



12th CGD bidding round concludes

In a significant stride towards achieving 100 per cent coverage of country's area for the development of city gas distribution (CGD) network, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) hosted a concluding ceremony for the 12th CGD bidding round. The event was inaugurated by Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas & Housing and Urban Affairs, in the presence of Tarun Kapoor, adviser to PM; Dr Anil Kumar Jain, Chairperson, PNGRB; board members and secretary of PNGRB. There was a large presence of key stakeholders from the oil and gas sector of the country and the successful bidders of 12th CGD bidding round. During the event, Puri distributed the letter of intent to successful bidders for their respective geographical areas. The minister acknowledged the efforts of MoPNG, PNGRB, and the successful bidders towards building a robust oil and gas infrastructure.

Ahead of polls, govt extends LPG sop, announces ₹10,000cr package for NE

Raises MSP For Jute By ₹285/Quintal

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In a pre-election push targeted at northeastern states and women, Union cabinet on Thursday cleared a Rs10,000 crore industrialisation scheme for the hilly region and Rs 12,000 crore for the next fiscal to extend the subsidy of Rs 300 a cylinder under the Ujjwala scheme.

In addition, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs decided to increase the minimum support price for jute by Rs 285 a quintal to Rs 5,335, in a bid to ensure a return of 65% of all-India weighted average cost of production for farmers. The decision will greatly benefit farmers in eastern states, especially Bengal, textiles minister Piyush Goyal told reporters.

The move come days before the model code of conduct for general elections kicks in. Election Commission is widely expected to announce the poll dates in the middle of next week, leaving a narrow window for the



The announcement on Ujjwala is targeted at women, seen as one of the key voters of BJP. The subsidised gas cylinder scheme was a major vote-catcher both in state polls and the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Govt had last year increased subsidy from ₹200 to ₹300 for up to 12 cylinders every year, and a price reduction of ₹200 for every cylinder

Modi govt to hold one or two more cabinet meetings before the bugle is sounded.

The announcement on Ujjwala is targeted at women, seen as one of the key voters of BJP, as the subsidised gas cylinder scheme has been a major vote-catcher both in state polls as well as the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Amid oft-repeated complaints of low offtake of refills, govt had last year increased the subsidy from Rs 200 to Rs 300 for up to 12

cylinders every year and had also announced a reduction of Rs 200 for every cylinder.

The subsidy support has boosted consumption of clean fuel in Ujjwala households from three refills per year in 2019-20 to 3.9 till Jan, with an increase seen in recent months. Poor women are seen to have benefited significantly from the scheme as they do not have to trudge long distances in search of firewood.

Similarly, as an outreach to the North-East, which ac-

counts for 24 Lok Sabha seats, govt cleared Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialisation Scheme or UNNATI to incentivise investors for setting up new units in the seven states or undertaking significant expansion.

The capital investment incentive of up to Rs 10 crore, depending on the zone (industrially advanced or industrially backward district), in

addition to interest subsidy of up to 5%. The funds are to be used over 10 years for the development of industries and employment generation in the states in the region. For the Centre, North-East has been a focus area and even in the budget, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman flagged a balanced development in the region as well as the eastern parts of the country.

Centre hikes DA to 50%, extends Rs 300 LPG subsidy for Ujjwala

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: In a series of significant decisions, the Central government announced several initiatives on Thursday aimed at benefiting various sectors of society ahead of the upcoming general elections. These decisions encompass a wide range of areas, including financial allowances, subsidies, industrial development, and the promotion of artificial intelligence (AI).

The Centre approved a substantial hike in Dearness Allowance (DA) for central government employees and Dearness Relief (DR) for pensioners. Effective from January 1, 2024, the DA has been increased to 50 per cent of basic pay from the previous rate of 46 per cent. This move is expected to benefit over 1 crore employees and pensioners. The decision comes in light of the rising cost of living and is aimed at mitigating the impact of inflation on government employees and pensioners.

The combined impact on the exchequer on account of both Dearness Allowance and Dearness Relief would be Rs 12,869 crore per annum. The impact would be Rs 15,014 crore during the year 2024-25 (January 2024 to February 2025).

With the increase in DA, transport allowance, canteen allowance, and deputation allowance among others have been increased by 25 per cent. House Rent Allowance has been raised from 27 per



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» Govt approves Rs 10,037 cr scheme to promote industrialisation in NE region..... [See P12](#)

cent, 19 per cent and 9 per cent of basic pay to 30 per cent, 20 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively.

