

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

PRADHAN MANTRI UJJWALA YOJANA

Recently, a Right to Information (RTI) application was filed to the three oil marketing firms to find out the status of the PM Ujjwala Scheme.

About

- In the last financial year, 90 lakh beneficiaries of the government's flagship welfare scheme Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana did not refill their cylinders.
- And over 1 crore beneficiaries refilled their cylinders only once.
- **Distributors record drop in LPG cylinder bookings:** As per a reply filed by the government in Lok Sabha, in March this year, the LPG consumption under the Ujjwala Yojana remains at 3.66 refills per connection annually.
- **COVID effect:** These figures should also take into account the fact that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the government provided up to three free of cost LPG refills to PMUY beneficiaries from April 1, 2020, and this was extended up to December 31, 2020.
- **Commercial LPG prices hiked:** PMUY beneficiaries have availed 14.17 crore free refills under the Scheme, across the country, as per the same reply filed by Union Petroleum Ministry in Lok Sabha.

PM Ujjwala Scheme

- It is a scheme of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas for providing LPG connections to women from Below Poverty Line (BPL) households.
- The scheme was originally launched on May 1, 2016, in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh by the Prime Minister of India with a target of releasing 8 crore connections by March 2020.
- During Ujjwala 1.0, a target was set to provide **LPG** connections to 5 crore women members of BPL households.
- Subsequently, the scheme was expanded in April 2018 to include women beneficiaries from seven more categories (SC/ST, PMAY, AAY, Most backward classes, tea garden, forest dwellers, Islands).
- Also, the target was revised to 8 Crore LPG connections.
- So far over 9 crores, of connections under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana have been released.
- This target was achieved in August 2019, seven months ahead of the target date.
- The PMUY 2.0 was launched in the financial year 2021-22 making a provision for the release of additional one crore connections.

PMUY 2.0

- In the Union budget for FY 21-22, provision for an additional one crore LPG connection under the PMUY scheme was announced.
- These one crore additional PMUY connections (**under Ujjwala 2.0**) aim to provide deposit-free LPG connections to those low-income families who could not be covered under the earlier phase of PMUY.
- **Other Benefits:**
 - It will provide the first refill and hotplate free of cost to the beneficiaries.
 - The enrollment procedure will require minimal paperwork.
 - In it., migrants will not be required to submit ration cards or address proof.
 - A self-declaration for both '**family declaration**' and a 'proof of address will suffice.
 - It will help achieve the Prime Minister's vision of universal access to LPG.

Objectives & significance

- **Health Benefits:** Health hazards associated with cooking based on fossil fuel.
 - **WHO estimates:** About 5 lakh deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuels.
- **Women Empowerment:** Women are saved from the danger of collecting firewood by hiking long distances.
- **Socio-Economic Benefits:** Productive activities, & connection on Women's name.
- **Environment:** Less pollution due to fuel burning.

Challenges

- **High Initial Cost:** No support by the government at the refiling stage forces the poor to pay more.
- **Administrative concerns:** For example, Data discrepancies in Aadhar.
- **Logistics:** Lack of last-mile connectivity & filling plants in rural areas.
- **Behavioural concerns:** Despite having LPG, people still use wood to save costs.

Way Ahead

- Strengthening the supply chain, Ensuring affordability, availability, and accountability.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

1. North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

Recently, Russia has said it will be forced to take "retaliatory steps" over its neighbour Finland's move to join NATO.

About North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), 1949

- Established in: 1949
- Headquarters: Brussels, Belgium
- India is not a member country of NATO.
- It is an intergovernmental military alliance (also called the Washington Treaty) between 30 countries across the world including the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union.
- **Members:** Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999, followed in 2004 by Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the former Soviet republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In the following years, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro and North Macedonia also became members, bringing NATO membership to 30 nations.
- **Military Objective:** It is committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes. If diplomatic efforts fail, it has the military power to undertake crisis-management operations.
- **Political Objective:** It promotes democratic values and enables members to consult and cooperate on defence and security-related issues to solve problems, build trust and, in the long run, prevent conflict.
- **A key provision of the treaty is Article 5:** It states that if one member of the alliance is attacked in Europe or North America, it is to be considered an attack on all members. That effectively put Western Europe under the "nuclear umbrella" of the US.

