Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana

Why in news?

- Recent report of US-funded Health Effect Institute reveals air pollution has caused 120,000 infant deaths in India.
- Two-thirds of this death is due to the use of solid fuels during the cooking.

What are other facts regarding this deaths?

- WHO report said that India witnessed about five lakh deaths per year due to unclean cooking fuels.
- According to experts, having an open fire in the kitchen is equivalent to burning 400 cigarettes an hour.

What are the steps taken to address this issue?

- NGT banned the sale and use of crackers in the National Capital Region during November 9-30.
- It has issued notices to 18 States/UT's where the air quality is "not satisfactory".
- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) scheme was introduced looked to address the health hazards of mother & child caused due to the mass use of charcoal, wood and animal dung for cooking.

What are the details of the PMUY scheme?

- It scheme provides concessional LPG connections to 5 crore families especially the women living below poverty line (BPL) within 3 years & Rs 8,000 crore was allocated for the scheme.
- Beneficiaries can avail this scheme by providing ration card, bank account details and Aadhaar number.
- Government provides subsidy of RS 1,600 as support, primarily to enable the beneficiaries pay the security deposit and initial fitting charges & balance is recovered through instalments.
- The beneficiaries could also avail zero-interest EMI facilities for buying the stove and cost of the first refill.
- 14 parameters was used to prepare the beneficiary list which excludes relatively well off- any member of the family having a government job or any family owning irrigated land, etc.

- Later the scheme was extended to include those who would declare themselves being poor, not falling under any of the excluded criteria.
- In 2018 Budget, additional Rs 4,800 crore was allocated to serve an enhanced target of nine crore households.

How was the performance of the scheme?

- On December 11, 2019, Comptroller and Auditor General of India submitted a performance audit report of the scheme & said that 90 %of the target has been achieved.
- Hence annual allocation was cut by 58 % in budget which was enough to fund arrears to be reimbursed.
- The report said that average annual refill consumption for PMUY beneficiaries remained low when compared to the non-PMUY consumers.
- It was due to poor financial condition & there were instances of diverting the domestic cylinders to commercial uses.
- The scheme was virtually withdrawn in September 2019 though no formal declaration was made.
- At that time only 3 states- Haryana, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh & 5 UT's were declared kerosene-free.

How did the scheme helped during the pandemic?

- During the time of lockdown, the scheme was used to ease the livelihood pressure on poor households by combining it with Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana.
- The government declared that it will subsidise three 14.2-kg LPG cylinders in full for the beneficiaries from April to June.
- On July 8, 2020, the scheme was extended till September 30 for those who could not order the three cylinders due to the pandemic.
- Parliamentary committee on petroleum raised concern with the closure of the scheme.
- In its report tabled in Parliament before the pandemic outbreak, it recommended to extend the scheme to the urban and semi-urban slum areas to further LPG coverage to the masses.
- In view of the report on pollution-led infant deaths, the government should reconsider scheme after normalcy is restored.

Source: The Business Line



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