

Prepaid PNG metering push to plug CGD losses

SUDHEER PAL SINGH

New Delhi, 19 April

A committee set up to recommend a road map for the implementation of smart domestic piped natural gas (PNG) meters has suggested shifting to a prepaid billing regime nationwide to improve commercial viability, along with offering a production-linked incentive (PLI) for meter manufacturers.

The five-member committee found that, based on technical performance, lifecycle cost analysis, and implementation readiness, smart diaphragm-based domestic PNG meters are the most feasible and cost-effective solution for large-scale deployment across the city gas distribution (CGD) sector.

"The assessment established that smart meters offer clear advantages over conventional meters, including automated meter reading, real-time consumption monitoring, improved billing accuracy, enhanced safety through remote shut-off in case of leakage or tampering, real-time tamper alerts, and greater consumer transparency," it said.

The committee, headed by Anjan Kumar Mishra, secretary at the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), argued that prepaid smart metering with remote communication eliminates bad debts, strengthens revenue protection, reduces operational expenditure, and improves cash flows for CGD entities.

The panel's deliberations with CGD entities revealed persistent challenges under the conventional postpaid regime, including payment defaults, accumulation of receivables, high recovery costs,



SMART METERS ENABLE AUTOMATED READINGS, REAL-TIME MONITORING, BETTER BILLING ACCURACY, REMOTE SHUT-OFF FOR LEAKS/TAMPERING, AND GREATER TRANSPARENCY

and recurring expenditure on manual billing and meter reading.

"Industry data indicated that a significant proportion of domestic consumers default on payments, resulting in a substantial financial and operational burden for CGD entities. The committee observed that prepaid smart metering directly addresses these challenges and delivers tangible operational and financial benefits, making CGD entities the primary beneficiaries of smart domestic PNG meter implementation," the panel said in its report.

The committee said any additional expenditure linked to smart metering should not be passed on to consumers and may be borne by CGD entities.

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mint primer

Why oil prices haven't cooled despite a truce

By N. Madhavan

Hostilities in West Asia may have eased, but oil prices remain above the pre-war levels. Though prices have stayed below \$100 a barrel since the ceasefire, conflicting signals from the US and Iran are keeping markets volatile. *Mint* looks at the near-term outlook.

Energy squeeze

The IMF has warned that the West Asia war is driving up energy prices across the world.



Source: Bloomberg

GOPAKUMAR WARRIER/MINT

1 Haven't oil prices dipped in recent days?

Yes. After surging to over \$110 a barrel at the peak of the West Asia war, oil prices moderated following the ceasefire announcement. However, they remain above pre-war levels of around \$65 a barrel. For instance, benchmark Brent crude, which traded at about \$74 a barrel before the US-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February, rose to a high of \$107 when Iran effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz and key oil infrastructure in the region came under attack. Prices eased after the ceasefire, and on Friday Brent traded at \$87 a barrel after Iran indicated that the strait had reopened.

REUTERS

2 What has happened since then?

On Saturday, Iran once again shut the Strait of Hormuz, a critical route for about 15% of global oil trade, after objecting to continued US restrictions on vessels linked to its ports. According to news reports, a couple of ships were attacked over the weekend, further escalating tensions. The movement of vessels has come to a near halt, and oil prices are therefore expected to rise when markets reopen on Monday. While Iran and the US have publicly claimed that there is progress in talks, experts caution that a final peace deal remains distant, with the ceasefire set to end on Wednesday.



REUTERS

3 Why are both sides not coming to an agreement?

The US has asked Iran to hand over its stockpile of enriched uranium and halt all enrichment activities. It is also seeking firm assurances that Iran will not shut the Strait of Hormuz in future. Rejecting the demands, Iran is pushing for unfreezing of over \$100 billion of its assets held overseas and a removal of economic sanctions imposed by the US and allies.

4 Why are crude prices unlikely to cool soon?

First, the gap between the two sides suggests that a comprehensive peace deal is unlikely anytime soon. Second, uncertainty over whether the ceasefire will hold continues to weigh on market sentiment. Third, the Strait of Hormuz must remain open for shipments to resume at scale. Experts say it could take weeks to clear inventories and move stored oil before shut-in oil wells can be brought back online. Damaged oil infrastructure will need repairs before production can return to pre-war levels.

5 How is this affecting the global economy?

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned that the West Asia conflict is driving up energy and food prices across the world, adding to inflationary pressures and weighing on economic growth. It has also warned that the conflict risks pushing up government borrowings, which as a share of world gross domestic product is set to touch 100% by 2029, a level not seen since the second world war. For India, prolonged disruption could translate into slower growth if high energy prices persist.

India plans flex-fuel push as oil risks rise

Flex-fuel cars can work on 85% ethanol blend, but may cost more

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NEW DELHI

The Centre is planning a nationwide policy push to enable the adoption of flex-fuel vehicles (FFVs) that can run on ethanol blends of up to E85 (85% ethanol and 15% petrol), as the West Asia conflict prompts India to explore ways to cut oil import dependence, according to two people aware of the development and a correspondence reviewed by *Mint*.

India's current 20% ethanol blending mandate, introduced in 2025, had triggered public complaints over reduced mileage and concerns around engine performance.

The Union petroleum and natural gas ministry has called a meeting on Monday to discuss the issue. "During the meeting, a presentation will be made by the working group constituted for preparing the plan for the rollout of FFVs," one of the people cited above said, requesting anonymity.

The working group, comprising experts from oil marketing companies, automobile makers and the government, will present its plan to top executives of state-run oil firms and representatives of the automobile industry lobby group Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), and officials from relevant ministries.

