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Business Standard (Hindi)
City gas ke vistar se hoga 4.5 lakh naukriyon ka srajan
Sep 8, 2021 | Delhi | Pg No.: 4 | | Sq Cm:230 | AVE: 258529 | PR Value: 1292646

सिटी गैस के विस्तार से होगा 4.5 लाख नौकरियों का सृजन

त्वेष मिश्र
नई दिल्ली, 7 सितंबर

हाइड्रोकार्बन सेक्टर स्किल काउंसिल (एचएसएससी) के मुख्य परिचालन अधिकारी संदीप सिंह राणा के मुताबिक भारत के सिटी गैस डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन (सीजीडी) इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर के विकास से करीब 4,50,000 नौकरियों के सृजन की संभावना है।

राणा ने बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड से बातचीत में कहा, 'जनता को बड़े पैमाने पर प्राकृतिक गैस उपलब्ध कराने के लिए सरकार सीजीडी नेटवर्क के विस्तार पर बहुत जोर दे रही है। सीजीडी नेटवर्क के कवरेज में बढ़ोतरी से हाइड्रोजन संबंधी नौकरियों में अगले 20-25 साल में अनुमानित रूप से 4,50,000 रोजगार सृजन की संभावना है।'

सीजीडी के 10वें दौर की बोली के बाद गैस ग्रिड नेटवर्क का विस्तार देश की करीब 70 प्रतिशत आबादी तक हो जाएगा, जो देश के 50 प्रतिशत भौगोलिक क्षेत्र में रहती है।

राणा के मुताबिक खुदरा ईंधन पंप और तरलीकृत पेट्रोलियम गैस (एलपीजी) वितरण में भी नौकरियों में बढ़ोतरी होगी। इन्हें नए पेट्रोल पंपों से समर्थन मिलेगा, जो मझोले और छोटे शहरों में निजी और सरकारी उद्यमों द्वारा स्थापित किए जा रहे हैं, जिससे ईंधन की बढ़ती मांग पूरी की जा सके। उन्होंने कहा, 'इससे इस क्षेत्र में खुदरा वृद्धि को बल मिल सकता है और इसके लिए रिटेल पेट्रोल पंपों पर ज्यादा कर्मचारियों व लोगों की जरूरत होगी।'

उम्मीद

- हाइड्रोकार्बन स्किल काउंसिल के मुताबिक 4,50,000 नौकरियों की संभावना
- 1,42,000 लोगों को 3 साल में प्रशिक्षित कर प्रमाणपत्र दिया

प्रधानमंत्री उज्ज्वला योजना (पीएमयूवाई) के विस्तार से भी अवसर मिलेंगे। राणा ने कहा, 'इसके लिए स्थानीय भंडारण व वितरण स्टेशनों पर ज्यादा संख्या में कुशल कामगारों की जरूरत होगी और डिलिवरी करने वालों की भी जरूरत होगी। इसकी वजह से भी प्रशिक्षित कार्यबल की जरूरत बढ़ेगी, जिससे नए गैस चूल्हों व अन्य उपकरणों की मरम्मत और रखरखाव हो सके।'

नैशनल स्किल मिशन आफ इंडिया के तर्ज पर हाइड्रोकार्बन सेक्टर स्किल काउंसिल (एचएसएससी) की स्थापना की गई है। राणा ने कहा कि एचएसएससी 2018 से काम कर रहा है और तबसे 1.42 लोगों को प्रशिक्षित और प्रमाणित किया जा चुका है।

काउंसिल ने हाइड्रोकार्बन क्षेत्र की उच्च प्राथमिकता वाली 23 नौकरियों के लिए क्वालीफिकेशन पैक्स (क्यूपी) विकसित किए हैं।

इनमें से ज्यादा लोकप्रिय कौशल में रिटेल आउटलेट अटेंडेंट (तेल एवं गैस), एलपीजी डिलिवरी पर्सनल, एलपीसी मैकेनिक, इंडस्ट्रियल वेल्डर (तेल और गैस) इंडस्ट्रियल इलेक्ट्रीशियन (तेल एवं गैस) पाइप फिटर-सिटी गैस डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन, प्रॉसेस इंस्ट्रूमेंट ऑपरेटर और फायर सेफ्टी टेक्नीशियन (तेल और गैस) शामिल हैं।

Domestic air traffic rises 31% in Aug to 66 lakh

OUR BUREAU
Mumbai, September 7

The Indian aviation industry is seeing a steady month-on-month recovery, according to credit rating agency ICRA. The agency said there has been a sequential growth of 30-31 per cent as the Covid-19 infection trajectory dropped.

In August, domestic passenger traffic registered improvement at 65-66 lakh, compared to 50.1 lakh in July 2021, a y-o-y growth of around 131 per cent.

Airlines' capacity deployment for August 2021 was about 99 per cent higher at around 57,500 departures (28,834 in August 2020). On sequential basis, the number of departures in August 2021 was higher by 22 per cent, as Covid infections were on a downward trajectory.

For August 2021, average daily departures were at 1,900, significantly higher than 900 in August 2020, and 1,500 in July 2021.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation had increased the permitted capacity to 65 per cent from July 5. It has now allowed increasing capacity to 72.5 per cent from August 12 until further orders.

Kinjal Shah, Vice-President & Co-Group Head-Corporate Ratings, ICRA, said, "Though the recovery continued in August, there is continued stress on demand, driven largely by second wave of the pandemic, limiting travel to only necessary travel, while both leisure and business travel have been curtailed due to various State-wide restrictions, despite the decline in infections."

Rising ATF prices

Elevated aviation turbine fuel prices continue to pose a near-term challenge. However, a marginal sequential decline of 3.8 per cent in September 2021 is a respite for the industry. The MoCA also increased the minimum and maximum fare band by 10-13 per cent for domestic flights with effect from August 12 until August 31.

