



NAMAN SHARMA
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1. Gas from new sources will end shortage, say officials

Why in the news?

The article is newsworthy because it addresses an immediate and practical concern for millions of people and businesses in India: a shortage of natural gas and LPG. It explains how the government is responding to the crisis by tapping into new global markets (the U.S. and Norway) and outlines the timeline for relief, which is crucial information for households, restaurateurs, and industries affected by the supply crunch.

Short crisis

Gas shipments from distant regions, while economically feasible, might take longer to arrive, **leading to a shortage in the interim**

- On March 5, Centre had asked all oil refining companies to **maximise production**, with all propane and butane produced, recovered, or otherwise available to be used for producing LPG

- LPG output has increased **10% from previous levels** since prioritising supplies to households over industries, says official

- Gas from Norway and the U.S. are now **'viable options'** apart from Qatar

- Estimates suggest **two months** for India to bring gas from Norway or the U.S.



Background

India is currently facing a crunch in its natural gas supply. This shortage has been exacerbated by a sharp increase in global energy prices. Traditionally, India has relied on imports, particularly from Qatar, where prices were previously locked in at lower rates (\$6-8 per MMBtu). The government has had to intervene, asking oil refining companies to maximise production and prioritise household LPG needs over industrial users to manage the crisis.

Feature

The key development in this story is the shifting economics of global gas imports. Government officials state that while spot prices have surged (to around \$15 per MMBtu), this high price point makes it economically viable to source natural gas from new, distant suppliers such as Norway and the United States. Previously, the shipping costs and distance made these sources unviable compared to closer suppliers like Qatar. However, with the current market rates, importing LNG from these new sources is now a feasible option for bridging the supply gap.

Challenge

The primary challenge is a logistical one: time and distance. Shipping gas from the U.S. or Norway is not a quick fix. According to shipping estimates, a round trip to these destinations takes approximately two months. While these imports are now financially viable, the delay in transit means that India will likely face a continued or prolonged shortage in the interim period before those cargoes arrive. This creates a gap between securing the supply and actually receiving it.

Way Forward

The government is taking a multi-pronged approach to manage the situation:

- **Diversification of Sources:** Actively securing LNG cargoes from Norway and the U.S. to supplement supplies from Qatar.
- **Domestic Production:** Prioritising and increasing domestic LPG production by 10% by directing refineries to maximise output, specifically diverting propane and butane for household use.
- **Stakeholder Management:** To address the concerns of commercial users (like restaurateurs), the government has formed a committee of executives from Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) to review requests for LPG supply and provide relief wherever possible.

Conclusion

Government officials are confident that the high prices will not be a long-term problem, as they have unlocked access to a wider global market. However, they acknowledge that due to the shipping distances involved, there will be "some short-term pain." The strategy relies on enduring the current logistical gap to secure a more diversified and stable gas supply in the near future.

2. Blossoms of hope: Kashmir banks on almonds, tulips to revive tourism

Why in the news?

This article is newsworthy because it highlights a strategic and symbolic effort by the Jammu and Kashmir government to revive the region's vital tourism industry. Following a devastating terrorist attack in 2025 that killed tourists and severely damaged the sector, the story focuses on the government's proactive measures to lure visitors back by showcasing the region's natural beauty, specifically its renowned tulip and almond blossoms, as a beacon of hope and normalcy.

Background

The tourism sector in Kashmir, which contributes nearly 7% to the region's economy, suffered a major setback in 2025. In April of that year, a terrorist attack in Pahalgam resulted in the deaths of 26 civilians, including 25 tourists. This incident, followed by Operation Sindoor in May, led to a sharp decline in visitor numbers. The government was forced to close 44 tourist destinations, including the famous Tulip Garden. Consequently, tourist arrivals plummeted to just 11.16 lakh in 2025, a dramatic drop from 26 lakh in 2024.

Feature

The centrepiece of the revival plan is the celebration of Kashmir's spring bloom.

