



**General Studies-2; Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.**

## India's Clean-Cooking Strategy

### Introduction

- Over the last 15 years, the Government has attempted to replicate the success that LPG adoption has seen in urban households, in poorer and rural households.
- The Grameen Vitrak Yojana, launched in 2009, has helped grow the rural distributor base from 18% to 60% of the total LPG distributor base today.
- The ambitious Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) has provided more than 9.5 crore new households with LPG connections since 2016.
- However, for the first time, LPG consumption in Indian households saw an absolute reduction in FY23.

### The LPG story

- In the recent past, the share of Indian households using LPG as the primary cooking fuel had risen to 71% in 2020 from 33% in 2011.
- However, the following events have dented the universal use of LPG in Indian households
  - COVID-19 pandemic that led to loss of livelihoods and income.
  - Also, subsidy for LPG consumption was withdrawn for all consumers.
  - Russian invasion of Ukraine and the resulting surge and volatility in crude prices.

### Concerns / Challenges

- Despite significant efforts, home delivery and distribution channel issues remain.
- India's dependence on imported LPG has steadily increased to over 64% in FY23.
- Indian households have seen a near-doubling in LPG prices since May 2020 in nominal terms.
- It is unlikely that India can return to a regime where a subsidy of approximately INR20,000 crore (2011-12 prices) was provided each year for LPG consumption

## Way Forward

- More budgetary outlay will be needed for subsidies to entice the poor to consume LPG and avail its health benefits.
- **India's clean cooking policy must pivot towards the adoption of clean-cooking technologies and shift from an LPG-only strategy.**
- With near 100% access to electricity connections, rural households can also shift specific cooking needs to electricity.
- This can then spur the domestic manufacturing ecosystem for e-cooking technologies and reduce the dependence on imported LPG and crude, and the outflow of precious forex.
- Displacement of 'chulhas' by e-cooking would also avoid climate pollutant release.

## Conclusion

- The debate needs to move from LPG subsidy alone to financing and business models that value India's clean cooking transition for its climate and clean air benefits.