Benefits under gratuity have been increased by 25 per cent with an increase ceiling of Rs 25 lakh from the existing Rs 20 lakh.

The burden on the exchequer due to an increase in various allowances would be Rs 9,400 crore annually.

The decision is in line with the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission and is expected to have a significant impact on the exchequer.

In another move aimed at supporting vulnerable sections of society, the government announced the extension of the Rs 300 per LPG cylinder subsidy to poor women under the Ujjwala Yojana for the fiscal year 2024-25. This subsidy, which was initially introduced in October last [Continued on P4](#)

Centre hikes DA

year, has been extended to provide continued assistance to beneficiaries. The Ujjwala Yojana aims to provide deposit-free LPG connections to adult women from poor households, thereby promoting clean cooking fuel and reducing air pollution. The extension of the subsidy is expected to benefit nearly 10 crore families and will cost the government Rs 12,000 crore.

In a bid to accelerate the development of artificial intelligence (AI) in the country, the Cabinet approved the India AI Mission with an outlay of Rs 10,372 crore for five years. The mission aims to build a high-end scalable AI ecosystem through public-private partnership mode. Under the initiative, supercomputing capacity comprising over 10,000 GPUs will be made available to various stakeholders, including startups, academia, researchers, and industry. This initiative is expected to democratise access to technology and foster innovation in the field of AI, aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of leveraging technology for inclusive growth.

The government also approved the Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialisation (UNNATI) Scheme, 2024, with an outlay of Rs 10,037 crore for eight northeastern states. This scheme aims to promote industrial development and generate employment opportunities in the region. Incentives will be provided to investors for setting up new units or expanding existing ones, with a focus on capital investment, interest subvention, and GST-linked incentives. The scheme is expected to boost economic growth and address the developmental challenges faced by the northeastern states.



fire in oil refinery in Iran kills 1, injures 3

TEHRAN: A fire at an oil refinery in the southern Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas killed at least one person and injured three, state media said Thursday.

A furnace at the refinery caught fire as it was being repaired at about 11 am local time, state TV reports. A 38-year-old man was killed and the three people injured were taken to hospital, where they are receiving treatment, state TV said. One of the three is said to be in critical condition.

In July, a fire at the same refinery injured eight firefighters after two oil tanks in a tank farm caught fire.

Similar fires have been reported from time to time at the port.

AGENCIES

Fuel demand rises 5.7% in Feb on strong output

Reuters

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India's fuel consumption rose 5.7% year-on-year in February, government data showed on Thursday, helped by strong factory activity in the world's third-biggest oil importer and consumer.

Total consumption, a proxy for oil demand, totalled 19.72 million metric tonnes (4.98 million barrels per day) in February, up from 18.66 million tonnes last year, data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC) of the oil ministry showed.

Demand was up about 5.1% on a daily basis from the 4.74 mbpd (20.04 million metric tons) consumed in January.

"The increase month-on-month in fuel consumption is yet another tour de force of the Indian economy, a sign of how strong demand growth has been in recent months," said Viktor Katona, lead crude analyst at Kpler.

"Diesel demand is almost guaranteed to hit a new record this year (in June), surpassing the 2 mbpd mark for the first time in history."

Sales of diesel, mainly used by trucks and commercially run passenger vehicles, rose by 6.2% year-on-year to 7.44 mil-



Demand was up about 5.1% on a daily basis from the 4.74 mbpd (20.04 million metric tonnes) consumed in January.

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lion tons in February. They were up about 6.8% month-on-month to 1.88 mbpd on a per-day basis.

India's manufacturing industry enjoyed robust growth in February with activity expanding at its fastest pace in five months, led by accelerated global demand and lower inflationary pressures, a private survey last week showed.

Sales of gasoline in February rose 8.9% from the previous year to 3.02 million tons.

Meanwhile, Indian automakers continued to report a steady rise in sales in February, helped by demand for two-wheelers and utility vehicles, monthly sales data from com-

panies showed last week.

Sales of bitumen, used for making roads, rose by 3.7% annually, while demand jumped 14.4% on a monthly basis.

"Bitumen was the quickest growing product category...a testament to the Modi government's investment spree in the months leading up to the election," Katona said.

