight full members, including its six founding members — China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. India and Pakistan joined as full members in 2017, and at the Samarkand summit in 2022, Iran was admitted as a permanent member of the SCO. Over the years, SCO has emerged as one of the largest trans-regional international organisations.

In March this year, the government of Saudi Arabia officially agreed to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as a dialogue partner. India and Iran may use the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) platform to revive their oil trade.

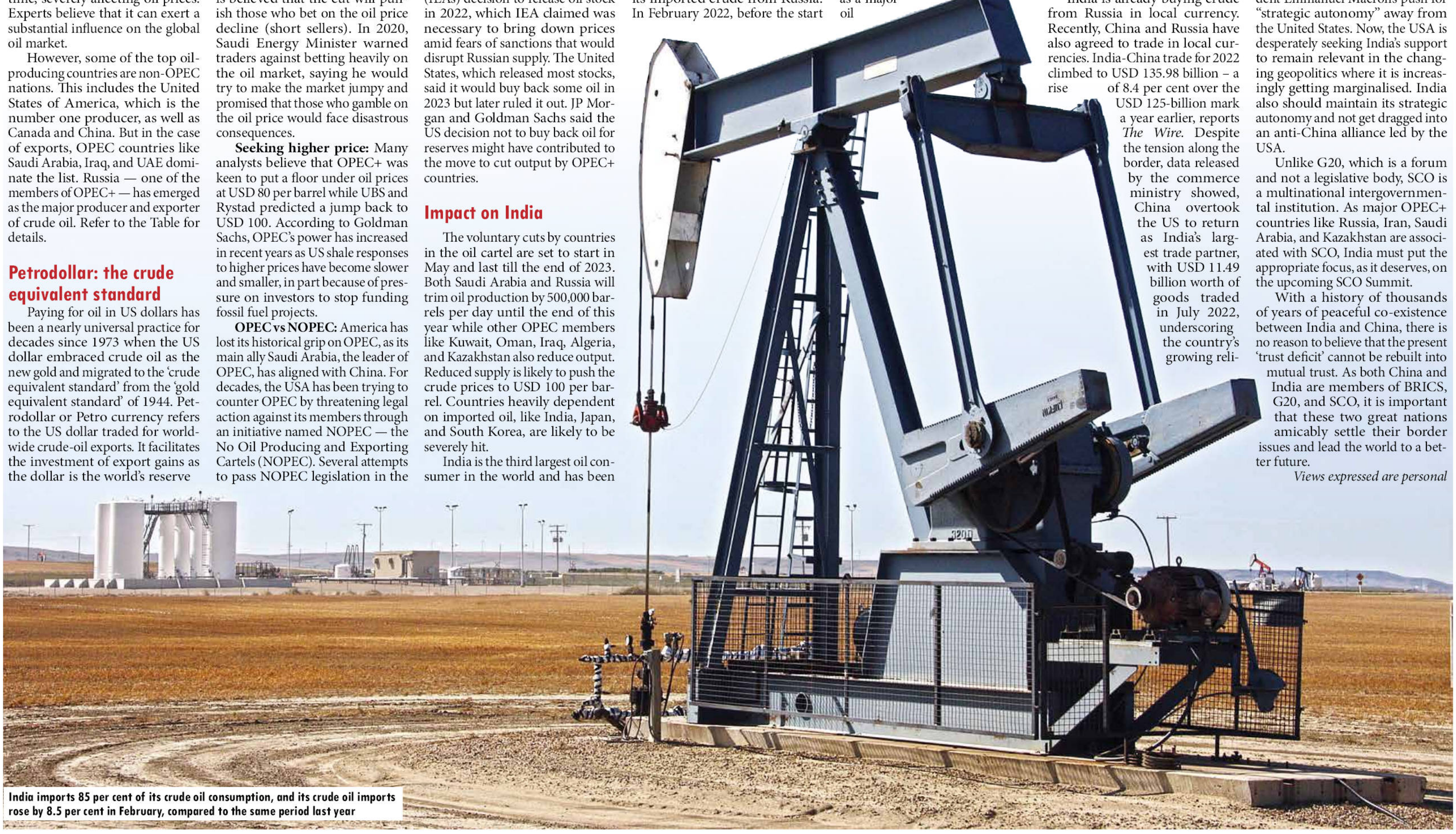
Conclusion

In 2023, India is playing host to two major Summits — G20, which is an extended group of G7 countries, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The USA and its NATO allies are desperately trying to involve India in their fight against emerging superpower China and its Eurasian allies. In March, the US permanent representative to NATO said, NATO's door was open for more engagement with India should the Indian government seek it. Meanwhile, Politico reported that European leaders are becoming increasingly favourable towards French President Emmanuel Macron's push for "strategic autonomy" away from the United States. Now, the USA is desperately seeking India's support to remain relevant in the changing geopolitics where it is increasingly getting marginalised. India also should maintain its strategic autonomy and not get dragged into an anti-China alliance led by the USA.

Unlike G20, which is a forum and not a legislative body, SCO is a multinational intergovernmental institution. As major OPEC+ countries like Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Kazakhstan are associated with SCO, India must put the appropriate focus, as it deserves, on the upcoming SCO Summit.

With a history of thousands of years of peaceful co-existence between India and China, there is no reason to believe that the present 'trust deficit' cannot be rebuilt into mutual trust. As both China and India are members of BRICS, G20, and SCO, it is important that these two great nations amicably settle their border issues and lead the world to a better future.

Views expressed are personal



India imports 85 per cent of its crude oil consumption, and its crude oil imports rose by 8.5 per cent in February, compared to the same period last year

STATESMAN, Delhi, 23.4.2023
Page No. 9, Size:(5.11)cms X (6.50)cms.

Three IOCL Paradip Refinery employees arrested

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
PARADIP, 22 APRIL:

Three employees of IOCL Paradip Refinery including two junior engineers and a contract worker were arrested by the Abhayachandpur police for illegal supply of alkylate products from plant by giving their ID card to the driver of a private vehicle .

Sources said the vehicle was at the MS blending site near the Indian Oiltanking Limited (IOTL) on Friday carrying eight empty containers and was detected by the CISF. The driver produced a IOCL permanent ID card named Mrunmaya Kumar Bai . Later, the driver identified himself as Biswajit Guru , contract worker of M/S Dispan Udyog who used the duplicate pass of Bai to enter inside MS blending site near the IOTL area.

During investigation, it was found that Bai is working as junior engineer grade VI of Paradip Refinery of IOCL while Dehury is also in a similar post. During interrogation, these accused persons have confessed their guilt. They have stolen the alkylate product from Paradip Refinery of IOCL by using a fake gate pass of JE Bai through a private car. Sub Inspector of CISF Ashish Joshi lodged an FIR with the Abhayachandpur police station and all three have been arrested.

VIRAT VAIBHAV, Delhi, 23.4.2023
Page No. 15, Size:(4.06)cms X (6.10)cms.

आईजीजीएल ने एशिया की सबसे लंबी जलीय हाइड्रोकार्बन पाइपलाइन तैयार की

एजेंसी ■ गुवाहाटी

इंद्रधनुष गैस ग्रिड लिमिटेड (आईजीजीएल) ने असम में जोरहाट और माजुली के बीच ब्रह्मपुत्र नदी में एशिया की सबसे बड़ी हाइड्रोकार्बन पाइपलाइन का निर्माण पूरा किया है। कंपनी के मुख्य कार्यपालक अधिकारी (सीईओ) अजीत कुमार ठाकुर ने शनिवार को यह जानकारी दी। ब्रह्मपुत्र नदी के नीचे क्षैतिज दिशात्मक ड्रिलिंग (एचडीडी) विधि से 24 इंच व्यास वाली हाइड्रोकार्बन पाइपलाइन बिछाने का चुनौतीपूर्ण काम शुक्रवार को पूरा हो गया। उन्होंने बताया कि यह परियोजना पूर्वोत्तर भारत को राष्ट्रीय गैस ग्रिड से जोड़ने वाले नॉर्थ ईस्ट गैस ग्रिड (एनईजीजी) के निर्माण में एक प्रमुख मील का पत्थर है। उन्होंने बताया कि ब्रह्मपुत्र नदी की मुख्य धारा में इस एकल एचडीडी क्रॉसिंग में पाइपलाइन की कुल लंबाई 4,080 मीटर है। उन्होंने दावा किया कि यह एशिया में 24 इंच व्यास और उससे अधिक आकार वाली सबसे लंबी हाइड्रोकार्बन पाइपलाइन है। उन्होंने कहा कि मुख्य रूप से मानसूनी बारिश और बाढ़ जैसी कई बाधाओं को पार कर 4,080 मीटर लंबी पाइपलाइन को बिछाने का काम पूरा कर लिया गया है।

VEER ARJUN, Delhi, 23.4.2023
Page No. 11, Size:(7.70)cms X (7.99)cms.

आईजीजीएल ने एशिया की सबसे लंबी जलीय हाइड्रोकार्बन पाइपलाइन तैयार की: सीईओ

गुवाहाटी, (भाषा)। इंद्रधनुष गैस ग्रिड लिमिटेड (आईजीजीएल) ने असम में जोरहाट और माजुली के बीच ब्रह्मपुत्र नदी में एशिया की सबसे बड़ी हाइड्रोकार्बन पाइपलाइन का निर्माण पूरा किया है। कंपनी के मुख्य कार्यपालक अधिकारी (सीईओ) अजीत कुमार ठाकुर ने शनिवार को यह जानकारी दी। ब्रह्मपुत्र नदी के नीचे क्षैतिज दिशात्मक ड्रिलिंग (एचडीडी) विधि से 24 इंच व्यास वाली हाइड्रोकार्बन पाइपलाइन बिछाने का चुनौतीपूर्ण काम शुक्रवार को पूरा हो गया। यह परियोजना पूर्वोत्तर भारत को राष्ट्रीय गैस ग्रिड से जोड़ने वाले नॉर्थ ईस्ट गैस ग्रिड (एनईजीजी) के निर्माण में एक प्रमुख मील का पत्थर है। ब्रह्मपुत्र नदी की मुख्य धारा में इस एकल एचडीडी क्रॉसिंग में पाइपलाइन की कुल लंबाई 4,080 मीटर है। उन्होंने दावा किया कि यह एशिया में 24 इंच व्यास और उससे अधिक आकार वाली सबसे लंबी हाइड्रोकार्बन पाइपलाइन है। उन्होंने कहा कि मुख्य रूप से मानसूनी बारिश और बाढ़ जैसी कई बाधाओं को पार कर 4,080 मीटर लंबी पाइपलाइन को बिछाने का काम पूरा कर लिया गया है।

DAINIK JAGRAN, Rastriya Sanskaran, 23.4.2023
Page No. 10, Size:(9.34)cms X (6.97)cms.

उत्तर प्रदेश के सोनभद्र में मिल सकता है कच्चे तेल और गैस का भंडार

जागरण संवाददाता, सोनभद्र

- घोरावल के गुरुवल में बोरिंग के दौरान लगी आग के बाद की गई जांच
- ओएनजीसी के देहरादून इकाई की रिपोर्ट में तरल हाइड्रोकार्बन की पुष्टि

सोना, कोयला, बालू व पत्थर के बाद सोनभद्र जिले की कोख से कच्चा तेल व गैस मिलने के संकेत मिले हैं। सैंपल की प्रारंभिक जांच में तरल हाइड्रोकार्बन मिलने के बाद उत्तर प्रदेश भूतत्व एवं खनिकर्म विभाग ने अप्रैल के प्रथम सप्ताह में व्यापक जांच के लिए केंद्रीय पेट्रोलियम व प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्रालय को पत्र लिखा है।

घोरावल तहसील के गुरुवल गांव में जनवरी के प्रारंभ में एक किसान ने ट्यूबवेल के लिए बोरिंग कराई थी। बोरिंग के दौरान उसमें आग लग गई जो तमाम प्रयास के बाद भी नहीं बुझी। इसका पता चलने पर जिलाधिकारी के निर्देश पर खनन विभाग के भू-विज्ञानी प्रशासन की टीम के साथ मौके पर पहुंचे। जूट के बोरे को पानी में भींगोकर बोरहोल के ऊपर बांधकर आग पर काबू पाया गया। इसके बाद बोरहोल के 45 फीट अंदर उपस्थित पानी सैंपल के रूप में लेकर जांच के लिए देहरादून स्थित ओएनजीसी कार्यालय को भेजा गया। जांच में बोरहोल का पानी थर्मोजेनिक पाया गया, जिससे प्राकृतिक गैस के साथ कच्चे तेल की संभावना को मजबूती मिलती है। बोरवेल को 440 फीट गहरा खोदा गया है। वहां से निकल रही गैस की महक डीजल जैसी है। माचिस जलाने पर बोरवेल का पानी लपट के साथ जलने लगता है। वहां लगी आग तो बुझा ली गई है, लेकिन गैस का रिसाव बदस्तूर जारी है।

> सोनभद्र जिले में प्रचुर मात्रा में कोयला पाया जाता है। इस कारण यहां हाइड्रोकार्बन मिलने की उम्मीद पहले से थी। गुरुवल में ओएनजीसी के देहरादून इकाई की जांच में हाइड्रोकार्बन पाया गया है। संबंधित किसान को निर्देश दिया गया है कि बोरवेल वाले स्थान पर किसी तरह की गतिविधि न हो।
> – चन्द्र विजय सिंह, जिलाधिकारी सोनभद्र

सोनभद्र में है धरती के सबसे पुराने फासिल्स : सोनभद्र के सलखन में धरती का सबसे पुराना फासिल्स (जीवाश्म) पार्क मौजूद है। घोरावल क्षेत्र में सेडिमेंट्री राक (अवसादी चट्टानें) पाई जाती हैं।

PUNJAB KESARI, Delhi, 23.4.2023
Page No. 10, Size:(2.30)cms X (8.84)cms.

एशिया की सबसे लंबी जलीय हाइड्रोकार्बन पाइपलाइन तैयार

गुवाहाटी, (पंजाब केसरी) : इंद्रधनुष गैस ग्रिड लिमिटेड (आईजीजीएल) ने असम में जोरहाट और माजुली के बीच ब्रह्मपुत्र नदी में एशिया की सबसे बड़ी हाइड्रोकार्बन पाइपलाइन का निर्माण पूरा किया है। कंपनी के मुख्य कार्यपालक अधिकारी (सीईओ) अजीत कुमार ठाकुर ने यह जानकारी दी। ब्रह्मपुत्र नदी के नीचे क्षैतिज दिशात्मक ड्रिलिंग (एचडीडी) विधि से 24 इंच व्यास वाली हाइड्रोकार्बन पाइपलाइन बिछाने का चुनौतीपूर्ण काम शुक्रवार को पूरा हो गया। यह परियोजना पूर्वोत्तर भारत को राष्ट्रीय गैस ग्रिड से जोड़ने वाले 'नॉर्थ ईस्ट गैस ग्रिड' (एनईजीजी) के निर्माण में एक प्रमुख मील का पत्थर है। ब्रह्मपुत्र नदी की मुख्य धारा में इस एकल एचडीडी क्रॉसिंग में पाइपलाइन की कुल लंबाई 4,080 मीटर है। उन्होंने दावा किया कि यह एशिया में 24 इंच व्यास और उससे अधिक आकार वाली सबसे लंबी हाइड्रोकार्बन पाइपलाइन है। उन्होंने कहा कि मुख्य रूप से मानसूनी बारिश और बाढ़ जैसी कई बाधाओं को पार कर 4,080 मीटर लंबी पाइपलाइन को बिछाने का काम पूरा कर लिया गया है।