

NEWS TODAY

The International Energy Agency (IEA) Released "India Gas Market Report: Outlook to 2030"

Report recommends policy reforms as India aims to **increase share of cleaner natural gas** in its energy mix to **15% by 2030**, up from **6% today**.

Key Findings

- **India's Gas Consumption:** It will grow by **60% by 2030** and City gas distribution (CGD) sector will lead demand growth.
 - ⊕ **CGD sector** supplies natural gas to **households, industries, etc through pipelines.**
- **India's Gas Production:** Reached **35 billion cubic meters (bcm)** in 2023, and **Krishna-Godavari deepwater** fields contribute **one-fourth of total output.**
- **Imports:** India is the **fourth-largest LNG** importer globally; Imports to more than **double by 2030.**
- **Compressed Biogas (CBG) :** **Potential** remains largely untapped (present capacity is **<1% of the potential**).

Challenges faced by the Gas Sector in India

- **Current Pricing Issues:**
 - ⊕ Gas prices from **legacy fields (an old, mature natural gas field)** are capped at **~USD 10 per million British thermal units (MMBtu), inhibiting full discovery of gas price.**
 - ⊕ **Limits** are also imposed on gas from **high-cost fields** like **deepwater projects.**
- **State-owned GAIL** (Gas Authority of India Limited) dominates both **gas marketing and pipeline transmission**, creating potential **conflicts of interest.**
- India lacks **underground gas storage (UGS)** facilities and has **limited LNG storage capacity.**

Policy Recommendations :

- **Liberalizing Gas Pricing:** Gradually extend pricing freedom to all fields, as suggested by the **Kirit Parekh Committee (2022).** **Lift price ceilings** on deepwater and ultra-deepwater projects.
- **Establish independent gas transmission system operators (TSOs)** to ensure fair and non-discriminatory access to pipelines.
- **Harmonize taxation of competing fuels** (e.g., coal); promote the **Indian Gas Exchange (IGX)** for efficient price discovery.
- **Efficient infrastructure** development with **transparent third-party access.** E.g. Building **Strategic Gas Reserves.**

India's Palm Oil Imports Drop to 14-Year Low

The **palm oil's share** of India's total edible oil **imports fell below 30%** for the first time in over a decade.

- This decline is primarily attributed to **availability of cost-effective alternatives** like **soyoil.**

What is Palm Oil?

- Palm oil is derived from the fruit of the African oil **palm tree (Elaeis guineensis).**
- There are 2 types of palm oil:
 - ⊕ **Crude palm oil** (the extract from the **fruit pulp**) which is primarily used for **cooking.**
 - ⊕ **Palm kernel oil** (the extract from its **seed**) which is used for **non-edible purposes** (Cosmetics, pharmaceuticals etc.).
- Both oils are **colourless, odourless, and relatively tasteless.**
- Oil palm trees are **native to Africa** but **currently Indonesia and Malaysia** make up over 85% of global supply.

Palm Oil Production in India

- **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala** are the **major Oil palm growing States** and account for **98% of the total production.**
- India is the **largest importer of palm oil in the world.**
- India has launched **National Mission on Edible Oils - Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)** in 2021 to promote oil palm cultivation and reduce import burden on edible oils.



India's Prime Minister made his 6th Official Visit to France

Key Agreements Signed

- **Cooperation in Nuclear Energy:** Both countries agreed to collaborate on developing **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)** and **Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs)**.
 - ⊕ **SMRs** are compact nuclear reactors that are designed to be built in factories and shipped to sites.
 - ⊕ **AMRs** are a next-gen nuclear reactor with an improved efficiency, safety and sustainability.
- **Launch of India-France Indo-Pacific Triangular Development Cooperation:** It aims to support climate- and SDG-focused projects from third countries in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Inauguration of India's Consulate General in Marseille.**

