

Gorakhpur fertilizer plant a symbol of self-reliant India

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Agriculture experts agree on the role of fertilizer in maintaining food production, thereby meeting the global food demand. As per various estimates, about 30-40% of total global agriculture production is attributed to appropriate and timely use of fertilizer.

Shortage of fertilizer is a global phenomenon due to various reasons, including scarcity and rising prices of raw material and supply chain logistics. India had been mainly dependent on China and UAE for raw material supply but China's fertilizer companies have suspended export for their own reasons, which affected fertilizer availability in India.

The commissioning of fertilizer plant in Gorakhpur, which was lying closed for nearly 30 years, has come a major boost to urea production in India which will go a long way in ensuring food security in the country.

The plant, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 7, is a shining example of the success of Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India), as its reopening has been done completely on indigenous inputs.

Joint Venture

The project, in its new avatar as Hindustan Urvarak and Rasayan Ltd (HURL), is a joint venture of five major public sector companies – National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), Coal India Ltd, Indian Oil Corporation Ltd, Fertilizer Corporation of India and Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation Limited. When it closed down in 1990, it had an installed capacity of producing 900 metric tonnes (MT) per day (TPD) of urea, but now, it will produce about 3800 TPD of urea, more than four times of its former capacity. It will now produce 12.7 lakh metric tonnes of indigenous neem-coated urea every year.

The foundation stone of the unit was laid by the PM on July 22, 2016. The unit has been built at a cost of around Rs 8,600 crore and is a milestone in the industrial transformation of eastern UP. Its distinct prilling tower, with a height of 149.5 metres is said to be the highest in the world and more than double the height of Qutub Minar (73 metres), is a landmark for the people of the region.

It will also produce about 2200 MT of liquid ammonia. The plant has India's first air operated rubber dam and blast proof control room as enhanced safety measure.

The plant will be powered by natural gas instead of naphtha, which was expensive and caused pollution. The production cost of fertiliser will come down by about one-third of that incurred in the past.

Dream Fulfilled

The unit's revival was a long-standing demand in the region. Owing to sustained efforts of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and with logistic support by PM Modi, the dream of reviving the unit could be realised.

The factory will now supply urea to farmers of Purvanchal region and from neighbouring states as well. It will play a part in ensuring price stability in domestic fertiliser market and help in saving foreign exchange reserves to facilitate India's march towards self-reliance in urea sector.

Food security is crucial for a country like India and increasing food grain production is the key. Sufficient and timely availability of fertilizer helps farmers maintain productivity of their fields. The plant has the potential of changing the socio-economic landscape of the region.

As urea production starts here, hectic activity has already started in terms of movement of people and material. It will give direct employment to about 20,000 people and generate about 1.5 lakh indirect jobs.

It will also open up opportunities in the field of packaging, transport, logistics and support services.

The plant will help in changing the perception about east UP and put it on to the industrial map of the country.

(The writer is chairman, Gallant Industries)