Cooking gas, or liquefied petroleum gas sales rose by 8.5% to 2.59 million tonnes, while naphtha sales jumped by 11.7% to about 1.19 million tons, compared with last February, the data showed.

Fuel oil use decreased by 11.2% year-on-year in February.

Green ammonia, fuelling the future

Sachchida Nand

Ammonia, the second largest chemical produced in the world is mainly used for making fertilizers and a variety of chemicals. Synthesis of ammonia on industrial scale in 2013 is stated to be the biggest invention of 20th century which is helping to feed almost 40 per cent of the world's population. It is manufactured from synthesis of hydrogen and nitrogen gases.

Hydrogen in turn is manufactured from fossil fuels viz natural gas, petroleum products and coal, natural gas remaining the dominant feed.

In order to reduce the carbon emission, now emphasis is on producing ammonia from renewable energy. Ammonia, produced through 'electrolysis' is called 'green ammonia'. Production and use of green ammonia is part of 'National Green Hydrogen

Mission'. Incentives provided for production of renewable power and green hydrogen will also help to reduce the cost of green ammonia to improve its commercial viability.

The newer development is that in addition to use of ammonia as feed for chemicals, it can also be used as fuel. Ammonia has certain advantages over hydrogen as fuel. This is a commodity being produced, stored, transported and handled on large scale for more than a century. India itself will be producing 19 million tonnes and importing another 2.5 million tonnes ammonia this year. There are production and storage facilities at more than 30 places in the country.

Research and development (R&D) efforts so far concentrated on use of hydrogen as fuel either through combustion or fuel cells. It has been demonstrated convincingly that hydrogen can be used as fuel both for



GREEN AMMONIA. Green future

transportation and as well as in stationery facilities. Efforts are on worldwide to use ammonia as marine fuel. While green ammonia is produced from green hydrogen, it can be cracked to regenerate hydrogen, thus working as carrier for green hydrogen. The Centre, through the National Green Hydrogen Mission, has targetted to

produce 5 million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2030, both for domestic consumption and export.

Even if one-fourth of this is converted to green ammonia, there will be almost 7 million tonnes of ammonia production through this route by 2030.

There is of course, need to increase our focus on research and development on use of ammonia as fuel including emission control from such facilities. The government has initiated efforts to study hydrogen as marine fuel on pilot scale by way of extending financial support for such project. The government should also encourage pilot studies for use of ammonia as fuel in boilers and ships, which is key to enhancing country's energy security and meeting our climate goals.

The writer is former Additional Director General, Fertiliser Association of India. Views expressed are personal

IGL cuts CNG prices by ₹2.50 in Delhi-NCR

**Our Bureau
New Delhi**

Indraprastha Gas (IGL) has slashed the prices of compressed natural gas (CNG) by ₹2.50 per kg.

The revised prices become effective from Thursday. “The retail consumer price of CNG is being reduced by ₹2.50 per kg across all geographical areas of IGL from 6 a.m. on Thursday, 7 March 2024. The revised selling price of CNG in Delhi will be ₹74.09 per kg, while it will be ₹78.70 per kg in Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad GA from 6 a.m. tomorrow morning,” IGL said on X (formerly Twitter) late Wednesday night.

IGL supplies CNG for vehicles and piped natural gas (PNG) for households in Delhi-NCR and other areas. The re-

duction in prices of CNG — consumed by auto rickshaws, taxis and the logistics sector— comes close to the announcement by Mahanagar Gas (MGL). MGL, which serves Mumbai, has announced a cut in the prices of transport fuel by ₹2.5 per kg to ₹73.50.

PM Modi to launch projects worth ₹18,000 crore in Assam

AGENCIES

GUWAHATI, 7 MARCH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch development projects worth Rs 18,000 crores in Assam during his upcoming visit to the state.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday told media persons that PM Modi will land at Tezpur airport on Friday evening. He will head to the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve and spend the night there.

"On Saturday morning, the Prime Minister will visit the national park and explore the rich biodiversity of Kaziranga. He is scheduled to take Jeep and elephant safaris in the morning at 5.30 on Saturday," Sarma said.

PM Modi will inaugurate the newly built Tinsukia Medical and will also lay the foundation stone of the upcoming medical college in the Sivasagar district.



