TAPI pipeline project may resume in Spring

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The Taliban-led government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said negotiations over technical issues of the TAPI, or the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India, pipeline have taken place and the project will resume in the spring, the media reported on Friday.  
  
"We hope to immediately reach an exact date on the restart of the TAPI pipeline project in the spring. We hope the work on other projects including TAPI will be resumed soon too," TOLO News quoted Shafi Azam, a senior official at the Ministry, as saying.  
  
Economists have suggested that the TAPI pipeline project would also provide job opportunities for the Afghan citizens.  
  
"I consider the resumption of this project at such a critical time a positive step because when this project is resumed, the people will be provided with both gas and job opportunities," said Ahmad Muneeb Rasa, an economist.  
  
However, many reports were published about the resumption of TAPI projects in Afghanistan, but it is yet to begin.  
  
"The accomplishment of the major economic projects in the country is in the hands of the regional countries such as India and Pakistan. As long as the interests of the two countries are not ensured, the implementation of this project will be just a possibility," TOLO News quoted Shakir Yaqob, an economist, as saying.  
  
The TAPI gas pipeline is planned to span 1,680 km and connect Afghanistan's Herat and Kandahar provinces with Pakistan and India.  
  
Afghanistan will pay 5 per cent of the project's expenses.  
  
The project began nearly three decades ago.

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**ADB’s red flag**

The Asian Development Bank had recently said that unless the Islamic Emirate is recognised, it will not help implement the TAPI project.

According to local media, the bank had suspended all of its activities related to the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India project since August last year when the Taliban took control of Afghanistan.

"The Asian Development Bank (ADB) said that unless the Islamic Emirate is recognized, it will not help implement the TAPI project. The bank said it had suspended all activities related to the TAPI project since August 8 last year," an Afghanistan-based radio and television network said in a Tweet.

TAPI pipeline will be a trans-country natural gas pipeline running across four countries.

According to some economists, the implementation of the TAPI project will provide job opportunities for around 12,000 people in Afghanistan, Tolo News has reported.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan is part of the Turkmen gas pipeline project to Pakistan and India, and it is expected that Afghanistan will earn about USD 400 million a year for allowing transit across its territory.

Also, Turkmen officials expressed optimism about the future of the project after a meeting three weeks ago with the head of the Afghanistan foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, according to Tolo News. (IANS/ANI)