

Government is discussing the details of the project with the Government of Iran and Pakistan at bilateral and trilateral levels, the first tripartite working group meeting of Iran, Pakistan and India on the IPI Gas Pipeline Project was held in Tehran on 14-15 March 2006. Second trilateral meeting of Iran-Pakistan-India is scheduled to be held on 22—24 May, 2006 at Islamabad. Various project related issues including those relating to the Project Structure, Framework Agreement and Pricing are being discussed in these meetings.

As regards gas imports from Myanmar, in January 2005, the then Minister (P&NG) participated in a trilateral Ministerial meeting between the Oil Ministers of Bangladesh, Myanmar and India. In pursuance of the trilateral Joint Press Statement released after that meeting, a Techno-Commercial Working Committee (TCWC) of the representatives of the three countries prepared a draft MoU in February, 2005 to be signed by the three oil Ministers after the approval of their respective Governments. However, no further progress has been achieved as Bangladesh wants the inclusion of certain bilateral issues in the trilateral MoU, which is not acceptable to India.

In view of the above, India is pursuing the option of a gas pipeline from Myanmar through the North-Eastern State of India by passing Bangladesh. Recently GAIL has got a feasibility report of the project-prepared. The discussions with the Myanmar side on the project are continuing.

So far as gas imports from Turkmenistan are concerned, the Governments of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan have been pursuing the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) Project. ADB has been designated as the lead development partner for the project. An Indian delegation led by the Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas visited Ashgabat, Turkmenistan on 14-15 February, 2006 to participate in the 9th Steering Committee Meeting of TAP project as an 'Observer'. The Steering Committee has invited India to become an official member of the project. The matter is under examination for taking a view.

Lack of facilities at retail outlets

t3291. SHRI KANJIBHAI PATEL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

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RAJYA SABHA

(a) the number and names of entrepreneurs belonging to SC/ST who have been given permission to start petrol/diesel retail outlets in Gujarat during 2004-05 and 2005-06 alongwith the locations thereof;

(b) the number of functional outlets out of them; and

(c) the number of outlets lacking in basic facilities as on 15th April, 2006?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (c) During the years 2004-05 and 2005-06, the public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs) viz., Indian Oil Corporation Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited and IBP Co. Limited had allotted 131 retail outlets (ROs) under the categories reserved for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, in the State of Gujarat. The details of the allottees and the locations where such ROs are to be set up are available with the Directors(Marketing) of the OMC concerned. Out of these allotment, 28 retail outlets have so far been commissioned and are operational. Out of the commissioned retail outlets, basic facilities exist in 23 outlets. In the remaining five cases, provision of facilities of proper drive-way and construction of sales room building are under progress while the other basic facilities exist.

Special drive for vacancies

3292. SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of backlog vacancies as on 31st March, 2004 in various Departments under the Ministry;

(b) whether, special drive was carried out to fill in the above backlog vacancies;

(c) if so, the number of vacancies filled in during the last two years, Department-wise; and

(d) what are the backlog vacancies as on 31st March, 2006?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) The number of backlog vacancies reserved for SCs/STs, as on 31st March, 2004 in