

'Absence of global firms in India's E&P sector may be due to lacklustre discoveries'

Rishi Ranjan Kala

New Delhi

In a report, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has said while the recent fiscal and licensing reforms in India's exploration and production (E&P) sector have increased the country's relative competitiveness *vis-à-vis* other fiscal regimes and bid processes, international participation remains sparse.

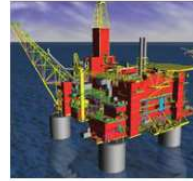
"In part, the absence of international companies may be due to lacklustre discoveries since the turn of the century. Over the last 23 years, 2,000 million barrels (mb) of commercial liquid resources have been discovered in India, with close to half associated with the onshore Rajasthan RJ-ON-90/1 project," the IEA said in a report on India's oil and gas sector, which was launched during the recently concluded India Energy Week.

TOP NATIONS

By comparison, IEA pointed out that Angola, Norway and Guyana have all seen around 10,000 mb of oil resources discovered over the same time period, while explorers in Brazil have found a massive 40,000 mb.

"Against the backdrop of capital discipline, major players may be waiting on the sidelines for a world-class find before establishing operations and cost centres in the country. In addition, international oil companies' exploration capital is shrinking as a per cent of total outlays, having slipped from 21 per cent in 2000 to 9 per cent last year. Larger exploration finds may help prioritise Indian exploration among international players," the IEA said.

Last month, Wood Mackenzie (WoodMac) said that India is expected to conclude the Open Acreage Licensing Programme



Over the last 23 years, only 2,000 million barrels of commercial liquid resources have been discovered in India

(OALP) IX bidding round and open the OALP X round in 2024 calendar year to boost domestic production.

MISSING ALLURE

"In 2024, India will conclude OALP IX and kick off its OALP X offering. These two rounds offer large concessions in offshore that were previously no-go areas for oil and gas exploration. The majors have shown lots of interest, but we remain sceptical this will turn into big acreage acquisitions," WoodMac said in its latest report on the Asia Pacific upstream sector.

S&P Global Commodity Insights said that India should explore making its terms offered to foreign E&P companies more attractive.

In January, S&P Global Commodity Insights Senior Vice-President and Chief Energy Strategist Atul Arya told *businessline*: "I think if one has to still see how to attract more investment, we should see our fiscal terms from the perspective of being a net importer."

S&P Global Commodity Insights ED Energy Transition & Cleantech Consulting Gauri Johar said for a net importing country, the fiscal terms have to be even more attractive.

"I think it may be worth having one more loop of conversation with the investors that are looking for more. I think the question to always ask is what will it take?," she emphasised.

PM: India brings innovation & speed in energy climate action

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: India offers “scale and speed, quantity and quality to every mission”, PM Narendra Modi said on Wednesday, pitching for a larger role in global energy and climate arena.

“Inclusivity boosts the credibility and capability of any institution... 1.4 billion Indians bring talent, technology and innovation to the table. We bring scale and speed, quantity and quality to every mission,” Modi said in his recorded address to International Energy Agency’s ministerial meeting to mark organisation’s 50th anniversary.

Underlining India’s achievements in climate action, PM said India has surpassed its Paris climate targets ahead of time and remains firmly committed to addressing the global issue. He expressed confidence that India playing a bigger role will hugely benefit the IEA.

India, the third-largest oil consumer and a heavy-



Modi said India was home to 17% of the global population while it was also running some of the world’s largest energy access initiatives. But still, its carbon emissions account for only 4% of the global total. It aims to cut emissions intensity of GDP by 45% by 2030 from 2005 levels

hitter in coal use, achieved its emissions intensity-related targets 11 years ahead of the committed time-frame and non-fossil fuel targets nine years ahead of schedule. The government has set a 2070 net-zero.

He pointed out that India is home to 17% of the global population while it is also running some of the world’s largest energy access initiatives. But still, India’s carbon emissions account for only 4% of the global total. Giving perspective to the scale of India’s achievement in carbon mitigation, he said, “In one decade, we went from 11th largest economy to

fifth largest. In the same period, our solar energy capacity grew twenty six fold. Our renewable energy capacity also doubled.”

The country now aims to reduce emissions intensity of gross domestic product by 45% by 2030 from 2005 levels and achieve 50% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.

Modi also highlighted India’s proactive approach in leading initiatives like the International Solar Alliance and the Mission LiFE, which focuses on pro-planet lifestyle choices.

DIESEL EXPORTS TO EUROPE DROPPED TO 40,000 BPD IN JANUARY

India's petroleum product exports to Europe crash to 18-month low in Jan

SUKALP SHARMA

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

INDIA'S PETROLEUM product exports to Europe nosedived to an 18-month low in January with tankers hauling fuels—mainly diesel—from India avoiding the Suez Canal route in view of the security concerns in the Red Sea region, as per ship tracking data. India's diesel exports to Europe, which had touched a record high of over 287,000 barrels per day (bpd) in December, crashed to around 40,000 bpd in January, according to data from commodity market analytics firm Kpler.

Consequently, India's overall petroleum product exports to Europe in January fell almost 70 per cent from December to around 111,500 bpd—the lowest since July 2022.

India's total petroleum product exports in January declined nearly 18 per cent from December levels to 1.11 million bpd, seemingly due to a combination of the Red Sea trade disruptions and robust domestic demand in India. The impact of the Red Sea troubles on India's



India's total petroleum product exports in January declined nearly 18% from December levels to 1.11 million bpd. *File*

overall petroleum product exports was rather limited in January as exporters shifted cargoes to various other geographies, the shipping data indicates.

Countries that saw a spurt in petroleum product dispatches from India in January vis-à-vis December include Saudi Arabia, Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Oman, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, among others.