In ICRA's view, the price increase may not materially impact passenger traffic demand as travel is limited to necessary one. However, it will allow airlines to recoup some part of the increase in ATF prices, cushioning impact of losses.

The Financial Express
'NPS base to jump by a quarter in FY22'
Sep 8, 2021 | Delhi | Pg No.: 1,2 | | Sq Cm:367 | AVE: 1200605 | PR Value: 6003024

EXPANDING COVER

'NPS base to jump by a quarter in FY22'

SURYA SARATHI RAY & PRASANTA SAHU
New Delhi, September 7

AS MANY AS 52 CPSEs, including biggies IOC, ONGC, NTPC, BPCL, GAIL (India), PFC and various railway companies, have come aboard the Nation Pension System (NPS) with over one lakh employees over the last few years, helping expand the cover, even as there has been a stagnation in new job creation by the Centre and a slowing of the pace of recruitment by many state governments. Helped by distribution partners — mainly banks and banking correspondents —, the NPS subscriber base, which stood at 4.24 crore at the end of FY21, will get to expand by a record one crore in the current financial year, Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) chairman Supratim Bandyopadhyay told *FE* in an interview.

Nearly 30 lakh people were added to the NPS fold till late August this fiscal, including 28 lakh under the Atal Pension Yojana (APY).

NPS is getting broad-based. Our distribution channels comprising mainly bank partners, are doing excellent work. In August, we added a record one million customers. About 35,000 people are joining per day. While SBI is the leading intermediary, small finance banks and RRBs are also doing well.

—SUPRATIM BANDYOPADHYAY,
CHAIRMAN,
PFRDA

Continued on Page 2

'NPS base to jump by a quarter in FY22'

Apart from APY, private corporate segment and the 'All Citizens' Model" (individuals) were also expected to show good growth, he said.

Citing the precedents abroad, he also stressed the need for a universal pension-cum-insurance scheme for the masses, by combining the APY, the largest component in the NPS in terms of subscription base with two other government-run products – Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBM) and Suraksha Bima Yojana. APY assures a minimum pension of ₹1,000-5,000/month to the subscribers, despite being market-linked, and has current subscriber base of over 3 crore.

Of course, there is still a long road ahead to meet the objective of bringing the country's entire 45 crore unorganised sector workers under a viable, robust social security net.

Bandyopadhyay said: "We have suggested (to the government) that let the APY not be isolated, because while what it offers is pension, when somebody starts contribution, say at the age of 18 or 20, she has a long way to go to get that pension. But, if her life is cut short, then the person or his family doesn't actually get a good cover, even though the entire corpus created is returned to her nominee. If an insurance cover is also clubbed with the pension facility, say Suraksha Bima for accident cover and PMJJBM for life cover, the wider scheme could be ideal for the unorganised sector workers where the contribution levels are pretty low."

He said as in many other countries, 'nudging' by the government to choose the 'right financial product' might go a long way in bolstering the social security net for the low-income workers.

With the government sector reaching near saturation, non-government sector (excluding Atal Pension Yojana), which at present is only 7% of total subscriber base, holds key to the growth of NPS as well as expansion of old-age income for the masses, he noted.

"Many of the CPSEs had their own superannuation schemes, either they were managing themselves or by insurance companies. When they saw a better option in NPS as it provides much higher post-tax returns and a higher corpus at the time of exit, they have chosen it," Bandyopadhyay said. For CPSEs and state-run financial institutions, NPS is not mandatory, while for Union and state government employees, it already is. "Life Insurance Corporation is also set to shift their employees to NPS soon," he said.

The government sector subscribers fetched return of 12.6% on the NPS corpus in the past year while it was 8.5% under EPFO and around 8% under a couple of superannuation funds run by insurance companies. In the last 12 years, the average annual return of government NPS subscribers have been over 10%, Bandyopadhyay said.

In a low interest regime, it often becomes difficult for many corporate houses including CPSEs to even match the returns given by EPFO (8.5% for last year), so shifting to NPS enabled them to cut subsidy cost to match EPFO returns.

Individual NPS subscribers get tax deduction of up to ₹1.5 lakh under Section 80C of Income Tax Act and an additional deduction of ₹50,000 under section 80CCD 1(B). Moreover, NPS contributions by employers (up to 10% of the salary) is allowed as a deductible perquisite for employees under Section 80CCD(2), subject to a ceiling of ₹7.5 lakh in a financial year. An employer can claim the NPS contributions to employees' NPS accounts (up to 10% of the salary) as an exempted business expense under Section 36(1)(iva). At maturity, 60% of the lumpsum amount received by subscribers is tax-free and the balance invested for purchasing annuity is also exempt from tax.

The central government employees' enrolment grew just 3.5% on year in FY21 and 1.7% between March 31 and August 28, 2021, to a total of 22.13 lakh. Enrolment of state government employees rose 8% in FY21 and grew about 4% from March 31 till August 28 to a total of 53.37 lakh. In contrast, enrollment in corporate sector, which includes CPSEs, grew nearly 16% in FY21 and by 7% between March 31 and August 28. The current subscriber base in this segment is 12.04 lakh.

$1 bn refund offer acceptable, to drop cases within days: Cairn

Asked if company would make a comeback to India, Cairn CEO said India will become another potential investment destination once issue is closed

NEW DELHI: UK-based Cairn Energy PLC on Tuesday said it will drop litigations to seize Indian properties in countries ranging from France to the US, within a couple of days of getting a $1 billion refund resulting from the scrapping of a retrospective tax law.

