

# Fourteen killed in GAIL India gas pipeline blast and fire

BY NIDHI VERMA

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(Reuters) - Fourteen people were killed and 20 injured on Friday in a blast and fire at a gas pipeline in Andhra Pradesh, again raising safety concerns over the country's energy projects.

The fire broke out on a stretch of pipeline running through the village of Nagaram, engulfing buildings and burning victims to death, according to TV news footage and eyewitness accounts. Many such projects are opposed by villagers on safety grounds.

"The situation is very bad ... 14 people were burnt alive and 20 have been admitted to hospital with injuries," Yanamala Ramakrishnu, state finance minister of Andhra Pradesh, told Reuters. He added that the fire had been brought under control.

Friday's incident was the most deadly in the Indian energy sector since August 2013, when 28 people were killed in a fire at Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd's ([HPCL.NS](#)) refinery at Vizag in Andhra Pradesh.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said victims and relatives would receive compensation. He said 200,000 rupees would be paid to relatives of the dead and 50,000 rupees for those injured, in addition to relief payments by the petroleum ministry and GAIL.

Elected last month by a landslide, Modi wants to accelerate major energy and infrastructure projects that have been blocked by planning delays.

The latest fire occurred in a pipeline operated by state-owned energy company GAIL (India) Ltd ([GAIL.NS](#)) and disrupted supplies to a power station and closed two gas fields.

The 18-inch pipeline supplies 0.5 million standard cubic metres of gas a day to a power plant operated by Lanco Infratech Ltd. ([LAIN.NS](#)), GAIL spokeswoman Vandana Chanana said.

"We have made arrangements to supply gas to consumers through alternative pipelines," Chanana said.

State-run explorer Oil and Natural Gas Corp ([ONGC.NS](#)) has shut two of its gas fields that were supplying the fire-hit pipeline, its head of exploration N. K. Verma said.

GAIL's shares declined 1.1 percent at 1:07 p.m. while Lanco Infratech's shares were down 1.3 percent.

Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu have ordered an inquiry into the blast and fire.

(Additional reporting by Sumeet Chatterjee in MUMBAI, Aditya Kalra and Tommy Wilkes in NEW DELHI Editing by Douglas Busvine and Michael Perry)

Source:

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/06/27/uk-india-blast-idINKBNoF207Q20140627>

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## GAIL pipeline fire raises safety concerns<sub>p</sub>

*Sudhakaran*, TNN | Jun 28, 2014, 02.25 PM IST

KANNUR/KOCHI: The action committees in Kannur said that the LNG pipeline mishap in Andhra Pradesh, which claimed 15 lives, has justified the public concern over the proposed LNG pipeline from Kochi to Mangalore.

"When we raised our concern about the dangers of a pipeline passing through human habitats and residential areas, authorities said that we are creating fear psychosis among people to hinder the development. But this mishap has proved what we said was true," said U K Sayed, district coordinator of Gas Pipeline Victims' Forum, a state-level forum formed by the people to oppose the LNG pipeline project in the present form.

However GAIL officials said that this is just one-off incident and cannot be taken as a pointer to raise objections against the project. They added that people still depend on oil tankers for transporting fuel despite accidents.

"Ideally, accidents should not occur and that's what we focus on. We had already taken all precautions while constructing the 43-km pipeline in Kochi," said GAIL deputy general manager (DGM) Ramesh KP.

Association chairman C R Neelakantan said that laying pipelines in a densely populated state like Kerala is not safe. "There are several other options like barge, trucks, sea routes which we can pursue in this regard," he said.

This is not the first instance of such an explosion in India and at least three explosions were reported in Goa, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh over the past five years, said forum activists, adding that no casualty was reported because explosions happened in deserted areas.

"Though the government said US standard will be maintained while laying the pipeline, these are false promises. Even in the US, where the security is said to be high, LNG mishaps are reported," activists said.

"If they give importance to human security, the first thing they should do is to spare human habitats," said Sayed.

"Though there is a valve for every 40 kilometre of the pipeline that gets shut in case of a leak, the gas within this area is sufficient for a catastrophe and hence people will not permit the pipeline to pass through residential areas," said a member of the Victim's Forum, which plans to revive the campaign against the backdrop of the latest mishap.

Social activist Bhaskaran Vellur, who is part of an action committee in the northern parts of Kannur, felt that the project was a trap of sorts.

"For the project, GAIL does not take over the land but just gives compensation by retaining the land in the name of the owner, which means the owner has to pay tax and also take the ownership of any mishap happening there, which we cannot approve," he said.

"People are not against development or laying the pipeline line. But safety is our concern with all-inclusive growth. But here the development is corporate-centric and hence the people are being taken for a ride with false promises," said Bhaskaran.

*(With inputs from Sudha Nambudiri)*

**Source:**

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/GAIL-pipeline-fire-raises-safety-concerns/articleshow/37383387.cms>