



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 09-05-2024

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The socio-ecological effects of LPG prices hike

Syllabus: GS-2; Impact of Government policies and Interventions

Context

- *Data from the 2014-2015 ACCESS survey, conducted by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water, found LPG's cost to be the foremost barrier to its adoption and continued use in rural poor households.*
- *Thus, 750 million Indians primarily use solid cooking fuels — wood, dung, agricultural residues, coal, and charcoal — every day.*
- *Solid cooking fuels are associated with innumerable health hazards and socio-economic and environmental impacts.*

Has the govt. pushed LPG use?

- *The Indian government has often placed a premium on the cooking fuels in rural households transitioning to LPG.*
- *The Rajiv Gandhi Gramin LPG Vitrak scheme was launched in 2009 to increase LPG distribution in remote areas; nearly 45 million new LPG connections were thus established between 2010 and 2013.*
- *Direct benefit transfers for LPG under the 'PAHAL' scheme were initiated in 2015.*
- *In 2016, direct home-refill deliveries were implemented and the 'Give it Up' program enrolled around 10 million LPG consumers to voluntarily discontinue subsidies and transfer their accounts to below-poverty-line households.*
- *The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) followed, to install LPG connections in 80 million below-poverty-line households by 2020.*
- *The scheme also provides a subsidy of ₹200 for every 14.2-kg cylinder, which increased to ₹300 in October 2023.*
- *Fast forward to 2022: of the 54 countries whose LPG prices were available, those in India were reportedly the highest, around ₹300/litre.*

The study

- *In 2023, a study done by the author and Amir Kumar Chhetri showed how local communities of the Jalpaiguri district in West Bengal depend on the forests for fuelwood.*
- *The landscape has highly degraded forest remnants in a mosaic of tea estates, human settlements, and agricultural land, thanks to a history of forest conversion and fragmentation.*

- *Based on 40 focal group discussions in tea-estate labour colonies and in forest and revenue villages, the study found that residents in **the area depend mainly on forests for fuelwood, for both household consumption and to sell.***
- *Roughly half of the 214 local shops in 10 markets used fuelwood; the shop-workers reported the cost of a commercial cylinder, ₹1,900, to be exorbitant.*
- *Around 38.5% of Jalpaiguri's population is below the poverty line and most of them work in tea estates with a daily wage of ₹250.*
- *Against this backdrop, the persistent use of fuelwood as cooking fuel is unsurprising.*

What are suitable alternatives?

- *While the act of collecting fuelwood gives the people cooking fuel, it also **degrades the forest and forces people to risk adverse encounters with wild animals.***
- *Due to various government schemes, most households in Jalpaiguri have LPG connections but few refill the cylinder even twice a year.*
- *On introduction of the PMUY scheme, many households quickly switched to LPG from fuelwood, and reported that their **cooking activities became fast and smokeless,** they could forgo the need to rise early and the time and effort spent in collecting fuelwood.*
- *But the hike in the price of LPG rendered these advantages short-lived.*
- *Devising locally acceptable, suitable, and sustainable alternatives to fuelwood is important to secure the forests, wildlife and locals' livelihoods.*
- *Work is ongoing with the West Bengal Forest Department and Joint Forest Management Committees to help four villages acquire saplings of high fuelwood value on the conditions that they will be native species, prohibited from logging, unpalatable to elephants and will be maintained by locals.*
- *Alternatives like efficient cooking stoves, optimised shade tree density in tea plantations, and multi-stakeholder meetings for resource governance are also in the works.*

What next?

- *The findings suggest that the LPG price rise, especially over the last decade, could cause socio-ecological crises in places where there are no viable alternatives to fuelwood and socio-economic deprivation is common.*
- *Future governments must focus on making, and keeping, LPG affordable.*
- *At the same time, they also need to endeavour to free solid cooking fuels from socio-ecological endangerment, like, say, with a national policy on introducing smokeless cooking stoves that consume less fuelwood.*

Interpol's Colour-Coded Notices

Syllabus: GS-2; Judiciary

Context

- **The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** is likely to issue a *Blue Corner notice* against absconding Janata Dal (Secular) MP Prajwal Revanna.



Interpol's colour-coded notices

- A *Blue* or a *Blue Corner* notice is a part of Interpol's elaborate system of colour-coded notices, which, according to the organisation's website, enable countries to **"share alerts and requests for information [on wanted persons/crimes] worldwide"**.
- This sharing of critical crime-related information is crucial for tackling internationally spread out criminal activities.
- There are seven types of notices — *Red Notice, Yellow Notice, Blue Notice, Black Notice, Green Notice, Orange Notice, and Purple Notice*. Each has a different implication.

- **Red Notice:** *To seek the location and arrest of persons wanted for prosecution or to serve a sentence.*
- **Yellow Notice:** *To help locate missing persons, often minors, or to help identify persons who are unable to identify themselves.*
- **Blue Notice:** *To collect additional information about a person's identity, location or activities in relation to a criminal investigation.*
- **Black Notice:** *To seek information on unidentified bodies.*
- **Green Notice:** *To provide warning about a person's criminal activities, where the person is considered to be a possible threat to public safety.*
- **Orange Notice:** *To warn of an event, a person, an object or a process representing a serious and imminent threat to public safety.*
- **Purple Notice:** *To seek or provide information on modus operandi, objects, devices and concealment methods used by criminals.*
- *These notices are issued by the Interpol's General Secretariat at the request of a member country's **Interpol National Central Bureau**, and are made available for all member countries.*
- *The International Criminal Police Organization, commonly known as Interpol, facilitates worldwide police cooperation and crime control. Based out of Lyon, France, it is the world's largest international police organisation.*

Drip Pricing

Syllabus: GS-3; Economy

Context

- *A recent warning regarding "drip pricing" was issued by the **Department of Consumer Affairs**, which warned customers of the practice.*

What is drip pricing?

