

DAILY PT POINTERS

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The Hindu-Health(GSII)/Environment(GSIII)-Page 8

The socio-ecological effects of LPG price hikes

What are the schemes launched by the Government of India to increase the uptake of LPG connections?

Privanka Das

The story so far:

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 14.2kg 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.

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?

Our 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.

Priyanka Das is a fellow at the Coexistence Consortium.

THE GIST

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India is now third largest producer of solar power

Jacob Koshy

NEW DELHI

In 2023, India overtook Japan to become the world's third-highest producer of solar power, said a report by international energy analytics agency Ember on Wednesday. India generated 113 billion units (BU) of solar power in 2023 compared to Japan's 110 BU.

In terms of installed power capacity, which includes sources of renewable and non-renewable energy, India at 73 gigawatt (1 GW is one billion watts) ranks fifth in the world while Japan is at third place

(83 GW), according to data computed by Ember.

While reflective of the rising share of solar power in India's energy mix, the power produced per year can vary due to fluctuations in a country's power demand and local circumstances which lead to a gap between the installed capacity and actual power produced.

Large gap

Data from government think-tank, NITI Ayog suggest that as of May 2024, solar power while making up 18% of India's total installed electricity of 442

GW, made up only 6.66% of the power actually produced - reflecting the gap between potential and actuals.

Power demand in Japan decreased by 2% (2 BU) in 2023 after rising in 2021 and 2022, thus allowing India to overtake Japan. While it is unclear if this trend will sustain next year, as surpassing the next country - the United States which is in the second spot - will require India to more than double its current solar production and exceed 228 BU.

The leading producer of solar power in the world is

China which produced 584 BU of solar power in 2024 - more than the next four countries combined - the United States, Japan, Germany and India.

'Future has arrived'

Globally however, renewable sources of energy made up 30% of global electricity produced. Renewables have expanded from 19% of global electricity in 2000, driven by an increase in solar and wind power, to 30% in 2023. China was the main contributor in 2023, accounting for 51% of the additional global solar generation and 60%

of new global wind generation. Combined with nuclear, the world generated almost 40% of its electricity from low-carbon sources in 2023.

Ember forecasts fossil fuel generation to drop in 2024 and the trend to continue in other years, suggesting that 2023 might be the year when the fossil fuel production may have "peaked" globally.

"The renewables future has arrived," said Dave Jones, Ember's director of global insights. "Solar in particular is accelerating faster than anyone thought possible."

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How the Widal test clouds India's sense of its typhoid problem

Because of the Widal test's propensity for erroneous results, the actual burden of typhoid in India remains obfuscated. A lack of awareness of the proper time at which to collect a blood sample, along with a lack of standardisation of kits and poor quality-control, compound the problem

Vasundhara Rangaswamy
Parth Sharma

More often than not, the experience for patients with a fever is to get tested and treated for a typhoid infection. The test is a rapid blood test called the Widal test. The subsequent treatment usually consists of tablets, typically in urban areas, or injections in rural ones.

Typhoid spreads through contaminated food and water and is caused by *Salmonella typhi* and other related bacteria. Also known as enteric fever, it presents with a high fever, stomach pain, weakness, and other symptoms like nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea or constipation, and a rash. Some people, called carriers, may remain symptom-free and shed the bacteria in their stool for several months to years.

These symptoms mimic those of malaria, dengue, influenza, and typhus, to name a few, each with different treatment modalities. If left untreated, typhoid can be life threatening. Per the



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- If left untreated, typhoid can be life-threatening. Per the World Health Organisation, 90 lakh people are diagnosed worldwide with typhoid every year and 1.1 lakh die of it. In India, clinicians use the Widal test extensively to diagnose typhoid in both public and private sectors. It's a point-of-care test and doesn't need special skills or infrastructure. Developed in the late 1800s by a French physician, it is no longer used in many countries because of its flaws

The Hindu-Economy(GSIII)

India's sugarcane subsidy broke WTO norms: U.S., Australia

Amiti Sen
NEW DELHI

The U.S. and Australia have contended India gave sugarcane subsidy beyond the limits set in the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), which may have distorted global trade.

In a recent paper submitted to the WTO's Committee on Agriculture, based on compilation of data on India's market price support for sugarcane over a four-year period (2018-19 to 2021-22), both the countries argued that during all the four years India's sugar subsidies crossed 90% of the value of production against



production efficiency, and farmers in some States are eligible for additional payments by sugar mills under specific State-level support, known as State-Advised Prices (SAPs). This paper implements the approach to calculating India's market price support

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- Each sugar season...India sets the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane. The FRP is an administered price that effectively acts as a floor price for sugar mills to pay farmers for sugarcane. In addition, farmers are paid premiums for increased production efficiency, and farmers in some States are eligible for additional payments by sugar mills under specific State-level support, known as State-Advised Prices (SAPs).