The firm, which gave India its biggest onland oil discovery, termed "bold" the legislation passed last month to cancel a 2012 policy that gave the tax department power to go back 50 years and slap capital gains levies wherever ownership had changed hands overseas but business assets were in India.

The offer to return money seized to enforce retrospective tax demand in lieu of dropping all litigations against the government "is acceptable to us," Cairn CEO Simon Thomson told PTI in an interview from London.

Cairn will drop cases to seize diplomatic apartments in Paris and Air India airplanes in the US in "a matter of a couple of days" after the refund, he said adding Cairn's shareholders are in agreement with accepting the offer and moving on.

"Some of our core shareholders likes BlackRock and Franklin Templeton agree (to this). Our view is supported by our core shareholders (that) on balance it is better to accept and move on and be pragmatic. Rather than continue with something negative for all parties which could last for many years," he said.

Seeking to repair India's damaged reputation as an investment destination, the government last month enacted new legislation to drop Rs 1.1 lakh crore in outstanding claims against multinationals such as telecom group Vodafone, pharmaceuticals company Sanofi and brewer SABMiller, now owned by AB InBev, and Cairn.

About Rs 8,100 crore collected from companies under the scrapped tax provision are to be refunded if the firms agreed to drop outstanding litigation, including claims for interest and penalties. Of this, Rs 7,900 crore is due only to Cairn.

"Once we get to final resolution, part of that resolution is us dropping everything in terms of litigation. We can do that within a very short period of time, just a matter of a couple of days or something," Thomson said. "So we are preparing on the basis of getting this resolution quickly, all these cases being dropped, and putting all this behind."

He said all enforcement proceedings brought because of the Government of India's refusal to honour an international arbitration award asking it to return the value of money seized to enforce the retrospective tax demand, will be dropped.

"Everything will be dropped. There will be no more litigation, that will be it. It will clear the matter up," he said.

Cairn in its half-yearly report on Tuesday said it will return up to $700 million out of the Rs 7,900 crore ($1.06 billion) it is supposed to get from the Indian government, to "shareholders via special dividend and buyback."

Asked if the company would make a comeback to India, Thomson said India will become another potential investment destination once the issue is closed.

"If there is right opportunity, why not," he said.

Cairn, he said, has had a "good, open and transparent line of communications with the Government of India" on finding a resolution to the retro tax issue. "Our aim was to get to a resolution... something which would be acceptable to our shareholders."

"We were pleased when the Government of India made what we thought was a pretty bold move, in terms of enactment of the legislation," he said. "The intention of the government, we are obviously aligned with it, is to get this resolved as quickly as possible. Hopefully, that means within the next few weeks. It is good not only for us and our shareholders but also importantly for India."

The resolution will bury the ghost of retro tax and help move on. "We are keen to get back to Cairn being talked about in terms of success in Rajasthan. I think moving on from this will allow us to do that," he said referring to the prolific oil discovery the firm made in Barmer.

In accepting the terms of the new legislation in India, Cairn would be required to withdraw its international arbitration award claim, interest and costs and to end all legal enforcement actions in order to be eligible for the refund.

"It will mean we will forego interest and penalty in terms of the original arbitration award. The important thing for us is it returns the value that was taken from us. From our perspective it is the right thing to do, be pragmatic, put this behind us, move on," he said adding this would help wipe away a factor negatively impacting investment for many years to come.

The 2012 legislation was used to levy a cumulative of Rs 1.10 lakh crore of tax on 17 entities including UK telecom giant Vodafone but nearly 98 per cent of the Rs 8,100 crore recovered in enforcing such a demand was only from Cairn.

An international arbitration tribunal in December overturned a levy of Rs 10,247 crore in taxes on a 2006 reorganisation of Cairn's India prior to its listing, and asked the Indian government to return the value of shares seized and sold, dividend confiscated and tax refund withheld. This totalled $1.2 billion-plus interest and penalty.

The government initially refused to honour the award, forcing Cairn to identify $70 billion of Indian assets from the US to Singapore to enforce the ruling, including taking flag carrier Air India Ltd to a US court in May. A French court in July paved the way for Cairn to seize real estate belonging to the Indian government in Paris.

All these litigations will be dropped, he added. PTI

Highlights

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The Times of India
Air India bids likely by Sept 15
Sep 8, 2021 | Delhi | Pg No.: 1,27 | | Sq Cm:302 | AVE: 6228447 | PR Value: 31142237

Air India bids likely by Sept 15

Financial bids for the final phase of Air India's divestment are expected by September 15. The Tata Group, which founded the airline in 1932, and SpiceJet promoter Ajay Singh are among the suitors. After submission of bids, the sale will require a nod from the Union Cabinet. **P 27**

Selloff: Financial bids for Air India by Sept 15

Saurabh Sinha
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Air India divestment has entered its final, and most crucial, phase with qualified bidders expected to put in financial bids by September 15.

The Tata Group, which founded the airline in 1932, and struggling-to-survive SpiceJet promoter Ajay Singh are among the qualified suitors. The Tata Group has bid for AI through AirAsia India and its executives have been visiting the airline sites across India in the past few months.

While Air India has been on the selloff list, it has moved slowly as the government and the bidders sought to resolve several issues — from employee benefits to how government guarantees will be dealt with — as it will form the template for future strategic sales.

SETTING THE STAGE

- Government is keen to hand over AI to the highest bidder by end of 2021
- Bidders will quote an enterprise value based on estimate of combined value of AI's equity and debt
- Bidder who quotes highest enterprise value will be the winner

Photo: Saurabh Sinha

BPCL and Shipping Corporation are among the high-profile public sector companies lined up for sale during the current fiscal year as the government chases a record target of Rs 1.75 lakh crore in 2021-22. For long, the government's commitment to the selloff programme has been questioned and if the Air India sale goes through, it could set the stage for more stake sales.