The government is banking on two major attractions:

- **Badamwari (Almond Garden):** Chief Minister Omar Abdullah will inaugurate a spring festival here. The garden, which predates the 14th century, has been enhanced with 300 new almond trees and a new lavender patch covering 6.25 acres to extend the flowering season.

- **Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden:** Set to open on March 16, this garden features over 1.8 million tulip bulbs across 70-75 varieties, offering an experience comparable to the famous Keukenhof gardens in the Netherlands. It hosted a record 8.25 lakh visitors in April 2025 before the attack.

Challenge

The primary challenge is overcoming the psychological impact of the 2025 terror attack and restoring tourists' confidence in Kashmir as a safe destination. The attack directly led to the closure of major sites and a sustained drop in visitors throughout the year. Additionally, the natural window for the spring bloom is short, making it a limited-time opportunity to attract the crucial initial wave of tourists and signal that the region is once again open for business.

Way Forward

The government's strategy is multi-faceted, combining infrastructure upgrades with security reassurances.

- **Enhancing Tourist Experience:** The Floriculture Department is modernising gardens with "selfie points," refurbished rain shelters, and new plant varieties (like lavender) to extend the blooming season and boost the gardens' appeal on social media.
- **Diversifying Attractions:** The aim is to transform Badamwari into an "all-season garden" on the lines of Japan's cherry blossom festivals, making it a permanent fixture on tourist itineraries rather than just a seasonal stop.
- **Security and Reopening:** Authorities have conducted a security audit and have reopened the tulip garden and other destinations, signalling that safety measures have been strengthened to protect visitors.



Conclusion

By investing in its floral heritage and creating world-class garden experiences, the J&K government is sending a powerful message of resilience. The blooming tulips and almonds are positioned as "blossoms of hope," intended to symbolise the return of peace and normalcy. The success of this

spring festival will be a critical test of whether the region can lure tourists back and begin to heal the economic and emotional wounds inflicted by last year's violence.

3. Chandigarh achieves 99.93% literacy, gets 'fully literate U.T.' tag

Why in the news?

This article is newsworthy because it reports on a significant developmental milestone: Chandigarh has officially achieved a 99.93% literacy rate, earning the tag of a "fully literate" Union Territory. This accomplishment places Chandigarh among an elite group, as it becomes only the sixth state or Union Territory in the country—and the second UT overall—to reach this status, marking a major success in public policy and education.

Chandigarh achieves 99.93% literacy, gets 'fully literate U.T.' tag

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

Chandigarh attained 99.93% literacy rate, thus making it a fully literate Union Territory, said Gular Chand Katari, the Governor of Punjab and Administrator of Chandigarh. It is the sixth State/U.T. in the country and the second Union Territory to achieve the feat.

To celebrate this achievement, Chandigarh's Education Department held a "felicitation of neo-literates", where newly literate individuals were honoured. Mr. Kataria, the chief guest at the event, described the achievement as a historic moment

for Chandigarh. He said the success achieved under the Understanding Lifelong Learning for All in Society (ULLAS) has helped the city surpass the 95% literacy benchmark set under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Mr. Kataria said Chandigarh's literacy rate has increased from 93.7% to 99.93%, with 15,556 citizens participating in the programme and 14,711 successfully clearing the literacy assessment. The Governor also highlighted the remarkable leap in women's literacy from 90.7% to 99.89%, calling it a significant step towards women's empowerment.

Background

The push for total literacy was formalised under the Understanding Lifelong Learning for All in Society (ULLAS) initiative. The primary goal was to help Chandigarh surpass the 95% literacy benchmark set by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Before this drive, Chandigarh's literacy rate stood at 93.7%. The campaign focused on enrolling non-literates in the city and providing them with the resources and assessment needed to become literate.

Feature

The headline feature is the dramatic increase in the literacy rate from 93.7% to 99.93%. This leap was achieved through targeted grassroots participation:

- Participation: 15,556 citizens enrolled in the literacy programme.
- Success Rate: 14,711 of those participants successfully cleared the literacy assessment.
- Women's Empowerment: A notable aspect of the feat was the surge in female literacy, which jumped from 90.7% to 99.89%, a factor the Governor described as a significant step towards empowerment.