Key Highlights of the India's Visit to France

- **Multilateral Cooperation:** France supports India's permanent United Nation Security Council membership.
- **Defence Cooperation:** Progress in **Scorpene submarines** construction and indigenisation; launch of **FRIND-X defence startup platform**. France included India as an observer in the **Eurodrone MALE programme**.
 - ⊕ **Military exercises:** Varuna, La Perouse etc.
- **Technology:** Both appreciated the progress of **International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER)**.
 - ⊕ India is one of seven ITER members, contributing to assembling the world's largest Tokamak to generate 500 MW fusion power.
 - ⊕ **Launch of India-France Year of Innovation (2026)** to promote scientific and technological collaboration.
- **Trade Relations:** Record bilateral trade in 2024 with over USD 15 Billion.



YouTube influencer under police investigation for alleged obscene remarks on show

In legal terms, 'obscenity' can be defined as an **indecent expression** which could be displayed **through words, actions or gestures**.

Ethical Issues Surrounding Obscenity

- **Freedom of Expression vs. Obscenity Laws:** Constitution guarantees freedom of speech under **Article 19(1)(a)**, but this right is restricted by laws like the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 (e.g., Section 294, Section 296)**.
- **Subjectivity in Defining Obscenity:** Lack of an objective definition of obscenity leads to subjective interpretations.
 - ⊕ **E.g., The Aveek Sarkar v. State of West Bengal case**, where Supreme Court acknowledged that what is considered obscene in one community may not be in another.
- **Censorship vs. Artistic Freedom:** Tension between censorship to protect public morality and freedom of artists to express themselves creatively.
 - ⊕ **E.g., In Maqbool Fida Hussain v. Raj Kumar Pandey case**, court ruled that nudity alone does not constitute obscenity, highlighting ethical dilemma between artistic expression and societal norms.

Key Recommendations for Obscenity

- **Define obscenity clearly**, contextually sensitive, avoiding subjective terms.
- **Application of Harm Principle:** Restrictions on obscenity should aim to prevent harm, not merely offend public sensibilities.
- **Adopting Community Standard Principle:** Implement a '**Contemporary Community Standard**' test, reflecting societal morals evolving with time and community values.

Legal Provisions related to Obscenity

- **Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986:** Outlaws the indecent, improper and scandalous depiction of women.
- **Young Persons (Harmful Publication) Act, 1956:** Restricts publication of such matters which might corrupt or adulterate a child or a young person's mind.

Judicial Pronouncements related to Obscenity

- **S. Khushboo v. Kanniammal & Ors.**, where the appellant's opinion on premarital sex was challenged on grounds of morality and decency. The court had to balance her right to free speech with societal moral standards.

Supreme Court Seeks Centre and ECI response on Lifetime bar for Convicted MPs/MLAs

The PIL challenges constitutional validity of **Sections 8 & 9 of Representation of People Act, 1951** to prevent criminals from re-entering politics.

- **Representation of People Act** disqualifies person convicted of a criminal offense and sentenced to imprisonment for not less than 2 years and 6 years after release.

Criminalization of Politics

- Criminalization of politics refers to the increasing involvement of individuals with criminal backgrounds in the political system.
- According to **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)**
 - ⊕ **251 (46%)** of the 543 elected MPs in 2024, have criminal cases against them,
 - ◆ **171 (31%) face serious criminal charges** including rape, murder, kidnapping etc.
 - ⊕ The chances of winning for a candidate with a criminal background were **15.4%** as against just 4.4% for a candidate with a clean background.

Impact

- **Economic:** Use of **black money** in elections and indirect promotion of **crony capitalism**.
- **Social:** Focus on maximizing financial and muscle power impacts the cause of **social welfare**, promotes **culture of violence and social disharmony**.
- **Political:** It promotes **freebies (Rewdi culture)**, vote bribery and undermines principles of **Free and Fair Elections and good governance**.