Over the past couple of months, a number of cargo ships

have come under attack from the Iran-backed Houthi rebels of Yemen around the Bab el-Mandeb strait, which leads to the Red Sea and Suez Canal, forming the shortest, albeit narrow, route to the Mediterranean Sea and beyond from the Arab Peninsula, North-East Africa, and the Arabian Sea. The route is seen as an important artery of global goods and energy supplies. The Houthis have so far claimed that they are targetting vessels with links to Israel and its allies in

view of its military offensive in Gaza.

The security situation in the Red Sea region has forced a number of major shipping lines and Western oil companies to shun the route and instead take the much longer route around Africa via the Cape of Good Hope. Higher risk premiums and longer voyages have hit movement of goods between Asia and Europe, and Asia and North America in terms of significantly higher freight rates. The majority of Indian fuel exports to Europe are now going around Africa, adding 15-20 days to the voyage.

India was traditionally not the biggest of fuel sources for Europe, with the continent depending heavily on Russia for energy imports.

However, in the aftermath of Moscow's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, as Europe started shunning Russian crude oil and fuels, India emerged as the largest buyer of Russian seaborne crude and also a major fuel supplier to Europe with all such shipments passing through the Red Sea. Interestingly, the movement of Russian oil

through the Suez Canal-Red Sea route has largely been immune to the prevailing crisis as Russia is perceived as Iran's ally and the Houthi rebels appear to be backed by Tehran.

"Last year, 3.5 Mbd (3.5 million bpd) of refined product flows was shipped via the Suez, a record annual high, making up 14% of total refined product flows. Jet fuel is the most exposed, with 33 per cent of exports utilizing the canal. Flows of these products are already disrupted with some cargoes travelling via the Cape (of Good Hope), while others are waiting in the Arabian Sea. The surge in freight rates has also closed arbitrages which will restrict long haul flows to Europe," Kpler had said last month in a detailed report on trade disruptions caused by the Red Sea crisis.

India is the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil and depends on imports to meet over 85 per cent of its domestic requirement. The country, however, is a net exporter of petroleum products as its refining capacity of around 5 million bpd is higher than the demand in the domestic market.

IEA will gain when India plays a bigger role in it: PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, February 14

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA

Modi on Wednesday said India brings talent and innovation to the table and the International Energy Agency (IEA) will benefit if the world's fastest growing major economy plays a bigger role in the Paris-based organisation.

In a recorded message for the ministerial meeting of the IEA, he said India has surpassed its Paris climate targets ahead of schedule and remains firmly committed to addressing the global issue.

Prime Minister Modi said India's carbon emissions account for only four per cent of the global total despite it being home to 17 per cent of the global population and undertaking some of the world's largest energy access initiatives.

Congratulating the IEA on its 50th anniversary, the prime minister said, "I am sure that the IEA will benefit when India plays a bigger role in it." "Inclusivity boosts the credibility and capability of any institution," he said and added that "1.4 billion Indians bring talent, technology and innovation to the table". "We bring scale and speed, quantity and quality to every mission," Modi said.

Noting that India is the world's fastest growing major economy, he said sustained growth needs energy security and sustainability.

"In one decade, we went from the 11th largest economy to the fifth largest. In the same period, our solar energy capacity grew twenty-six fold. Our

● OIL SHARE TO BE HIGHEST IN TOTAL ENERGY DEMAND

India's oil and gas import bill may double by 2045

Renewables growth percentage seen highest at 11.5% in 15 years

ARUNIMA BHARADWAJ
New Delhi, February 14

THE COUNTRY'S PRIMARY energy demand, which is projected to almost double to 38.5 million barrels of oil equivalent per day (mboe/d) by 2045, will see the growth percentage of renewables being the highest at 11.5%. However, the share of oil- and coal-based power will remain at the top at 30.1% and 33.2%, respectively, as per the report by the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC).

"While demand for all energy sources will increase during this period, oil will account for the largest part of the growth as the country's demand for oil products will more than double from 5.1 mboe/d in 2022 to 11.6 mboe/d in 2045," the report by PPAC said.

The country's oil consumption is likely to jump to 305 million tonne of oil equivalent (Mtoe) in 2030 from 210 Mtoe in 2020, as per S&P Global Commodity Insights. Gas consumption will register a rise to 70 Mtoe in the same period against 53 Mtoe in 2020. As domestic supplies remain limited, the country's oil imports will exceed 90% of demand by 2030 at 280 Mtoe and gas imports are projected to surpass 60% of supplies at 44 Mtoe, as per the PPAC data.

India already spends more than \$160 billion of foreign exchange every year on energy

HIGH ENERGY

■ The growth percentage of renewables projected to be the highest at **11.5%** in 15 years

■ India already spends more than **\$160 bn** of forex every year on energy imports



Crude import bill (\$ billion)



* (till Dec) Source: PPAC

imports, according to government statistics. "The import bill is likely to double in the next 15 years without steps to reduce this import dependence. Higher imports will put a further burden on government finances," the report said. Crude oil and products import bill till December of FY24 stands at \$115.69 billion, as per the PPAC data.

Moreover, the renewed interest in the country's exploration and production field from international oil and gas companies is likely to have only a limited impact as these companies are seen reducing their investments in the oil and gas sector while transitioning to green energy. With limited investments and no major discoveries, the oil and gas sector remains under the shadow.

As per the report, average recovery factors in the country are 20-30% compared with the global average of 35-40%. "The application of new technologies, including digi-

tal tech, machine learning and data analytics, provides a further impetus to focus on improving recovery factors."

The recovery factor is a measure of how large a proportion of resources originally in place can be recovered.

Domestic oil and gas companies can partner with strategic international investors that want to access the country's growing domestic energy market, which will give further impetus to the domestic oil and gas sector, the report said.