The Times of India
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SUKHET MODEL

Bring dung and get free LPG refill

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @Patna

MUNI Devi, 45, is happy as an LPG cylinder, given to her under the Ujjwala Scheme, is refilled every two months without spending a single rupee.

Munni Devi is among the 44 beneficiaries of the Ujjwala Yojna under the Sukhet panchayat of Madhubani district, who get their LPG cylinders refilled by depositing farm waste and cattle dung from their houses with units that convert them into organic manure.

This unique Sukhet Model is the brainchild of Dr Rajendra Prasad Agriculture University (RAU) at Pusa in Samastipur district. Till February, these women were unable to refill due to rising prices.

On February 4, the RAU set up two units of converting the farm waste and the cattle dung into organic manure. Vice Chancellor Ramesh Chandra Srivastava inaugurated the units -- now running at Majdih village under the Sukhet Panchayat. Another benefit of the Sukhet model is that the farmers easily get organic manure for the harvesting purpose.

The Sukhet Panchayat has nearly 2,500 houses with over 7,000 population. Sunil Yadav, a local resident, runs these units for processing the waste into organic manure after collecting it from poor households.


The beneficiaries with the agricultural university officials

The Morning Standard
CAIRN READY TO ACCEPT REFUND, WITHDRAW CASE
Sep 8, 2021 | Delhi | Pg No.: 1 | | Sq Cm:255 | AVE: 611468 | PR Value: 3057341

CAIRN READY TO ACCEPT REFUND, WITHDRAW CASE

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Chennai

UK-based Cairn Energy Plc will drop litigations to seize Indian government properties abroad, including diplomatic apartments in Paris and Air India airplanes in the US, after getting $1 billion refund of retrospective tax collected by the Centre, Cairn CEO Simon Thomson said.

The government had last month enacted a new legislation to reverse the controversial retrospective tax law of 2012, which had led to tax claims worth over ₹1.1 lakh crore against multinational companies such as Cairn Energy Plc, Vodafone Plc, pharma major Sanofi, and alcohol sector firm SABMiller.

The government had already secured around ₹8,100 crore from such companies through a variety of routes. Of this, ₹7,783 crore (of $1.06 billion) was collected from Cairn alone. From this refund, Cairn plans to return up to $700 million to shareholders — $500 million through a special dividend and a share buyback programme worth $200 million. "The remainder of the proceeds would be allocated to further expansion of the low cost, sustainable production base," it said.

Cairn also plans to enter into statutory undertakings with the GoI related to the new legislation. While it admitted that the final form of these statutory undertakings has yet to be published by the GoI, it went on to note that it anticipates that the principal condition prescribed will be the withdrawal of Cairn's rights under the international arbitration award.

Cairn sees end to tax dispute with India

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The U.K.-based Cairn Energy is working with the Government of India to expedite "documentation and payment of refund" of $1.06 billion of retrospective taxes at the centre of its high-stake dispute with India that it expects to be resolved in the "near term".

In its half-yearly report released on Tuesday, Cairn said it plans to return $700 million to the shareholders through special dividends and buybacks, out of the expected tax refund.

"Progress in resolving our Indian tax issue and active portfolio management leave Cairn well-positioned to deliver growth from a sustainable business, focused on generating further value and returns for shareholders," said Simon Thomson, chief executive of Cairn Energy PLC.

CONTINUED ON ▸ PAGE 8

Cairn sees end to tax dispute with India

The government recently amended the income tax laws to scrap the retrospective tax provisions introduced in 2012-13, under which Cairn was taxed in 2014 for a corporate restructuring undertaken in 2006-07.

The tax department subsequently froze the firm's shares as part of the proceedings and sold them off to recover the claimed tax dues.

The company's disclosure on Tuesday indicates it is positively examining the provisions of the Centre's amendments to the problematic tax law.

The changes propose to refund the taxes levied retrospectively if the affected taxpayers drop all pending litigation and forego any interest and damages claims.

The government had issued draft rules to implement the amended law and the final rules are awaited soon, as the consultation period on the draft rules ended last week.

The rules include a requirement by the affected party to "indemnify, defend and hold harmless" the government of all costs and expenses, if a separate interested party such as shareholders, beneficial owners, officers of the firm, brings, files or maintains any claim over the matter, after the dispute is resolved.

Cairn said it was "working with Government of India to expedite documentation and payment of refund".

If the refund came through, it proposed to give its shareholders $ $500 million as a "special return" and deploy up to $200 million for a share buyback programme.

The balance of around $300 million, would bolster its net cash position to "pursue value accretive expansion and diversification", it said.

EID Parry to set up ₹92.5 cr. distillery in AP

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

EID Parry India Ltd. has announced the setting up of a 120 kilo litre per day capacity distillery at its Sankili unit in Andhra Pradesh.

On Tuesday, the board approved the ₹92.5 crore project. The investment cost would be met through borrowings, the company said in a regulatory filing.

The distillery would utilise sugarcane juice or syrup as principal feedstock during the crushing season. Grains like broken rice or maize would be used during off season to manufacture ethanol, which would have assured offtake from oil marketing firms, the company said.

ENTERPRISE CONNECT

A Business Initiative

Punjab National Bank launches festive offer, waives loan processing charges

With the festive season around the corner, Punjab National Bank (PNB) has launched Festival Bonanza Offer to enhance the availability and affordability of credit to customers. Under the festive offer, the Bank will waive all service charges/ processing fees and documentation charges on its retail products like Home Loans, Vehicle Loans, myProperty Loans, Personal Loans, Pension Loans and Gold Loans. PNB now offers an attractive interest rate starting from 6.80% on home loans and 7.15% on car loans. The Bank is also offering personal loans to the public from 8.95%, which is one of the lowest in the industry. Bank has also announced offering home loan top-up at an attractive rate of interest. Customers can avail of the exciting offer – available till December 31, 2021 - through any of the PNB's branches around the country or via digital channels. Despite the impact of the pandemic, PNB is committed to its customers by offering them customized products, incentives and ease of banking services. The Bank is confident that this festive season will see an encouraging revival in overall consumer spending, thereby boosting its credit portfolio.