Challenge

While the article focuses on success, the inherent challenge in such a drive was reaching the "last mile"-identifying and educating the remaining non-literate population (the 6.3% who were not literate before the campaign). Ensuring that adult learners, who often have work and family commitments, could participate in and complete the literacy program required effective mobilisation and administration under the ULLAS framework.

Way Forward

The "fully literate" tag is not an end, but a new beginning. The framework used (ULLAS) emphasises "Lifelong Learning for All in Society." The way forward involves:

- Moving beyond basic literacy to functional literacy and vocational skills.
- Ensuring that the newly literate citizens (neo-literates) retain and improve their skills.
- Sustaining the momentum to ensure the literacy rate remains high and inclusive for future generations.

Conclusion

Chandigarh's achievement of a 99.93% literacy rate is a historic public policy success, demonstrating the effectiveness of targeted educational campaigns like ULLAS. By surpassing the NEP 2020 target and making a massive stride in female literacy, Chandigarh has set a benchmark for other regions to follow, proving that with concerted effort, the goal of total literacy is attainable.

4. Researchers publish first-of-its-kind checklist on fireflies across India

Why in the news?

This article is newsworthy because it announces a landmark scientific achievement: the creation of the first-ever comprehensive checklist of firefly species in India. Published in the journal *Zootaxa*, this study fills a massive 260-year gap in scientific knowledge by consolidating fragmented records from 1881 to 2025. For the first time, researchers, conservationists, and the public have a single, authoritative resource to understand the diversity of these glowing insects in the country.

Background

Fireflies in India have been documented sporadically since the 1800s, but the research has been highly fragmented. Many species were described in the 19th century and have never been studied again using modern taxonomy. This has left significant gaps in understanding their biology, distribution, and ecological roles. The lack of accessible, consolidated literature has been a major

stumbling block for scientists trying to study these insects, making it difficult to conduct further research or assess their conservation status.

Feature

The key feature of this study is its comprehensive nature. The checklist documents 92 species of fireflies across 27 genera in India. Notably, more than 60% of these species are endemic, meaning they are found nowhere else in the world. The study also reveals that fireflies have been recorded in 22 States and one Union Territory, with many species occurring across multiple geographies. The checklist provides crucial details for each species, including the names of the original and subsequent documenters, the years of documentation, and their geographic locations.

Challenge

The primary challenge highlighted by the research is the "insufficiency of modern literature" and the lack of updated taxonomic study. Over 50 species have not been recorded in India since they were first described, raising questions about their current populations and conservation needs. This "knowledge gap" makes it difficult to assess threats like habitat loss, light pollution, and climate change that may be impacting these species, many of which have been scientifically "invisible" for over a century.



Way Forward

The publication of this checklist is described by the authors as a "first step to remedy the situation." By providing a verified and updated list of species, the researchers aim to:

- Provide a foundational resource for future taxonomic, ecological, and genetic research on Indian fireflies.
- Enable scientists to identify species correctly and build upon the historical data.
- Raise awareness about the diversity and endemism of fireflies, which can pave the way for dedicated conservation efforts.

Conclusion

After nearly three years of meticulous work, Indian researchers have successfully bridged a colonial-era knowledge gap by publishing the first modern checklist of the country's fireflies. By documenting 92 species and revealing that over half have not been seen in generations, the study not only celebrates India's rich biodiversity but also sounds a subtle alarm. It serves as a critical starting point for all future research and conservation strategies aimed at protecting these iconic, glowing insects.

5. SC to look into plea against law on Muslim inheritance

Why in the news?

This article is newsworthy because it captures a significant legal debate at the Supreme Court of India regarding the intersection of religion, gender equality, and civil law. A plea has been filed challenging the Muslim personal law on inheritance (under the Shariat Application Act, 1937) as discriminatory for granting women a smaller share of property than men. The Court's oral observations highlight the delicate balance between judicial intervention and legislative prerogative in matters of social reform.



