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MINISTRY OF
SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY



MK Yadav Sir

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In first election since 2019, Ladakh queues up, registers 77.61% voting

There are 85 candidates in the fray for the 26-member Hill Council; results will reflect the mood of the people on the Centre's move to grant UT status to Ladakh, comprising Leh and Kargil districts

Peerzada Ashiq
KARGIL

With Pakistani peaks overlooking the polling booths in once-war-battered zones of Kargil, the fifth Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council-Kargil (LAHDC-K) elections witnessed a massive 77.61% turnout on Wednesday, in the first ever polls since Ladakh was carved out as a Union Territory in 2019.

The polling, which started at 8 a.m. and ended by 4 p.m., marks a quantum jump from around 70% polling recorded during the 2018 Council elections, according to an official.

In all, 85 candidates are in the fray for the 26-member Hill Council, with Congress fielding the highest number at 22, followed by 17 each from the National Conference (NC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The BJP is facing an uphill task against the NC-Congress combine. There are 24 candidates who are contesting as Independents in these elections which will reflect the mood of the people on the Centre's move to grant UT



A senior citizen walking towards a polling station in Hunderman, the last village on the Line of Control, to vote in the Hill Council polls on Wednesday. NISSAR AHMAD

65,878 voters, with Shia Muslim population in a majority. P

olling booths were abuzz with men and women since morning at Kargil's Kaksar village, located at an altitude of 14,000 feet. Muzaffar Ali, 51, a voter in Kaksar, described the first ever polls held under the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh, carved out from J&K in 2019, as "significant and decisive".

Villagers dislocated

During the 1999 Kargil war, Kaksar village saw the dis-

plateau. "The ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan has brought relief to locals. We welcome it," Mr. Ali said.

He is however critical of the Centre's move to separate Kargil from Kashmir and says "it was not the right move".

"We believe Statehood and the provisions of Article 370 should be returned to us," Mr. Ali added.

Bilgees Nasreen, 19, a student who is also a first-time voter from Kaksar village, which has over 600 voters said she voted

A majority of voters in Kargil district expressed resentment over the Centre's decision to bifurcate J&K into two UTs.

"I am an Indian. People of Drass helped the Army fight the Pakistan Army in 1999. But Drass sees its identity closer to Kashmir, where we have centuries-old links. Restoring Article 370 will help in protecting our identity," Gayas-ud-Din, a shopkeeper at the world's second coldest

place Drass, said. In Hunderman, overlooking the villages of Pa-

Context: Recently, the voting for the **fifth Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC)-Kargil** took place, marking the first elections in Ladakh following the revocation of **Article 370**.

Article 370 and its Removal

- **Background:** The **Constituent Assembly of Jammu & Kashmir** (through Article 370) was empowered to recommend which articles of the Indian Constitution should apply to the state.
- **Clause 3 of the article 370** gives the President of India the power to amend its provisions and scope.
- **Removal of Article 370:**
 - Amendments were made to make applicable the entirety of **India's Constitution to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)**.
 - It was done when the State was under President's Rule with **no elected Legislative Assembly in place**.
 - In 2019, the **Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order 2019**, issued by the President, withdrew the special status of J&K and extended all provisions of the Indian Constitution to J&K.
 - The **J&K (Reorganisation) Act 2019** bifurcated J&K into two UTs - J&K was an UT with a Legislative Assembly; Ladakh was without an Assembly.

Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council

- LAHDC, Leh was **constituted in accordance** with the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council Act, 1995.
- The **Council came into being** with the holding of elections on August 28, 1995.
- The **democratic constitution of the Council** has heralded democratic decentralization of planning process with the involvement of people at the grass root level.

Govt bans NLFT and ATTF outfits based in Tripura

Context: Recently, the Centre declared the **National Liberation Front of Tripura**, All Tripura Tiger Force, and their factions as unlawful associations under the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act**.

