

PESHAWAR: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Thursday submitted an inquiry report about embezzlement in the exploration of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) from Chanda Oilfield in Kohat in which the bureau had found Rs1015.475 million irregularities in the contract.

The NAB senior investigation officer, Col (retired) Hussain Afridi submitted a final investigation report to a division bench comprising Chief Justice Dost Muhammad Khan and Justice Qaiser Rashid through Additional Deputy Prosecutor General, Muhammad Jamil Khan in which he claimed the officials of Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) and Oil and Gas Development Company (OGDCL) had caused a total loss of Rs1015.475 million to the public exchequer in the LPG contract to Foundation Gas (FONGAS).

The court allowed the NAB to proceed against the officials involved in the scam under the relevant provisions and articles of NAB Ordinance and further conducted inquiry if necessary before submitting reference against the officials concerned in the scam.

The high court also directed the federal government to press the ministry concerned to pay royalty on LPG to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government. The court also directed the government to prepare proper formula and schedule for LPG royalty payment to the KP.

The court also directed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief secretary to form taskforce comprising experts and qualified technocrats to prepare a plan for utilising the funds for the LPG producing areas as the funds were used for social sector development in the area in a justified manner and without political consideration.

However, the bench said the public representatives would also be allowed in the finalisation of the schemes, but the funds would be utilised on merit for development of the people of the area.

On previous hearing, the court had directed the interior division to put the names of chairman of Ogra and several other officials including that of OGDCL on the exit control list (ECL) after an inquiry pointed out irregularities in the exploration of LPG from Kohat oilfields.

The chief justice had taken suo motu notice of the issue after receiving reports that natural gas at different gas fields had been converted into LPG in an illegal manner in Karak and Kohat.

The court had assigned investigation of the issue to NAB and FIA. Later, the NAB and FIA officials informed the court that natural gas could not be converted into LPG and in fact LPG was extracted from the oilfields.

After further investigation on the court's directives the NAB investigation officer Col Hussain Afridi and Mohammad Irfan, an assistant director of FIA, submitted their inquiry report and stated that they had found several irregularities in exploration of LPG.

The investigation revealed that prior to awarding the contract to FONGAS in 2008, distribution of LPG continued for almost a year in a clandestine manner. It was suspected that an LPG plant, which was earlier set up at Chakwal was shifted to the oilfield in Kohat in an illegal manner. It was alleged that the extraction and distribution deals of LPG also appeared to be in a shady manner. The bench disposed of the suo moto case with the direction to the NAB to proceed with the matter in accordance the law against the officials involved in the scam.

Courtesy: The News