Concerns with Saubhagya scheme

What is the issue?

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- Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (‘Saubhagya’) launched in September.
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- The policy has set a standard for itself without enough focus on its capacity to deliver results.
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What is Saubhagya scheme about?

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- This new scheme is just a way of refurbishing the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY).
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- The earlier scheme of rural electrification launched in July 2015, which aimed to electrify all un-electrified villages by May 2018.
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- The objective of the Saubhagya scheme is to provide energy access to all by last mile connectivity to achieve universal household electrification in the country.
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- Saubhagya makes grandiose promises to provide a free electricity connection to all willing Below Poverty Line households.
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- It claims to ensure electrification of all willing households in the country on a payment of Rs. 500,which shall be recovered by the power distribution companies in 10 instalments along with electricity bills.
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What are practical difficulties with the scheme?

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- **Payment of Bills -**It expects the poor to pay the bills without providing any subsidy to ease their burden.
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- Expecting poor households to bear the recurring burden of bills as per the prevailing tariff of DISCOMs is unimaginable.
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- The government has conveniently overlooked the fact that for the poor in some States, the inability to pay an electricity bill is a big impediment
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- **Efficiency -**Even if 90% of households are electrified in villages, there is no promise of minimum hours of supply.
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- There is a power shortage even at this moment leading to scheduled and unscheduled load shedding, often up to 10 hours or more.
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- **Additional capability -** This scheme would potentially require an additional 28,000 MW and additional energy of about 80,000 million units per annum, which is roughly 7% of India’s current installed power capacity.
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- Considering these huge lapses managing this additional demand would prove to be challenging.
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Source: The Hindu

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