



Why LNG is central to the future expansion of India-Qatar trade

SUKALP SHARMA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 21

THE RECENT state visit of Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani saw New Delhi and Doha setting a target to double bilateral trade to around \$28 billion a year by 2030, apart from elevating the bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership. According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), "trade, investment, and energy" were among the major topics discussed between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Al-Thani.

The India-Qatar trade relationship has predominantly been fueled by New Delhi's heavy imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG), of which Doha is India's largest supplier. With the two countries now aiming to double bilateral trade over the next five years, LNG, or super-chilled gas, is likely to play a pivotal role in that endeavour as well.

The reason: India's LNG imports are ex-

pected to surge over the next five years as the country's natural gas consumption is set to grow significantly. The expected growth in imports would coincide with Qatar expanding its LNG export capacity. In fact, Qatar and the US are the two key geographies that are likely to see notable expansion in LNG export capacity over the coming years, and Indian oil and gas companies are understood to be eyeing both countries to meet the incremental gas demand.

LNG as driver of bilateral trade

Even as India hopes to increase exports to Qatar and attract investments, it is a fact that the balance of trade between the two countries is heavily skewed in Qatar's favour. LNG imports accounted for 50% of India's overall imports from Qatar, which totalled \$11.49 billion in the first 11 months of 2024. Other major imports were also fossil fuel-linked commodities and products like liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), crude oil, plastics,

and other petrochemicals.

By contrast, India's exports to Qatar during that period totalled just \$1.61 billion. In January-November 2024, India imported 9.82 million tonnes of LNG from Qatar, which accounted for 38.8% of India's overall LNG imports by volume. In value terms, India's LNG imports from Qatar were \$5.75 billion, accounting for 41.2 per cent of its total LNG imports.

India's largest LNG importer Petronet LNG has a long-term contract with Qatar for 75 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) of LNG, which was extended to 2048 last year. Apart from this, Qatar also holds a sizable share in India's LNG purchases from the spot market. In December, public sector major GAIL inked a five-year contract with QatarEnergy for additional imports.

Growing Indian demand

The Indian government has set an ambitious target to increase the share of natural

gas in the country's primary energy mix to 15% by 2030, from a little over 6% at present. This will boost LNG imports even further, with domestic natural gas being able to meet just about half of the country's demand at the moment.

EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

According to the Paris-based International Energy Agency (IEA), India's natural gas consumption is seen rising nearly 60% over 2023 levels to 103 billion cubic metres (bcm) by 2030, while LNG imports are set to more than double between 2023 and 2030 to 65 bcm a year, driven by steady demand growth and a much slower rise in domestic production.

"Between 2013 and 2023, India's LNG imports increased by 70%, and reached 36 bcm in 2024, matching the previous record set in 2020 and cementing the country's position as the fourth-largest LNG importer globally," the IEA said in a recent report.

No wonder then that India's oil and gas

companies are scouting for LNG supply contracts globally. Just last week, Indian oil and gas companies inked three long-term LNG import deals worth billions of dollars with global majors. The deals included long-term contracts by public sector refiners Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) with the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), and Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation's (GSPC) deal with French company TotalEnergies.

At the same time, Qatar will significantly add to its LNG export capacity. The Gulf country's liquefaction capacity is set to nearly double to 142 mtpa by 2027 from 77 mtpa.

US position, growing share

Over the coming years, the US is expected to be Qatar's biggest competitor for supplying LNG to India. The US is currently India's second-largest source of super-chilled gas. In January-November 2024, India imported 5.12 million tonnes of LNG

from the US, accounting for 20.2 per cent of the former's cumulative LNG imports. It was valued at nearly \$2.5 billion.

New Delhi and Washington have agreed to take steps towards making Washington "a leading supplier of oil and gas to India", which could help bridge the trade deficit between the two countries, US President Donald Trump had said after meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Washington DC last week.

Trump also lifted the Joe Biden administration's ban on export permits for new LNG projects, which could further solidify the United States' position as the world's largest LNG exporter.

It is no surprise then, that in their hunt for more long-term LNG contracts, Indian oil and gas companies are keenly eyeing opportunities in the US. "Indian companies are looking at buying LNG from around the world, including particularly from the US," Petroleum Secretary Pankaj Jain told reporters just days before the PM's US visit.