IREDA Inks MoU with TANGEDCO for Green Energy projects

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. (IREDA) today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Tamil Nadu Generation & Distribution Corporation Limited (TANGEDCO), for providing its technical expertise in developing Renewable Energy projects and fund raising. The MoU was signed by Shri Pradip Kumar Das, Chairman & Managing Director (CMD), IREDA and Shri Rajesh Lakhoni, CMD, TANGEDCO. Under the MoU, IREDA will extend its technical expertise to TANGEDCO for Renewable energy project development, bid process management, and implementation support. IREDA will also assist TANGEDCO in debt raising through developing financial models, assistance in the understanding market instrument, underwriting services for the proposed debt requirement, and conducting pre-market surveys, road shows to generate interest amongst prospective investors. Signing the MoU, CMD, IREDA said: "The MoU highlights IREDA's continuous efforts for the development of Renewable Energy sector in line with Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. This is a transformational opportunity for IREDA and TANGEDCO to achieve perfect synergy between the two organizations. It will facilitate knowledge sharing and provide consultancy services, which will contribute to driving sustainable development of the country. We look forward to extending our consultancy services to other State Govt. as well for the development of Renewable Energy sector." It is understood that there are huge opportunities for the development of renewable energy in Tamil Nadu. Accordingly, TANGEDCO is planning for 20,000 MW of Solar Power Project, with adequate Battery Storage, 3,000 MW of Pumped Storage Hydro Electric Project, and 2,000 MW of Gas Based Power Plant for efficient Renewable integration. The estimated loan required for the above projects is about Rs.1,32,500 Crores (approx.). IREDA, as the largest lender of the Renewable Energy sector is committed to play an important role in the fulfillment of the financial requirements for RE projects.

Pankaj Kumar takes over charge of Director (Offshore) of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC).

As Director (Offshore), Mr. Kumar will be responsible for the entire gamut of Offshore Oil & Gas fields contributing around 70 per cent of Crude Oil and 78 per cent of Natural Gas production of the Maharatna ONGC. Mr Kumar is a thorough Oil & Gas industry professional with more than 34 years of experience across ONGC's business functions, varying from Operations Management of Offshore and Onshore fields, Well Engineering, Joint Venture Management, Corporate Strategic Management and Asset Management. He has held key positions as Chief of Corporate Strategy & Planning group of ONGC and Asset Manager of Cambay and Ahmedabad Asset. Sustainable production enhancement from mature fields of Ahmedabad and Cambay is a testimony to his impeccable Asset and Project Management skills. He has been instrumental in bringing numerous technological advances by working with various Assets across the Energy major. During his recent tenure as Asset Manager of one of the largest onshore Assets of ONGC at Ahmedabad, the country faced the worst-ever pandemic and lock down. Under his dynamic leadership, during this severe lock-conditions, the Asset with 67 installations continued production round-the-clock. He is known for his visionary approach and dynamic decision making. During his stint in Joint Venture (JV) Operations Group, Mr Kumar was instrumental in exceptional turnaround of CB-OS/2 Offshore JV block by making it profitable with almost 100 per cent increase in production and delivering complex offshore projects in Panna-Mukta and Tapti block, on-time and within allocated budget. Mr Kumar contributed in formulation of ONGC's Long Term Growth Strategy: Energy Strategy 2040 as Chief Corporate Strategy & Planning. Mr Kumar is also the Chairperson of Society of Petroleum Engineers India Section (SPE) – an international organization formed to collect, disseminate and exchange technical knowledge concerning the exploration, development and production of oil and gas resources and related technologies for the public benefit.

NTPC congratulates Archer Harvinder Singh for winning India's first-ever Paralympics medal in Archery in Tokyo Paralympics

NTPC Ltd, India's largest integrated energy company, congratulates archer Harvinder Singh for his exemplary performance in the Men's Recurve Event at the Tokyo Paralympics. Harvinder Singh, who won Bronze at the Tokyo Paralympics, becomes first archer to bring home a medal in Paralympics archery. NTPC has been supporting and promoting archery in India with a partnership with Archery Association of India (AAI).On this historical occasion, NTPC family congratulates Shri Harvinder Singh, Archery Association of India along with the coaches and managers for their commitment towards the sports.NTPC in partnership with the Federation (AAI) has intended to work towards increasing the competitiveness among archers by organising various competitions for improved and continuous training and mentoring.

Rajasthan state Industrial Development & Investment Corporation Ltd ,receives National Award for outstanding performing SIIDC

Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation Limited (RIICO) has been conferred with the outstanding performing State Investment & Industrial Development Corporation (SIIDC) National Award in a national function held at Puducherry on 6th September, 2021 ,organized by COSIDICI which is an Apex body of State Industrial Development Corporation (SIDCs), State Financial Corporations (SFCs) and State Infrastructure Development Corporations in the Country. RIICO received this award due to its meticulous and well planned initiatives taken for attracting investment to the State, developing and providing best infrastructure facilities to industries, having transparent system of allotment of land through e-auction. RIICO has developed Product-specific zones such as IT Parks, SEZs, Agro Food Park, Ceramic & Glass Zones, Auto Zone, Leather Complex, Apparel Park, Sports Goods & Toy Zone, MSE Areas, Artificial Jewellery, besides country's First country specific zone for Japanese companies. Also initiatives for developing new projects such as DMIC, Fintech Park, Bulk Drug Park, Medical Devices Park, Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemical Investment Region (PCPIR) have been taken. In spite of Covid-19, Corporation allotted more than 2800 plots in the year 2020-21, highest ever in the history of RIICO. In the current year, RIICO has plans to allot more than 4500 plots. Plans are afoot, to set up new industrial areas in every sub-division of the State and is likely to launch more than 100 industrial areas in the current financial year. In the year 2020-21, 15 new industrial areas were launched. The Corporation developed MSE areas for accommodating the need of Micro and Small Scale Industries by carving out smaller size of plots having an area of 250, 500 and 700 sq. mts. To ease and bring transparency in the land allotment, RIICO has adopted the process of e-auction. Now, anyone from anywhere in the world can access to the information as to the availability of RIICO industrial areas and plots and can get the allotment by way of participating in eauction process.

Petroleum Secretary flags off production from ONGC deepwater gas well U1B in KG-DWN 98/2, peak 1.2 MMSCMD

Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG), flagged off maiden production from the deep-water gas well U1B of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) on 31 August 2021. The gas well, located in KG-DWN 98/2 Block Cluster – II, has an estimated peak production of 1.2 million metric standard cubic meters per day (MMSCMD). It is the deepest well of the Cluster. The event was graced by the presence of ONGC CMD Subhash Kumar, Additional Secretary (Exploration) Mr. Amar Nath, Additional Secretary & Financial Advisor Mr. Rajesh Agarwal, ONGC Director (Exploration) Mr. R K Srivastava and ONGC OSD-Offshore Mr. Pankaj Kumar. Dedicating the gas well to the nation, Mr Kapoor congratulated Team ONGC led by the CMD and lauded the dedication of the Energy Maharatna towards production enhancement of Oil and Gas for the nation. He said that the extensive experience of ONGC in Exploration and Production brings confidence in the successful operation of the deep-water gas well. Expressing that there is a lot of production potential in deep-water wells, the Petroleum Secretary said this monetization holds special national significance as the first priority of the government is to ensure enhancement of domestic production and reduction of Oil and Gas imports. Mr Kapoor said that we look forward to production enhancement, especially from ONGC, and expressed hope for monetization of many more such wells in the near future.

Smt. Vartika Shukla assumes charge as Chairperson & Managing Director of EIL

Smt. Vartika Shukla has assumed charge as Chairperson & Managing Director of Engineers India Limited (EIL) w.e.f. September 1, 2021. Smt. Vartika Shukla has the distinction of being the first-ever woman C&MD of the Company. A graduate in Chemical Engineering from the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, Smt. Shukla joined EIL in 1988 and possesses extensive consulting experience comprising Design, Engineering and Implementation of complexes in Refining, Gas Processing, Petrochemicals, Fertilizers etc. She has led to the successful completion of many prestigious projects for clients in Oil & Gas and Petrochemical Industry both in India and Overseas. In line with Government of India's emphasis on deploying alternative fuel sources to supplement the energy requirements of the country, Smt. Shukla has also been spearheading the Company's initiatives in new energy areas like Bio Fuels, Coal Gasification, Waste to Fuel, Hydrogen Energy etc. These initiatives will not only strengthen the energy infrastructure of the country but will also promote the sustainability mission. Outlining her vision on assuming charge as C&MD, Smt. Shukla said that while EIL's leadership position in domestic hydrocarbon sector is unparalleled, the Company will strive to consolidate its international footprints by mapping high potential geographies and forging strategic alliances. "We must strive to usher in a new era of Customer Delight through immaculate services and innovation in our operations'" she added. Smt. Vartika Shukla's distinguished career is adorned with several prestigious accolades namely, first PETROFED Woman Executive Award, SCOPE Excellence Award and MoP&NG Innovation Award with her team.

Growth in allopathic drug companies

Commercial units manufacturing allopathic formulations and basic drugs have registered a 'phenomenal' growth during the 24 years after independence. Some 2,300 units are now making a turnover of Rs. 266 crores as against Rs. 10 to 15 crores in 1947. Disclosing this here to-day [Indore, September 6], the Union Minister of State for Petroleum and Chemicals, Mr. P.C. Sethi, said while the Government was largely satisfied by the progress in the field of manufacture, it was equally concerned to see that the formulations and drugs were sold to people at 'reasonable' price. Speaking at a reception arranged by a local drug manufacturing concern, Mr. Sethi said the Drug Control Act had proved to be an effective measure in checking the prices of drugs and other medicines. The Minister agreed that some of the drugs still continued to be sold at a higher price, but that was due to lack of adjustments at dealer level. Mr. Sethi had held talks on the matter yesterday with a number of manufacturers in Bombay and hoped to remove the disparity soon.

The Pioneer
Let all green initiatives not be just gas
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Let all green initiatives not be just gas

SUDHANSHU **MANI**

Further electrification of India's rail tracks would actually result in higher CO_2 emissions because electricity is majorly sourced from fossil fuels

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said this Independence Day that India can achieve self-reliance in energy through an economy of gas-based fuels, electric mobility and bio-fuels/ethanol in petrol. Following up on the promise of National Hydrogen Mission announced in the 2021-22 Budget, he also launched this mission to facilitate generation of carbon-free fuel from renewables, setting a target of 2047 for India to achieve self-reliance in energy. He found the right optics by saying that the country has had to take a pledge to become energy-independent in the 100th year of independence.

Let us go back to another announcement by the PM on energy front; In the "Urja Sangam" conference in March 2015, he had proclaimed the objective of reducing India's oil import from 77 per cent of total consumption in 2013-14 to 67 per cent by 2022. Today, the dependence has actually increased with imports accounting for 85 per cent of oil requirements.