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

The Hindu-IR(GSII)/Environment(GSIII)

‘Malaysia plans to introduce orangutan diplomacy’

Agence France-Presse
KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysia intends to gift orangutans to palm oil-purchasing countries as part of an initiative similar to China’s panda diplomacy, the commodities minister said on Wednesday.

Johari Abdul Ghani said the “orangutan diplomacy” strategy would gift the endangered great apes to palm oil trading nations, especially major importing territories like the EU and

- Malaysia intends to gift orangutans to palm oil-purchasing countries as part of an initiative similar to China’s panda diplomacy, the commodities minister said on Wednesday.
- the “orangutan diplomacy” strategy would gift the endangered great apes to palm oil trading nations, especially major importing territories like the EU and India.
Orangutans are critically endangered,
- The name orangutan means “**man of the forest**” in the **Malay language**.
- They have a characteristic ape-like shape, shaggy reddish fur and grasping hands and feet.
- They are the **largest arboreal mammal**, spending most of their time in trees.
 - These great apes are only found in the wild on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra.

Indian Express: Governance (GSII)-Page 14

Do marriages need to be registered? What happens if they aren't?

APURVA VISHWANATH
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

THE SUPREME COURT last week ruled that a Hindu couple who had appeared before it had “never acquired the status of husband and wife”, as they had registered their marriage under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (HMA) before performing wedding rituals. The SC ruled that the couple, who had filed divorce cases, need not get a divorce because they were never married in the first place.

The apex court’s observations spotlight various issues on the registration and solemnization of a marriage, and its necessity.

What is a solemnized marriage?

Solemnizing a marriage refers to the performance of an official marriage ceremony, with appropriate rituals.

In India, marriage is largely governed by a gamut of personal laws, and the Special Marriage Act, 1954 (SMA). Though codified

through statute, these personal laws are essentially practices obtained by religion, with each religion having its own set of ‘requirements’ for a marriage – a marriage is ‘valid’ when these requirements are met.

For instance, for Hindus and Christians, marriage is a sacrament, or a religious bond. Rituals such as *kanyadaan* and *saptapadi* (*sapt* = seven) solemnize a Hindu marriage. Section 7 of the HMA codifies these requirements, and names *saptapadi* as an essential ritual.

For Christians, a ceremony in church based on local customs is regarded as a valid marriage. For example, for some Tamil Christians, this involves tying of a *tholi* – a chain with a cross on the pendant in church.

Under Muslim law, however, marriage is a contractual obligation. A valid marriage requires the consent of both parties, in writing, and in the presence of witnesses. In practice, this entails both parties giving vocal consent, and signing a *nikahnama* (an Islamic marriage contract) in the presence of witnesses and a *qazi*.

And what are registered marriages?

The registration of a marriage after it is solemnised as per rituals is different from a ‘registered’ marriage.

Terms like ‘court marriage’ or ‘registered marriage’ refer to a non-religious or civil marriage under the SMA, which is a secular law.

A marriage performed under this law is essentially a solemnization in ‘court’ (a registrar’s office) without any rituals.

However, marriages under personal laws (such as HMA) become valid only after the performance of rituals prescribed by religion. A marriage without any rituals is only valid under the SMA.

Section 8 of the HMA gives power to the state to register marriages solemnised as per the requirements of Section 7. Similarly, the Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872, provides the procedure for the solemnization of Christian marriages and their registration.

For Muslims, a *nikahnama* issued by a *qazi* outlines the terms of the marriage.

Although not a public registration under a statute, this registration form is widely adopted. Apart from this, several states have their own laws for the registration of Muslim marriages and divorce.

What if a marriage is not registered?

Although there is a central legislation on marriage registrations – the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act, 1886 – it does not have a robust application to marriage, unlike the effort to record births and deaths. States have their own laws, and in some states like Karnataka and Delhi, registration of a marriage is mandatory.

A certificate of marriage registration is useful for various official purposes where the spouses need to declare that they are married – for instance, applying for a spousal visa or joint medical insurance. However, not registering a marriage cannot be the sole ground to declare it invalid – since register-

ing a marriage itself does not make it valid.

When the validity of a marriage is contested, then a marriage certificate alone is not enough to prove the marriage. An exception to this is a certificate under the SMA which is “conclusive” proof of marriage. Section 13(2) of the SMA states that “on a certificate being entered in the Marriage Certificate Book by the Marriage Officer, the Certificate shall be deemed to be conclusive evidence of the fact that a marriage under this Act has been solemnized and that all formalities respecting the signatures of witnesses have been complied with”.

In Muslim and Christian marriages too, registration takes place almost immediately after solemnization, which makes for more reliable evidence. This is unlike a Hindu wedding, where the priest performing the ceremony does not routinely certify the marriage.

