

Pradhan asks OPEC to price oil responsibly

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday voiced its concern over high international oil prices with oil producers cartel OPEC and nudged it to move to responsible pricing that balances interests of both producers and consumers.

Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan conveyed India's concerns when he met ambassadors of OPEC countries in India, an official statement said here.

"The meeting comes at a crucial time when the global crude oil prices are at the highest since the peak of 2014," it said.

India is 80 per cent dependent on imports to meet its oil needs and eight of its top suppliers are from the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The block accounted for about 83 per cent of India's total crude oil imports, 98 per cent of its LPG imports and 74 per cent of its LNG imports during

the last financial year ended March 31, 2018.

"During the meeting, Minister Pradhan expressed his concern about rising crude oil prices and its negative impact on consumers across the world, particularly in India," the statement said. "He emphasised that global crude prices have gone beyond the threshold which can be sustained by the world."

Production cuts by OPEC have led to international oil prices hitting a four-year high last month that forced a ₹3.8 per litre hike in petrol and ₹3.38 a litre increase in diesel prices. Rates started to cool towards month end and retail prices have been cut thereafter.

Pradhan said the market fundamentals do not support such high prices.

He urged OPEC "to move to responsible pricing, one that balances the interests of both the producer and consumer."

He reiterated the issue of discriminatory pricing through measures such as Asian

Premium.

"Minister urged them to move to transparent and flexible markets for both oil and gas," the statement said.

Pradhan is scheduled to visit Vienna next week from June 20-21 to participate in the 7th OPEC International Seminar to further discuss these key issues with OPEC Secretary General Sanusi Barkindo. Ministers from OPEC member countries will also be attending the seminar.

"Met with Ambassadors of #OPEC and discussed India's growing position in the world energy demand & the need for responsible pricing which balances the interests of both the producer & consumer countries. Also suggested to create transparent & flexible markets for both oil and gas," Pradhan tweeted with pictures of him standing with Ambassadors of Iran and Venezuela to India.

India, he said, will be a key driver of global energy demands in the next 25 years.