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA)

- **Passed**: in 1967.
- **Aims**: To effective prevention of unlawful activities and associations in India.
- The Act grants complete **authority to the central government**.
- If the Centre perceives an **activity as illegal**, it can proclaim it as such through an Official Gazette.
- **Applicability**: Under the act, both Indian and foreign nationals can be charged.
- **Punishment**: The act has the death penalty and life imprisonment as the highest punishments.
- **Duration of punishment**: Under section 43D, police are empowered to detain the accused in police custody for 30 days and in judicial custody for a period of 180 days without the charge sheet.
- **UAPA Apply**: Both Indian and foreign nationals can be charged.
- **Meaning of Unlawful Activity**: It pertains to any action by an individual or group with the intent to undermine India's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

IN THE LOK SABHA

NATIONAL INVESTIGATION AGENCY AMENDMENT BILL, 2019

Empowers NIA to probe terror attacks targeting Indians, Indian interests on foreign soil

Allows NIA to probe cyber-crimes and cases of human trafficking

Allow the Centre and states to designate sessions courts as special court for trial



UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES (PREVENTION) ACT AMENDMENT BILL

UAPA Bill empowers NIA DG to approve seizure/attachment of property in case

Inspector of NIA can investigate offences under chapter IV and VI

PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Increase NHRC members from two to three, one of which will be a woman

A retired Supreme Court judge could also be considered as chairperson

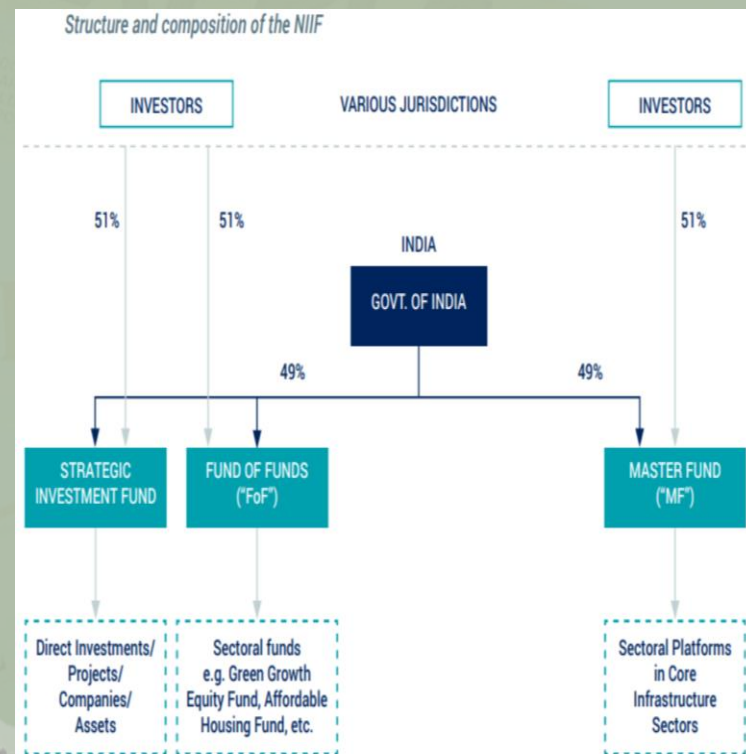
National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) launches \$600 million India-Japan Fund (IJF) with Government of India and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) as anchor investors

Context: Recently, the **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF)** announced a partnership with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) to establish a \$600 million India-Japan Fund (IJF), with **JBIC and the Government of India (GoI)** as primary investors.

- The announcement marks **NIIF's first bilateral fund**, with the GoI contributing 49% of the target corpus and the remaining 51% contributed by JBIC.

National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF)

- About:** NIIF is sponsored and anchored by the Government of India, which holds a 49% interest in it.
- Set up:** in December 2015 as a Category-II Alternate Investment Fund.
- NIIF is **India's first sovereign wealth fund**.
- Focus:** investing in core infrastructure sectors, such as transportation, energy and digital.
- Headquarters:** Mumbai.
- Objective:** To provide long-term capital to the country's infrastructure sector.
- It is a collaborative investment platform for international and Indian investors.
- Funds managed:** Master fund, Fund Of Funds and Strategic Fund.



Sikkim: Chungthang dam breach another reminder of climate risks associated with hydropower

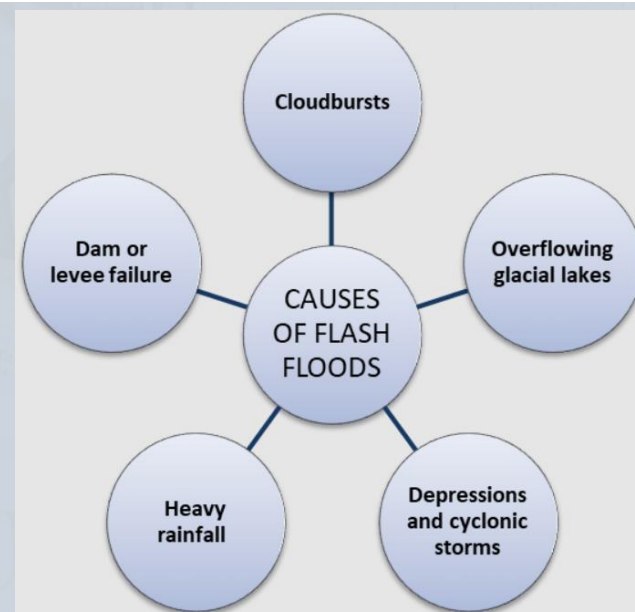
Context: Recently, a glacial lake outburst in north Sikkim's Mangan district, caused flash floods and breached Sikkim's Chungthang dam, the state's largest hydropower project.

Flash flood

- **Meaning:** A flood caused by heavy or excessive rainfall in a short period of time, generally less than 6 hours known as a flash flood.
- **Conditions for occurrence:** It can occur either within minutes or a few hours of excessive rainfall.
 - It can occur even if **no rain has fallen**, or after a sudden release of water by a debris or ice jam.
 - It happens more where **rivers are narrow and steep**, so they flow more quickly.
 - It **can occur in urban areas located near small rivers** since hard surfaces such as roads and concrete do not allow the water to absorb into the ground.
- **Causes:** It may be caused by
 - **Heavy rain associated with a severe thunderstorm**, hurricane, tropical storm, or meltwater from ice or snow flowing over ice sheets or snowfields.
 - It also occurs due to **Dam or Levee Breaks, and/or Mudslides** (Debris Flow).
 - Occur on or near volcanoes, after eruptions, **when glaciers have been melted by the intense heat**.

Key Points

- The burst led to the breach of Sikkim's Chungthang dam (Teesta 3 HEP), the **biggest hydropower project** in the state.
- The Himalayan region is part of a **seismically active zone**.
- The dam is part of the 1,200 megawatts (MW) **Teesta Stage III Hydro Electric Project**. The dam breach in the Himalayan state has raised serious concerns about a deluge in the downstream areas.



SYNTHETIC GEMS FIND TAKERS EVEN AMONG HNIs

Lab-grown Diamonds Set To Catch Festive Sparkle

Listed jewellery cos enter segment to tap into growing demand

Sutanuka.Ghosal@timesgroup.com

Kolkata: Lab-grown diamonds are set to acquire a new sparkle this festive season, amid growing acceptance among customers, according to industry executives. With the introduction of buyback schemes by manufacturers and expansion of the store network, up to 60% year-on-year growth is expected during this period, they said.

Even high-net-worth individuals (HNIs) have taken a shine to lab-grown diamonds, which earlier attracted mainly the 18-35 age group that could not afford natural diamonds, said people in the know. This, they said, has prompted listed players like Senco Gold & Diamonds to enter the market in this financial year to tap into the growing demand.

Price remains a key magnet for customers, to be sure, as a carat of lab-grown diamond (LGD) costs ₹60,000-70,000, a fraction of ₹10-11 lakh for a natural diamond. "With increased awareness and consumer accep-

Shining Bright

3M lab-grown diamonds produced in India annually

Mumbai and Surat are the largest hubs

10% of domestic market captured by these gems

\$6B Domestic diamond market size

THE REAL THING

LAB-GROWN DIAMONDS HAVE THE SAME PHYSICAL PROPERTIES AS NATURAL DIAMONDS

Main difference lies in their origin

Natural diamonds are mined

LGDs are produced in a controlled environment

ce of LGD jewellery in India, we are extremely bullish this Diwali season and expecting sales growth of almost 60% year-on-year," said Mumbai-based Pooja Sheth Madhavan, founder of Limelight Lab Grown Diamonds, the country's largest LGD jewellery brand. "Moreover, we will open five additional stores before Diwali, taking the total to eight stores, and have a robust plan and pipeline of a further 10 stores before March 2024. We are all set to showcase a new and wide range of sustainable luxury to the Indian consumer."

G. Viswanathan, chairman of

Wondr Diamonds, which has 15 stores in southern India, said, "HNIs are buying LGDs as they are more eco-friendly and have a negligible impact on the environment. This festive season we are looking at a 25% growth compared to last year." Wondr Diamonds plans to open another 15 stores in the country, in places including Delhi and Raipur. Sanjay Banka, chief financial officer, Senco Gold & Diamonds, said, "We are working on how to fix the resale value of lab-grown diamonds. We will get into LGD business in the current fiscal."