2. Devasahayam Pillai, first Indian layman to be declared a saint by Vatican?

- Devasahayam Pillai, who was born a Hindu in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu and converted to Christianity in the 18th century, became the first Indian layman to be declared a saint by the Vatican .
- Pope Francis canonised Blessed Devasahayam during the Canonisation Mass in St Peter's Basilica, which was attended by over 50,000 faithful from all over the world, as well as government delegations honouring him and nine other new saints.
- Besides Devasahayam, the Pope proclaimed five other men — Titus Brandsma, Cesar de Bus, Luigi Maria Palazzolo, Giustino Maria Russolillo, and Charles de Foucauld — and four women — Maria Rivier, Maria Francesca of Jesus Rubatto, Maria of Jesus Santocanale, and Maria Domenica Mantovani — as saints.

Life and death

- Devasahayam was born on April 23, 1712 in Nattalam village in Kanyakumari district, and went on to serve in the court of Marthanda Varma of Travancore.
- After meeting a Dutch naval commander at the court, Devasahayam was baptised in 1745, and assumed the name 'Lazarus', meaning 'God is my help'.
- "His conversion did not go well with the heads of his native religion. False charges of treason and espionage were brought against him and he was divested of his post in the royal administration.
- According to the Vatican, "while preaching, he particularly insisted on the equality of all people, despite caste differences", which "aroused the hatred of the higher classes, and he was arrested in 1749".
- On January 14, 1752, Devasahayam was shot dead in the Aralvaimozhy forest. He is widely considered a martyr, and his mortal remains were interred inside what is now Saint Francis Xavier's Cathedral in Kottar, Nagercoil.

Sainthood road

- In 2004, the diocese of Kottar along with Tamil Nadu Bishops' Council and Conference of Catholic Bishops of India recommended Devasahayam for beatification. He was declared blessed by the Kottar diocese in 2012, 300 years after his birth.
- During the midday 'Angelus' prayer in the Vatican that day, Pope Benedict XVI described Devasahayam as a "faithful layman", and urged Christians to "join in the joy of the Church in India and pray that the new Blessed may sustain the faith of the Christians of that large and noble country".
- In 2014, Pope Francis recognised a miracle attributed to Devasahayam, clearing the path to his canonisation.

- He was approved for sainthood in February 2020 for “enduring increasing hardships” after he decided to embrace Christianity, according to the Vatican, in November 2021 announced May 15, 2022 as the date for the ceremony.
- While clearing Devasahayam for sainthood in 2020, the Vatican dropped ‘Pillai’ from his name, and referred to him as “Blessed Devasahayam”.

3. Vaccine against 3 encephalitis viruses found safe, effective

- A vaccine for eastern equine encephalitis virus (EEEV), western equine encephalitis virus (WEEV), and Venezuelan equine encephalitis virus (VEEV) was found to be safe, well-tolerated and induced a neutralising antibody response in adult volunteers, according to results from a phase 1 clinical trial, published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases.
- EEEV, WEEV and VEEV are spread to humans through the bites of infected mosquitoes.
- Horses are also susceptible to infection, but horses cannot transmit the viruses directly to humans.
- Infections in humans are rare but can lead to flu-like symptoms and, in some cases, severe neurological damage or death.
- Researchers designed a virus-like particle (VLP) vaccine candidate that uses proteins from the outer shells of the viruses, the US National Institutes of Health said in a media release.
- VLPs do not contain the genetic material that the viruses need to replicate inside cells, so VLPs cannot cause infection.
- In trials on 30 candidates, the vaccine was safe, well-tolerated and induced durable immune responses against all three viruses.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Q1. India and the EU have maintained a robust strategic relation. However, in some critical areas, there is still room for enhanced cooperation between the both. Analyse. (250 words)

Introduction

India-EU relationship dates back to 1960s when India was the first country to establish relationship with European economic union which later evolved into common market -European union. For more than a decade, the EU and India partnership had been slow-moving and fragmented, struggling to maintain momentum. India was acknowledged as a strategic partner in 2004. But seventeen years on there is still no mutually agreed set of clear priorities. The EU-India relationship fails to acknowledge each partner's individual realities. Today's changed circumstances provide the two sides with a new set of opportunities to move forward on the long-stalled agenda of stronger ties between India and European Union.