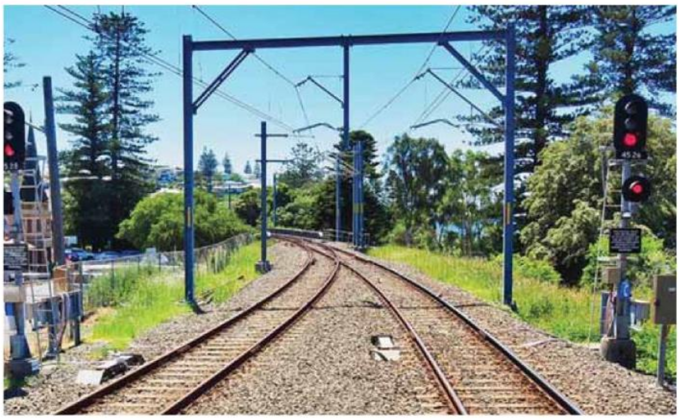
Whether the new national targets are pragmatic or not is a subject of a larger debate. Days before the PM's announcement, there was a media splash that Indian Railways (IR), with a view to kicking off hydrogen mobility in India, had invited bids for hydrogen fuel cell-based trains. Whenever calling of bids, and not actual execution, by IR becomes news, the project usually ends in a whimper. We will, therefore, confine ourselves to see the country-wide status through a limited prism of what IR has done. Before that, however, a glance at electric mobility, particularly e-buses.

Although diesel buses account for a small percentage of the total vehicular population, they contribute to more than 50 per cent of air pollution and carbon emissions in India. State transport corporations, mostly with poorly-managed finances, are known to run smoke-spewing, rickety, diesel buses. The Union Government made an ambitious plan to shift them to cleaner and sophisticated electric buses. It started with FAME (Faster Adoption & Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India) that proved to be ill-conceived and came a cropper due to ambiguity and misuse of the subsidy. It was later rejigged as FAME 2 for subsidy only to state transport corporations but the impact has so far been far from healthy; the penetration of e-buses in the country languishes at around 2000 buses whereas the number of buses in the country is over 17 lakhs.

If the bard's "What's past is prologue" is a lesson in history which sets the context for the present, then IR's report card so far has been dismal and does not inspire any confidence in its ability to contribute and complement the PM's ambitious road map.

The thrust started somewhat with bio-fuels and IR even set up a dedicated organization in Delhi called IROAF (IR Organization for Alternate Fuels), mandated for fixing standards, development, research and execution in fuel and energy efficient and eco-friendly technologies for assimilation in IR. After numerous experiments, sanctions, build-up of esterification plants, repeated news items, there is not one diesel train of IR which runs regularly on diesel+bio-fuel mix.

> UNLESS THIS PROJECT IS TAKEN UP IN RIGHT EARNEST WITH ALL LOOSE ENDS ABOUT VIABILITY, TENDERING FOR EQUIPMENT, ORDERING, DESIGNING THE VEHICLE AND RETRO FITMENT SCHEMES, COMMISSIONING, TRIALS AND OPERATION TIED UP WITH CLEAR-CUT RESPONSIBILITIES, IT WOULD ALSO END UP LIKE ALL ITS PREDECESSORS



We soon heard of initiatives of a dual fuel mode, diesel with CNG, for diesel locomotives and diesel-electric multiple units (DEMUs) to reduce their tail pipe emissions. Some prototypes were made but the project was given up in favour of LNG as CNG has limitation of lower energy density and thus poses a space limitation for on board fuel. LN Ghas comparable energy density with diesel and therefore is much less problematic for on-board storage of fuel. The LNG project lies in infancy for years with no clear road-map.

The next to catch the fancy of IR was multi-gen set diesel locomotives, which with the option to switch on and off one engine, are more energy-efficient. Two such prototypes were made nearly ten years back but the project was foreclosed due to the increased pace of electrification of IR tracks and the IR perceived, belatedly, that these locomotives could not be proliferated.

We also heard of Solar Panels on roof tops of DEMU. A pilot project was completed on some coaches of DEMUs and introduced in the Delhi suburban area, touted funnily as the first-ever in the world. If indeed it was a first-ever, that itself should have alerted IR about the inefficacy of the project. Never mind, moreover, that these prototypes were so constructed that the solar panels mounted on top of the roof offered air resistance and nearly negated the saving in fuel due to solar cells. It was another irrational project which seems to have died with the death of DEMUs themselves in the face of rapid electrification.

Nearly twenty years after its formation, the IROAF website has this to state: "Except for minor projects and showcase installations, IR have not aligned itself with the targets of the 2022. There is very little that IR is doing on its own to contribute to the agenda set by the GoI. The steps taken so far by IR are not commensurate with the quantity of energy that it consumes and the influence that it can exert due to it being the single largest buyer of petroleum and electricity."

An honest admission. But this is now followed by this hydrogen punch, supposedly in line with the PM's declaration that green hydrogen would give India a quantum-jump in achieving its green targets. According to IROAF, the project will commence on the 89 kilometres-long Sonipat-Jind section with retro fitment of hydrogen fuel cell in two DEMU rakes.

It is notable that IR has been trying to acquire hydrogen fuel cell technology for diesel locomotives for a decade but in vain. Has there been any inquest before announcing this bidding process? In his speech, the PM also said what IR has been saying now for many recent years: 100 per cent electrification of all tracks under the zero-emission policy, thus becoming the first major railway-country in the world to do so. This policy itself is debatable. There is a view that further electrification of India's rail tracks would actually result in higher CO_2 emissions because electricity is majorly sourced from fossil fuels and therefore India should first prioritise greening its electricity network by pursuing regenerative energy sources more vigorously rather than electrifying its tracks. In any case, if the policy of 100 per cent electrification is indeed here to stay, why waste time and energy on the hydrogen fuel cell project?