Context: Industry executives have recently noted that **lab-grown diamonds** are gaining increased popularity and acceptance among

Lab-Grown Diamonds (LGDs)

- **About:** Lab-grown diamonds are diamonds created using specialized technology that replicates the natural processes responsible for the formation of natural diamonds.
- **India is the largest producer** of lab-grown diamonds through CVD technology and contributes to nearly 25% of global LGD production through CVD technology.
- **Diamond Simulants:** Materials like **Moissanite**, **Cubic Zirconia (CZ)**, **White Sapphire**, and **YAG** are diamond simulants, attempting to mimic the appearance of diamonds.
- **Identification Difficulty:** Distinguishing between lab-grown diamonds (LDGs) and natural diamonds is a complex task that often requires advanced equipment.
- **Industrial Uses:** LDGs find extensive use in industrial applications, **especially in machinery and tools.**

India's Diamond Industry

- **India is the world's largest cutting and polishing center** for diamonds. It accounts for over 90% of polished diamond manufacturing globally.
- **India contributes 19% of the total diamond exports** in the world. (2019).
- **Over 75% of the world's polished diamonds**, gems, and jewelry are exported by India.

Jammu and Kashmir's famed Pashmina gets geographical recognition with GI tag

Context: Recently, Basohli Pashmina, a more than 100-year-old traditional craft from Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, has got the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

Basohli Pashmina

- **Pashmina Characteristics:** Renowned for its extraordinary softness, fineness, and lightweight nature, Pashmina offers excellent insulation and durability.
- **Variety of Pashmina Products:** Pashmina encompasses a range of items, including shawls tailored for both men and women, mufflers, blankets, and baskets.
- **Pashmina Origin:** Pashmina specifically refers to a superior type of cashmere spun from the downy undercoat of the Changthangi, a breed of mountain goats (*Capra hircus*) dwelling on the Changthang Plateau in Tibet and portions of Ladakh.
- **Changpa:** The Changpa, a nomadic group inhabiting the Changthang plateau in Tibet, are traditional producers of pashmina wool in the Ladakh region.

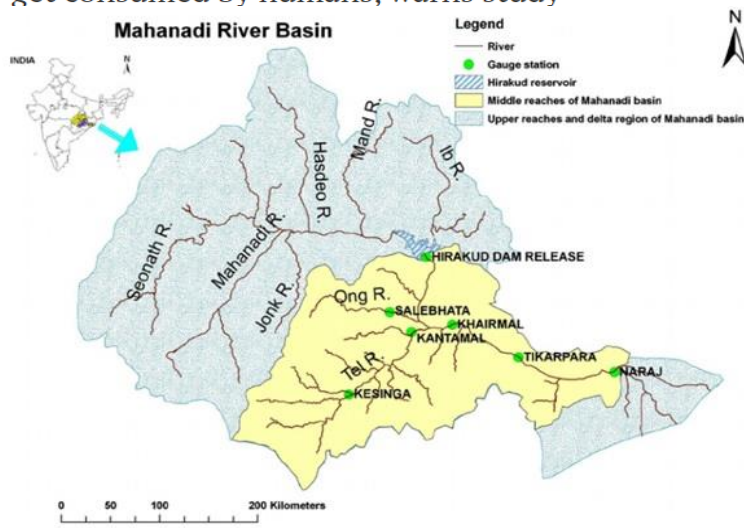


GI Tag

- **About:** It is a symbol used on items that come from a particular geographical area and have qualities or a reputation linked to that place of origin.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- **Tenure:** 10 Years
- **Regulated By:** Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999.
- **India's First GI Product:** Darjeeling Tea (2004-05)

Hirakud, 7 other Odisha wetlands show high levels of toxic heavy metals

High carcinogenic risk at Hirakud for adults and children; Heavy metals can enter crops through soil, get consumed by humans, warns study



Context: Recently, elevated levels of cancer-causing heavy metals like **lead and chromium** were detected in **eight wetlands in Odisha**, including the Hirakud reservoir.

Key Points

- Heavy metal pollutants that **commonly accumulate in wetlands** as a result of human activity include lead, chromium, cadmium, copper, mercury, nickel, zinc, manganese and arsenic.
- The heavy metals **can also enter the environment indirectly** through the food chain.
- Selected 8 wetlands:** Chandaneswar, Chilika, Daringbadi, and Koraput as well as constructed ones like Bhadrak, Hirakud, Talcher, and Titlagarh.
- The researchers calculated the ecological risk posed by **heavy metal accumulation**. The **ecological risk index** measures the potential ecological risk (RI) factor of all metals tested together.
- The **highest RI was found in** Hirakud, followed by Talcher, Bhadrak, Titlagarh, Chilika, Chandaneswar, Koraput and Daringbadi.

Hirakud Reservoir

- Location:** Sambalpur town in the state of Odisha
- River:** Mahanadi.
- Background:** Commencing operations in 1957, it represents one of the earliest significant **multipurpose river valley projects** initiated following India's independence.
- It is built **across the Mahanadi River by a combination of earth and modern dams** with a total length of almost 26 kilometers.
- It thereby moderates the impact of floods in the Mahanadi Delta.
- It was designated a **Ramsar site in 2021**

India expresses commitment towards combating organised crimes at UNTOC

Context: Recently, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs participated in the two-day **UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime Ministerial Conference** at Palermo in Italy.

United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNCTOC)

- **Adopted by the UN General Assembly:** 15 November 2000, by resolution 55/25.
- **Entry into force:** 29 September 2003.
- **Signatories:** 147.
- **India has been a member** of UNTOC and a signatory to its protocols since the year 2011.
- **Parties:** 191.
- **Complemented by three Protocols:**
 - The Protocol to Prevent, **Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons**, Especially Women and Children.
 - The Protocol against the **Smuggling of Migrants** by Land, Sea and Air.
 - The Protocol against the **Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms**, their Parts and Components, and Ammunition.

₹300 PER 14.2-KG CYLINDER

Centre hikes LPG subsidy for Ujjwala beneficiaries by 50%

SUKALP SHARMA

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 4

IN THE run-up to Assembly polls in five states later this year and Lok Sabha elections in 2024, the government on Wednesday increased the cooking gas subsidy for poor households under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) by Rs 100 per 14.2-kg cylinder to Rs 300. The decision is expected to benefit 9.6 crore households that are currently covered under the targeted subsidy scheme.

This decision, which was announced by Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur after Wednesday's meeting of the Union Cabinet, comes around a month after the government announced a price cut of Rs 200 per cylinder for all domestic liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) consumers including PMUY beneficiaries, and expanded the PMUY coverage to cover another 75 lakh poor households over three years.

With Wednesday's decision, a 14.2-kg domestic LPG cylinder in Delhi will effectively cost Rs 603 for PMUY beneficiaries, while for other domestic consumers, it will continue to be priced at Rs 903.



There are currently around 9.6 crore households covered under the PMUY.

Under the PMUY, beneficiaries pay the full price for the cylinders and the subsidy is transferred to their bank accounts by public sector oil marketing companies (OMCs), for up to 12 refills in a year. The government compensates the OMCs for the subsidy payout.

Ahead of the Assembly polls, the Congress has promised to provide LPG at Rs 500 per cylinder in Madhya Pradesh if voted to power. Its government in Rajasthan has already cut the effective price to Rs 500 per cylinder for poor households by providing additional subsidy support. Both these

states, along with Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram, are going to polls later this year. The Opposition parties had been criticising the government for high fuel prices, particularly those of cooking gas.

As per official data, there are currently around 9.6 crore households covered under the PMUY and the average LPG refill rate under the scheme was 3.71 cylinders for 2022-23 in terms of 14.2-kg cylinders.

Assuming the beneficiary base and the cylinder refill rate remains constant, the decision to raise

cooking gas subsidy could cost the government around Rs 3,600 crore on an annualised basis. This translates to around Rs 1,800 crore for the remainder of the current fiscal ending March.

In the Union Budget for 2023-24, the government provisioned Rs 7,680 crore as cooking gas subsidy for the fiscal, assuming a per-cylinder subsidy of Rs 200. With Wednesday's decision, the final subsidy burden for the fiscal is likely to be higher than the budget estimate.

The PMUY, which was launched in 2016, was seen as one of the key welfare schemes that helped the Bharatiya Janata Party return to power at the Centre in 2019.

The scheme has played a key role in taking LPG coverage to near saturation in India. The key objective of the PMUY is to discourage poor households from using conventional cooking fuels like firewood, which are a cause of household pollution and have an adverse impact on health.

According to the latest National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) report, LPG is the primary source of energy for nearly 50 per cent of households in rural areas and about 90 per cent of urban households across India.

PM UJJWALA SCHEME

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Government Scheme)

Context: Recently, the government made a significant move by raising the cooking gas subsidy for economically disadvantaged households participating in the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY).