"Greater ownership of foreign oil/gas supplies will ensure the domestic energy security and help in managing price volatility," the report said. Furthermore, the report has projected energy consumption of the country through coal-based sources at 12.8 mboe/d in 2045.

The country's coal demand is expected to increase but register a slower growth rate after the first part of the outlook period at just 1.9%. The

reason for coal's slowing pace is the faster deployment of other energy resources, especially gas, nuclear and other renewables, said the report. The imports of coal will continue to remain at around 25% with more domestic capacity coming online.

The contribution of renewables (solar and wind) to the primary energy requirements is estimated to increase from 0.3 mboe/d in 2022 to almost 4 mboe/d in 2045.

The government has increased efforts to raise the share of natural gas in the energy mix to 15% from the current 6% by 2030.

However, the share is seen rising by about just 10.6% by 2045. Nuclear power, too, is likely to more than triple between 2022 and 2045 from 0.3 mboe/d to 1.3 mboe/d.

The country presently has around 6 GW of nuclear capacity under construction which once online will almost double the country's installed capacity.



Big Oil is the Magnificent Seven's hedge-in-waiting

NARRATIVES OF THE information age supplanting the industrial one write themselves, but the details matter. Energy stocks fell from grace even as the US reemerged as the world's biggest oil and gas producer and global oil demand topped 100 million barrels a day. This seeming incongruity stems largely from the excesses of the shale boom. In response, the industry spent the past several years proving it can prioritise dividends and buybacks. Last year's payout set a new record.

What has the best part of half a trillion dollars bought Big Oil? Tolerance, but not love. There are one or two standouts, notably ConocoPhillips which, since the end of 2018, has actually beaten the S&P 500. Overall, though, these stocks now trade on markedly lower multiples than before the pandemic.

Paul Sankey, a veteran Wall Street analyst who now runs Sankey Research LLC, tracks the energy sector's share of forecast S&P 500 earnings and its weight in the index. At the end of 2019, both were aligned at roughly 4% each. Today, energy's share of earnings has jumped to more like 7% — but its weight in the index is below 4%.

The last time we saw a gap like that was in the run-up to 2014, which made sense. Oil was over \$100 a barrel and bound to fall, taking earnings with it. Plus, the companies were overspending. Today, oil at around \$80 doesn't seem overstretched and the industry is giving out, not gobbling, capital.

Perhaps investors, seeing peak oil (or gas) demand hasn't arrived just yet, think the majors should actually be reinvesting a bit more now that they've shown contrition. Well-timed deals, especially Conoco's mid-pandemic swoop on Concho Resources, have been well-received, as was Diamondback Energy's \$2.6 billion acquisition of Endeavor Energy Resources LP on Monday.

Yet scars from the last spending boom remain. Exxon Mobil's higher-than-expected capital expenditure figure for the fourth quarter overshadowed strong results recently. Diamondback, meanwhile, twinned its big deal with a 7% dividend increase and a pro-forma cut to combined capex budgets of roughly 10%-20%.

Rather than investors falling in love with drilling again, this combination of big buybacks and flat multiples resembles a form of well-paid apathy. The boom in mergers and acquisitions is more like overdue rationalisation of an industry with too many c-suites than some bullish scramble for assets.

Saudi Arabia-led supply cuts have supported oil prices but by definition create an overhang of spare capacity waiting to cap rallies. The oil and gas markets have also seemingly digested the initial shock of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and appear untroubled by rising violence in the Middle East. US natural gas prices have resumed their habitual torpor, even as the White House casts doubt on future exports. In the background, while the energy-transition mood music has become somewhat subdued of late, investments in cleantech are still surging, policy remains supportive and even if Tesla looks less magnificent these days, China's booming electric vehicle sales are impossible to ignore.

Above all, the Magnificent Seven growth stocks have sucked all the oxygen out of the room. Not only does the tech sector offer growth, it now, in contrast to the bubble of the late 1990s, offers big payouts of its own. When Meta Platforms recently unveiled a \$50 billion buyback and new dividend, the stock's one-day gain of \$19.7 billion, the biggest ever, was worth more than Conoco's and Occidental Petroleum's market caps combined. At 30% of the S&P 500's market cap — but only about 20% of the anticipated earnings — the tech sector's weight is now roughly eight times that of energy, an even wider gap than at the height of the tech bubble 24 years ago.

As much as having one's fate determined by outside forces grates, the energy sector may simply have to accept its status as a hedge against that day coming. Sankey points out a certain irony here in that the data centres behind AI are energy hogs, spurring big increases in forecasts of US electricity consumption. Sankey sums up: "You can't be long AI and short energy, sustainably, but the market is anyway." The energy sector, busily consolidating itself for when sentiment turns, is left to hurry up and wait.





SHELL PEGS OVER 50% RISE IN LNG DEMAND BY 2040

GLOBAL DEMAND FOR LNG is estimated to rise by more than 50% by 2040, as China and countries in South and Southeast Asia use LNG to support their economic growth, Shell said in an annual report. Global LNG trading rose by 1.8% to 404 MMT in 2023, Shell said in its 2024 LNG outlook.

PFC signs MOA with Assam Bio-Refinery Pvt Ltd for setting up bio-refinery



Power Finance Corporation Limited (PFC) & Assam Bio-Refinery Private Limited (ABRPL) successfully signed a loan agreement on 13.02.2024 for extending term loan of Rs. 3037.50 crore for setting up Bio-Refinery plant for 2G Bioethanol production and other products such as Furfuryl Alcohol, Acetic Acid, Liquid CO₂ along with 24 MW Bio-Coal based CPP in Numaligarh, Assam State at an estimated Project Cost of Rs 4200 crore. The bio-refinery plant uses dry bamboo as input raw material of 3 MTPA. It shall produce Cellulosic 2G Bio Ethanol and other platform chemicals using Chempolis' 2nd generation bio-refining technology 'Formicobio™'. ABRPL is a Joint Venture (JV) of Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) and a subsidiary of Oil India Ltd. (OIL), Fortum 3 B.V., Netherlands (Fortum 3 BV) and Chempolis OY, Finland (Chempolis).



