Under Ground Coal Gasification in India: An Alternative and Viable Option

Description:
As a prospering economy, India faces energy security as a growing challenge. At present, India's energy mix majorly consists of coal (52 per cent), oil (32 per cent), gas (10 per cent), hydro electricity (5 per cent) and nuclear energy (1 per cent). Due to ever increasing concerns over climate change, cleaner fuel like gas is preferred over fossil fuel (coal). Therefore, to address these concerns, India has increased share of gas in its energy mix in by 25.5 per cent from 2008 onwards. Gas is consumed by major sectors like power, fertiliser, city gas, etc. Further, users consuming liquid fuels are shifting to gas, and many Greenfield proposals (based on gas) are coming up. The upward pressure would widen the demand supply mismatch in the coming years. To address these concerns, India is making efforts to bring gas through trans-border. In addition, it is exploring un-conventional alternatives such as Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) for supply of gas.

On April 1, 2010, India has 276,810.41 million tonnes (MT) of coal resources, out of which only 40 per cent (approximately) are recoverable. To utilise its rest of the reserves, Government of India (GoI) has taken initiatives to implement UCG in the country. In terms of policy framework, UCG is at its nascent stage, though the GoI has given instructions to encourage investment in UCG. Several organizations, such as Oil and Natural Gas Corp. Ltd. (ONGC), Gail India Ltd. (GAIL), Coal India Ltd. (CIL), Essar Oil Ltd. (EOL), Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) and Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL), have conducted or are planning to conduct UCG trails. Recently, the Central Mine Planning and Design Institute Ltd. (CMPDIL) has invited bids from India/abroad for commercial development of UCG in Kaitha under CCL territory and Thesgora 'C' block under WCL territory.

UCG is re-evolving over the globe as a technology to replace the conventional mining methods. The process reduces the emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs), and leaves residual ash and rock inside. In addition, it is the only available method to exploit the unmineable coal resources, thereby tapping the potential coal reserves of the country.

In this milieu, the authors highlight the UCG as a potential technology to address the countries energy demand. The Report focuses on UCG as an alternative to environmental solution along with a feasible option to exploit the irrecoverable resources. It also covers the investment scenario for UCG operations in India and captures the issues and concerns around the same.

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