

# More govt buses to run on CNG, says Hakim

**KINSUK BASU**

**Calcutta:** The Bengal government will run a large number of buses on CNG, an environment-friendly fuel, transport minister Firhad Hakim said on Wednesday while inaugurating a CNG station at the Kasba bus depot.

“Apart from Calcutta proper, CNG stations will be set up in the adjoining districts in phases as part of the transport department’s efforts to reduce pollution caused by vehicles and operational costs,” Hakim said.

The CNG station in Kasba is the first to be set up in a government bus depot. In March, the city got two CNG stations — one in New Town and the

other in Garia — where anyone can refuel vehicles powered by the green fuel.

Indian Oil Corporation set up the station in New Town and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited built the one in Garia.

As with the two stations set up in March, the one in Kasba will receive CNG from Bengal Gas Company Limited (BGCL), a joint venture between the Bengal government’s Greater Calcutta Gas Supply Corporation Limited and GAIL, a central government undertaking.

“We will set up more gas stations soon, where even private bus operators can fill their vehicles,” Hakim said.

Bengal had signed an agreement with the BGCL in June 2021 for supply of CNG buses that the state government will run.

Over the next five years BGCL will set up CNG facilities in various government bus depots. Primarily, eight bus depots have been identified where CNG stations will be set up in the first phase, including in Salt Lake, Thakurpukur, Barrackpore, Belgharia, Howrah, Santragachhi and Karunamoyee.

The Bengal Gas Company Limited will invest Rs 3.5 crore towards building CNG infrastructure at each depot.

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Transport department officials said introduction of CNG-powered buses would lead to considerable reduction in operational cost as fuel costs could be cut down by 25-30 per cent.



**Transport minister Firhad Hakim inaugurates the CNG station in Kasba on Wednesday**

Each CNG station can refuel 15 buses in an hour.

Senior officials of the Bengal Gas said the company would invest around Rs 7,000 crore towards setting up the gas grid in Calcutta and its adjoining areas.

“The state government needs to come out and support private bus operators who are waiting to switch to CNG,” said Tito Saha, general secretary of the City Suburban Bus Services, which recently introduced five CNG-powered buses in New Town.

On Wednesday, transport department officials said the government was working on a package to encourage private bus operators to switch to CNG.



# State depot gets first CNG station in major push for cleaner fuel

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**Kolkata:** Bengal transport minister Firhad Hakim on Wednesday inaugurated a CNG station at Kasba West Bengal Transport Corporation depot which paved the way for faster conversion from dirty fuel diesel to clean fuel CNG for public transport. This is the seventh CNG station in the city, but the first one at any of the bus depots across Bengal.

Hakim dispensed CNG to a new CNG bus. With the bigger dispenser, 15 buses can be refueled in an hour. CNG is much cheaper than diesel.



Firhad Hakim inaugurates the CNG station at Kasba bus depot

While one litre of diesel costs a consumer Rs 92.74, one kg (1.1 litre) of CNG costs Rs 76.5.

"Apart from affirming our commitment to cleaner and greener environment, CNG will give us an immuni-

## Times View

It is a step in the right direction. But we need many more such stations. Adequate stations will give a big fillip to the use of green vehicles.

ty from highly unstable prices of diesel and petrol," said Hakim.

A year ago, an agreement was signed between Bengal Gas Company Limited (BGCL) and West Bengal Transport Corporation (WBTC) to construct CNG stations at eight depots, including Kasba, said a senior transport de-

partment officer.

"We are authorized by the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board to supply Compressed Natural Gas / Piped Natural Gas in Kolkata and parts of its adjoining districts. Now we are bringing CNG in caskets to the city. Once it comes through the pipelines, supply will be steady and cost-effective, too," said a senior BGCL official, a JV company of Gas Authority of India Limited & Greater Calcutta Gas Supply Corporation Limited. The official also applauded the transport department's announcement of taxes and registration fees waiver for CNG vehicles

# CNG filling station to ease pollution woes



**STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**  
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Putting its best foot forward to ease out the city's pollution and harmful emission burden, the state transport department launched a compressed natural gas (CNG) station at West Bengal Transport Corporation (WBTC) Kasba today.

An agreement was signed between Bengal Gas Company and WBTC last year for setting up of CNG stations at eight locations in and around the city. As per the agreement, BGCL is to set up CNG facilities within the premises of WBTC and supply CNG to buses.

The eight locations include Howrah, Salt Lake, Thakurpukur, Nilgunj, Belghoria, Santragachi and Karunamoyee and Kasba Bus depot.

Notably, BGCL (a JV Company of GAIL and GCGSCL) has been authorized by Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) for supply of CNG or piped nat-

ural gas in Kolkata and parts of its adjoining districts.

The company is to spend rupees 3.5 crores to build up CNG infrastructure at each bus depot. About 15 buses per hour can be refueled with two bus dispensers in the online CNG Stations at bus depots.

According to the state Transport minister, Firhad Hakim, the department runs on a subsidy of about rupees 700 crores.

"If we are able to introduce electric and CNG vehicles soon, the department would not have to be run on subsidy. Instead, the department would make some earnings and give to the state government," said the minister.

"We are also considering whether our laws could be amended to extend the permit of 15-year-old buses by five years if they are converted into CNG. I have asked the department to prepare a note on this," added the minister.