Related SC Judgments

- **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) case (2002):** Mandates disclosure of criminal records of all candidates contesting elections.
- **Lily Thomas case (2013):** A sitting legislator is disqualified immediately after conviction.
- **Public Interest Foundation v. Union of India (2019):** Political parties publish the criminal record of their candidates on their websites, social media and local newspapers.

The Supreme Court Slams Pre-election Freebies

The SC asserted that **unrestrained Freebies** ease the poor into a **parasitic life**, depriving them of any initiative to find work, join the mainstream, and contribute to national development.

About Freebies

- **Definition:** RBI defined freebies as **"a public welfare measure such as that is provided free of charge"**.
 - ⊕ However, the **Election Commission of India** has **not defined** freebies.
- **Examples:** **Free electricity, water, public transportation** etc.

Concerns about Freebies

- **Fiscal Burden:** Excessive freebies put a **strain on state finances**, leading to high **fiscal deficits**.
 - ⊕ Ex. **Punjab** faced financial crises due to **excessive spending on freebies**.
- **Derails Development:** Instead of investing in infrastructure and job creation, money is spent on short-term gains.
- **Environmental Harm:** **CAG report** flagged free **electricity** as leading to **groundwater depletion (Punjab Case)**.
- **Weaken Institutions:** **Loan waivers & free power** weaken banks, **DISCOMs (N.K. Singh)**.

Way Forward

- **Balanced Approach to Welfare:** Distinguish between **essential welfare schemes** (health, education, food security) & **non-merit freebies**.
- **Institutional and Legislative Reforms:** Encourage **Parliamentary debate** on defining and regulating freebies.
- **Political and Electoral Accountability:** Increase **ECI's role** in ensuring transparency in electoral manifestos.

Positive Impacts of Freebies



Uplifting Weaker Sections

Enhances long-term social welfare by supporting disadvantaged groups.



Boost Consumption

Increases economic activity through sustained consumer spending.



Immediate Relief in Crisis

Provides quick social welfare benefits during emergencies like COVID 19.



Productivity Boost

Enhances short-term economic activity by improving workforce efficiency.

Also In News



BrahMos NG (Next Generation)

BrahMos NG missile's maiden flight test set for 2026, production to begin by 2027-28.

About BrahMos NG (Next Generation)

- **Advanced supersonic cruise missile** developed by **India-Russia joint venture**.
- **Type:** It is a lighter, smaller, and more versatile and lethal version of the existing BrahMos missile.
- **Deployment:** Designed to be deployed on **SU-30MKI** and **LCA Tejas**, submarines, and naval platforms.
- **Capability:** Speed of **Mach 3.5** and a range of **290 km** (extendable to 450 km).
- **Export Potential:** India has delivered the first batch of **BRAHMOS** supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines in 2024.



Starlink

SpaceX Starlink's satellite internet is available in Bhutan.

About Starlink

- **Starlink is a constellation of thousands of satellites** that orbit the planet much closer to Earth, at about **550km**, and cover the entire globe.
 - ⊕ Because **Starlink satellites are in a low orbit, latency is significantly lower**.
- **Aim:** To provide global **broadband coverage**, especially in remote areas.
- **Benefit:** Unlike fiber or cellular networks, Starlink **requires no ground infrastructure**.
- **India** has thus far **not provided** Starlink permissions to operate in India.



PARAS-2 Spectrograph and Sub-Saturn Exoplanet

Scientists at **Physical Research Laboratory (PRL)** discovered a **new dense exoplanet** using **PARAS-2 Spectrograph at Mt Abu Telescope**.

- **Exoplanet:** It lies in the Sub-Saturn category (size in transition region between Neptune-like and gas giant exoplanets).

About PARAS-2 (PRL Advanced Radial velocity Abu Sky Search Spectrograph)

- It is a state-of-the-art high-resolution fiber-fed spectrograph aimed to unveil the super-Earth-like worlds.
 - ⊕ A **spectrograph** is an instrument that disperses light into its spectrum for analysis of its composition and properties.
- It is the **highest-resolution spectrograph in Asia** with high precision and sensitivity.