Global crude prices have remained volatile amid the conflict, briefly crossing \$100 per barrel before easing following a cease-

FLEX FIX



EHTANOL ENDGAME

<p>POLICY is for flex-fuel vehicles that can run on ethanol blends up to E85</p>	<p>HOWEVER, the current 20% ethanol mandate has triggered complaints</p>	<p>GLOBAL crude prices are volatile, crossing \$100 per barrel before easing</p>
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fire, with risks of another spike persisting. Such a scenario poses a significant fiscal risk to India, considering it imports 90% of its oil requirements. A \$1 per barrel increase for a year would add around ₹16,000 crore to the country's import bill. India sourced

oil worth \$109.5 billion in fiscal year 2026 (FY26), according to the petroleum ministry's Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell (PPAC).

TURN TO PAGE 2



India plans E85 flex-fuel vehicle policy push amid West Asia oil risks

FROM PAGE 1

Recent disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have further heightened concerns, with the ministry of ports, shipping, and waterways saying on Sunday that two vessels had to return to the Persian Gulf after reporting a firing incident while exiting the Strait.

With transport accounting for a bulk of petrol consumption, reducing dependence on fossil fuels in the mobility sector is seen as critical.

India's automobile market recorded sales of over 12.59 million petrol vehicles in FY26, according to data from govern-

ment portal Vahan. The petrol vehicles made up approximately 44% of the country's total sales of 28.3 million vehicles, underscoring the scale of transition required.

However, the auto industry remains cautious about the rollout of flex-fuel vehicles.

"The auto industry's qualms before launching flex fuel vehicles in India are about the lack of clarity on pricing of blended fuels, the uncertainty around distribution of the blended fuel at retail pumps, as well as about incentives for FFVs, since these vehicles are more costly to produce compared to other petrol vehicles," said a person aware

of flex fuel vehicle policy deliberations.

Queries sent to the ministries of petroleum and natural gas, heavy industries, and road transport, as well as IOCL, HPCL, BPCL, SIAM and major automakers, remained unanswered.

Globally, flex-fuel vehicles are used extensively in Brazil, where they were introduced in 2003. Today, they dominate new vehicle sales, with over 90% of cars and two-wheelers capable of running fully on ethanol, petrol, or a blend of both (in various proportions), supported by a strong sugarcane-based ethanol ecosystem.

In India, however, experts say that while flex-fuel vehicles are strategically important, rebuilding public trust will be key.

Sanjukta Subudhi, associate director of microbial biofuels and biochemicals at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), a New Delhi-based think tank, said that while tailpipe emissions of FFVs are lower than traditional petrol vehicles, further studies and quality safeguards may be required to rebuild public

trust.

The push is also being driven by a surplus in domestic ethanol production, with capacity at

In India, experts say that while flex-fuel vehicles are strategically important, rebuilding public trust will be key

20 billion litres against demand of around 11 billion litres under the E20 programme.

Faced with surplus capacity, ethanol makers have been lobbying the government for

higher blends in fuel as well as incentives for flex-fuel vehicles within days of the beginning of the West Asia war, *Mint* reported on 19 March.

Higher ethanol blending is the need of the hour, said C.K. Jain, president of the Grain Ethanol Manufacturers Association (Gema), a lobby group covering more than 100 distilleries. "Twenty billion litres of ethanol has been produced, and another 2-3 billion litres will be produced by the end of this year. With this stockpile, it is possible to create a 40% ethanol blend in petrol," he said.

While there is some energy loss in using higher blends of ethanol in fuel, there is no damage to the engine, Jain said. He added that since mileage of vehicles is reportedly falling due to the use of ethanol

blends, consumers should get a price advantage on these blends.

According to S.S.V. Ramakumar, former director, R&D at Indian Oil, the move towards 20% ethanol blending of petrol was made after extensive testing and studies. He had told *Mint* on 19 March that about 10 billion litres of ethanol meets the 20% blending requirement, and the industry estimates 20 billion litres production in 2028.

So, progressing beyond 20% blending would require further tests and study to establish performance and component compatibility, he had said.

US renewal of Russian oil waiver a breather for India

SHUBHANGI MATHUR
New Delhi, 19 April

In a historic reversal of policy, the US has renewed a waiver allowing countries, including India, to purchase Russian crude oil for nearly a month.

The renewed waiver comes as a major breather because it would help India secure crude oil supplies as the Strait of Hormuz remains disrupted, according to industry experts and refinery executives.

This disruption is despite a ceasefire announced between Iran and the US.

“The latest waiver is a huge relief for India as this will ease our supply situation (crude oil). Our refineries are operating at full capacity despite the crisis. Russian oil supplies have been critical for ensuring that,” said Prashant Vasisht, vice-president & group head of corporate ratings at Icra. Under the latest US waiver, countries are allowed to purchase Russian crude oil and petroleum products until May 16 that were loaded onto vessels on or before April 17.

This is in stark contrast to a statement made barely two days ago by US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent that the sanctions waiver on Russian and Iranian oil would not be renewed.

Indian refiners remained confident of continuing to source Russian crude even without the US waiver renewal, as the restrictions apply only to sanctioned oil entities.

“We were never prevented from buying (crude oil) from Russia; it was our top supplier even in March. As reopening of Strait of Hormuz remains unclear, we are still banking on crude oil purchases from Russia, Africa, Latin America, US and Gulf countries, such as Saudi Arabia



and the UAE. Supplies are almost zero from landlocked countries (in West Asia) such as Iraq, Kuwait and Qatar,” said a refinery executive.

According to data from maritime intelligence firm Kpler, India’s imports of Russian crude rose to a nine-month high of 2.06 million barrels a day in March, up from 1.06 million barrels a day in February. Until April 17, refiners have imported 1.67 million barrels a day of Russian oil.

Meanwhile, a similar waiver for Iranian crude oil and petroleum products expired on Sunday.

As the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz remains unclear, two Indian-flagged vessels, VLCC Samnar Herad and Bulk Carrier Jag Arnav, reported a firing incident on Saturday while transiting the narrow maritime chokepoint, following which they returned to the Persian Gulf.

However, the central government assured that there was no injury to the crew. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met Iran’s Ambassador to India, Mohammad

Extended relief

- Latest waiver permits purchases of Russian crude/products until May 16, if cargoes were loaded on or before April 17
- India’s Russian crude imports jumped to a 9-month high of 2.06 million barrels a day in March, up from 1.06 million barrels a day in February
- Imports have averaged 1.67 million barrels a day from Russia up to April 17
- With the Hormuz situation being uncertain, India is still banking on crude oil purchases from Russia, Africa, Latin America, the US, Saudi Arabia and the UAE

Fathali, in New Delhi and conveyed deep concern at the firing incident.

“Reiterating his concern about this serious incident of firing on merchant ships, the foreign secretary urged the Ambassador to convey India’s views to the authorities in Iran and resume, at the earliest, the process of facilitating India-bound ships across the Strait,” the government said in a press release.

Meanwhile, an Indian-flagged crude oil tanker Desh Garima, with 31 Indian seafarers onboard, safely crossed the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday.

The vessel is expected to arrive in Mumbai on Wednesday. The petroleum ministry said on Sunday that consumers have been prioritised with 100 per cent supplies to domestic PNG and CNG transport, and the overall gas allocation to fertiliser plants has been enhanced to around 95 per cent of their six-month average consumption.

Additionally, gas supply to other industrial and commercial sectors, including supplies through city gas distribution networks, is enhanced up to 80 per cent.

Blending 20% DME with LPG can cut imports by 6.3 million tonnes

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The blending of 20 per cent dimethyl ether (DME) — produced from coal gasification — with LPG could reduce LPG imports by about 6.3 million tonnes annually, leading to a saving of forex of up to \$4.04 billion (around Rs 34,200 crore) per year, according to a latest report.

Coal gasification converts coal into syngas, which is then transformed into DME's clean-burning fuel that serves as a homegrown substitute for imported LPG.

The report assumes significance in the wake of India facing Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) supply constraints since the war broke out in West Asia.

According to the report titled 'Coal gasification for energy and chemical security' by EY-Parthenon and New Era Cleantech Solution Ltd — a domestic coal gasification firm — "DME, producible from coal gasification, can partially substitute LPG imports".

It further said 20 per cent blending could displace approximately 6.3 mil-



It will lead to forex savings of up to \$4.04 billion (around Rs 34,200 crore) per year

lion tonnes of LPG imports annually.

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has already notified standards permitting up to 20 per cent DMG-LPG blending in India.

The report further said DME is emerging as a clean fuel alternative, particularly for LPG blending. India currently has limited pilot-scale domestic DME production.

Balasaheb Darade, MD, New Era Cleantech, said, "A clear blending policy will be

key to unlocking investments and scaling domestic DME production."

DME can be produced from coal gasification, natural gas reforming, biomass gasification or waste-derived syngas through two major production pathways: the indirect route (syngas to methanol to DME) and the direct route (syngas to DME via single reactor catalytic process).

Countries with large coal reserves can therefore produce DME domestically through coal gasification technologies.

DME combustion produces significantly lower emissions compared with conventional hydrocarbon fuels.

China accounts for nearly 90 per cent of global DME production capacity, primarily due to its large scale coal-to-chemicals industry.

Global DME production is dominated by coal-based routes, which account for overwhelming majority of output. A much smaller shares come from natural gas or methane based pathways, while bio DME contributes only a minimal fraction.

Over 39,000 consumers give up LPG for PNG, 4.85 lakh new connections added



AGENCIES

New Delhi, 19 April

In a significant shift towards alternative fuel adoption, more than 39,000 consumers have surrendered their LPG connections and switched to piped natural gas (PNG), the government said on Sunday.

The transition, facilitated through the MYPNGD.in platform, is part of a broader strategy to ensure long-term energy stability and reduce dependence on LPG.

The government said it has been working closely with

States and Union Territories under the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and the LPG Control Order, 2000 to monitor supplies and curb malpractices such as hoarding and black marketing. States have been asked to take the lead in ensuring smooth availability of petrol, diesel and LPG, with the Centre reiterating this responsibility through multiple communications and review meetings.

To strengthen coordination, regular meetings have been held with state authorities,

including high-level reviews chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in early April.

During these discussions, states were directed to issue daily press briefings, counter misinformation on social media, and intensify enforcement drives through district administrations in coordination with oil marketing companies. As part of enforcement measures, more than 2,400 raids were conducted across the country on 18 April alone to check hoarding and black marketing of LPG.

Public sector oil marketing companies have also stepped up vigilance, imposing penalties on 264 LPG distributorships and suspending 67 others for violations.

At the same time, the government is accelerating the expansion of city gas distribution networks to boost PNG adoption.



Russian oil relief

The US has extended by 30 days its waiver from sanctions for Russian oil purchases. Just days ago, US Treasury secretary Scott Bessent had ruled that out. This flip-flop is a relief. Global oil supplies need all the help they can get if prices are to descend and every barrel has begun to count. Costlier oil has imperilled the global economy as inflation rises and growth weakens, including in America where petrol prices at pumps are averaging over \$1 per litre, which is eye-popping by US standards. This may explain President Donald Trump's sudden magnanimity over Russian oil. It's a fungible commodity; a supply shock anywhere reaches everywhere. In such a scenario, the origin of oil does not matter. The waiver, which applies to oil loaded onto vessels, will help India in particular, given that it is among the biggest buyers of Russian oil; China buys more but gets most of it through pipelines. For a lasting cool-off in hydrocarbon prices, however, the world needs Iran to ease its grip on the Strait of Hormuz that it re-tightened in response to a US blockade of its ports. Also, Tehran must stop menacing Red Sea traffic via a proxy militia. On its part, the US also needs to give peace a chance.

