

# GAIL suspends two senior officials

## Pipeline Blast Toll Rises To 20; Crude Oil Leak In Tatipaka Village Creates Panic On Sunday

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Kakinada:** Faced with severe criticism of negligence, the Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) on Sunday suspended two of its senior officials based in Rajahmundry even as the toll in the gas pipeline blast incident in the Konaseema region of East Godavari district increased to 20 with two more victims succumbing to burns. The GAIL also announced that it will adopt Nagaram village which bore the brunt of the blast and conduct an audit of its pipeline system with an international agency.

Even as senior GAIL officials were handing over a cheque of Rs 3.89 crore towards compensation to the kin of the blast victims to EG district collector Neetu Kumari Prasad, tension spread in Tatipaka village as crude oil began leaking from an ONGC pipeline outside an ONGC refinery. Panic-stricken people ran away from the site and scores of villagers later staged protest blocking the main roads. A senior ONGC official told media that there was no need to panic over the crude oil leak, though he accepted that an accidental spark could lead to a major mishap.

GAIL did not mention the names of the officials suspended, but sources named them as general manager Pankaj Patel and deputy general manager Rakesh Prasad. The officials are in-charge of regional operations and maintenance of the pipeline network.

Some more officials are likely to face the axe after GAIL

### IN THE PIPELINE



» Foot patrolling of pipeline network initiated

» International agency to be appointed for safety audit of entire pipeline network

» Affected pipeline certified

by independent national and international agencies, says GAIL

» ₹4 cr compensation handed over to district authorities, disbursement to start on Monday

» ₹20 lakh for kin of deceased, ₹50,000 for injured

» Loss of crop, property to be compensated fully

» GAIL to adopt Nagaram village

completes its own internal probe into the blast. Villagers alleged that they had reported gas leakage to senior authorities several times, but they did not attend to the problem. It has appointed executive director (human resources) Amit Ray as the nodal officer for coordinating relief and rehabilitation measures, besides taking up foot-patrol of "every inch" of gas pipeline in KG basin.

The GAIL compensation will be distributed to the relatives of the victims by the state government on Monday. GAIL has announced Rs 20 lakh each to the kin of the deceased.

BC Tripathi, chairman and managing director of GAIL, said his company deeply mourns the tragic loss of life and property. The state-run gas authority will bear the medical expenses of all the injured persons and best possible medical care will be provided. In the case of those permanently disabled, Rs 5 lakh each will be put in a fixed deposit to enable subsistence benefits through monthly

income schemes.

"A detailed plan of action is being drawn up for rehabilitation of the affected persons. The loss of property as well as crops is being assessed in consultation with the district authorities and GAIL will extend compensation for the same. A series of welfare measures, including construction of permanent houses for the 35 affected families, will be taken up. The company will also adopt Nagaram village," a GAIL statement said.

It noted that its Tatipaka-Kondapalli pipeline has been certified for safety by various national and international agencies of repute. The internal audit group of GAIL will undertake audits to thoroughly check various pipeline systems across the country and submit detailed report within a fortnight. It has also been decided to engage an international consultant of repute to conduct an intensive third-party audit of its pipeline safety systems and other hydrocarbon installations as a precautionary measure.