(representational image)



## বা টি তি

### কসবায় চালু সিএনজি পাম্প



■ এই সময়: এক দিকে পেট্রোলপেঁচের লাগাতার মূল্যবৃদ্ধি, অন্য দিকে পরিবেশ দূষণ নিয়ন্ত্রণের কথা মাথায় রেখে শহরে বাড়ানো হচ্ছে সিএনজি পাম্পের সংখ্যা। বুধবার কসবায় পরিবহণ দপ্তরের ডিপোয় একটি সিএনজি পাম্পের উদ্বোধন করে পরিবহণমন্ত্রী ফিরহাদ হাকিম বলেন, 'যে ভাবে জ্বালানির দাম বাড়ছে সেই অনুপাতে ভাড়া বাড়লে মানুষের উপরে চাপ বাড়বে। সে কারণেই সিএনজি বাস এবং ব্যাটারি-চালিত বাসের সংখ্যা, চার্জিং স্টেশন বাড়ানো হচ্ছে।' গত বছর জুনে বেঙ্গল গ্যাস কোম্পানি লিমিটেডের (বিজিসিএল) সঙ্গে পরিবহণ দপ্তরের একটি চুক্তি স্বাক্ষর হয়। পরিবহণ দপ্তর সূত্রে খবর, কলকাতা এবং লাগোয়া এলাকা মিলিয়ে ৮টি সিএনজি পাম্পিং স্টেশন তৈরি করবে বিজিসিএল। প্রতিটি পাম্পের জন্যে বরাদ্দ করা হবে সাড়ে তিন কোটি টাকা। কসবা ছাড়াও সিএনজি পাম্পিং স্টেশন তৈরি হবে হাওড়া, মশ্টেলেক, ঠাকুরপুকুর, মীলগঞ্জ, বেলঘরিয়া, সাঁতরাপাছি এবং করুণাময়ীতে। বর্তমানে নিউ টাউন, চিনার পার্ক, নিউ গড়িয়ায় সিএনজি ভরার ব্যবস্থা আছে।

## চালু সিএনজি পাম্প

▶▶ কসবায় রাজ্য পরিবহণ নিগমের বাস ডিপোয় প্রথম সিএনজি পাম্পের উদ্বোধন হল মঙ্গলবার। এ দিন পাম্পের উদ্বোধন করেন পরিবহণমন্ত্রী ফিরহাদ হাকিম। কসবা ছাড়াও হাওড়া, সল্টলেক, ঠাকুরপুকুর, নীলগঞ্জ, বেলঘরিয়া, সাঁতরাগাছি এবং করুণাময়ীতে পরিবহণ নিগমের ডিপোর জমিতে সিএনজি পাম্প গড়ে তোলার জন্য নিগমের সঙ্গে চুক্তি হয়েছে বেঙ্গল গ্যাস কোম্পানি লিমিটেড নামে একটি সংস্থার। এ দিন ওই পরিকল্পনার আওতায় প্রথম পাম্প উদ্বোধন হল। কসবায় ওই পাম্পের পাশের জমিতে আরও একটি সিএনজি পাম্প তৈরি করা হবে। এ দিনের অনুষ্ঠানের পরে 'সিটি সাবার্বান বাস সার্ভিস'-এর সাধারণ সম্পাদক টিটু সাহা জানান, সিএনজি পাম্পের সংখ্যা বাড়লে পরিবেশবান্ধব বাস চালানোর ক্ষেত্রে আগ্রহ বাড়বে।

# Bus operators keen on CNG for sustenance

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**Kolkata:** Reeling under the high cost of diesel, a section of bus operators is now keen on switching to CNG, a less expensive and more environment-friendly fuel and also exploring new AC routes to make the operations sustainable in the long run.

The City Suburban Bus Service that launched the AC route between Shapoorjee and Ultadanga a few days

## Times View

This would be a "confluence response" to two different phenomena: the availability of and easier access to green fuel as well as the runaway hike in fossil fuel price. But, whatever the reasons, we should take advantage of the situation and push as many green vehicles as possible into the public-sector transport fleet.

ago has proposed five long routes in the city, which will connect the IT hubs of Sector V and New Town with areas like Garia, Barasat and Thakurpukur. They have also proposed a scheme, under which they will run the state owned non-AC buses and pay a fee to the government.

"With most of the existing buses set to be phased out by 2024, we need new ideas and new business models to sustain ourselves. Our initial dialogue with the state government has been meaningful. The government has expressed its willingness to support private players using alternate forms of

## More CNG pvt buses added to city fleet

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**Kolkata:** At a time when many old bus routes are either shutting down or reducing frequency, there is good news for New Town and Barasat.

received positive response. The new Ultadanga-Shapoorji route has been so planned as the CNG filling station is located at New Town. A meeting of the private operators of City Suburban Bus Service trans-

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energy. For this, they are ready to consider new routes or bring diversions to the existing routes. Keeping in mind that the Kasba CNG pump is up and running, we have proposed to run an AC private route from near Sakherbazar/Eden City to Shapoorjee and another two between Garia and Shapoorjee as well as Barasat and Shapoorjee," said Titu Saha, general secretary of the City Suburban Bus Service.

Tapan Banerjee of Joint Council of Bus Syndicate has spoken to the government about arranging loans for those who are planning to run on alternate fuels by changing the engines, instead of taking new buses. "First, there should be clarity whether the ones who are switching to CNG will be allowed to operate. We also want clarity on whether the state will help us procure bank loans in buying new buses once the old ones are scrapped," said Banerjee.

The state transport department officials stated that there were talks on providing subsidies to the owners who wanted to switch to CNG fuel. "We will help the city's bus fleet to be cleaner, greener and cost effective. A decision in this regard will be announced soon," said a senior official.