Ethanol blending programme is scientifically validated and closely monitored by the government; misleading claims and old images being circulated on social media

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The Government of India has noted certain misleading and unsubstantiated claims being circulated on social media regarding Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP), which appear to be aimed at confusing and misleading the public. It has also been observed that old images and videos are being recirculated in an apparent attempt to garner viewership through sensationalism and create unwarranted concerns regarding ethanol-blended fuel.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas reiterates that the Ethanol Blending Programme is scientifically validated and continuously monitored by the Government.

The Ethanol Blending Programme was launched in 2003 with the objectives of reducing crude oil imports, enhancing energy security and promoting environmental sustainability. The programme has been implemented in a phased manner based on technical preparedness and stakeholder consultations, culminating in the rollout of 20 per cent ethanol blending (E20) from 2023 onwards.

The Government continuously monitors the implementation of the Ethanol Blending Programme in consultation with oil marketing companies, automobile manufacturers, fuel testing agencies and other stakeholders.

Since the introduction of E20 petrol, no widespread issues of engine failure or vehicle breakdown attributable to ethanol blending have been reported.

A claim currently being circulated relates to the hygroscopic nature of ethanol. It is common knowledge that the entry of water into the fuel tank is undesirable for any fuel, whether ethanol blended or otherwise. Modern vehicles are equipped with design features and safeguards to prevent water entry into fuel tanks.

It has also been observed that certain individuals are creating and sharing videos on social media falsely portraying sugarcane juice as being mixed directly with petrol. Such content is misleading and baseless. Ethanol used for fuel blending is produced through established industrial processes and conforms to stringent quality specifications before blending with petrol.

Ethanol is made from a variety of feedstocks, such as sugarcane juice, molasses, broken rice and maize, but the properties of ethanol are vastly different from the input feed stock as it has undergone a series of processes, including fermentation, which leads to fermentation of the sugars present in the feedstocks.

The circulation of such videos appears aimed at sensationalising the issue and increasing their viewership.

Ethanol-blending in India conforms to stringent fuel quality specifications and undergo rigorous testing before deployment. The rollout of higher blending levels has been undertaken only after extensive technical evaluation and consultation with automobile manufacturers and other stakeholders.

Recently, a video showing ants near a vehicle fuel tank was widely circulated on social media. In response, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) clarified that fuel-grade ethanol used for petrol blending is produced through fermentation and distillation processes that eliminate residual sugars from the final product. Further, fuel ethanol contains denaturants that are repellent to insects. There is no identifiable attractant associated with E20 fuel that would cause ants or other insects to congregate around vehicle fuel caps. Therefore, claims suggesting a link between E20 fuel and ant attraction have no scientific basis and are not supported by scientific evidence.

Similarly, multiple claims suggesting that the use of E20 fuel could affect vehicle insurance validity were clarified by the concerned stakeholders and found to be incorrect.

Ethanol blending is a globally accepted practice and is successfully implemented in several countries, including the United States, Brazil and Japan. Brazil has long adopted higher ethanol blending levels, with E27 serving as the standard petrol blend.

It is important to note that the Ethanol Blending Programme has helped save the country over ₹1.4 lakh crore in foreign exchange through reduced crude oil imports. The programme has also created sustained demand for agricultural feedstocks used in ethanol production, thereby supporting farmers' incomes and strengthening the rural economy.

Ethanol blending plays an important role in enhancing India's energy security, reducing carbon emissions and advancing the country's transition towards cleaner mobility. The Government remains committed to implementing the programme in a safe, transparent and consumer-centric manner, guided by scientific evidence and continuous stakeholder engagement.

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