LNG imports from US hit a record 7.14 BCM in 2024

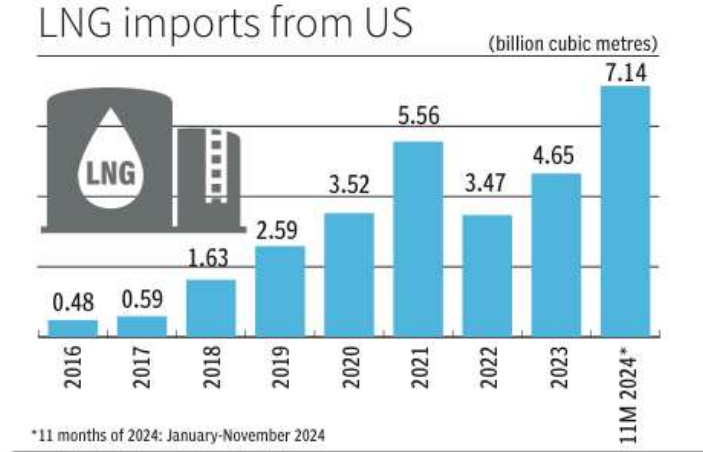
Rishi Ranjan Kala
New Delhi

The country's imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the US surged to an all-time high of 252.28 trillion cubic feet or roughly 7.14 billion cubic metres (BCM), during the 11 months of 2024. According to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), India's LNG imports from the US rose by more than 71 per cent y-o-y during the 11 months of 2024. Compared to the entire 2023 calendar year (CY), the imports were higher by 53.5 per cent.

The previous high was registered in 2021 when India imported 5.56 BCM of LNG from the North American country.

The import volume during December 2024 is yet to be updated, which will take the share even higher, albeit marginally.

According to the world LNG report 2024, the US overtook the UAE as India's



second largest LNG supplier in 2023 calendar year, after Qatar.

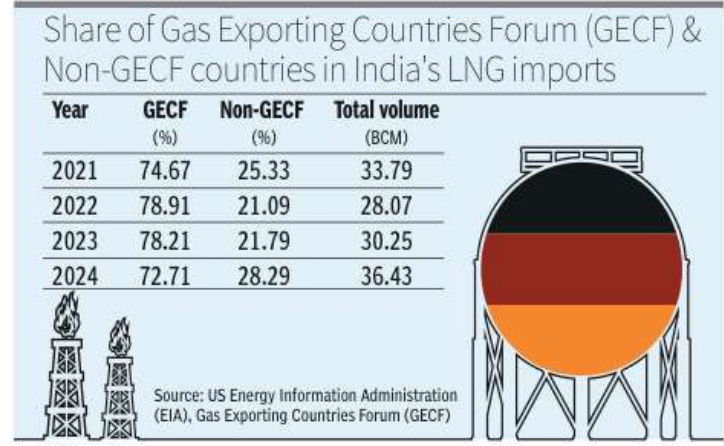
Kenneth Foo, Associate Editorial Director at S&P Global Commodity Insights, told *businessline* in July 2024 that the US was the standout exporter in the global LNG market in 2023, overtaking Qatar and Australia with strong growth in liquefaction capacity.

"With India at closer proximity via the Cape of Good Hope for US LNG cargoes compared to North Asia,

sellers were more incentivised to sell volumes to India to save freight costs. The ongoing US long term contracts signed by Indian entities also continued to underpin LNG consumption," he added.

RIISING US SHARE

As per the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), India's LNG imports during 2024 stood at around 36.43 BCM with GECF, accounting for 72.71 per cent, while non-GECF countries cornered 28.29 per cent, which is their



highest share on record.

GECF members are Algeria, Bolivia, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago, UAE and Venezuela. Angola, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Peru and Senegal hold observer status.

Besides the US, the non-GECF countries include Australia, Indonesia, Oman, Brunei, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Norway and Cameroon.

The previous high was in

2021 when non-GECF countries' share hit 25.33 per cent out of the total LNG imports of 33.79 BCM.

GECF, which represents some of the world's top natural gas exporting countries, accounts for the largest share of purchases by the world's fourth largest LNG importer.

However, rising imports from the US to India have helped increase the share of non-GECF countries in 2024, a year the North American country retained the title of the world's largest exporter for the second consecutive

year. A comparison of the US EIA data with that from the GECF suggests that the US accounts for the biggest share among the non-GECF countries.

Among the non-GECF countries, the share of the US in LNG exports to India stood at 64.59 per cent in 2021, which fell to 58.61 per cent a year later.

However in 2023, its share rose to more than 70.50 per cent.

In 2024, it further surged to a record 71.83 per cent counting just the imports during January-November (Taken from the US EIA).

ENERGY BASKET

India's LNG imports from the US are likely to grow further considering the recent meeting between US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri has already indicated that oil and gas purchases from the US can grow to \$25 billion annually from around \$15 billion last year.



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EXPLAINED ECONOMICS

BPCL to set up ₹5,500-crore polypropylene unit in Kochi

V Sajeer Kumar

Kochi

BPCL is setting up a polypropylene unit in Kochi with an investment of ₹5,000 crore, according to Sanjay Khanna, Director (Refineries).

“The job is in progress. This is the second petrochemical unit in Kochi. We plan to commission the unit by October 2027,” he told *businessline* on the sidelines of the Invest Kerala Global Summit in Kochi. “Internationally such projects operate at 65 per cent ca-

capacity. We operate in the 80-90 per cent range. The unit will have an annual capacity of four lakh tonnes of polypropylene,” he said.

Polypropylene finds wide application in industries such as packaging films, sheets, boxes, containers, bags, home ware, home care, personal care, and articles of day-to-day usage.

A Compressed Biogas Plant (CBP) in Kochi, he said, will be ready by the next quarter to handle 150 tonnes of municipal waste per day; it will make six

tonnes of compressed biogas. Around 40 to 50 tonnes per day of solid waste will be composted. Asked if BPCL has any plans to set up more such plants Khanna said, “We have the expertise to operate and manage the plant. Let us establish the first one and then we will go further,” he said.

BPCL has also signed an MoU with Kinfra to establish a POL terminal in Palakkad. Work on the ₹880-crore project is expected to start in April and be completed by September 2028.

WHICH FUEL WILL POWER CARS IN 2030?

How India's passenger vehicle market is shifting gears

● The share of CNG, electric, and hybrid is steadily increasing



■ **SRIHARI MULGUND & SHASHANK JAIN**



IMAGING: SUNEESH K

IN THE INDIAN passenger vehicle (PV) space, while petrol and diesel continue to dominate, a new era of cleaner fuels is on the horizon. New emission standards, growing environmental consciousness, and rising fuel prices are expected to push up the share of battery electric vehicles (BEVs), CNG and hybrids.

PV volumes are likely to grow at a CAGR of 4.9% to 5.75 million units (FY24 to FY30). Petrol and diesel dominate (77%), with CNG, hybrids, and BEVs making up the rest. But by FY30, the share of petrol and diesel could drop to less than half, and that of CNG, BEVs, and hybrids rise (to 21%, 18% and 15%, respectively), according to the EY-Parthenon (EYP) analysis.

Factors driving the shift

Diesel: The share of diesel is expected to drop from 18% in FY24 to just 12% by FY30, fading away from the compact car segment. Potential bans in major cities, shorter vehicle lifespans (10 years), and limited model availability could further deter buyers.

CNG: Its appeal is growing, particularly in hatchbacks and small sedans, because of a favourable total cost of ownership (TCO) and new models. But challenges, such as limited refueling infrastructure, perceived performance issues, lack of enough automatic transmission options, and reduced boot space, can temper the pace of adoption.

BEV: These are expected to benefit from favourable TCO and new models, although the lack of charging infrastructure remains a hurdle. The share of hybrids could rise owing to a narrowing price gap between hybrids and petrol or diesel models, coupled with the

absence of range anxiety.

Effects on PV segments

Hatchbacks: These will rely on pure petrol and CNG (81%), followed by BEVs at 13%, and hybrids at 6% by FY30, according to the EYP analysis. CNG will remain a popular choice for hatchbacks, especially with OEMs introducing that 'dual cylinder' technology that preserves boot space. BEVs may be limited to city-oriented models.

Compact SUVs: These may exhibit a balanced distribution of petrol, CNG, and BEVs. While most buyers may prefer petrol, lifestyle consumers may opt for diesel (until these are available). OEMs that don't offer diesel will position CNG as a fuel-efficient alternative. BEVs are likely to cater to diverse use cases with their practicality and efficiency.

Midsize SUVs: BEV adoption could surge (25% by FY30). Strong hybrid penetration may also rise, growing from 7% in FY24 to 13% in FY30. Diesel will remain viable primarily for highway travel and lifestyle usage, while EYP expects CNG adoption to be constrained by performance limitations.