Reliance BioEnergy to spend ₹10 bn on 8 biogas units in Andhra

HYDERABAD: Reliance BioEnergy Pvt Ltd has firmed up plans to invest Rs 10.24 bn on setting up eight compressed biogas plants in Andhra Pradesh over the next one year, an official source

said today. "These plants would require a land bank of around 300 acres, employ nearly 600 people and produce 105,000 tn per annum of biomass energy," the official said.



IEA would benefit when India plays a bigger role in it: Narendra Modi

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the International Energy Agency (IEA) would benefit when India plays a bigger role in it. While addressing the Paris-based organisation, the Prime Minister also said India had exceeded all of its Paris Agreement commitments towards climate change.

“Inclusivity boosts the credibility and capability of any institution. 1.4 billion Indians bring talent, technology, and innovation to the table. We bring scale and speed, quantity and quality to every mission. I am sure that the IEA will benefit when India plays a bigger role

India's commitment

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India is home to 17% of global population. Yet, India's carbon emissions account for only 4% of global total. He said India is firmly committed to combating climate change

in it. Let us harness this platform to strengthen existing partnerships and form new ones. Let us build a cleaner, greener, and inclusive world,” said Modi.

In a recorded message at the 50th Ministerial Meeting of the IEA, Modi said India had ex-

ceeded its Paris Climate commitments, ahead of the timeline. He highlighted that India is home to 17% of the global population and runs some of the world's largest energy access initiatives. Yet, India's carbon emissions account for only 4% of the global total. He said the country is firmly committed to combating climate change.

“Ours is a collective and proactive approach. India has already led initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance. Our Mission LiFE focuses on pro-planet lifestyle choices for a collective impact. ‘Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle’ is a part of India's traditional way of life. India's G20 Presidency saw significant action on this front.”



COCHIN AIRPORT TO SET UP GREEN HYDROGEN PLANT

Kochi, Feb. 14: Cochin International Airport Ltd (CIAL) has entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) for setting up a green hydrogen plant in the premises of airport.

This collaborative effort will result in the world's first green hydrogen plant and fueling station located within an airport setting, CIAL said in a statement on Wednesday.

The agreement exchange ceremony for the green hydrogen plant was held at Legislative Complex, Thiruvananthapuram in the presence of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan who is also the chairman of CIAL, it said. — PTI



'1st-green hydrogen plant at airport'

Bharat Petroleum Corp. Ltd (BPCL) said on Wednesday it will set up the first-ever green hydrogen plant inside an airport in the country. BPCL said it would build and operate a 1,000-kilowatt green hydrogen plant inside Cochin International Airport, which will contribute land, water and green energy resources. The initial output will be used to power vehicles in the airport, which is in the southern part of the country, BPCL said.

Green hydrogen, which is produced from water using renewable energy sources, is recognized as a future fuel and aligns with carbon-neutral strategies. Indian companies are investing billions of dollars to reduce emissions to meet the country's goal of net zero emissions by 2070. India is also expanding the use of biofuel in its transport sector to achieve this goal. BPCL plans to invest \$18.16 billion over the next five years to grow its oil business and expand its renewable energy portfolio as it aims for a 2040 net zero goal.

REUTERS

Puri underlines PM's vision to hike natural gas share to 15 pc

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri has reiterated Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to increase the share of natural gas from 6% to 15% in India's energy mix while addressing the inaugural edition of the International Conference of Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulators.

The conference was held under the aegis of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) during the India Energy Week 2024 in Goa with the conference's overarching theme, "Navigating Pathways for Natural Gas Development".

It emphasized upon nat-



ural gas's role in driving faster and deeper emission reduction that is vital to meet climate goals of emerging and developing countries.

Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas appreciated the PNGRB for this initiative and emphasised that going forward

international regulatory conclave of oil and gas regulators be made as an integral feature of IEW.

Dr Anil Kumar Jain, Chairperson, PNGRB, stressed upon the importance of regional collaboration between South and Southeast Asian countries for knowledge sharing to formulate effective regulatory frameworks for natural gas development.

At the conference, the discussions at five plenary sessions delved into a spectrum of topics, ranging from geopolitical uncertainties impacting energy security, rapid infrastructure development, public-private partnerships and institutional growth.

Further, an exclusive

roundtable of international regulators brought together the custodians of regulatory frameworks, providing a platform for sharing best practices, cross-border collaborative strategies to enhance energy security and ensuring effective governance.

The esteemed group of speakers bought forward the need for natural gas to "row in the energy mix and its role as a transition fuel to achieve net-zero emissions. They highlighted geopolitical uncertainties impacting energy supply to developing countries and the need for a united front from the global south to secure energy supply.

The dialogue put spotlight on India's natural gas regu-

latory and infrastructure development, especially for overall infrastructure development and city gas distribution sector to provide reliable and affordable clean energy.

Industry leaders advocated for the need for a regional clean energy agenda between South and Southeast Asian nations via interconnected gas and electricity grids.

The International Conference of Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulators served as a nexus of expertise, offering an opportunity for various stakeholders to network, exchange knowledge and forge partnerships to shape the future of natural gas development.



A tiny hedge fund is becoming a thorn in the side of energy giant BP

London-based Bluebell Capital Partners aims at big targets via campaigns against world's biggest cos, sometimes hitting them

Jenny Strasburg
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LONDON

Giuseppe Bivona and his partners run a tiny activist hedge fund from a small office here not far from Buckingham Palace. The single room has big windows, seven desks and little space for much else.