Assuming that the project is an effort to develop a standby technology, sourcing of hydrogen needs to be settled simultaneously. All hydrogen production in the country employs the Steam Methane Reforming process that utilises fossils fuels because since the cleaner method of Water Electrolysis is not only expensive but also in the nascent stage. Will the project be green enough if hydrogen is sourced from fossil fuels?

Unless this project is taken up in right earnest with all loose ends about viability, tendering for equipment, ordering, designing the vehicle and retro fitment schemes, commissioning, trials and operation tied up with clear-cut responsibilities, it would also end up like all its predecessors. I hope these questions are settled and IR engineers work silently to make it successful instead of creating another hoopla which would turn a damp squib.

(The writer is retired General Manger, Indian Railways. The views expressed are personal.)

Oil slides 2%

Alberta: Oil prices fell over 2% on concerns about demand in the US and Asia. **REUTERS**

The Morning Standard

The Flaws In Centre's Asset Monetisation Plan

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Little attention has been paid to the issue of implementation of the monetisation pipeline. There is also the question of how the proceeds would be spent

THE FLAWS IN CENTRE'S ASSET MONETISATION PLAN

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AMIT BANDRE

IN a country where infrastructure investment by the government has been the biggest challenge even during stable economic times, the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) is definitely well-intentioned in terms of its end objective: to enable "Infrastructure Creation through Monetisation", where the public and private sector are seen to collaborate, "with each excelling in their core areas of competence, so as to deliver socio-economic growth and quality of life to the country's citizens".

A comprehensive review of the asset monetisation plan suggests that the idea itself is meritorious. In a pandemic situation where the government wishes to foster growth, infrastructure investment holds the key. However, the share of capital expenditure in the overall government spending even in the pre-pandemic year FY 2019 was only 12.3%. This share has been budgeted at 15.91% for FY 2022. However, with limits to raising taxes and other receipts, and the need for maintaining the fisc under control, while the government concentrates on providing the much-needed support to sectors most hit by the pandemic-induced economic crisis, getting newer streams of receipts becomes critical.

And this is where the government has used a so-called 'reimaginative approach' to its erstwhile attempts at privatisation as a means of raising finance for funding such investment. With the government retaining ownership over such assets, there is substantial risk mitigation for the private sector, which is no longer constrained by having to invest in long-term capital-intensive assets. Monetisation then appears to be superior to privatisation, more so since the government's disinvestment efforts in the past have hardly yielded the desired positive results. There is also some evidence that such an approach of monetisation has worked in the case of certain assets such as toll roads, transmission towers and the power sector.

The asset monetisation envisaged seeks to move away from an earlier focus on greenfield investments—which have seen little private sector appetite in the past—towards brownfield investments. The Public-Private partnership envisaged in such brownfield investments would benefit from the efficiencies brought in by the private sector. The NMP envisages monetisation of core assets of 13 sectors held by the Central government, with an estimated value of ₹6 lakh crore over the period FY 2022-2025.

The moot question is over the quantum of support that the monetisation is likely to provide, the clarity in terms of its scope and most importantly, its implementation.

Such monetisation, however well-intentioned, is a drop in the ocean. It is expected to finance no more than 5-6% of the capex (of ₹111 lakh crore) under the National Infrastructure Pipeline over the period. More importantly, 13 sectors, each with multiple assets, are sought to be monetised over the next four years—when the government has been missing its disinvestment targets year on year, even when it involves blue chip companies like BPCL.

A greater problem is the lack of clear thinking on some of the deeper issues that may arise as a result of such monetisation. This would get completed over the period 2022-2025, giving private players the rights to monetise these assets over long periods of time—25-50 and even 60 years. Take the case of monetisation of hill /mountain railways sought to be done through the Operate, Maintain and Develop (OMD) based PPP model for a period of 30-50 years, which itself may be extended. While the concessionaire is required to maintain the heritage nature of project assets, they would not just get the right to earn fare and non-fare revenues for 30-50 years through train operations but would also be allowed to charge user charges and sub-lease rights on the station and adjoining real estate on railway land for 30-50 years. This has the potential to jeopardise the rights of the locals living in these areas and cause protests. For instance, despite toll booths being one of the more successful government methods of monetisation, toll collections haven't been glitch-free as has been witnessed in various parts of the country earlier as well. The youth protests against an attempt to collect toll on the Kollam bypass in recent months is a case in point, with the protesters demanding, among other things, that people living in nearby areas be exempted.

> Monetisation appears to be superior to privatisation, more so since the government's disinvestment efforts in the past have hardly yielded the desired positive results. But there is the need to address the vexatious issues of conceptual and operational clarity

There is a larger question of where within the budget will such proceeds from monetisation be accounted for, and how these proceeds will be spent. Would they, for instance, be part of the government's capital receipts? The NMP document does speak about these proceeds being used to finance further infrastructure. "The addition of new/greenfield assets using the funds so raised continues to ensure a significant share of public sector entities in such sectors." There are no specific guidelines/rules, however, on how these proceeds could be used. Could they be used (more importantly not used) for paying salaries, giving pensions and subsidies, etc., thereby incurring revenue expenditure? There is little clarity on the same.

The big miss, however, is the little attention paid to the issue of how the NMP would be implemented, and a clear scenario planning based on the government's experience in disinvestment. The 101-page Volume II document with only one page devoted to an Implementation Plan, in a nutshell, may be the biggest challenge of the NMP.

The monetisation of brown-field assets will need to address the vexatious issues of conceptual and operational clarity, besides a clear roadmap of implementation with scenario planning in place.

(Views are personal)

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