- This decision is set to have a **positive impact on the 9.6 crore households** currently enrolled in the targeted subsidy program.

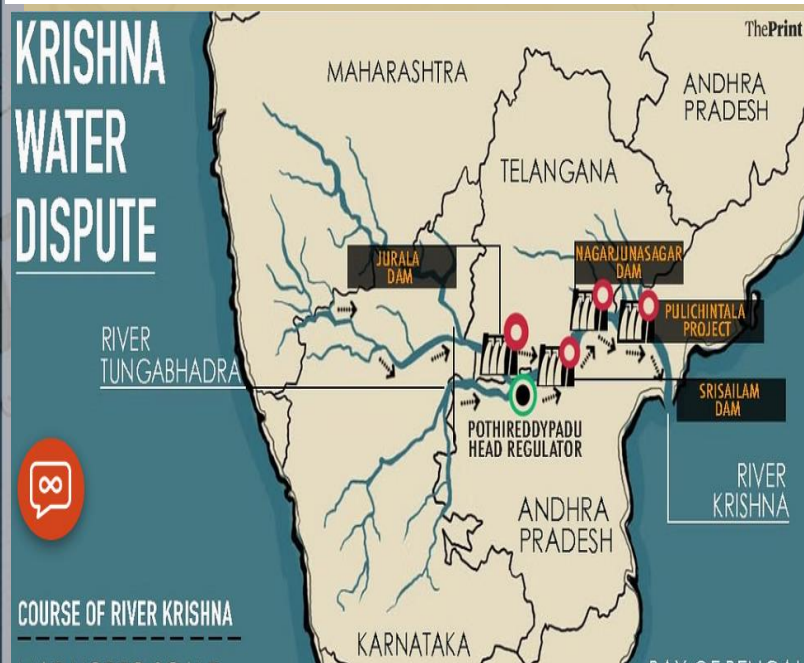
PM Ujjwala Yojana

- **Launched:** May 2016.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- **Objective:** To make clean cooking fuel such as LPG available to the rural and deprived households that were otherwise using traditional cooking fuels such as firewood, coal, cow-dung cakes, etc.
- **Target:** LPG connections to 5 crore women members of BPL households.
- **Expansion:** The scheme was expanded in April 2018.
- **Beneficiaries:** Women beneficiaries from 7 more categories- SC/ST, PMAY, AAY, Most backward classes, tea garden, forest dwellers, and Islands.

LPG Subsidy

- The **Government of India provides gas subsidies** as a type of financial assistance to beneficiaries. In an effort to help Indian households cope with inflation, **this subsidy is provided on LPG cylinders.**
- Beneficiaries receive the subsidy amount in their bank accounts.

Cabinet approves Terms of Reference to Krishna Water Dispute Tribunal-II under Inter State River Water Disputes (ISRWD) Act, 1956 – request from State of Telangana



Context: Recently, the Union Cabinet, led by the Prime Minister of India, granted approval for the issuance of additional Terms of Reference (ToR) to the existing **Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II** of the ISRWD Act to address disputes **between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh**.

Inter-State River Water Disputes (ISRWD) Act, 1956

- **About:** The IWRD Act, 1956's objective is to address water disputes related to the utilization, control, and allocation of interstate rivers or river valleys.
- **Article 262 of the Indian Constitution:** It grants a role to the Central government in settling conflicts over inter-state rivers that may arise between state or regional governments.
- **Applicability to UTs:** The IWRD Act, 1956 applies exclusively to Indian states and does not extend to union territories.
- **Participation in Tribunal Adjudication:** Only the concerned state governments have the right to participate in tribunal adjudication, and non-government entities are not allowed to take part in the process.

Krishna Water Dispute

- **Geographic Route:** The 1,400-km long Krishna River originates in Mahabaleshwar, Maharashtra, and flows eastward, ultimately emptying into the Bay of Bengal.
- **Background Dispute:** The origins of the Telangana-Andhra Pradesh water dispute can be traced back to the **reorganization of states in India in 1956** when Andhra Pradesh was formed.
- **Bachawat Tribunal's Involvement:** This tribunal allocated 811 tmcft (thousand million cubic feet) of water to Andhra Pradesh when it was a unified state.
- **Water Allocation:** The Tribunal recommended a specific allocation, suggesting that the Krishna River water should be shared in the ratio of **512 tmcft for Andhra Pradesh** and **299 tmcft for Telangana**.

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