War impact: Crude oil imports fall to 5-year low

Rishi Ranjan Kala
New Delhi

Crude oil imports in March were the lowest for the month in the last five years as the West Asia conflict, which led to the continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz for more than 50 days and counting, impacted supplies from its largest suppliers in the Middle East Gulf (MEG) region.

According to the Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell, crude oil imports during March declined by 2.6 per cent m-o-m and 17 per cent y-o-y to 18.9 million tonnes (mt) provisionally. Imports in March fell for the third consecutive month. Besides, it is also the lowest monthly import in FY26. In fact, monthly imports in March are the lowest since September 2024.

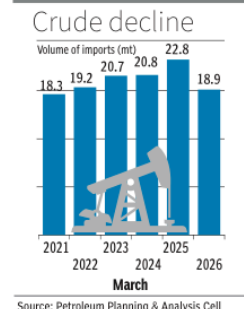
Analysts attribute this to the ongoing conflict in West Asia, which has led to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz since February 28. Currently, around 30 per cent of India's imports that were to transit the Strait have been impacted.

KEY SUPPLIERS

Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the UAE and Oman are the key Indian suppliers, whose cargoes transit the world's most critical energy choke point.

As the conflict in West Asia intensified, India diversified its import basket reducing reliance on the Strait. In January and February, more than 50 per cent more than 50 per cent of India's exports transited the Strait.

To compensate for barrels



from the MEG region, India procured Russian crude oil at sea, which was aided by a 30-day sanctions waiver from the US. Indian refiners have bought a total of 60 million barrels of Russian crude oil since March 5. India purchased around 1.98 million barrels per day (mb/d) of Russian crude oil in March compared to a little over 1 mb/d during February, as per Kpler.

RUSSIAN OIL

The International Energy Agency (IEA), in its April oil market report, said importing countries received 4.4 mb/d of Russian crude oil in March, with India unloading 2 mb/d and China 1.8 mb/d.

Indian crude imports rose by 9,30,000 b/d month-on-month after the US waived restrictions on purchases for cargoes that were loaded before March 5. An estimated 22 million barrels of Russian oil came onshore in India in March, and 14 million barrels in China, wiping out the volumes at sea that had built up since October 2025.

In March, 12 Indian refineries processed Russian crude compared with seven in February, the IEA said.



50 days of war, \$50 bn oil shock to the world

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on Friday that the Strait of Hormuz was open following a ceasefire accord agreed in Lebanon, while the US President Donald Trump said he believed a deal to end the war would come "soon", though the timing remains unclear. However, nearly 50 days into the Iran conflict, more than 500 million barrels of crude and condensate have already been knocked out of the global market, according to analysts and Reuters calculations, marking the largest energy supply disruption in modern history. With crude prices averaging around \$100 a barrel, the lost output is estimated at roughly \$50 billion.

REUTERS

500 mn barrels, in perspective

- 10 weeks of global aviation demand
- 11 days of no road transport worldwide
- 5 days of total global oil demand
- 1 month of US, Europe oil consumption
- 4 months of global shipping fuel use
- 6 years of US military fuel usage

The economic hit

8 mn

barrels per day (bpd) lost in March from Gulf Arab producers, nearly matching the combined output of Exxon Mobil and Chevron

- 19.6 million to 4.1 mn barrels drop in jet fuel exports from February to March-April
- Roughly equals to 1% of Germany's GDP



Strain & recovery

- 12 mn bpd, the scale of production outages since late March
- 45 mn barrels, the drawdown in global onshore crude inventories in April
- 4-5 months, the time heavy crude fields in Kuwait and Iraq may take to stabilise.
- Restoration of key infra, including Qatar's Ras Laffan LNG complex, could require several years to function at full refining capacity

Oil supplies on slippery slope

Recent global crises reveal the limits of India's oil diversification strategy



S DINAKAR
Hyderabad, 19 April

Seven weeks into the West Asia war, India initiated a rare drawdown of its strategic petroleum reserves (SPR), the oil equivalent of a central bank buffer. But the move exposed a core vulnerability: The reserves were thin, covering barely six days of consumption. Last week, the corpus shrank by another 10 per cent, when tankers *Kashimasan* and *Lila Jannagar*, carrying a combined 3 million barrels — roughly half of India's daily demand — delivered crude to Bharat Petroleum's Kochi and Indian Oil's Paradip refineries, respectively, according to shipping data and industry sources.

This marked a record for domestic crude movement to refineries in a single month, coinciding with a severe disruption in supplies from West Asia, India's biggest and most dependable oil & gas supplier. The Iran-US-Israel conflict effectively shuttered the Strait of Hormuz, the artery of India's oil trade.

Refining and government officials maintained that supplies remained adequate despite the steep fall in West Asian shipments. The numbers partially support that claim, but also reveal stark gaps. In February, before the war, West Asia supplied about 3.1 million barrels per day (bpd) to India, 93 per cent via Hormuz. By April, these flows had shrunk by two-thirds. Even after tapping alternative sources, refiners remain well below February import levels, according to *Business Standard* estimates based on Kpler data.

"The 2026 Hormuz crisis has revealed the structural limitations of India's oil security strategy," said Vrinda Sahai, a research analyst in the Security Studies Program at Carnegie India, in a note. Short-term fixes like reverting to Russian oil or incremental diversification cannot address the deeper constraints shaping India's energy dependence, she added.

Even as SPR drawdowns confirmed stress in the system, questions emerged about their timing. Sumit Ritolia, analyst at Kpler, said it was unclear why reserves were tapped when other sources were still available. Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd has around 30 million barrels, about 77 per cent of capacity, the oil ministry said in February. "A durable oil and energy security strategy must evolve beyond reactive crisis management," Sahai said.

Reactive policy
In the 70 years since Independence, India's oil strategy has largely been reactive, even as demand has surged to 5.5 million bpd, making it the world's third-largest consumer (behind the US and China). The International Energy Agency and the US energy agency point to India as the world's biggest driver of oil demand.

The reactive instinct has carried into the Hormuz crisis. Refiners and policymakers were caught off guard, said two senior industry officials. After record February supplies, West Asian imports fell sharply to 1.24 million bpd in March and about 1.7 million bpd in April, despite Saudi Arabia — India's second-biggest oil supplier in February (behind Russia) — boosting shipments after rerouting them via its Red Sea terminal at Yanbu. Saudi supplies rose to 781,000 bpd in April, 10 per cent above its 2025 average — despite the Hormuz closure.

"The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has always featured in scenario planning, but was considered highly unlikely — almost suicidal for any party attempting it," said Sergey Vakulenko, senior fellow at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center. India did not plan for it, senior industry officials said.

Refiners now face a shortfall of roughly 1.5 million bpd of medium, sour crude, the grade most compatible with Indian refineries, an investigation into oil receipts based on satellite data showed. Overall receipts in March and April were about 800,000-900,000 bpd lower than pre-war levels, a 17 per cent drop, even after increased Russian purchases and Red Sea shipments.



But the Yanbu route carries risks. It passes through the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, where Iran-backed Houthi rebels have threatened shipping. "Red Sea and Yanbu/Petrolina are at risk," said Neil Crosby, analyst at commodity analytics firm Sparta. Recent attacks on Petrolina pumping stations may be the first in a series, he said. "The additional 3.5-4.5 million bpd routed via Yanbu could prove short-lived."

Efforts to revive Iranian supplies have also faltered. Despite a 30-day US waiver, only two cargoes were discharged at Paradip and Sikka out of 140 million barrels floating offshore. Reliance rejected a third cargo on compliance grounds, a company official said. Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum, and Hindustan Petroleum turned away several others, citing concerns over trader credibil-

ity and documentation.

Meanwhile, China secured most of the available Iranian crude at steep discounts. A Singapore-based trader said Iranian oil was priced cheapest at \$2-4 per barrel above Brent, compared to \$10 for Russian crude, \$12-14 for West Asian grades, and up to \$20-25 for African and US supplies.

The US has indicated the waiver for Iranian oil will not be extended. The ceasefire remains fragile. On April 18, two Indian-flagged ships — including a VLCC (very large crude carrier) carrying Iraqi crude worth over \$250 million — reported coming under fire near Hormuz, according to the UK Maritime Trade Operations. Iran's Revolutionary Guard has said the strait will remain closed unless US restrictions on Iranian ports are lifted. (Just a day earlier, Iran and the US had announced its reopening.)

Oil wars

Explaining the shortfalls, two senior refining officials said alternative sources in Africa and the Americas are 25-40 days away, compared to about a week from West Asia and two to three weeks from Russia. Orders must be placed a month or more in advance, limiting flexibility. African shipments may reach a four-year high this month, accounting for 9-10 per cent of India's total imports. But these are largely light, sweet grades that Indian refineries cannot fully process and mainly use to blend with heavier oils, said R Ramachandran, former director (Refineries), Bharat Petroleum.

India's oil sourcing has been volatile since 2022, thanks to the wars in Europe and West Asia. In 2021, over 60 per cent of crude imports came from West Asia, with Africa at 13 per cent and Russia a speck. The Americas accounted for 19 per cent, reflecting India's diversification efforts.

The Ukraine war reshaped that mix. As Russia offered steep discounts — up to \$20-\$25 per barrel — its share rose to over a third of India's imports, reducing West Asia's share by 20 percentage points.

That dependence proved fragile. Under pressure from the Trump administration last year, India was forced to scale back Russian imports, and turn to costlier Saudi and United Arab Emirates grades. West Asia has remained indispensable because Saudi Arabia can supply the full range — from light, sweet to heavy, sour — and in any quantity India needs, Ramachandran said.

The Hormuz blockade has, however, pushed India back toward Russian crude. Imports, which were halved in February under US pressure, rebounded after Washington granted a temporary waiver, allowing an additional 40-50 million barrels of Russian oil purchases until April 11. Refiners had hoped for an extension. Russia predominantly supplies medium, sour Urals, an ideal substitute for lost West Asian supplies.

"We will not be renewing the general licence on Russian oil, and we will not be renewing the general licence on Iranian oil," US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said. But as the Hormuz crisis deepened, Washington extended the Russian waiver for another month from April 17.

"India and China, as the largest buyers of Gulf oil, were hit hardest by the closure," Vakulenko said. "In such conditions, Russian oil becomes indispensable. Even if there is a ceasefire, both countries will remain wary of future disruptions."

Russia offers a hedge against West Asian dependence, but as long as oil invites sanctions, New Delhi will find itself navigating Washington's diktats.

‘एक दिन में 53 लाख सिलेंडर दिए गए’

दावा

नई दिल्ली, एजेंसी। केंद्र सरकार ने रविवार को कहा कि पश्चिम एशिया बनाव के बीच ईंधन की बिना रुकावट आपूर्ति सुनिश्चित की जा रही है। एक ही दिन में 53 लाख से अधिक घरेलू सिलेंडर डिलीवर किए गए।

रविवार को पेट्रोलियम एवं प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्रालय ने एक बयान में यह जानकारी दी। बताया कि देश में घरेलू एलपीजी सिलेंडरों की डिलीवरी बुकिंग के हिसाब से सामान्य बनी हुई है।

समुद्री सुरक्षा पर कड़ी नजर रखी जा रही: मंत्रालय ने कहा कि

मंत्रालय ने कहा, 39 हजार से अधिक एलपीजी कनेक्शन छोड़े गए



पेट्रोलियम एवं प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्रालय ने बताया कि 39 हजार से अधिक उपभोक्ताओं ने अपने एलपीजी कनेक्शन सरेंडर कर दिए हैं। ये सभी वे उपभोक्ता थे, जिनके घर के पास पीएनजी उपलब्ध थी। इन लोगों ने अब पीएनजी कनेक्शन ले लिए हैं। मंत्रालय के मुताबिक, यह पीएनजी की ओर बढ़ते रुझान का संकेत है। मंत्रालय ने नागरिकों से अपील की है कि वे पेट्रोल-डीजल और एलपीजी की घबराहट में खरीदारी नहीं करें। मंत्रालय के मुताबिक, सरकार ईंधन की पर्याप्त उपलब्धता के लिए हर मुमकिन कोशिश कर रही है।

शनिवार को एक ही दिन में 53.5 लाख से अधिक घरेलू सिलेंडर डिलीवर किए गए। दावा किया कि घरेलू एलपीजी, पीएनजी और सीएनजी (परिवहन) की सौ फीसदी आपूर्ति की जा ही है। सरकार ने घरेलू गैस आपूर्ति में कमी नहीं होने का भरोसा दिलाते हुए

कहा है कि समुद्री सुरक्षा पर कड़ी नजर रखी जा रही है।

ऑटो एलपीजी की खपत बढ़ी: मंत्रालय ने ऑटो एलपीजी की खपत में अचानक आई बढ़ोतरी का भी इशारा किया। बताया कि अप्रैल में (17 अप्रैल तक) द्वारा ऑटो एलपीजी की औसत बिक्री

लगभग 305 मीट्रिक टन प्रतिदिन रही। इससे पहले फरवरी में यह औसत 177 मीट्रिक टन प्रतिदिन था। मंत्रालय ने बताया कि कालाबाजारी और जमाखोरी पर रोकथाम की कार्रवाई भी जारी है। शनिवार को देशभर में 2400 से अधिक स्थानों पर छापे मारे गए।

रसोई में ईंधन के लिए एथेनॉल का इस्तेमाल संभव

प्रस्ताव

नई दिल्ली, एजेंसी। एलपीजी संकट के बीच केंद्र सरकार, एथेनॉल को एक वैकल्पिक ईंधन के तौर पर इस्तेमाल कर सकती है। सरकार की योजना शुरुआत में व्यावसायिक संस्थानों जैसे होटल, एयरपोर्ट और रेस्टोरेंट में एथेनॉल का इस्तेमाल खाना बनाने में करने की है। उद्योग जगत ने इसका प्रस्ताव सौंपा है।

माना जा रहा है कि इस प्रस्ताव को एक अंतर-मंत्रालयी पैनल के सामने रखा जाएगा। इस पैनल में पेट्रोलियम, सड़क परिवहन, भारी उद्योग और खाद्य मंत्रालय के अधिकारी शामिल हैं। यही पैनल एथेनॉल से जुड़े नीतिगत फैसले लेता है।

एलपीजी में 20 प्रतिशत डीएमई मिलाने से बचत होगी

कोयला गैसीकरण से उत्पादित 20 प्रतिशत डाइमिथाइल ईथर (डीएमई) को रसोई गैस (एलपीजी) के साथ मिलाने से एलपीजी आयात में सालाना लगभग 63 लाख टन की कमी आ सकती है। एक ताजा रिपोर्ट के अनुसार इससे प्रति वर्ष लगभग 34,200 करोड़ रुपये तक की विदेशी मुद्रा की बचत होगी। कोयला गैसीकरण की प्रक्रिया में कोयले को सिनगैस में बदला जाता है, जिसे बाद में डीएमई में बदल दिया जाता है। डीएमई एक स्वच्छ जलने वाला ईंधन है, जो आयातित एलपीजी के स्वदेशी विकल्प के रूप में इस्तेमाल होता है। पश्चिम एशिया में युद्ध छिड़ने के बाद से भारत को एलपीजी आपूर्ति में आने वाली बाधाओं के मद्देनजर यह रिपोर्ट काफी महत्वपूर्ण मानी जा रही है। न्यू एरा क्लीनटेक सॉल्यूशन लिमिटेड की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, 20 प्रतिशत मिश्रण से सालाना लगभग 63 लाख टन एलपीजी आयात कम हो सकता है।



अगर इस प्रस्ताव को मंजूरी मिल जाती है तो ईंधन का मजबूत विकल्प तैयार हो सकता है।

बताया जा रहा है कि एथेनॉल को खाना पकाने के लिए एक पूरक स्वच्छ ईंधन के

तौर पर देखा जा सकता है न कि एलपीजी के विकल्प के तौर पर। गौरतलब है कि अमेरिका ईरान-युद्ध की वजह से एलपीजी आयात बाधित हुआ है और इस वजह से घरेलू बाजार में एलपीजी की उपलब्धता

कम हुई है। सरकारी तेल विपणन कंपनियां घरेलू जरूरतों को प्राथमिकता दे रही हैं, जिससे होटल और रेस्टोरेंट जैसे कमर्शियल संस्थानों को कम एलपीजी की आपूर्ति हो रही है।