From this unlikely perch, the fund, called Bluebell Capital Partners, aims to punch far above its weight by launching campaigns against some of the world's biggest companies, most of them in Europe. Sometimes the punches land.

The fund's latest target, British oil giant BP, has already granted Bivona a meeting with its chairman, according to people familiar with the meeting. And BP's new chief executive officer, Murray Auchincloss, last week was compelled to refute Bluebell's arguments when announcing the company's otherwise rosy earnings report.

That might seem an outside response to a fund that has accumulated a holding likely worth less than 0.01% of BP's roughly \$103 billion market capitalization, based on Bluebell's general description of its portfolio. Bluebell declined to disclose its exact investment.

Bluebell's criticism could resonate because it taps into a core challenge facing BP: its commitment to shrinking oil-and-gas production while boosting investment in less-profitable green-energy sources.

Meanwhile many investors, including Bluebell, simply want more of BP's cash to be handed back to them.

In his opening salvo to BP, a letter sent in October, Bivona called the plan to invest more in clean energy at the expense of oil-and-gas production "irrational." Bivona argues that doing so in effect strengthens competitors such as Shell, Exxon Mobil and Chevron, which aren't setting short-term targets to dial back on drilling.



BP last week promised to boost cash payouts to shareholders.

BLOOMBERG

"You only make richer the shareholders of your competitor," said Bivona in an interview. "I'm questioning how they deploy capital, for sure. Big time."

During BP's public earnings call last week, an analyst referred to Bluebell's proposals as "sort of intriguing."

BP appreciates engagement with shareholders, Auchincloss said in response, but he added that Bluebell is wrong on the merits of its argument.

"Obviously, we don't agree with them," he told *The Wall Street Journal* in an interview. BP hasn't set new long-term oil-and-gas production targets and has said it is sticking with the strategy it previously laid out.

Bluebell backs BP's commitment to long-term net-zero environmental goals, Bivona says, but he argues that the company is shrinking production faster than society's demand is dropping off.

"The CEO doesn't get it," Bivona said.

BP should instead return more cash to shareholders so they can invest where they want in the energy

sector, Bivona says—green or otherwise.

Some shareholders see Bluebell's demands as the wrong kind of activism. "We don't think responsible shareholders will allow a conservative investor to slow down a transition that is already moving far too slowly," said Mark van Baal, founder of shareholder advocacy group Follow This, which has pushed BP and other major oil companies to cut carbon emissions faster.

BP last week promised to boost cash payouts to shareholders, part of a fourth-quarter earnings report that also included better-than-expected oil-and-gas trading results. Its shares were up 5.5% the day of the report.

Auchincloss said BP's integrated strategy is working. Its ability to buy and sell renewable power alongside oil and gas through its trading arm boosts the baseline profitability of lower-carbon businesses, making them increasingly competitive with

oil and gas in ways some investors don't recognize, he said.

BP's green strategy shift originated with former CEO Bernard Looney, who resigned in September under pressure over undisclosed details of relationships with colleagues. Former finance chief Auchincloss, who stepped in as interim CEO, was named permanent CEO last month.

Bluebell's campaign is the latest sign of pressure on BP to defend its green-energy investments. It also reflects shifting debates over how the world's biggest energy companies should manage the drive to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions.

After energy stocks tanked during the pandemic, investors openly questioned whether that marked the early-stage demise of fossil-fuel-based business models.

Three years ago, another small activist firm called Engine No. 1 took on Exxon Mobil in an expensive proxy fight, arguing that the U.S.

giant didn't have a plan for a future with shrinking oil demand and that it should invest more in the energy transition.

The fund won three seats on the Exxon board, and the company later pledged to target carbon neutrality on its own emissions. Unlike some of its European peers, Exxon hasn't pulled back on oil-and-gas production.

Since then, the Ukraine war and other geopolitical turmoil have intensified concerns about energy security and driven up energy prices. Exxon has enjoyed record profits the past two years, leading CEO Darren Woods to contend his cautious approach to the transition—and his steadfast commitment to oil and gas—was the right course.

Bivona and Bluebell co-founder Marco Taricco, both Italian, met at Columbia Business School in the 1990s before going on to investment-banking careers at Goldman Sachs and other banks, working in Milan, London and New York.

They started Bluebell in 2014 as an advisory firm providing investment ideas to other hedge funds, including Elliott Investment Management and Jana Partners, for years among the most feared U.S. activists, collectively managing billions.

By comparison, Bluebell started with about \$20 million and now has \$130 million in its main fund.

Bivona said Bluebell doesn't need huge positions. It mobilizes support through other investors, unions and selective media interviews, according to marketing materials, without waging expensive proxy battles. For one such campaign involving a chemicals company, Bluebell bought a single share to make the point that size was overrated.

Bluebell's main pool of assets is currently divided up across holdings in about a dozen companies. The typical holding time of a position is 18 months, Bivona said.

The fund's BP position is held through a type of equity swap, or derivative, closely linked to the value of BP shares and which can be converted to shares any time, Bivona said.

Bluebell's main hedge fund has reported annualized returns of 8.3%, net of fees, since inception, according to a January 2024 investor presentation. That compares with a roughly 6.9% average annual return for activist funds across the industry for the same period, according to hedge-fund tracker HFR.

In 2021, Bluebell led a successful push for a shake-up at French yogurt giant Danone, joining forces with other activist funds. The chairman, who also was CEO, stepped down in March 2021 in what was a rare victory for activist funds in France's rigid corporate landscape.

In other campaigns, Bluebell prodded mining giant Glencore to unload its thermal coal business and complained that asset-management behemoth BlackRock shouldn't try to impose its ideological beliefs on the corporate world in the form of its push to promote environmental, social and corporate-governance—or ESG—concerns.

Glencore didn't engage with Bluebell. BlackRock executives met with Bluebell privately, and the company said publicly that it disagreed with Bluebell's climate- and corporate-governance campaigns at companies where BlackRock was invested.

Bivona says Bluebell studied BP and talked to investors for about a year before taking its position in September 2023.

He won't name those investors but says, "If you see the history of underperformance of the share price, do you think you will find a happy community?"

The fund's October letter was earlier reported by *The Financial Times*.

BP executives, including Auchincloss, last week hit the road to meet with investors in Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere, as they typically do after year-end earnings.

Auchincloss said last week that investors are supportive of the company's direction and mix of traditional and newer businesses.

"I think they will hear a different view," Bivona said in response to the CEO's comments. "It's a debate. Let's see where we go."

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Many investors, including Bluebell, simply want more of BP's cash to be handed back to them

Indraprastha Gas to look at acquiring renewable assets: MD

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NEW DELHI

State-run Indraprastha Gas Ltd (IGL) may look at acquisitions in the renewable energy space, particularly solar power, along with its core focus on city gas distribution, biogas and liquefied natural gas (LNG), said its managing director Kamal Kishore Chatiwal.

He noted that acquisition of solar assets would help make the company net zero.

“Capex will remain in the same range ₹1,500-1,600 crore in (FY25). If an opportunity comes for acquisition either in renewables, city gas distribution (CGD) space or any other, then we have the cash,” he said, however, adding that there is no proposal available currently.

City gas distribution (CGD), biogas and LNG will remain the core focus of investment plans. “We are also looking for renewables, solar. It will also be helpful for our internal net zero plans,” he said.

Promoted by Gail (India) Ltd and Bharat Petroleum



Kamal Kishore Chatiwal, IGL managing director.

Corporation Ltd (BPCL), IGL is a city gas distribution major and supplies CNG (compressed natural gas) and piped natural gas (PNG) across Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region) including parts of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan.

Chatiwal said the company's target is to set up 80-90 CNG stations in the current financial year and a similar number in the next fiscal (FY25). In terms of PNG connections, he said that in the past five to six years, the company has expanded its PNG network

from 750,000 connections to over 2.5 million.

IGL's target is to add 2-300,000 connections every year, he said.

In a bid to diversify its operations, the company during the recently ended India Energy Week 2024 signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with technology partners to set up compressed biogas (CBG) plants across Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh with an investment of about ₹6,000 crore. In May last year, the company had tied up with ACME Group to explore green hydrogen opportunities.

In the interview, Chatiwal also outlined plans to accelerate compressed biogas blending in its city gas distribution network. In November, the union ministry of petroleum and natural gas came up with phased mandates for CBG blending in CNG and PNG, saying the compressed biogas obligation would be kept at 1%, 3% and 4% of total CNG and PNG consumption for FY26, FY27 and FY28 respectively. Starting FY29 the obligation will be for 5% blending.



सौर ऊर्जा

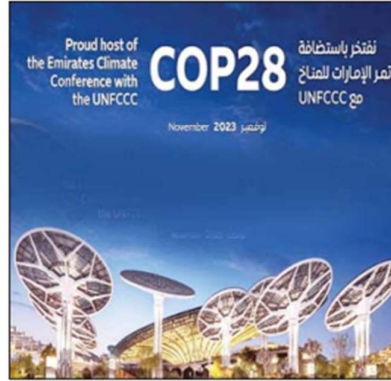
सुरेश भाई

स्वच्छ पर्यावरण की उम्मीदें

विश्व में जलवायु परिवर्तन से बढ़ रही गर्मी और आर्थिक गतिविधियों में आई तेजी के कारण ऊर्जा की खपत दिनोदिन बढ़ती जा रही है जिसके लिए दुनिया के लोग जीवाश्म ईंधन (पेट्रोल-डीजल) का 80 फीसद उपयोग कर रहे हैं, जो जलवायु संकट पैदा करने के लिए सर्वाधिक जिम्मेदार है। इसकी खपत कम करने के लिए दुनिया के लोग प्रति वर्ष जलवायु सम्मेलन में चिंता व्यक्त करते हैं।

पिछले दिनों दुबई में 28वें जलवायु सम्मेलन में महसूस किया गया था कि नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा (सौर, पवन, बायोमास, भू-तापीय) के पर्याप्त स्रोत जब तक उपलब्ध नहीं होते तब तक जीवाश्म ईंधन पर बर्दशें लगाना संभव नहीं है। ऊर्जा के इन स्थायी स्रोतों को उपयोग में लाने के लिए इसलिए भी कदम धीमे पड़े हैं कि इससे स्वच्छ ऊर्जा प्राप्त करने के लिए 4.5 अरब डॉलर की आवश्यकता है, जिसको विकसित देश विकासशील देशों को पूरी तरह देने के लिए राजी नहीं हैं। भारत में ही जीवाश्म ईंधन से 75.5 फीसद, परमाणु शक्ति से 2.8, सौर ऊर्जा से 4.2, पवन ऊर्जा से 4.6, पनबिजली से 10.7, बायोमास 0.5 फीसद ऊर्जा का इस्तेमाल हो रहा है। प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मोदी भी 2070 तक ही शून्य कार्बन उत्सर्जन की लक्ष्य प्राप्ति के लिए प्रतिबद्धता जता रहे हैं। जून, 2023 के अंत तक के आंकड़े बताते हैं कि भारत एशिया में तीसरे और दुनिया में पांचवें स्थान पर अक्षय ऊर्जा का उत्पादन कर रहा है। देश में 2030 तक 280 गीगावॉट सौर ऊर्जा क्षमता हासिल करने का लक्ष्य रखा गया है। वित्तीय वर्ष 2024 के बजट में सौर ऊर्जा क्षेत्र को आईबीईएफ द्वारा पांचवें सबसे आकर्षक वैश्विक सौर ऊर्जा क्षेत्र के रूप में मान्यता दी गई है।

हिमालय क्षेत्र में भी सौर ऊर्जा का विकास ऊर्जा प्रदेश के सपने को साकार कर सकता है। गौरतलब है कि विभिन्न मीडिया माध्यमों से केंद्र और राज्य सरकारों द्वारा सौर संयंत्र लगाने के लिए मदद देने की सूचनाएं आ रही हैं। बैंकों से कहा जा रहा है कि व्यक्तिगत स्तर पर यदि कोई 200 किलोवॉट सोलर संयंत्र लगाना चाहता है तो उसे 50 फीसद से अधिक सब्सिडी पर कर्ज मिल सकता है। इस तरह के सोलर संयंत्र लगाने पर एक करोड़ रुपये से अधिक खर्च आता है। यदि संयंत्र लग गया तो प्रति वर्ष एक लाख रुपये



की आय मिल सकती है और बिजली का बिल भी शून्य हो जाएगा। यदि कोई अपने घर में सोलर सिस्टम लगाना चाह रहा है, तो 'ओजस' सबसे तेज और विश्वसनीय विकल्प बताया जा रहा है। इनके द्वारा स्थापित किए जा रहे संयंत्र से 25 वर्षों तक मुफ्त बिजली मिल सकती है। 'आर्नेट सोलर' का अनुभव भी पिछले 8 वर्षों का है, जो सोलर पैनल को घर की छत के रूप में बना सकते हैं। इससे दोहरा लाभ है जिससे छत तो मिलेगी साथ ही बिजली भी मुफ्त मिल सकती है। यदि कोई नया घर बना रहा है तो अपनी पूरी छत को भी

सोलर पैनल की बना सकता है। पहाड़ी इलाकों, जहां लोगों ने जंगली जानवरों के आतंक के कारण अपनी खेतीबाड़ी बंजर छोड़ रखी है, में यदि सोलर पैनल लगाए जाते हैं तो वहां के गरीब, सीमांत एवं छोटे किसानों के लिए यह रोजगार का सबसे बड़ा साधन बन सकता है।

लेकिन इस सच से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता कि बैंकों के भरोसे इच्छुक लोगों तक सौर संयंत्र स्थापित करना मुश्किल होगा। अच्छा हो कि सरकार अपनी योजनाओं में उसे स्थान दे। क्षेत्र पंचायत, जिला पंचायत, ग्राम पंचायत के माध्यम से भी सौर ऊर्जा का विकास किया जा सकता है। सोशल मीडिया पर कंपनियां सोलर पैनल लगाने के आश्वासन दे रही हैं, जिनसे ऑनलाइन संपर्क करके मदद ली जा सकती है। राजस्थान समेत अन्य राज्यों, जहां सूर्य की किरणें अथाह गर्मी पैदा कर रही हैं, में स्थापित सोलर संयंत्र से पर्याप्त ऊर्जा पैदा हो रही है। पर्वतीय क्षेत्रों में भी ऐसे बहुत से इलाके हैं जहां हर समय धूप खिली रहती है और आबादी इसलिए निर्जन हो रही है कि गांव में पर्याप्त बिजली, पानी, शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य की बेहतर सुविधाएं नहीं हैं। ये सुविधाएं विद्युत आपूर्ति के बिना अधूरी रह जाती हैं। इन स्थानों में सुविधाओं के लिहाज से भी सौर ऊर्जा विकास की नई रोशनी ला सकती है।

दुनिया में स्वच्छ ऊर्जा के रूप में हाइड्रो पावर को अपेक्षित पहचान नहीं मिल पा रही है क्योंकि नदियों में लगातार जल की मात्रा घट रही है। बरसात में बाढ़ से नदियों के तट बुरी तरह प्रभावित हो रहे हैं। नदियों के बहाव को रोकने वाली जल विद्युत परियोजनाएं भी हर साल बड़े पैमाने पर क्षतिग्रस्त हो रही हैं। बाढ़ में बहने के बाद उन्हें दोबारा पूर्व स्थिति में नहीं लाया जा सकता। इसलिए सबसे बड़ा ऊर्जा विकल्प सौर ऊर्जा है। यह इसलिए भी देखा जा रहा है कि सूर्य की किरण हर जगह उपलब्ध हैं। अनेक स्थान हैं जहां सुबह से अंधेरा ढलने तक सूर्य का प्रकाश धरती को रोशन करता है। सूर्य की रोशनी को सौर ऊर्जा के रूप में उपयोग करना समय की मांग है।

भारत-यूई के बीच हुए 10 समझौते: क्वात्रा

निवेश, बिजली व्यापार और डिजिटल भुगतान प्लेटफॉर्म पर जोर

अबू धाबी, (एजेंसी): प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मोदी की यात्रा के दौरान द्विपक्षीय संबंधों को और मजबूत करने के लिए भारत और संयुक्त अरब अमीरात ने ऊर्जा, बुनियादी ढांचे, निवेश तथा अभिलेखागार के प्रबंधन जैसे प्रमुख क्षेत्रों में सहयोग के लिए 10 समझौतों पर हस्ताक्षर किए हैं। विदेश सचिव विनय क्वात्रा ने कहा कि दोनों देशों के बीच द्विपक्षीय व्यापार पहले से ही 85 अरब अमेरिकी डॉलर के करीब है। यूई भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में चौथा सबसे बड़ा निवेशक है। पहला समझौता, बिजली संपर्क और व्यापार के क्षेत्र में सहयोग से जुड़ा था। इस विशेष एमओयू का मकसद दो महत्वपूर्ण क्षेत्रों में हमारी साझेदारी को मजबूत करने पर ध्यान केंद्रित करना है, एक ऊर्जा सुरक्षा से संबंधित और दूसरा ऊर्जा व्यापार से संबंधित है। स्वच्छ ऊर्जा व्यापार इस समझौता



