

After Saubhagya, govt plans induction stoves for the poor

The proposed scheme will help reduce import of fossil fuels and generate fresh demand for electricity

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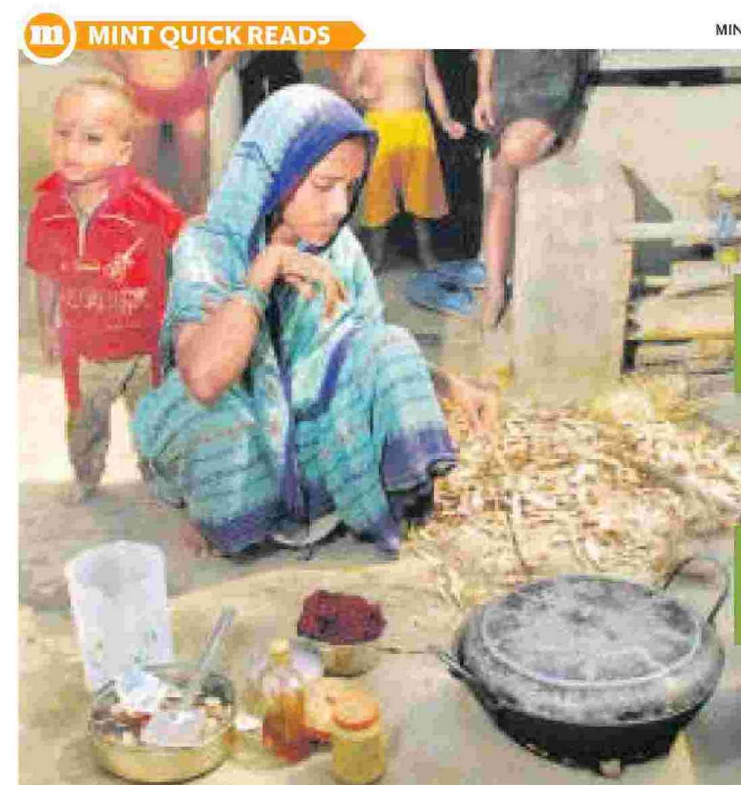
The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government is working on an ambitious plan to provide induction stoves to poor households in rural and urban India.

The scheme being explored by the Union power ministry will help reduce import of fossil fuels and generate fresh demand for electricity and consequently support underutilized power plants, said three government officials, all of whom spoke on condition of anonymity.

The shift to induction cooking will be possible after the ₹16,320 crore Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya) is implemented. The scheme is expected to increase India's electricity demand, with the centre setting a December 2018 deadline to provide electricity connections to more than 40 million rural and urban households.

"Such a large scale shift towards induction cooking will help save liquefied petroleum gas (LPG)," said one of the three officials mentioned above.

This comes against the backdrop of non-performing assets (NPAs) in power generation accounting for around 5.9% of the banking sector's total outstanding advances of ₹4.73 trillion, according to the second volume of the *Economic Survey*



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Govt push to boost power demand

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The centre has set a December 2018 deadline to provide electricity connections to over 40 million rural and urban households

The induction stove scheme can help boost India's per capita power consumption of 1,200kWh, which is among the lowest in the world

The NDA govt is exploring a series of measures to boost power demand and 34 coal-fuelled projects have been reviewed

2016-17 released in August.

Any substitution of fuels for cooking and heating will improve India's per capita power consumption of around 1,200kWh, which is among the lowest in the world. According to the government, the Saubhagya scheme will require an additional 28,000 megawatts (MW) of power, considering an average load of 1 kilowatt (kW) per household for eight hours in a day.

Induction cooking is more efficient as energy is directly transferred to the pan, said officials involved in the exercise

"Electricity is a good clean cooking source. The push for induction stoves will come post Saubhagya," another of the officials cited above said.

The NDA government is exploring a series of measures to boost electricity demand in the country. A total of 34 coal-fuelled power projects, with an estimated debt of ₹1.77 trillion, that have been identified by the department of financial services, have

been reviewed by the government. These projects face problems such as paucity of funds, lack of power purchase agreements and absence of fuel security. Of the projects accounting for 75,000MW facing problems, those accounting for 40,000MW can be salvaged, it was found.

The measures to boost demand include setting up a pan-India power distribution company, given that the segment will be key to the long-term fortunes of the power sector. Distribution companies (discoms) have so far been the

weakest link in the electricity value chain. Poor payment records of state-owned discoms have not only adversely affected power generation firms, but have also contributed to stress in the banking sector.

The country's energy demand is likely to go up by 2.7-3.2 times between 2012 and 2040 and hence the need to scale new frontiers, according to the government's policy think tank, NITI Aayog. India's per capita energy demand is expected to reach 1,055-1,184 kilogram of oil equivalent (kgoe) in 2040 from 503kgoe in 2012.

Queries emailed to a power ministry spokesperson on 1 August remain unanswered.

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India is the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases after the US and China, and among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. India plans to reduce its carbon footprint by 33-35% from its 2005 levels by 2030, as part of its commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted by 195 countries in Paris in 2015.

The government is also working towards ensuring stable electricity supply in the country. Its aim is to provide "24x7 clean and affordable power for all" by March 2019, with the state governments and Union territories on board for the objective.

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