However, in law, there exists a general presumption of marriage when a man and woman have cohabited continuously, even if there is no direct evidence of marriage.

Section 114 of the Indian Evidence Act states that “the Court may presume the existence of any fact which it thinks likely to have happened, regard being had to the common course of natural events, human conduct and public and private business, in their relation to the facts of the particular case.”

A ‘valid’ marriage as per rituals might be key in determining who is a rightful spouse when there are claims by multiple cohabiting partners. These aspects become crucial in bigamy trials and inheritance suits. In a bigamy case, a man has to prove that one of his marriages is not valid to not be charged for marrying twice. In an inheritance case, the validity of a marriage is questioned to disinherit a spouse. Evidence of a valid marriage can be proof of performing a valid marriage as per rituals (through photos, witnesses etc); and proof of long cohabitation as spouses through acceptance by family, friends or even children. A marriage certificate has corroborative value in these cases, but cannot be counted as evidence in itself.

**EXPLAINED
LAW**

The Supreme Court last week ruled that despite an official marriage certificate, a Hindu couple before the Court had “never acquired the status of husband and wife.”

The apex court’s observations in the ruling bring to focus various issues on registration and solemnization of a marriage, and its necessity.

Solemnizing a marriage simply refers to the performance of an official marriage ceremony, with appropriate rituals.

Marriage in India is largely governed through a gamut of personal laws, and the Special Marriage Act, 1954 (SMA). Though codified through statute, these personal laws are essentially practices ordained by religion, with each religion having its own set of ‘requirements’ for a marriage — **a marriage is ‘valid’ when these requirements are met.**

For instance, for Hindus (and Christians), marriage is a sacrament, i.e. it is a religious bond. Rituals such as *kanyadaan*, *panigrahana* and *saptapadi*, or other local customs solemnize a Hindu marriage. Section 7 of the HMA codifies these requirements, and names *saptapadi* as an essential ritual.

Indian Express: IR(GSII)-Page 14

WHY VIETNAM WANTS US TO CHANGE ITS 'NON-MARKET ECONOMY' STATUS

ALIND CHAUHAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

VIETNAM HAS been pushing the Biden administration to change its "non-market economy" classification to "market economy" to avoid high taxes imposed by the United States on the goods imported from the Southeast Asian country.

Communist Vietnam has been on Washington's list of non-market economies for more than two decades — a list which comprises 12 countries, including Russia and China.

The US Department of Commerce is currently reviewing Vietnam's status. The review is set to end by late July.

What are 'non-market economies'?

The US designates a country as a non-market economy based on several factors. These are: if the country's currency is convertible; if wage rates are determined by free bargaining between labour and management; if joint ventures or other foreign investment are allowed; whether the means of production are owned by the state; and if the state controls the allocation of resources and price and output decisions. Other factors like human rights are also considered.

The 'non-market economy' label allows the US to impose 'anti-dumping' duties on goods imported from designated countries. In international trade, dump-



Assembly line at a garment factory in Ho Chi Minh City. *The NYT*

Why does Vietnam want the 'market economy' status?

Vietnam has argued that it has recently implemented economic reforms which should get its name off the non-market economies list.

The country does meet a number of criteria for the status to be changed. For instance, Vietnam allows foreign investment, and wages are determined by free negotiations between workers and management, according to a report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a Washington-based think tank.

The change in status will help Vietnam get rid of the anti-dumping duties, making its products more competitive in the US market.

Vietnam has been pushing the President Joe Biden administration to quickly change its "non-market economy" classification to "market economy", in a bid to avoid high taxes imposed by the US on the goods imported from the Southeastern country.

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The non-market economy label allows the US to impose "anti-dumping" duties on goods imported from designated countries. In international trade, dumping is when a country's export prices are considered to be intentionally set below domestic prices, thereby inflicting harm to industries in the importing country. Anti-dumping duties essentially compensate for the difference between the imported good's export price and their normal value.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY



PIB-Health(GSII)/S&T(GSIII)

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

International Thalassemia Day

Union Health Secretary stresses on importance of timely detection and prevention for addressing Thalassemia

"By integrating compulsory Thalassemia testing into RCH program, burden of Thalassemia can be significantly alleviated"

Emphasizes on critical need for wide awareness on Thalassemia among the masses; launches an awareness video

Posted On: 08 MAY 2024 3:42PM by PIB Delhi

- Thalassemia is an inherited blood disorder that causes a body to have less hemoglobin than normal.
- Celebrated every year, International Thalassemia Day serves as a crucial platform to emphasize the importance of disease prevention, raise awareness, sensitize stakeholders, promote early detection, and ensure quality care for those affected by thalassemia.
- This year's theme, "Empowering Lives, Embracing Progress: Equitable and Accessible Thalassemia Treatment for All," encapsulates the collective mission toward universal access to comprehensive Thalassemia care.