



Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana

For Prelims: [Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana \(PMUY\)](#), [Ujjwala 2.0](#)

For Mains: Challenges faced by the PMUY in achieving its objectives, "Government Policies & Interventions."

Source: [TH](#)

Why in News?

The [Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana \(PMUY\)](#), aimed at providing **LPG gas cylinders** to rural and deprived households, has faced challenges in ensuring consistent usage among beneficiaries.

- Out of 9.58 crore Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana households, **1.18 crore bought no refills in 2022-23, and another 1.51 crore bought one refill.**
- Low refill rates raise concerns about the scheme's ability to ensure sustained usage among beneficiaries.

What are the Concerns Regarding the PMUY?

- **Limited Refill Consumption:**
 - Data reveals that the average PMUY beneficiary refilled **fewer than four LPG cylinders during 2022-23.**
 - One in four PMUY beneficiaries did not use any LPG cylinders or took just one refill in 2022-2023.
 - In contrast, non-PMUY households consumed significantly more cylinder refills, whose per household consumption of LPG cylinders **was 6.67 refills** highlighting a disparity in consumption patterns.
- **Rising LPG Cylinder Prices:**
 - Steep price increases in LPG cylinders, even with subsidies, have made them **less affordable for rural and deprived households.**
 - High prices may discourage beneficiaries from using LPG for cooking, defeating the scheme's purpose.
- **Subsidy Expenditure:**
 - Between January 2018 and March 2023, rates for subsidised LPG cylinders increased by 82%, reaching ₹903 in March 2023 from ₹495.64 in January 2018.
 - Subsidy amounts depend on the difference between the Retail Selling Price (RSP) and the subsidised cost set by the government.
 - Non-subsidised LPG cylinders saw a 49% price increase, reaching ₹1,103 in March 2023.
- **International Factors Impacting LPG Prices:**
 - Various factors, including import charges, bottling charges, freight, delivery charges, GST, and distributor commission, contribute to the final LPG price.

What is Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)?

- **About:**
 - The **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MOPNG)**, introduced the '**Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana' (PMUY)** as a flagship scheme with the objective of making **clean cooking fuel such as LPG available to the rural and deprived households** which were otherwise using traditional cooking fuels such as firewood, coal, cow-dung cakes etc.
 - Usage of traditional cooking fuels had detrimental impacts on the health of rural women as well as on the environment.
- **Objectives:**
 - Empowering women and protecting their health.
 - Reducing the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel.
 - Preventing young children from a significant number of acute respiratory illnesses caused due to indoor air pollution by burning fossil fuel.
- **Features:**
 - The scheme provides a financial support of Rs 1600 for each LPG connection to the BPL households.
 - Along with a deposit-free LPG connection, Ujjwala 2.0 will provide the first refill and a hotplate free of cost to the beneficiaries.
- **Benefits of PMUY:**
 - The eligible beneficiaries receive a **free LPG connection**.
 - The beneficiaries also **receive a subsidy on the first six refills of 14.2 kg cylinders or eight refills of 5 kg cylinders**.
 - The beneficiaries **can opt for an EMI facility to pay for the cost of the stove and the first refill**.
 - The beneficiaries can also join the **PAHAL scheme to receive the subsidy amount directly in their bank accounts**.
- **Phases of PMUY:**
 - **Phase I :**
 - The scheme was launched on May 1, 2016.
 - The target under the scheme was to release 8 Crore LPG Connections to the deprived households by March 2020.
 - The release of 8 Crore LPG connections under the scheme has also helped in increasing the LPG coverage from 62% on 1st May 2016 to 99.8% as on 1st April 2021.
 - **Ujjwala 2.0:**
 - In the Union budget for FY 21-22, provision for the release of additional 1 crore LPG connections to the eligible households by March 31, 2022.
 - The target of releasing additional 1 crore LPG connections under **Ujjwala 2.0** was achieved in January 2022. Subsequently, it was decided to release additional 60 lakh LPG connections under Ujjwala 2.0. OMCs have achieved the target of releasing 1.6 Crore LPG Connections under Ujjwala 2.0 on 31st December 2022.

