GAIL Pipeline in Kerala

Why in news?

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Kozhikode in north Kerala recently witnessed violent protests against the laying of a pipeline by the Gas Authority of India Ltd (GAIL).

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What is the project?

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- The Kochi LNG terminal was meant to ensure natural gas supply for domestic and industrial use in Kerala and in South India.
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- GAIL envisaged a pipeline to transport natural gas from Kochi to Mangaluru and Bengaluru.
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- The Kochi-Koottanad-Bengaluru-Mangaluru Pipeline (KKBMPL) project was thus conceived in 2007.
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- The first phase aimed at linking the terminal with local industrial users, including Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited.
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- The second phase of the pipeline was to go through seven districts of Kerala, besides covering parts of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
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What are the concerns?

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- The project has been delayed considerably because of resistance to **acquisition of land** under the **Right of Use (RoU)** agreement.

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- The **compensation** for farmers and landowners who allow GAIL to lay the pipeline through their property is a contentious issue.
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- The government has however doubled the compensation, and said it will be fixed by pegging the market rate at 10 times the fair price.
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- Also, despite GAIL stressing that the LNG is both safe and essential for the state's development, the agitators have serious **safety concerns**.
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- Consequently, GAIL had to terminate the contracts it entered into with construction firms to lay the pipeline.
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- The protestors demand that the pipeline be **relocated** from populated areas and taken through the sea route, instead.
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- This has been rejected by GAIL, which reportedly fixed the alignment with minimising impact on populated areas.
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- Also, as of the land required in Kerala, 70% is under **paddy cultivation.**
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- The Kerala section also requires 75 major horizontal drillings at the beds of **water bodies** to take the pipeline across rivers.
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- Thus, so many factors surrounding the pipeline poses challenges for its unhindered implementation.
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- Despite the disruption attempts, GAIL has managed to continue laying the pipeline, though under heavy police protection.
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- However, the project, which should have been commissioned in 2013, now has a **revised deadline** of February 2019.
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- Meanwhile, the delay is causing **huge losses** to the Kochi terminal and re-tendering is resulting in cost escalations.
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Quick Fact

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How does Right of Use (RoU) work?

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- GAIL acquires the Right of Use from landowners and/or farmers.
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- Owners are then paid compensation as per the Petroleum and Mineral Pipelines (Acquisition of Right of User in Land) Act, 1962.
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- Ownership remains with the landowners but they shouldn’t cultivate deep-rooted trees at a distance of 10 metres, or carry out constructions.
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- GAIL pays compensation as per the amount fixed by the state revenue department.
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Source: Indian Express

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