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Q1

"Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy is the sine qua non to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)". Comment on the progress made in India in this regard. (150 Words, 10 Marks).

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · GS III · 10 marks · Infrastructure

Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Core demand of the question

- Comment on why affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy is essential for the Sustainable Development Goals
- State India's progress on access, cooking fuel, power quality and clean energy
- **Judge remaining gaps:** DISCOMs, last-mile quality, coal, and clean cooking

Revision summary

SDG 7 energy access is the base for poverty, health, education, jobs and climate goals.

India expanded household electricity under **Saubhagya** and DDUGJY, cooking gas under **Ujjwala**, and efficient lighting under UJALA.

National Solar Mission, the **175 GW target** and the International Solar Alliance scaled clean power.

UDAY tried to repair DISCOM finances; PAT and labels raised efficiency.

Gaps remain in hours of supply, refill of LPG, coal dependence and loss-making distribution.

Introduction

The United Nations **Sustainable Development Goal 7** asks for affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy. Without that floor, schools, clinics, farms and factories cannot run, so poverty, health and climate goals stall. India after 2014 treated electricity and cooking gas as **mass public goods**. Progress on connections is real; **quality, cleanliness and financial health** of supply still lag.

Body**Why energy is sine qua non for the SDGs**

- Cheap, steady power and clean cooking cut **poverty and hunger** by raising farm and shop hours and by freeing women from fuelwood.
- Clinics, vaccines and **education** need light and cold chains; dirty fuel drives indoor air deaths, which hits **health** goals.
- Industry, digital payments and jobs need **reliable kilowatt-hours**, not only a pole on the map.
- **Climate and cities** fail if extra demand is met only by inefficient coal and diesel.

Progress in India

- **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY)** separated rural feeder supply and extended village lines; official data then treated inhabited villages as electrified.
- **Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya, 2017)** moved the target from the village to the **household** connection, including poor urban homes.
- **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (2016)** gave deposit-free **liquefied petroleum gas** connections so cooking could leave the chulha.
- **Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA)** cut lighting bills and peak load through LED bulbs.
- **Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission**, the **175 gigawatt** renewable target by 2022, and the **International Solar Alliance** (headquartered in India) pushed solar and wind scale.
- **Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY, 2015)** and **Integrated Power Development Scheme** tried to repair distribution losses and urban networks.
- **Perform, Achieve and Trade** and Bureau of Energy Efficiency labels raised efficiency in industry and appliances.

Comment on gaps

- **A connection is not 24x7 quality:** voltage, hours and agricultural feeder rostering still vary by State.
- **Distribution companies** remain loss-making, so they delay payments to generators and under-invest in wires.
- **Ujjwala** raised connections faster than sustained cylinder refills where income and refill logistics are weak.
- The generation mix is still **coal-heavy**; renewables need transmission, storage and a solvent buyer.
- Modern energy for SDGs therefore means **wires that work, cooking that is refilled, and power that is cleaner**, not only a new metre.

Flow diagram

SDG 7 modern energy -> Other SDGs jobs health climate
 SDG 7 modern energy -> Saubhagya DDUGJY access
 SDG 7 modern energy -> Ujjwala clean cooking
 SDG 7 modern energy -> Solar UJALA efficiency
 Saubhagya DDUGJY access -> Gaps quality DISCOM coal
 Ujjwala clean cooking -> Gaps quality DISCOM coal
 Solar UJALA efficiency -> Gaps quality DISCOM coal

Conclusion

Energy is the base on which other SDGs stand. India has closed much of the connection gap through **Saubhagya**, **Ujjwala**, UJALA and solar missions. The next test is reliable, solvent and cleaner supply so the connection becomes a service.

Facts & figures

SDG 7

UN goal on affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, adopted in the 2030 Agenda.

Saubhagya

Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (2017): last-mile electricity connections for remaining households.

Ujjwala

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (2016): deposit-free LPG connections for poor households, mainly women as beneficiaries.

UDAY

Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (2015): State-backed financial and operational turnaround of electricity distribution companies.

175 GW target

Union renewable capacity ambition by 2022 (solar, wind, biomass, small hydro), announced around the Paris climate pledge.

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