Formula To Calculate the LPG Price:

- The price of LPG is calculated based on the **formula known as import parity price (IPP)**.
- Basically, the calculations as per the **IPP are dependent on the international market**.
- The IPP calculation is done through Saudi Aramco's LPG price, which is the world's largest producer.
 - The price **involves costs like free on board (FOB) price**, ocean freight, customs duties, port charges and insurance costs, among other things.
- The price fluctuation of **crude oil also affects the international price of LPG**.
 - The inland prices include freight costs, oil company's margins, bottling costs, marketing expenses, dealer commissions and the **Goods and services Tax(GST)**.
- The final price thus calculated gives the retail selling price for non-subsidised cooking gas cylinders for consumers across different states.
- **India uses the IPP as most of its consumption is through imports.** The formula of LPG cylinders is revised on a monthly basis.
 - LPG is an important requirement with three major PSU suppliers like Indian oil, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited

(HPCL), charging mostly similar prices with different cost structures and operational efficiencies.

Way Forward

- The government should intensify efforts to educate beneficiaries about the health and environmental benefits of using LPG.
- Periodic evaluation of subsidy amounts and mechanisms to keep LPG affordable for beneficiaries is needed.
- Conduct regular assessments of the PMUY scheme's effectiveness and adapt policies accordingly to address emerging challenges.

Laïcité: Principle of Secularism in France

For Prelims: Laïcité, [Preamble](#), [Fundamental right](#), Liberty, Equality, [Fraternity](#).

For Mains: Comparison between Indian and French Secularism

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the French government **announced a ban on the wearing of the abaya, a traditional Islamic robe**, in state-run schools.

- This decision was framed as a measure to uphold the **principle of Laïcité**, [France's commitment to secularism](#). The move was met with both **support and criticism**, sparking a broader conversation **about the role of Laïcité in modern France**.

What is Laïcité?

- **About:**
 - Laïcité is a complex and politically charged term in France. It signifies a **formal separation of the State and Church**, emphasising the complete **removal of religious values from the public sphere**, replaced by **secular values such as liberty, equality, and fraternity**.
 - Laïcité finds its origins in the **struggle of anti-clerical Republicans** against the power of the Catholic Church.
- **Changing Demographics and Tensions:**
 - For the majority of the 20th century, **laïcité was generally not considered a significant issue** in France due to the **country's relative homogeneity**.
 - However, during the **1950s and 1960s**, significant **decolonization efforts in North Africa** resulted in a substantial migration of people from predominantly Muslim nations like **Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria to France**.
 - This demographic shift triggered occasional tensions and challenges related to laïcité.

▪ Related Controversial Legislation and Interpretations

- In 2004, France enacted a law prohibiting the **wearing of "ostentatious" religious symbols in public spaces**, including Catholic dresses, Jewish kippahs, and Muslim headscarves.
- In 2011, **face-covering veils were banned in public places**. Each such decision stirred new interpretations of Laïcité.

How does Laïcité Compare with Indian Secularism?

▪ Historical Origins:

- **Laïcité:** Laïcité is a concept rooted in **French history** and is a cornerstone of the French Republic.
 - It was solidified with the enactment of the **1905 law on the Separation of Church and State**.
- **Indian Secularism:** [Preamble](#) of the Indian Constitution declares India to be a **"Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic."** This sets the tone for the secular nature of the state.
 - The term 'Secular' was added to the **preamble by the [42nd Constitution Amendment Act of 1976](#)**.