जापान का एक महत्वपूर्ण खंड है। यह स्वाभाविक रूप से हरित हाइड्रोजन और ऊर्जा भंडारण पर भी ध्यान केंद्रित करेगा।

क्वात्रा ने कहा कि भारत-पश्चिम एशिया-यूरोप आर्थिक गलियारे के सशक्तिकरण और संचालन के लिए सहयोग से संबंधित अंतर-सरकारी रूपरेखा समझौता क्षेत्रीय संपर्क को आगे बढ़ाएगा। इस समझौते के तहत मुख्य क्षेत्रों में लाजिस्टिक्स मंचों पर सहयोग शामिल है जो इन विशेष गलियारों के उद्देश्यों को आगे

बढ़ाता है। जी20 शिखर सम्मेलन के दौरान सितंबर में नई दिल्ली में भारत-पश्चिम एशिया-यूरोप आर्थिक गलियारे की घोषणा की गई थी। आईएमईसी को चीन के 'बेल्ट एंड रोड इनिशिएटिव' (बीआरआई) के विकल्प के रूप में देखा जा रहा है। यह भारत, संयुक्त अरब अमीरात, सऊदी अरब, जॉर्डन, इजराइल और यूरोप को जोड़ेगा। संयुक्त अरब अमीरात के निवेश मंत्रालय और भारत के इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स तथा प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्रालय ने डिजिटल बुनियादी ढांचा परियोजनाओं पर सहयोग के लिए एक समझौता जापान पर हस्ताक्षर किए हैं।

क्वात्रा ने कहा कि डिजिटल बुनियादी ढांचा परियोजनाओं में सहयोग पर समझौता जापान डिजिटल बुनियादी ढांचा क्षेत्र में निवेश सहयोग सहित व्यापक सहयोग के लिए एक रूपरेखा तैयार करेगा।

डीजल प्रदूषण पर अंकुश के लिए गंभीरता आवश्यक

हाल में भारत सरकार के पेट्रोलियम एवं प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्रालय के एक अधिकारिक पैनल ने 2027 तक 10 लाख से अधिक आबादी वाले और ज्यादा प्रदूषण वाले शहरों में डीजल से चलने वाले चौपहिया वाहनों पर प्रतिबंध लगाने की सिफारिश की है। डीजल को लेकर चिंता बढ़ने के दो प्रमुख कारण हैं। पहला इससे वायु प्रदूषण बहुत होता है। इसके प्रयोग से हानिकारक अवयव जैसे सल्फर और कार्बन वातावरण में अधिक फैलते हैं। ये दोनों ही हृदय और फेफड़ों की गंभीर बीमारियों का एक बड़ा कारण है। दूसरा कारण है कि निकट भविष्य में डीजल समाप्त होने के कगार पर है। तेजी से बढ़ती खपत और वाहनों की बिक्री ने डीजल के अस्तित्व पर ही संकट पैदा कर दिया है। साल 2020 में ब्रिटिश पेट्रोलियम द्वारा प्रकाशित एक रिपोर्ट में बताया गया कि दुनिया में लगभग 392 बिलियन गैलन डीजल ईंधन बचा है। रिपोर्ट



डीजल से प्रदूषण कम करने और हवा साफ रखने के लिए डीजल का उपयोग कम करने वाले महत्वपूर्ण कदम उठाने होंगे

में यह भी अंदेशा जताया गया कि यह ईंधन लगभग 47 वर्षों तक चल सकता है। अतः डीजल प्रदूषण को कम करने और हवा को साफ रखने के लिए डीजल का उपयोग सीमित करने संबंधी महत्वपूर्ण कदम उठाने होंगे। इन नियमों में डीजल इंजन सहित वाहनों के लिए स्वच्छ ईंधन और सख्त उत्सर्जन मानकों के उपयोग शामिल हों। आपातकालीन स्थितियों को छोड़कर डीजल

जेनरेटरों की बिक्री एवं उपयोग पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिया जाना चाहिए।
सुधीर कुमार सोमानी, देवास

ईरान में विस्फोट से प्राकृतिक गैस पाइपलाइन क्षतिग्रस्त



एजेंसी ■ दुबई

ईरान में बुधवार को तड़के हुए विस्फोटों से एक प्राकृतिक गैस पाइपलाइन क्षतिग्रस्त हो गई। एक अधिकारी ने इन विस्फोटों को देश में नुकसानदायक और आतंकवादी कृत्य करार दिया। गाजा पट्टी में हमास के खिलाफ इजराइल की जंग के बीच मध्यपूर्व में हालात तनावपूर्ण बने हुए हैं। ईरान के पश्चिमी चाहरमहल और बख्तियारी प्रांत से उत्तर में कैस्पियन सागर के शहरों तक

जाने वाली प्राकृतिक गैस पाइपलाइन विस्फोट की वजह से प्रभावित हुई है। हालांकि इस बारे में ज्यादा जानकारी साझा नहीं की गई। लगभग 1,270 किलोमीटर लंबी यह पाइपलाइन ईरान के दक्षिण पार्स गैस क्षेत्र केंद्र असालुएह से शुरू होती है। ईरान के गैस नेटवर्क नियंत्रण केंद्र के प्रबंधक सईद अघली ने ईरान के सरकारी टेलिविजन को बताया कि एक नुकसानदायक और आतंकवादी कृत्य के कारण पाइपलाइन से सटे कई क्षेत्रों में विस्फोट हुए।