He will also launch the expansion projects of the Guwahati Refinery and the Digboi Refinery, which will cost Rs 510 crores and Rs 768 crores, respectively.

The opening of the Rs 3,992 crore pipeline project,

which runs from Barauni to Guwahati, is another key project to be launched by PM Modi.

On Saturday, the Prime Minister has scheduled programs in Arunachal Pradesh as well.

आज सीबीजी प्लांट का लोकार्पण करेंगे सीएम योगी

वैभव न्यूज़ ■ गोरखपुर

देवाधिदेव महादेव की आराधना के पावन पर्व महाशिवरात्रि पर मुख्यमंत्री योगी आदित्यनाथ शुक्रवार को धुरियापार में बने इंडियन ऑयल के सीबीजी प्लांट का लोकार्पण करेंगे। इस अवसर पर वह बांसगांव लोकसभा क्षेत्र को 222 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक के विकास कार्यों की सीमा भी देंगे। सीएम 68 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की 20 विकास परियोजनाओं का लोकार्पण तथा 154 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की 17 परियोजनाओं का शिलान्यास करेंगे। सीबीजी प्लांट समेत इन सभी

विकास कार्यों का लोकार्पण व शिलान्यास का समारोह धुरियापार की बंद चीनी मिल परिसर में शुक्रवार को दोपहर बाद होगा। धुरियापार की बंद पड़ी चीनी मिल के 50 एकड़ परिसर में बायो फ्यूल कॉम्प्लेक्स का निर्माण कराने की जिम्मेदारी इंडियन ऑयल कॉरपोरेशन लिमिटेड को मिली है। इसका शिलान्यास मुख्यमंत्री योगी आदित्यनाथ और तत्कालीन केंद्रीय पेट्रोलियम मंत्री धर्मेंद्र प्रधान ने 18 सितंबर 2019 को किया था इस कॉम्प्लेक्स में पहले चरण में सीबीजी (कंप्रेसड बायो गैस) और दूसरे चरण में एथेनाल का उत्पादन होना है।

उज्ज्वला लाभार्थियों के लिए 300 रु. एलपीजी सब्सिडी अगले वित्त वर्ष तक के लिए बढ़ी



तेजत न्यूज ■ नई दिल्ली

सरकार ने बृहस्पतिवार को उज्ज्वला योजना के तहत गरीब महिलाओं को 300 रुपए प्रति सिलेंडर की सब्सिडी एक अप्रैल से शुरू अगले वित्त वर्ष तक के लिए बढ़ा दी। पिछले साल अक्टूबर में प्रति वर्ष 12 एलपीजी सिलेंडर भरने तक 14.2 किलोग्राम के सिलेंडर पर सब्सिडी 200 रुपए से बढ़ाकर 300 रुपए प्रति सिलेंडर कर दी गई थी। 300 रुपए प्रति सिलेंडर सब्सिडी चालू वित्त वर्ष के लिए थी, जो 31 मार्च को समाप्त हो रही है। केंद्रीय वाणिज्य एवं उद्योग मंत्री पीयूष गोयल ने यहां संवाददाताओं से कहा कि मंत्रिमंडल की आर्थिक मामलों की समिति (सीसीईए) ने अब इस सब्सिडी को 2024-25 तक बढ़ाने का फैसला

किया है। इस कदम से लगभग 10 करोड़ परिवारों को लाभ होने की उम्मीद है। इसपर 12,000 करोड़ रुपए का खर्च आएगा। आम चुनावों से पहले यह कदम उठाया गया है। लोकसभा चुनाव अप्रैल-मई में होने वाले हैं। सरकार ने ग्रामीण और वंचित गरीब परिवारों को खाना पकाने का स्वच्छ ईंधन तरलीकृत पेट्रोलियम गैस (एलपीजी) उपलब्ध कराने के लिए गरीब घरों की वयस्क महिलाओं को बिना किसी जमा के एलपीजी कनेक्शन प्रदान करने के लिए मई, 2016 में प्रधानमंत्री उज्ज्वला योजना (पीएमयूवाई) शुरू की थी। लाभार्थियों को गैस कनेक्शन मुफ्त उपलब्ध कराए गए लेकिन उन्हें एलपीजी सिलेंडर बाजार मूल्य पर भरवाने की जरूरत पड़ती है। सरकार ने ईंधन के दाम बढ़ने पर मई, 2022