- *Drip pricing is a pricing technique in which firms **advertise only part of a product's price and reveal other charges later as the customer goes through the buying process.***
- *The additional charges can be mandatory charges, such as hotel resort fees, or fees for optional upgrades and add-ons.*



Beware of Drip Pricing

What you see while **CHOOSING**
isn't what you always **PAY**



BILL

Price details

Quantity(1):	₹ 4700
Handling charges:	₹ 150
Shipping charges:	₹ 150
Donation for cause:	₹ 50
Platform price:	₹ 80
Total Price:	₹ 5130

Tips to stay safe

- Writing further in the post on X, the Department of Consumer Affairs said, "If you come across such situations, reach out to NCH 1915 for assistance or WhatsApp 8800001915".
- To stop and control dark patterns like drip pricing, bait and switch, disguised advertising, and false urgency, the **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** had released "**Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023**" in December 2023.

Red Colobus Monkey

Syllabus: GS-3; Environment and Ecology

Context

- *Red Colobus: Conserving these Old World primates could help save Africa's tropical forests, says study*



More into the news

- *The scientists — from almost 20 institutions in the United States, Europe, and Africa — urged peers, civil society, local communities, funding agencies and other stakeholders “to invest in red colobus conservation efforts to help protect Africa’s tropical forests and biodiversity, mitigate the impacts of climate change, and improve food security and public health”.*
- *Investing in and conserving the red colobus species “could have cascading net positive impacts on African tropical forest health in the face of a growing biodiversity crisis”, they added.*
- *They called for all red colobus to be provided legal protections and their inclusion as priority conservation species in national laws and international treaties.*
- *Other recommendations made included*

- **greater investment in the creation and management of protected areas for red colobus monkeys,**
- **providing support to and engaging with communities that live in close proximity to these primates,**
- **carrying out surveys to estimate the exact populations of these monkeys and**
- **creating awareness about their conservation value.**

About

- *Red colobus monkeys are **Old World monkeys** that belong to the **genus Ptilocolobus**.*
- *They are closely related to black-and-white colobus monkeys, and some species are often found in groups with the blue monkey.*
- *There are 10 types of red colobus monkeys, including the western red colobus, Zanzibar red colobus, and Tana River red colobus.*
- *Red colobus monkeys are primarily **leaf-eaters**, and are part of the Colobines group of simian primates, which also includes langurs from south and southeast Asia.*
- *Colobines need a lot of choice in the types of plants they eat and how they process them.*
- *The Zanzibar red colobus, also known as Kirk's red colobus monkey, is **endemic to the main island of the Zanzibar archipelago**, off the coast of Tanzania.*
- *It is mainly a tree-dwelling species that prefers drier areas, and can be found in coastal rag scrub, coastal thickets, mangrove swamps, and agricultural areas.*
- *The Zanzibar red colobus is classified as an **endangered species**, and in the mid-1990s became the flagship species for conservation in Zanzibar.*

MQ-9B Predator drones

Syllabus: GS-3; Defence and Security

Context

- *India is looking at sealing a landmark deal to procure 31 MQ-9B Predator armed drones from the U.S.*

About

- *The General Atomics MQ-9 Reaper (sometimes called Predator B) is an **unmanned aerial vehicle** capable of remotely controlled or autonomous flight operations,*

developed by **General Atomics Aeronautical Systems (GA-ASI)** primarily for the United States Air Force (USAF).

- The MQ-9 and other UAVs are referred to as Remotely Piloted Vehicles/Aircraft (RPV/RPA) by the USAF to indicate ground control by humans.
- The MQ-9 is a larger, heavier, more capable aircraft than the earlier General Atomics MQ-1 Predator and can be controlled by the same ground systems.
- The Reaper has a 950-shaft-horsepower (712 kW) turboprop engine (compared to the Predator's 115 hp (86 kW) piston engine).
- **The greater power allows the Reaper to carry 15 times more ordnance payload and cruise at about three times the speed of the MQ-1.**
- The aircraft is monitored and controlled, including weapons employment, by aircrew in the Ground Control Station (GCS).
- The MQ-9 is the first hunter-killer UAV designed for long-endurance, high-altitude surveillance.

MQ-9B

Predator Drones



Max Gross Takeoff Weight: **5,670 kg**

Fuel Capacity: **2,721 kg**

Payload Capacity: **2,177 kg across 9 hardpoints (8 wing, 1 centerline)**



Crew:

Two pilots in ground control stations



Weapons

**Laser guided missiles
Anti-tank missiles
Anti-ship missiles**



Missions

- **Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief**
- **Search and Rescue**
- **Law Enforcement**
- **Border Enforcement**
- **Defensive Counter Air**
- **Airborne Early Warning**

Missions

- **Electronic Warfare**
- **Anti-Surface Warfare**
- **Anti-Submarine Warfare**
- **Airborne Mine Counter Measures**
- **Long-Range Strategic ISR**
- **Over-the-Horizon Targeting**