India and the European Union (EU) are looking to conclude negotiations on comprehensive trade and investment agreements before the beginning of electoral cycles on both sides in 2024, EU ambassador Ugo Astuto said.

Body

Various facets of India-EU bilateral relations:

- **Trade and Investment:**
 - The EU is India's largest trading partner, accounting for 12.9% of India's overall trade. Further the trade in services have almost tripled in last decade.
 - Overall, the EU is the second largest investor in India, with €70 billion of cumulative FDI from April 2000 to March 2017, accounting for almost one quarter of all investments flows into India.
- **EU and India** remain close partners in the G20 and have developed a regular macroeconomic dialogue to exchange experience on economic policies and structural reforms.
- **Energy Cooperation:** EU – India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership.
- **Research and Development:** India, participates in international ITER fusion. India also participates in research and innovation funding programme ‘Horizon 2020’
- **Environment and Water:** The EU and India also cooperate closely on the Indian Clean Ganga initiative and deal with other water-related challenges in coordinated manner.
- **Migration and mobility:** The EU-India Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility (CAMP) is a fundamental cooperation agreement between India and EU.
- **Development cooperation:** Over €150 million worth of projects are currently ongoing in India.

Opportunities for stronger India-EU ties

- The EU wants to pivot away from China. It recently signed a Comprehensive Agreement on Investment with China, which has drawn a lot of flak and its ratification has now been suspended because of diplomatic tensions.

- The European Parliament remains overwhelmingly opposed to this deal after China imposed sanctions on some of its members, in response to the EU imposing sanctions against China for its treatment of the Uyghur Muslim minority in the Xinjiang region.
- With the EU being India's largest trading partner and the second-largest export destination, the economic logic of strong India-EU economic relations is self-evident.
- The virtual summit saw India and the EU launching an ambitious "connectivity partnership" in digital, energy, transport, and people-to-people sectors, enabling the two to pursue sustainable joint projects in regions spanning from Africa, Central Asia to the wider Indo-Pacific.
- **Exports to EU:** India has an untapped export potential of \$39.9 billion in the EU and Western Europe. The top products with export potential include apparel, gems and jewellery, chemicals, machinery, automobile, pharmaceuticals and plastic.
- India benefits from tariff preferences under the EU's Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) for several of these products.
- In fact, India is among the major beneficiaries of the EU's GSP, with exports under the GSP valued at nearly \$19.4 billion in 2019, accounting for nearly 37% of India's merchandise exports to the EU.
- **New emerging world order after COVID-19:** As EU seeks to move away from a global supply chain that is overly dependent on China, India can emerge as its most natural ally.
- There is a significant untapped potential to expand India-EU bilateral trade relation through an FTA.
- The FTA will deliver on enhancing India's market access in key services.
- For this to happen, regulatory barriers in cross-border supply as well as provision of services through temporary movement of professionals will need to be addressed.

Concerns in India-EU ties

- **Stalled EU-India BTIA:** It is being negotiated since 2007 and both sides have major differences on crucial issues such as: –
 - EU's demands: significant duty cuts in automobiles, tax reduction on wines, spirits etc, a strong intellectual property regime, relaxation in India's data localisation norms, protection to all its items with Geographical Indication etc.
 - India's demands: 'Data secure' status (important for India's IT sector); Ease norms on temporary movement of skilled workers, relaxation of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) norms etc.
- **Trade imbalance:** India accounts for only 1.9% of EU total trade in goods in 2019, well behind China (13.8%). Trade imbalance is expected to further increase with ratification of the European Union Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) and the EU-Vietnam Investment Protection Agreement, which will make Indian exports less competitive.
- **India's perception of EU:** It views EU primarily as a trade bloc, preferring bilateral partnerships with Member States for all political and security matters. This is evident from lack of substantive agreements on matters such as regional security and connectivity.
- **Brexit:** It is unclear how U.K.'s withdrawal from EU will affect India's relation with EU as whole.
- **Human Rights concerns of EU:** The European Parliament was critical of both the Indian government's decision to scrap Jammu and Kashmir's special status in 2019 and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