39,000 पीएनजी उपभोक्ताओं ने एलपीजी कनेक्शन किए सरेंडर

नई दिल्ली, आइएनएस : अब तक 39,000 से अधिक पीएनजी धारकों ने अपने एलपीजी कनेक्शन वापस लौटा दिए हैं। पिछले दिनों सरकार ने पीएनजी के साथ-साथ एलपीजी कनेक्शन रखने वाले उपभोक्ताओं से अपील की थी कि वह अपने एलपीजी सिलिंडर सरेंडर करें। साथ ही चेताया भी था कि पीएनजी उपलब्ध होने पर भी एलपीजी नहीं छोड़ी तो गैस सिलिंडर नहीं मिलेगा। असल में सरकार ने यह कदम पश्चिम एशिया में चल रहे युद्ध के कारण उत्पन्न एलपीजी की कमी को दूर करने और देश में नेचुरल गैस पाइपलाइन नेटवर्क को तेजी से फैलाने के लिए उठाया गया है।

सरकार की ओर से बताया गया कि एलपीजी की जमाखोरी तथा कालाबाजारी रोकने के लिए देशभर में छापेमारी की जा रही है। 18 अप्रैल को ही 2,400 से अधिक जगह छापेमारी की गई। सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की तेल विपणन कंपनियों ने 264 एलपीजी वितरण केंद्रों पर जुर्माना लगाया और 67 अन्य के लाइसेंस निलंबित किया। शनिवार को 53.50 लाख से अधिक घरेलू एलपीजी सिलिंडर की डिलीवरी की गई।

देश भर में घरेलू पीएनजी के लिए प्रीपेड मीटर की सिफारिश

सुधीर पाल सिंह
नई दिल्ली, 19 अप्रैल

एक समिति ने देश भर में स्मार्ट घरेलू पाइपड नैचुरल गैस (पीएनजी) मीटरों की पोस्टपेड बिलिंग व्यवस्था में बदलाव करने का सुझाव दिया है। इस समिति का गठन पीएनजी मीटर की रोडमैप की सिफारिश के लिए हुआ था। समिति ने मीटर विनिर्माताओं को उत्पादन से जुड़ी प्रोत्साहन योजना (पीएलआई) मुहैया कराने का आग्रह भी किया है। इससे उनकी वाणिज्यिक सेहत में भी सुधार होगा।

इस पांच सदस्यीय समिति ने तकनीकी प्रदर्शन, जीवन चक्र लागत



विश्लेषण और कार्यान्वयन के लिए तैयारियों का विश्लेषण किया। समिति ने यह भी पाया कि स्मार्ट डायफ्राम-आधारित घरेलू पीएनजी मीटर से

व्यापक स्तर पर सिटी गैस वितरण (सीजीडी) क्षेत्र को सर्वाधिक व्यवहार्य व लागत प्रभावी हल मिलेगा। समिति ने कहा, 'मूल्यांकन ने स्थापित

समिति का तर्क

■ पेट्रोलियम और प्राकृतिक गैस नियामक बोर्ड के सचिव की अध्यक्षता वाली समिति की सिफारिश

■ प्रीपेड मीटर राजस्व सुरक्षा को मजबूत करता है, परिचालन व्यय को कम करता है और सीजीडी संस्थाओं के लिए नकदी प्रवाह में सुधार करता है

किया कि पारंपरिक मीटरों की तुलना में स्मार्ट मीटर कहीं ज्यादा लाभदायक होते हैं।

स्मार्ट मीटर में स्वचालित मीटर

रीडिंग, वास्तविक समय खपत की निगरानी, बेहतर बिलिंग सटीकता, लीकेज या छेड़छाड़ की स्थिति में रिमोट शट-ऑफ के माध्यम से बढ़ी हुई सुरक्षा, वास्तविक समय के आधार पर छेड़छाड़ अलर्ट और बेहतर उपभोक्ता पारदर्शिता की विशेषताएं हैं।' पेट्रोलियम और प्राकृतिक गैस नियामक बोर्ड (पीएनजीआरबी) के सचिव अंजन कुमार मिश्रा की अध्यक्षता वाली समिति ने तर्क दिया कि वाणिज्यिक दृष्टिकोण से प्रीपेड स्मार्ट मीटरिंग और रिमोट कम्युनिकेशन प्रभावी रूप से खराब ऋणों को समाप्त करता है। यह राजस्व सुरक्षा को मजबूत करता है, परिचालन व्यय को कम करता है और

सीजीडी संस्थाओं के लिए नकदी प्रवाह में सुधार करता है। समिति ने सीजीडी संस्थाओं के साथ व्यापक विचार-विमर्श किया और पारंपरिक पोस्टपेड की चुनौतियों का खुलासा किया। इन चुनौतियों में उपभोक्ता भुगतान चूक, प्राप्य का संचय, उच्च वसूली लागत और मैन्युअल बिलिंग और मीटर रीडिंग पर आवर्ती व्यय शामिल हैं।

समिति ने रिपोर्ट में कहा, 'उद्योग डेटा ने संकेत दिया कि घरेलू उपभोक्ताओं का बड़ा वर्ग महत्वपूर्ण अनुपात भुगतान पर चूक करता है। इसके परिणामस्वरूप सीजीडी संस्थाओं के लिए पर्याप्त वित्तीय और परिचालन बोझ होता है।