Large SUVs: These will remain predominantly diesel-powered, holding about 50% share by FY30 unless stricter regulations force a shift. New BEVs with extended driving ranges will attract buyers, but charging infrastructure will determine adoption for highway travel.

MUVs: Hybrids are expected to dominate, but CNG is unlikely to penetrate due to duty cycle prefer-

ences. Meanwhile, BEVs are in the early stages and will require an all-rounded product to gain traction.

OEM strategies

Indian OEMs with expertise in petrol, diesel, and CNG are moving towards EVs, as well as evaluating hybrids. **Japanese OEMs**, historically petrol-dominant, are introducing hybrids and strengthening presence in CNG. **Korean OEMs**, offering a mix of petrol, diesel, and CNG, are monitoring regulations and taxation policies before launching hybrids. **European OEMs** struggle to expand beyond petrol due to high development costs, stagnant market share, tax uncertainties.

Conclusion

Unlike countries focused on full electrification for net zero goals, India will forge its distinctive path in fuel mix. Petrol, CNG, and BEVs may dominate, but favorable tax policies could support hybrids. Diesel decline is likely to continue. With stringent fuel efficiency, OEMs will invest in BEVs, hybrids, and CNG, resulting in a diversified fuel mix. They will need to allocate resources across fuel types to remain competitive, keeping the suppliers invested. This multi-propulsion strategy will benefit consumers as they would have the option to choose based on their duty cycle, preference, and cost.

Srihari Mulgund is partner and new-age mobility leader, and Shashank Jain is manager, EY-Parthenon. Views are personal

In midsize SUVs, electric adoption could surge (25% by FY30); strong hybrid penetration may also rise — from 7% in FY24 to 13% in FY30



Trump 2.0 will slow, not kill, the global energy transition

Donald Trump's return to the White House has raised fears that the global energy transition will be thrown into reverse. The United States (US) president has vowed to "drill, baby, drill", roll back environmental regulations, and end the "green new scam." As the earth continues to warm — this January was the warmest on record, and 2024 was the first year with global average temperatures exceeding 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels — and decarbonisation metrics still lag scientific net-zero pathways, many worry we're about to witness a worldwide slowdown in the shift away from fossil fuels.

But Trump couldn't kill the green transition during his first term, and he won't succeed this time either. The reason is simple: Technological breakthroughs, steep learning curves, and plummeting costs have made clean energy sources cheaper than fossil fuels in most places. Whereas in 2017 the revolution was just getting started, by now it has reached escape velocity. This momentum is being driven not by politics or government intervention but by markets. That deep-red Texas leads the nation in renewable deployment is a case in point: Politics will no longer hold back the American energy transition.

That's not to say that politics won't slow the transition. In the United States, the Trump administration is already taking steps to loosen environmental and climate regulations, pro-

mote domestic oil and gas production, support the outlook for gas-fired power plants, and end clean-energy and EV adoption incentives. The president's day one executive orders expanded the federal lands available for oil and gas leasing, reversed former president Joe Biden's suspension of new LNG terminal approvals, and paused new wind projects on federal land and water. Aided by Republican majorities in Congress, Trump will look to repeal roughly half of the Inflation Reduction Act's footprint, including support for EVs and offshore wind as well as the Investment Tax Credits and Production Tax Credits.

Yet no edicts from Washington can halt the forward movement of the US energy transition. Despite Trump's claims of a "national energy emergency," the US has been a net energy exporter since 2019 and already produces more oil than any country in history. But with prices low and US oil and gas output already at record levels, fossil fuel production will struggle to go much higher in the near term — no matter what Trump does.

The deployment of clean energy will therefore continue, driven by increasing power demand and declining costs — especially for solar energy. American electric utilities will still pursue aggressive renewable buildouts to keep pace with rising energy use and ensure grid adequacy, even as new gas-fired power plants expand too. US automakers will not abandon their long-term EV plans, even as the



Ian Bremmer

Trump administration removes EV incentives and charging infrastructure funding. And Democratic-controlled states will continue pursuing ambitious decarbonisation policies as they did during Trump's first term.

Perhaps more importantly, meaningful parts of the IRA will remain in place because of their political support with Republican constituencies, which have benefitted disproportionately from the investments and job creation it has created. Next-generation clean energy technologies such as nuclear, geothermal, and carbon capture and storage will continue receiving support.