Way Forward

- To translate their common values into common action, EU and India in can work in third countries to consolidate democratic processes and build capacities of transitioning regimes through strengthening electoral and parliamentary institutions.
- EU can collaborate with India to facilitate connectivity and infrastructure projects in third countries, particularly smaller states in South Asia that often fall prey to power politics and fiscal instability resulting from China's loans and political influence as part of its BRI.
- Thus, as highlighted by EU strategy on India, adopted in 2018, India EU should take their relations beyond "trade lens", recognizing their important geopolitical, strategic convergence.

DAILY QUIZ

- Q1. With reference to the Pardoning Power of President and Governor consider the following statements
1. Both President and Governor can grant a pardon in cases where the punishment or sentence is by a Court Martial.
 2. The pardoning power of the Governor does not extend to death sentence cases.

3. Reprieve means a delay allowed in the execution of a sentence, usually a death sentence.
Which of the given above statements is/are correct?
(a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 3 and 2 only (c) 1 and 2 only (d) **only 1 and 3**
- Q2. With reference to InSight, consider the following statements:
1. It is NASA's mission to the Moon.
2. It is part of the Discovery Program.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 only (b) **2 only** (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- Q3. Formosa Strait is located between which of the following?
(a) Taiwan and Philippines (b) Japan and Russia
(c) Korea and Japan (d) **Taiwan and China**
- Q4. With reference to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), consider the following statements:
1. It was founded with the signing of an agreement by five countries namely the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.
2. India is not a member of OPEC.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) **Both 1 and 2** (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- Q5. With reference to Marital Rape in India, consider the following statements:
1. Section 375 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) provides an exception for marital rape.
2. The Principle of Consent in perpetuity allows marital rape.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
a) 1 only (b) **2 only** (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- Q6. Consider the following statements with respect to IMF's Special Drawing Rights SDR norms
1. The SDR is neither a currency nor a claim on the IMF
2. The SDR basket is reviewed every five years
3. In the recent review IMF declined the weight of Dollar and yuan from their earlier weightage.
Choose the correct statement using the code given below
a) **1 and 2 only** (b) 2 and 3 only (c) 1 and 3 only (d) 2 only
- Q7. Which of the following statement/s is or are correct regarding Marginal Cost of Fund Based Lending Rate (MCLR)
1. Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rate (MCLR) is the minimum lending rate below which a bank is not permitted to lend
2. Banks can not hike their MCLR .
Select the correct answer using the codes given below
a) **1 only** (b) 2 only (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- Q8. Which of the following statement is not correct regarding Dengue ?
a) Dengue is prevalent throughout India mostly of the Metropolitan cities
b) WHO recommends that Dengue vaccine only be given to persons with conformed previous Dengue infections
c) **Unlike malaria, Dengue is caused by protozoa**
d) Aedes mosquitoes bite during day time
- Q9. Examine the following statement with regards to Monsoon in India
1. Every El-Nino year leads to less rainfall and every La-Nina year leads to more rain fall in Indian subcontinent
2. There is no one to one correspondence but a general relationship between Monsoon and ENSO
Select the correct statement/s using the codes given below
a) 1 only (b) **2 only** (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- Q10. Consider the following statements with reference to National Adaptation Fund For Climate change (NAFCC).
1. NAFCC is a central sector scheme.
2. It is under implementation since 10th five year plan.
3. NABARD is the implementing entity.
Choose the correct statement using the code given below
(a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only (c) **1 and 3 only** (d) All of the above