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Industry &amp; Economy - Power

## Natural gas for power generation 'not feasible option'

### Our Bureau

*Methane gas from gas hydrates may be viable fuel*

### Potential sources

*In India, basins in the Andaman-Nicobar offshore and the Kerala-Konkan offshore were considered to be the potential sources of gas hydrates.*

Kolkata, July 19

The setting up of power stations based on domestic natural gas "is not a feasible option", according to Mr B.P. Singh, Executive Director (coal mining & coal washery), NTPC. The dependence on natural gas as an alternative fuel may be considered only when new gas fields are discovered with substantial proven reserve of gas, he felt.

Mr Singh said that the use of natural gas as a fuel for power generation in the country began only in late 80s with the commissioning of the Hazira-Bijapur-Jagdishpur pipeline by GAIL (India).

However, the modest proven reserves of natural gas (as estimated at the end of 2004-05) of 927 billion cubic metres were expected to last for about 29 years only at the current production rate of about 70 MMSCMD.

Incidentally, the potential for coal bed methane (CBM) was proved to be the largest among non-conventional domestic fuel sources, although studies are still under progress for its economic extraction and exploitation. Methane gas from gas hydrates was found to be the other promising sources of energy of the future.

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In India, basins in the Andaman-Nicobar offshore and the Kerala-Konkan offshore were considered to be the potential sources of gas hydrates. It would be quite some time before it could be considered as a viable fuel for power generation on commercial scale, he observed.

In the given situation, Mr Singh said, at the national conference on 'India's energy security' held here recently, that the installation of large-size thermal stations in the vicinity of coal mines was the most economical method of power generation and hence most preferred long-term option for large-scale thermal capacity addition. He felt that there was no other fuel, either domestic or imported, which could compete with domestic coal for thermal power stations.

**Factors hindering import**

Mr Singh said that domestic fuel supply (coal, gas) was likely to fall short of requirement for power generation in the short to medium term and some amount of imports of fuels seems inevitable. Import of fuel might get limited by a number of factors such as pricing, exchange rate variations, fuel security, international market conditions, capacity of handling and transportation infrastructure.

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