America's retreat from global climate leadership will have significant but not fatal implications for the pace of the energy transition abroad. Trump's decision to pull the US out of the Paris Agreement again and withdraw funding from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will reduce climate finance flows for emerging economies, dampen their enthusiasm for accelerated climate action, and encourage some like Argentina and Indonesia to follow Trump's lead.

But just as the US transition is unstoppable, so, too, is the global transition. Industrialised countries other than the US will remain broadly committed to the Paris Agreement. Europe views the energy transition as a way to reduce its import reliance and improve its energy security. India, the world's fastest-growing emitter, sees decarbonisation as an economic opportunity and a necessary step to reduce some of the world's worst air pollution. And most other emerging markets are eager to accelerate their renewables deployments for purely economic reasons. Most critically, China — the largest source of global emissions — is set to reach an emissions peak five years ahead of its previously stated 2030 target.

NO EDICTS FROM WASHINGTON CAN HALT THE FORWARD MOVEMENT OF THE US ENERGY TRANSITION. DESPITE TRUMP'S CLAIMS OF A "NATIONAL ENERGY EMERGENCY," THE UNITED STATES ALREADY PRODUCES MORE OIL THAN ANY COUNTRY IN HISTORY

Chinese manufacturers in technologies like solar panels, EVs, and batteries — which already dominate global supply chains — also won't abandon their expansion ambitions because of changes in US demand or market access. If anything, they see the Trump administration's policies as an opportunity to gain global market share, speeding global adoption of these technologies and driving further price declines. While the US falls further behind China in clean energy, the continuing drop in renewable power costs will encourage more emerging markets to adopt cheaper domestic renewables like solar and wind over volatile imported fossil fuels.

The economic and technological forces driving the clean energy revolution have simply become too powerful for any single country — even the US — or president — even Trump — to stop. The global transition will power forward, even if the journey includes a few more bumps along the way.

Ian Bremmer is the founder and board president of Eurasia Group Foundation. The views expressed are personal

कृषि शक्ति का पूर्ण लाभ उठाते हुए नवाचार को बढ़ावा पीएम मोदी के विजन के अनुरूप है मध्यप्रदेश की 'बॉयो फ्यूल योजना'

विशेष प्रतिनिधि ►► मोपाल

मुख्यमंत्री डॉ. मोहन यादव ने कहा है कि बॉयो फ्यूल योजना-2025 प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मोदी के 'लाइफ स्टाइल फॉर एनवायरनमेंट' (एलआईएफई) अभियान के मूल सिद्धांतों के अनुरूप है, जिसमें सतत विकास को प्राथमिकता देते हुए जिम्मेदार उपभोग और उत्पादन पर जोर दिया गया है। यह योजना प्रदेश की कृषि शक्ति का पूर्ण लाभ उठाते हुए नवाचार को बढ़ावा देगी।

प्रदेशवासियों के लिए हरित और समृद्ध भविष्य के साथ, योजना से प्रदेश में बॉयो फ्यूल मैनुफैक्चरिंग यूनिट्स, बॉयो ऊर्जा संयंत्र, फीड स्टॉक उत्पादन और आपूर्ति श्रृंखला के विभिन्न स्तरों पर व्यापक रूप से प्रत्यक्ष और अप्रत्यक्ष रोजगार सृजित होंगे। योजना से प्रदेश की ऊर्जा जरूरतों को पूरा करने में मदद मिलेगी, साथ ही पर्यावरणीय संतुलन बनाए रखते हुए औद्योगिक विकास को भी गति मिलेगी।

**व्यापक
रूप से प्रत्यक्ष और
अप्रत्यक्ष सृजित होंगे
रोजगार**



हरित ऊर्जा उत्पादन और रोजगार सृजन की पहल

मुख्यमंत्री डॉ. मोहन ने कहा कि

'बॉयो फ्यूल योजना-2025'

राज्य की आर्थिक

समृद्धि, हरित ऊर्जा

उत्पादन और

रोजगार सृजन के

लिए क्रांतिकारी पहल

है। इस योजना से प्रदेश

में कृषि एवं जैव अपशिष्ट

का प्रभावी उपयोग सुनिश्चित

होगा, जिससे पर्यावरण अनुकूल

ईंधन का उत्पादन किया जा

सकेगा और राज्य हरित ऊर्जा

के क्षेत्र में आत्मनिर्भर बन

सकेगा। नवकरणीय ऊर्जा और

सतत विकास की दिशा में

ऐतिहासिक कदम उठाते हुए

योजना को मंत्रि-परिषद द्वारा

अनुमोदित किया गया है।