

Transporters threaten to come on roads with families if fuel crisis not resolved within 12 hours

Rawalpindi

The closure of compressed natural gas (CNG) and shortage of petrol continued even on Tuesday, that hit the citizens quite hard, as the situation kept the vehicles off the roads, sparking protests in various localities of the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

The most affected people with fuel shortage were schoolchildren, students, office goers and common people, but the government is playing a spectator's role over the issue.

Majority of public and private transport remained off the roads and long queues of motorists and motorcyclists could be seen at the petrol pumps. The petrol pump staff claims that their stock dried during last 24 hours. But the Federal Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources Dr Asim claims the situation will improve in 24 hours.

Mutahidda Transport Union (MTU) President Malik Muhammad Sultan told **The News** that more than 70 per cent drivers have stopped their vehicles due to closure of CNG and shortage of petrol. **We have given ultimatum to the government of 12 hours to resolve the matter otherwise we would come on roads along with our families,** he threatened.

Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) has not been available for the last six days and to make the matter worse the Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Ltd (SNGPL) has said that the CNG stations would remain closed for six days in Punjab including twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

All petrol pumps have dried due to high demand of fuel as motorists wandering here and there and were seen pushing their vehicles. Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) was also not available for two days and poor rickshaw drivers are helpless to buy LPG in **black** on double rates at around Rs245-250 per kilogram.

**The News** also learnt that several incidents also happened at petrol pumps due to non-availability of fuel. Majority of petrol pump owners at Jhelum Road, Airport Road, Bakramandi Chowk, Dhoke Syedan Chowk, Chur Chowk, Pirwadhai Road and Pindora Road even called police to control law and order. **We had enough stock for the day, but since the CNG is not available for last one week and there is no alternate fuel available the demand would continue definitely Wednesday and Thursday too,** said Raja Wasim, owner of a petrol station at Satellite Town, adding, **however, the serious thing is that the banks remained closed on Tuesday (January 1, 2013) and we could not make payments for fresh supply on Tuesday.**

Talking to **The News** people belonging to different walks of life said that with the announcement by the SNGPL to forcefully cut down supply valves of gas stations, the impact would not only be inflationary for the motorists but with shortages going around, people would be wasting hours to get petrol as it was for CNG up to last week.

Muhammad Niaz, a motorist, said that government has jammed **wheel** due to wrong management and its rigid attitude. **My children did not go to school because their van did not come and van driver excused for absence of CNG and petrol,** he said. **We can't understand what the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Resources wants, why he is creating problems for public,** he added.

Rehana Kausar, a workingwoman said that public is facing difficult situation because there is no rule of law in the country. **I am standing here at Kutchery Stop for the last two hours, but neither a wagon nor a Suzuki came how I could I reach my office,** she asked.

All Pakistan CNG Association Supreme Council Chairman Ghayas Abdullah Piracha rejected the government plan and said that people have been facing great difficulties as most of the public transport went off the roads due to CNG closure and absence of petrol, which proves that the government, which came into power with the help of poor, is framing all policies to promote the interests of the rich while subjecting

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middleclass and poor to worst exploitation. He termed it as a conspiracy against masses hatched to promote interests of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) mafia, LNG and wealthy industrialists.

He said that the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources as well as Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) are dancing on the tunes of liquid petroleum gas mafia and politically connected industrial sector representing 22 notorious families known for grabbing most of the country's resources.

However, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Petroleum Dr Asim Hussain expressed confidence that the fuel shortage was only a one or two days issue. He said that there was around 2,500 tonnes of petrol at Pakistan State Oil's Sihala depot and the total demand for Rawalpindi and Islamabad is around 500 tonnes daily.

When The News contacted SNGPL Managing Director Arif Hameed he refused to give any statement over the issue and as per policy he remained tight lipped.

Courtesy: The News