▪ Characteristics:

- **Laïcité:** Laïcité in France is characterized by **strict separation of religious institutions from the state**.
 - This includes the prohibition of religious symbols in public schools, government buildings, and the public sphere.
- **Indian Secularism:** Indian secularism, as enshrined in the Indian Constitution, is more accommodative of religious diversity.
 - The state is not separated from religion but is expected to treat all **religions equally and impartially**.
 - The Indian government can provide financial support to religious institutions, and religious symbols are allowed in various public spaces.

▪ Inspiration that France Can Draw From Indian Secularism

- **Sarva Dharma Sambhava:** Indian philosophy of secularism is related to **"[Sarva Dharma Sambhava](#)"** (literally it means that the destination of the paths followed by all religions is the same, though the paths themselves may be different) which means **equal respect to all religions**.
 - Indian secularism does not exclude religion from the public sphere, but rather **accommodates it in a way that does not infringe on the rights of others**.
- **Protecting the Rights of Minorities:** Indian secularism recognizes the right to **profess, practice, and propagate religion** as a **[fundamental right](#)**, subject to public order, morality, and health.
 - It also protects the educational and cultural rights of minorities, and allows them to establish and administer their own institutions.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Mains:

Q. How is the Indian concept of secularism different from the western model of secularism? Discuss. (2016)

ASEAN Denies Myanmar's Chairmanship for 2026

[Source: TOI](#)

Why in News?

[Association of Southeast Asian Nations \(ASEAN\)](#) leaders have decided to deny Myanmar the opportunity to assume the rotating leadership of their regional bloc in 2026.

- This decision comes as a setback to Myanmar's ruling generals, who have been seeking international recognition after seizing power violently in 2021.
- Philippines agreed to take over the **regional bloc's chairmanship in 2026** at the ASEAN summit hosted by Indonesia.



What are the Reasons for Myanmar's Exclusion from the ASEAN Leadership?

- ASEAN diplomats have suggested that **Myanmar's exclusion is related to ongoing civil strife** within the country.
- Additionally, there are concerns that ASEAN's relations with the United States and the [European Union](#), among other international actors, **might be negatively impacted due to their non-recognition of Myanmar's military-led government.**

What is the Background and Concerns in Myanmar?

- **Background:**
 - In 2021, the Myanmar Army ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's democratically elected government, leading to widespread **condemnation and calls for her immediate release from detention.**
 - Western governments, led by the US, have been vocal in their opposition to the military-led government in Myanmar.
- **Issues:**
 - Since the military takeover in Myanmar, security forces have been accused of killing approximately 4,000 civilians and arresting over 24,000 others.
 - Myanmar's economy has collapsed with nearly half of the population now living below the [poverty line.](#)
 - Despite clear legal obligations for the military to protect civilians in the conduct of

hostilities, there has been consistent disregard for the related rules of international law.

What is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)?

▪ About:

- It is a **regional grouping** that promotes economic, political, and security cooperation.
- It was established in **August 1967 in Bangkok**, Thailand with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the founding members of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
- Its chairmanship rotates annually, based on the alphabetical order of the English names of Member States.
- In 2022, the estimated total GDP of all ASEAN states amounted to approximately **USD 3.66 trillion**.
- Commodity trade between India and ASEAN region has reached 98.39 billion in the period April 2021- February 2022. India's main trading ties are with Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand.

▪ Members:

- ASEAN brings together ten Southeast Asian states - Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam - into one organisation.



UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q1. Consider the following countries: (2018)

1. Australia
2. Canada

3. China
4. India
5. Japan
6. USA

Which of the above are among the 'free-trade partners' of ASEAN?

- (a) 1, 2, 4 and 5
- (b) 3, 4, 5 and 6
- (c) 1, 3, 4 and 5
- (d) 2, 3, 4 and 6

Ans: (c)

Q2. The term 'Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership' often appears in the news in the context of the affairs of a group of countries known as (2016)

- (a) G20
- (b) ASEAN
- (c) SCO
- (d) SAARC

Ans: (b)

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/07-09-2023/print>