सरकार ने इंडिया एआई मिशन को मंजूरी दी

केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल ने 10,372 करोड़ रुपए के व्यय के साथ पांच साल के लिए इंडिया एआई मिशन को मंजूरी दे दी है। केंद्रीय वाणिज्य एवं उद्योग मंत्री पीयूष गोयल ने बृहस्पतिवार को हुई केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल की बैठक के बाद यह जानकारी दी। उन्होंने कहा कि इस राशि का इस्तेमाल बड़े कंप्यूटिंग ढांचे के सृजन पर किया जाएगा। गोयल ने संवाददाताओं से कहा एआई परिवेश बनाने के लिए 10,000 से अधिक जीपीयू (ग्राफिक्स प्रोसेसिंग यूनिट) वाली सुपरकंप्यूटिंग क्षमता विभिन्न संबद्ध पक्षों को उपलब्ध कराई जाएगी।

में उज्ज्वला योजना के लाभार्थियों को 200 रुपए प्रति सिलेंडर सब्सिडी प्रदान की। अक्टूबर, 2023 में इसे बढ़ाकर 300 रुपए कर दिया गया। सरकार ने मध्य प्रदेश और राजस्थान सहित पांच राज्यों में विधानसभा चुनावों से पहले पिछले साल अगस्त के अंत में रसोई गैस की कीमतों में 200 रुपए प्रति सिलेंडर की कटौती की थी।



एनसीआर में 2.50 रुपये तक सस्ती हुई सीएनजी

नई दिल्ली : आम चुनाव से ठीक पहले सीएनजी प्रदाता कंपनी इंड्रप्रस्थ गैस लिमिटेड (आइजीएल) ने एनसीआर में सीएनजी के दाम में 2.50 रुपये प्रतिकिलो तक की कटौती की है। पहले दिल्ली में 76.59 रुपये प्रतिकिलो सीएनजी मिला करती थी, जो अब 74.90 रुपये किलो हो गया है। इसी तरह नोएडा में 81.20 रुपये प्रतिकिलो के बजाय अब 78.70 रुपये प्रतिकिलो, गुरुग्राम में 80.12, रेवाड़ी में 78.70 और करनाल में 80.43 रुपये प्रतिकिलो सीएनजी मिला करेगी। (जास)

एनसीआर में सस्ती हुई सीएनजी

जागरण संवाददाता, नई दिल्ली : आम चुनाव से ठीक पहले सीएनजी वाहन उपयोग करने वाले चालकों को राहत मिली है। सीएनजी प्रदाता कंपनी इंड्रप्रस्थ गैस लिमिटेड (आइजीएल) ने एनसीआर में अपने प्रतिकिलो सीएनजी के दामों में 2.50 रुपये तक की कटौती की है। पहले दिल्ली में जहां 76.59 रुपये प्रतिकिलो सीएनजी मिला करती थी, अब वह 74.9 रुपये किलो हो गई है। इसी तरह नोएडा में 81.20 रुपये प्रतिकिलो की बजाय अब 78.70 रुपये किलो, गुरुग्राम में 80.12, रेवाड़ी में 78.70, करनाल में 80.43 रुपये किलो सीएनजी मिला करेगी। बृहस्पतिवार सुबह छह बजे से दामों में कमी लागू हो गई है।

रिंग रोड पर नंगला माची सीएनजी पंप पर सीएनजी डलवाने पहुंचे टैक्सी चालक

- अब राष्ट्रीय राजधानी में 74.09 रुपये प्रति किलो मिलेगी सीएनजी
- सीएनजी वाहन चालकों ने कहा-हर माह 1500 रुपये की होगी बचत

मनोज का कहना है कि इससे कुछ हद तक हमें राहत मिलेगी, क्योंकि सीएनजी के दाम ज्यादा होने से हमारी बजत कम हो जाती है। इसी तरह एक अन्य टैक्सी चालक राजेश ने कहा कि भले ही चुनाव से पहले यह राहत दी गई है, लेकिन टैक्सी चालकों को प्रतिदिन 50 रुपये भी बचते हैं तो महीने में 1500 की बचत होगी। नौकरीपेशा दीपक कहते हैं कि उन्होंने पांच साल पहले सीएनजी की गाड़ी खरीदी थी उस समय के और अब के दाम में 20-25 रुपये का अंतर हो गया है।