तनाव के बीच रूसी तेल खरीद पर छूट से राहत

शुभांगी माथुर

अमेरिका ने अपनी नीति में ऐतिहासिक बदलाव करते हुए भारत सहित कई देशों को रूस से कच्चा तेल की खरीद जारी रखने की अनुमति दे दी। इससे भारत को बड़ी राहत मिली है क्योंकि इससे कच्चे तेल की आपूर्ति से संबंधित चिंता दूर होगी। रूसी तेल खरीद की छूट को घोषणा ऐसे समय में की गई है जब ईरान और अमेरिका के बीच युद्ध विराम की घोषणा के बावजूद होमुज स्ट्रेट से जहाजों का आवागमन बाधित है। उद्योग विशेषज्ञों और रिफाइनरी अधिकारियों के अनुसार यह नई छूट भारत के लिए कच्चे तेल की आपूर्ति की स्थिति को आसान बनाएगी।

इन्ना में कॉरपोरेट रेटिंग्स में उपाध्यक्ष और समूह प्रमुख प्रशांत वशिष्ठ ने कहा, 'यह छूट भारत के लिए बड़ी राहत है क्योंकि इससे हमारी (कच्चे तेल की) आपूर्ति आसान हो जाएगी। संकट के बावजूद हमारी रिफाइनरियां पूरी क्षमता से काम कर रही हैं और इसमें

रूस के तेल की आपूर्ति की भूमिका बहुत अहम है।'

अमेरिका ने विभिन्न देशों को 16 मई तक रूस से उन कच्चा तेल और पेट्रोलियम उत्पाद खरीदने की अनुमति है, जिन्हें 17 अप्रैल या उससे पहले जहाजों पर लाद दिया गया था। यह घोषणा अमेरिका के वित्त मंत्री स्कॉट बेसंट के दो दिन पहले दिए गए उस बयान के बिल्कुल उलट है जिसमें उन्होंने कहा था कि रूस और ईरान पर लगे प्रतिबंधों में दी गई छूट को आगे नहीं बढ़ाया जाएगा।

भारतीय रिफाइनरियां अमेरिका की छूट के नवीनीकरण के बिना भी रूसी कच्चे तेल की खरीद जारी रखने को लेकर आश्वस्त थीं क्योंकि ये प्रतिबंध केवल प्रतिबंधित तेल कंपनियों पर ही लागू होते हैं।

एक रिफाइनरी के एक अधिकारी ने नाम जाहिर नहीं करने की शर्त पर कहा, 'हमें रूस से (कच्चा तेल) खरीदने से कभी नहीं रोका गया। मार्च में भी वह हमारा सबसे बड़ा आपूर्तिकर्ता था। चूंकि होमुज स्ट्रेट के फिर से खुलने की स्थिति अभी भी



साफ नहीं है। इसलिए हम अभी भी रूस, अफ्रीका, लैटिन अमेरिका, अमेरिका और सऊदी अरब और संयुक्त अरब अमीरात जैसे खाड़ी देशों से कच्चा तेल खरीदने पर ही निर्भर हैं। इराक, कुवैत और कतर जैसे जमीन से घिरे देशों से आपूर्ति लगभग शून्य है।'

मैरीटाइम इंटेलिजेंस फर्म केप्लर के आंकड़ों के अनुसार मार्च में भारत का रूसी कच्चे तेल का आयात 9 महीने के उच्च स्तर 20.6 लाख बैरल प्रति दिन तक पहुंच गया, जो फरवरी में 10.6 लाख बैरल प्रति दिन था। 17 अप्रैल तक रिफाइनरियों ने 16.7 लाख बैरल प्रति दिन रूसी तेल का आयात किया है।

इस बीच, ईरानी कच्चे तेल और

पेट्रोलियम उत्पादों के लिए इसी तरह की छूट 19 अप्रैल को समाप्त हो गई। होमुज स्ट्रेट का खुलना अनिश्चित बना हुआ है। 19 अप्रैल को दो भारतीय ध्वज वाले पोत जग अर्णव ने इस संकीर्ण समुद्री मार्ग से गुजरते समय गोला बारी की घटना की सूचना दी, जिसके बाद वे फारस की खाड़ी लौट गए। हालांकि सरकार ने चालक दल के किसी भी चोटिल होने से इनकार किया।

भारत के विदेश सचिव विक्रम मिसरी ने भारत में ईरान के राजदूत मोहम्मद फतहाली से मुलाकात की और गोलाबारी की घटना पर गहरी चिंता व्यक्त की। सरकार ने एक विज्ञप्ति में कहा, 'व्यापारिक जहाजों

पर गोलाबारी की इस गंभीर घटना पर अपनी चिंता दोहराते हुए विदेश सचिव ने राजदूत से ईरान के अधिकारियों को भारत के विचारों से अवगत कराने और होमुज से भारत की ओर जाने वाले जहाजों की सुविधा की प्रक्रिया को जल्द से जल्द फिर से शुरू करने का आग्रह किया।' इस बीच 31 भारतीय नाविकों के साथ एक भारतीय-ध्वज वाला कच्चा तेल टैंकर देश गरिमा 18 अप्रैल को होमुज को सुरक्षित पार कर गया। जहाज के 22 अप्रैल को मुंबई पहुंचने की उम्मीद है।

पेट्रोलियम मंत्रालय ने कहा कि उपभोक्ताओं को प्राथमिकता दी गई है, जिसमें घरेलू पीएनजी और सीएनजी परिवहन को 100 फीसदी आपूर्ति की गई है और उर्वरक संयंत्रों को गैस आवंटन उनके छह महीने के औसत उपभोग का लगभग 95 फीसदी तक बढ़ाया गया है। इसके अतिरिक्त शहरी गैस वितरण नेटवर्क के माध्यम से की जाने वाली आपूर्ति सहित अन्य औद्योगिक और वाणिज्यिक क्षेत्रों को गैस आपूर्ति 80 फीसदी तक बढ़ाई गई है।