

Oil ministry sat over safety plan since Jan

Proposal Didn't Reach Cabinet, Focus Was On Gas Pricing

Sanjay Dutta | TNN

New Delhi: Repeated accidents in the oil industry failed to wake up the oil ministry and it forgot about plans, ready since January, to create an independent safety watchdog for the sector as its entire energy was taken up by the gas pricing issue.

Sources said the ministry was ready to seek Cabinet approval for enacting a new law for setting up petroleum and natural gas industry safety board. The proposal, however, never made it to the Cabinet's table as the focus was concentrated on resolving issues arising out of the decision to raise domestic gas prices from April.

Not just that. The issue also failed to make it to the todo list prepared by the minis-

GAS TROUBLE

Recent disasters involving gas pipelines

India

March | 7 killed in toxic gas leak from a dyeing unit in Tamil Nadu

June | 54 rendered unconscious after ammonia leak from a cold storage in Tamil Nadu.

> 6 killed, 30 injured after gas leak at Bhilai steel plant in Chattisgarh



ALIVE

Blazing fire after gas pipeline blast in Nagaram village



Nagaram

Andhra Pradesh
ONGC complex

Canada

Jan | Trans-Canada pipeline blew up 15 miles south of Winnipeg at Otterburne, Manitoba. Fire burned for more than 12 hours

Feb | One person died in Kniffely, Adair County, Kentucky, when underground pipeline of Columbia Gulf exploded. The blaze also razed homes and barns

Feb | Hilland gas pipeline exploded near Tioga, North Dakota

March | A Northern Natural Gas Company pipeline erupted six miles north of Fremont, Nebraska

May | A Viking gas pipeline

US

A recent Wall Street Journal review found that there were 1,400 pipeline spills and accidents in the US 2010-2013

try officials for the new government. Once again, the issue that hogged most of the space was gas pricing followed by new exploration

after an inter-ministerial committee of secretaries examined the various aspects and made their recommendations. The chemicals and fertilizers ministry agreed to the proposal with some changes. The department of industrial policy and promotion as well as the revenue raised some objections that were reconciled later.

There are at least eight authorities that oversee different aspects of safety in the oil and gas sector. Nearly all of them have been set up under different laws. As a result, often, there are either overlaps or absence of differentiation in safety issues concerning oil and gas sector and other such explosives industry.

At present, Oil Industry Safety Directorate is the key monitor of safety standards but lacks legal teeth to penalize companies for failing to comply with directives. Other bodies focus on limited safety aspects and does not have an overarching approach toward the peculiarity of safety in the oil and gas industry.

Blowout waiting to happen?

Hyderabad: Poor

maintenance, lack of proper scientific information on the KG Basin that is known for its geological complexity, existence of pressure zones within the earth and exploration sites in thickly populated areas have all contributed to Friday's blowout at Nagaram village in Konaseema region.

Experts feel there is an urgent need for a relook at the KG Basin as the Andhra government has proposed to develop the Visakhapatnam-Kakinada region as a petro hub. Setting up new petro units without reassessing the environmental and human safety norms, experts say, may create more havoc.

As villagers in Konaseema allege, ONGC, GAIL and others have failed to prevent such mishaps. The coastal region, more so the Konaseema area, is highly fragile and continuous blowouts will threaten its delicate ecological balance. TNN

ent and disconnected laws — that govern safety issues in the oil sector. The detailed proposal for seeking the Cabinet's approval was prepared

explosion near Warren, Minnesota, sent a fireball over 100 feet in the air

Malaysia

Petronas Gas pipeline exploded between Lawas town and Long Sukang in Sarawak. Houses and vehicles damaged, nearby villages evacuated

Belgium

July 2004 | 24 killed and 122 injured in gas pipeline explosion at Ghislenghien, 50km southwest of Brussels