Fishery Survey of India (FSI)

A **survey** conducted by the **Fishery Survey of India** discovered new fishing grounds in the **Arabian Sea**.

About FSI

- It is a nodal fishery Institute in India under **Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying**.
- **Function:** Survey and assessment of marine fishery resources in the **Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** and adjoining areas for sustainable exploitation and management.
- **Marine Engineering Division (MED) under FSI:** For maintenance of deep-sea fishing vessels.
- **Evolution:** It was Established as **Deep Sea Fishing Station project in 1946**.
 - ⊕ Recognised as a **Science & Technology Institute in 1988**.



Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary

The state government's move to build a village for tribals in the buffer zone of Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary raised objections.

- A **buffer zone** is a designated area around a **wildlife sanctuary** that helps protect the sanctuary's biodiversity and ecosystem.

About Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Location:** It lies in the **core of Western Ghats in Kodagu district (Karnataka)**.
 - ⊕ The sanctuary derives its name from **Brahmagiri Peak**, its highest point.
- **Vegetation:** It consists of evergreen and semi-evergreen forests interspersed with **shola grassland**.
- **Fauna:** Leopard, Gaur or Indian Bison, Barking deer, Lion Tailed Macaque, Nilgiri Langur etc.



Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

Recently, the PAC urged the government to review the toll tax rule for National Highways.

About PAC

- **Genesis:** It was first set up in **1921** in the wake of **Montague-Chelmsford Reforms**.
- **Constitution of Committee:** Constituted **every year** under **Rule 308 of Rules of Procedure & Conduct of Business** in Lok Sabha.
- **Members: 22** (15 from Lok Sabha, 7 from Rajya Sabha) with a one-year term.
 - ⊕ **The Minister is not elected** as a member of the Committee.
- **Chairman: Appointed by the Speaker** from Lok Sabha members.
- **Functions:** Reviews government expenditure, finance accounts, and appropriations approved by Parliament.



Mission Amrit Sarovar

Mission Amrit Sarovar, has rejuvenated or built over 68,000 ponds, significantly addressing water scarcity.

About Mission Amrit Sarovar

- **Launch:** In 2022, as part of India's "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav".
- **Aim:** Developing / rejuvenating **75 Amrit Sarovars (Pond)** in each district of the Country, totaling about **50,000 Amrit Sarovars** across the country.
- The mission integrates schemes like **MGNREGS and PMKSY** and promotes **public participation**
- There is **no separate financial allocation** for the Mission



Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2025

India is ranked the **6th most affected country** during **1993-2022** in the **CRI 2025**.

- During 1993-2022, India saw more than **400 extreme weather events**, causing losses of **USD 180 billion** and at least **80,000 fatalities**.

About CRI

- It is a **backward-looking index** ranking the **human and economic toll of extreme weather** with the **most affected country ranked highest**.
- **Published by: Germanwatch** (since 2006)
- **Methodology:**
 - ⊕ **Impact assessment** based on 3 hazard categories- **hydrological, meteorological, and climatological**.
 - ⊕ **6 key indicators: Economic loss, fatalities, and affected people** – each in absolute and relative terms.

Personality in News



Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati (1824 to 1883)

- He was remembered on his birth anniversary.
- He was born at Kathiawar (Gujarat).

Key Contributions

- **Religious Reforms:** He established **Arya Samaj** in Bombay in **1875**. He was **against idol worship and ritualism**.
- **Social Reforms: He opposed caste system**, and denounced untouchability as inhuman.
- **Women Empowerment:** He also stood for **Women's education**. He **opposed infanticide** and evil practices of **child marriage** and **enforced widowhood**.
- **Literary:** Satyarth Prakash, Veda Bhashya Bhumika, Sanskar Vidhi.

Values:

- Nationalism, Universal brotherhood, Humanism etc.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI