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Fuel saver



Automakers are now offering CNG vehicles

The continued rise in petrol and diesel prices in India has deeply worried both carmakers and car owners. The burden on motorists is even greater due to the pandemic. This is why many automotive manufacturers in India are working on alternate fuels in their cars to attract more customers. Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) vehicles are slowly picking up in the Indian market due to various customer choice advantages.

Passenger car maker and leader in the segment, Maruti Suzuki, is leading the pack with a selection of cars available on CNG; it is followed by Hyundai. Tata Motors, a recent entrant, introduced two models, the Tiago and Tigor, with advanced CNG technology. Recent market trends have shown CNG is one of the fastest-growing segments with average sales of 17,000 per month contributing almost 7 per cent to overall sales. Many factors have contributed to this demand for CNG vehicles, among them rising petrol and diesel prices, the lower cost of ownership and the availability of CNG stations. Also, CNG is an eco-friendly and affordable alternative option, which will have not gone unnoticed by the customer. Currently, the number of CNG stations stands at 3,095 and the numbers will go up further as the demand picks up. In H1 financial year 2022, CNG vehicles sales grew by over 50 per cent and registered a growth of 97 per cent.

Tata Motors' iCNG technology in the Tiago and Tigor offers best-in-class safety and comes with an array of features, including segment-first technologies

and hassle-free ownership. With this launch, Tata Motors plans to strengthen its position in the CNG market. "The demand for both economical personal mobility as well as greener, emission-friendly mobility is rapidly rising. With this foray into the fast-growing segment of CNG powered vehicles, we are offering more choice to our discerning customers. Our iCNG range offers a delightful experience with incredible performance, a wide range of premium features, upmarket interiors and uncompromised safety. Developed on the four pillars of Design, Performance, Safety and Technology, the feature-rich iCNG technology will further expand the appeal of our popular 'New Forever' range of cars and SUVs to open new vistas for growth," said Shailesh Chandra, MD, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd, and Tata Passenger Electric Mobility Ltd at the launch.

Good response In an endeavour to provide the CNG customer with a range of options to choose from, Tata Motors introduced its iCNG vehicles across trim levels of the Tiago and the Tigor. The carmaker also achieved its highest ever monthly sales of 40,777 units (in all segments) in January 2022. This figure includes its newly introduced CNG vehicles (Tiago and Tigor), which got a good response and sold 3,000 units in the first month of launch.

Taking its leadership in CNG powered vehicles further, Maruti Suzuki has added one more model to its line-up. Its latest addition, the new Celerio with S-CNG technology, delivers a mileage

of 35.60km. The S-CNG is factory-fitted and offers optimum performance, ensuring enhanced safety, convenience, and great fuel efficiency.

"Maruti Suzuki has pioneered offering factory-fitted CNG cars in the country. We have the largest portfolio of eight green models on the road and have sold around 9,50,000 S-CNG vehicles. Owning a factory-fitted S-CNG vehicle comes with standard warranty benefits and the convenience of Maruti Suzuki's service network spread across India, which our customers find very comforting. With green mobility in focus, we have witnessed a 22 per cent CAGR increase in our CNG sales in the past five years. This is a testimony to the customer accepting technologically advanced, eco-friendly, and safe CNG mobility solutions," said Shashank Srivastava, Senior Executive Director (Marketing & Sales), Maruti Suzuki India Limited.

"The launch of the Celerio S-CNG will take us a step closer to our ambition of spearheading the mass adoption of green vehicles in India. Interestingly, the S-CNG variant in the previous generation Celerio contributed over 30 per cent of total sales. The Celerio S-CNG with a new 3D organic sculpted design, energetic and spacious cabin, and S-CNG technology, will offer customers an affordable, safe, and high-performance green vehicle," added Srivastava.

The launch of Maruti Suzuki's S-CNG vehicle range is aligned to and complements the Government of India's vision of reducing oil imports and enhancing the share of natural gas in the country's primary energy mix from the current 6.2 per cent to 15 per cent by 2030. The government is also working

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to rapidly increase the CNG fuel pump network in the country. S-CNG vehicles are equipped with dual interdependent ECUs (Electronic Control Units) and an intelligent injection system. Vehicles are specially tuned and calibrated to deliver optimum performance and enhanced drivability across all kinds of terrain. ♦

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ECLGS

Bringing relief?

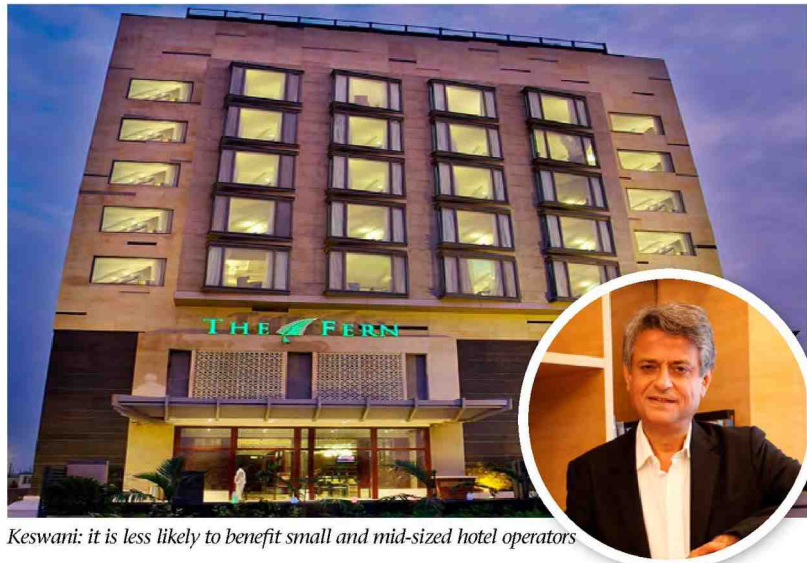
The Extension of The Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) and allocation of additional ₹50,000 crore for hotels and the hospitality sector till March 2023 in the Union Budget 2022-23 has brought a wave of relief to the industry, though Patu Keswani, Chairman and Managing director of a Bombay Stock Exchange-listed company 'Lemon Tree Hotels Limited' believes that ECLGS relaxation is less likely to benefit small and mid-sized hotel operators.

"I firmly believe that ECLGS support announced in this Union Budget will primarily benefit leading and branded Indian hospitality players as their bankers will certainly provide them the financial cushion considering the magnitude of large hoteliers' operations. Standalone hotel operators or small and mid-sized hotel operators in the country probably will not get adequate financial support from their bankers," said Keswani.

Lemon Tree Hotels has planned a massive pan-India expansion spree in the current year. "We will adopt an 'asset light' model for launching our hotels in India and plan to tie-up with property owners across the country in the months to come," added Keswani.

Under the ECLGS, which is for helping Indian companies tide over the liquidity crunch resulting from Covid curbs, banks in India provide additional loans to the existing borrowers without asking for extra collateral. To encourage banks, these loans are fully guaranteed by the government of India against credit losses.

"Hospitality and related services, especially those by micro and small enterprises, are yet to regain their



Keswani: it is less likely to benefit small and mid-sized hotel operators

pre-pandemic levels of business. Considering these aspects, the ECLGS will be extended up to March 2023 and its guarantee cover will be expanded by ₹50,000 crore to a total cover of ₹5 lakh crore, with the additional amount being earmarked exclusively for the hospitality and related enterprises," Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, said recently in her Union Budget speech.

Boost for the industry Sudeep Jain, Managing Director, South-West Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts, said: "We appreciate the government's move to extend the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme up to March 2023 for the hospitality sector. The additional amount of ₹50,000 crore that has been earmarked for hospitality and related sectors is a positive step towards providing the industry a boost this year. Additionally, the announcement of the introduction of e-passports and initiatives to improve connectivity within the country such as 'Gati Shakti plan' (focusing on roads, railways, airports, ports & waterways), national ropeway development plan, new Vande Bharat trains and Parvat Mala scheme to facilitate a modern system of transportation and connectivity in hilly areas, are expected to ease domestic and international travel in the medium to long term."

However, not all hoteliers are happy with the sops announced in the Union Budget to help the ailing Indian

hospitality sector. "Currently, many hoteliers don't have adequate money to repay their existing loans. Reduction of taxes, if announced in the Union Budget, would have helped the Indian hospitality industry a lot," said Param Kannampilly, chairman and managing director of Concept Hospitality – the owner of 'The Fern' brand. Kannampilly added that in the longer run, the Indian government's policy decision aimed at strengthening India's infrastructure sector is overall going to help the growth of the Indian hospitality industry. He said: "The government of India has been supportive, but it should be more proactive in providing interest-free loans, more subsidies, tax cuts, technology advancements, and a measure to increase domestic travel."

The latest Covid wave of the Omicron variant did not augur well for the Indian hospitality sector as according to industry body Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India, around 30 per cent of establishments in the organised sector comprising around 60,000 hotels and 5 lakh restaurants have already shut shop and another 15 to 20 per cent could follow suit if Covid continues to drag sentiments downwards for a few more months in the absence of significant international traffic, and restricted business as well as leisure travel of Indians across the country.

"Fortunately, the onslaught of Omicron has not proved to be fatal and also not badly hit our economy, and the

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Indian hospitality sector is in a gradual recovering phase at the moment," said Keswani.

It is anticipated that the Indian government's greater focus on infrastructure investments, notably road development and ropeways in the longer run will enhance connectivity in hilly areas and help the tourism sector make some strides. Developments like the proposed operation of 400 Vande Bharat trains, the recent handover of Air India to the Tatas and the anticipated launch of more air operators like Rakesh Jhunjhunwala's Akasa Air will boost tourism as well as the hospitality industry in India in the years to come. ♦

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CONFERENCES

Need of the hour

The recently concluded webinar organised by the industry chamber, ASSOCHAM in collaboration with CMAM Association of India, saw the active participation of all important stakeholders from the government, civil society and industry. They discussed in detail a number of issues relating to Micronutrient Deficiency and Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and the challenges that need to be addressed as a top priority. Micronutrients are not only important for development and growth but also for maintaining immunity standards, say experts. SAM is a major killer of children under five years of age. There are over eight million SAM children in India.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Sumita Ghosh (Additional Commissioner, In-charge Child Health, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India) stated that nutrition did not merely consist of consuming an adequate amount of food but also getting adequate macro and micronutrients. Macro and micronutrients were important not just for the survival of the child but also for a child to develop normally. According to her, the improvements in National Family Health Survey -5 (NFHS-5) were, unfortunately, marginal and not on the expected lines. The levels of micronutrient deficiency were alarming, with 67



per cent of children at the national level being anaemic and that is a big challenge to meet.

Malnutrition and infection are part of a vicious cycle. 70 per cent of child mortality is indirectly caused by lack of nutrition. Malnutrition in children takes several forms – children may be underweight, stunted or wasted. SAM is an intergenerational problem. Women who are undernourished during pregnancy have low birth weight (LBW) babies. The nutrition of girls during and after pregnancy is very important in this regard, added Ghosh.

Dr Sujeet Ranjan of Tata Trusts stated that malnutrition remained a major threat to the survival, growth and development of children in India. Micronutrient deficiencies or hidden hunger and the negative consequences of a diet lacking in essential vitamins and minerals/trace elements continued to pose significant public health challenges. And this despite the fact that ICDS, the community-based program of the government, is the largest platform in the world for the delivery of supplementary nutrition through ready-to-eat meals to eight million SAM children.

No national policy According to Dr Ranjan, Community based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) was the globally recommended approach for SAM. Unfortunately, CMAM was yet to be adopted as a routine part of the government system since there was not enough evidence with the policymakers and therefore there was no national policy around it yet.

Representing CMAM Association of India, Shilpee Bachhalsa stated that the government needed to be complimented for its efforts towards improving nutrition levels through the PDS,

mid-day meals, take-home rations, hot, cooked meals, etc. The government is also seized of the fact that the absence of micronutrients and energy content in dietary practices was a matter of concern and needed focussed intervention.

SAM is the most extreme and visible form of malnutrition. SAM children require specific micronutrient and energy-dense foods and supplements. While various initiatives, including facility-based management of SAM children at Nutritional Rehabilitation Centres (NRCs), have been taken up by the government, these are not enough. There are only 1200 NRCs in the country, she explains.

Reports suggest that 90 per cent of SAM children without complications do not require treatment at NRCs and can be treated at the community level. There is a need for national CMAM guidelines in handholding states in their efforts towards treating SAM. The CMAM guidelines should incorporate best practices from the various state programs run successfully. Rajasthan executed one of the most successful CMAM programs within which ready-to-use therapeutic foods were given to children.

The industry can bring manufacturing expertise, research and development and scale to the table for manufacturing products that the government determines to be helpful. A Laxmaiah (National Institute of Nutrition), Dr Alka Jadhav (Sion Hospital) and Harish Chand (World Vision India) also put forth their views.

Sion Hospital, uses self-developed Energy Dense Nutrition Supplements which contained 21 micronutrients (Type 1 and 2) to treat SAM children. ♦

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