Look, you are talking about inheritance. But the basic equality of a one man-one woman relationship... has it been realised throughout the country? No. Can we declare all bigamous relationships bound by personal law as *ultra vires* Article 14? We have to defer to the wisdom of the legislature to bring the Directive Principles into reality

JUSTICE JOYMALYA BAGCHI
SC Judge



Background

The case challenges provisions of the Shariat Application Act, 1937, which governs inheritance among Muslims in India. Under this law, Muslim women receive a smaller share of family inheritance compared to their male counterparts (e.g., a widow receives one-eighth if she has children, and a daughter receives half of a son's share). The petitioner, Poulomi Pavini Shukla, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, argues that this constitutes "artificial discrimination" and violates the constitutional right to equality (Article 14).

Feature

The core feature of the hearing was the Supreme Court's reluctance to strike down the law judicially. The Bench (led by the Chief Justice) raised critical questions about the consequences of such an action:

- **Legal Vacuum:** The Court asked what law would govern Muslim inheritance if the Shariat Act were struck down. The petitioner suggested the Indian Succession Act, but the Court cautioned against creating a "vacuum" that might deprive Muslim women of the rights they currently possess.
- **Reference to Mary Roy Case:** The petitioner cited the *Mary Roy vs State of Kerala* case, where the Court successfully extended equal inheritance rights to Syrian Christian women. However, the Court noted the differences in the legal frameworks.
- **Uniform Civil Code (UCC):** The Bench observed that achieving uniform civil laws, including inheritance, is a goal enshrined in Article 44 (Directive Principles). The judges suggested it would be wiser to "defer to the wisdom of Parliament" to bring a UCC rather than have the court "re-legislate" by striking down the Act.

Challenge

The primary legal challenge is the tension between fundamental rights (Article 14 - Equality) and personal laws. While the petitioner argues for immediate equality through judicial intervention, the Court fears overstepping its mandate. Striking down the Act without a replacement could lead to legal uncertainty. Furthermore, the Court noted that broader issues, like polygamy, remain unaddressed, suggesting that piecemeal judicial strikes might not be the solution to comprehensive reform.

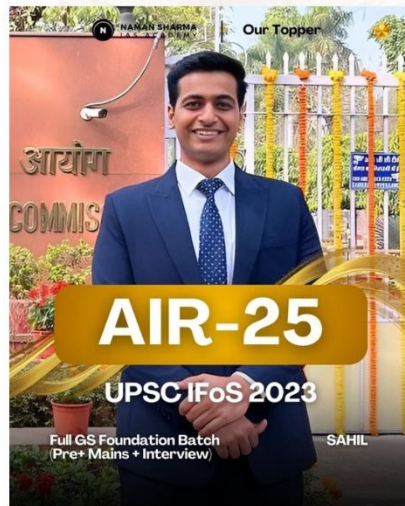
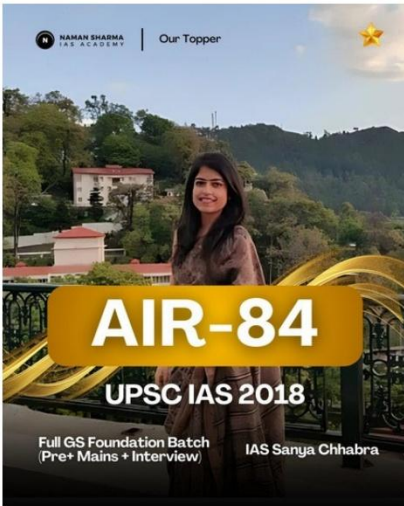
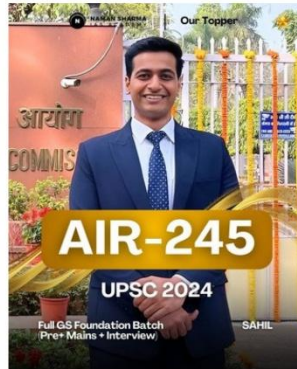
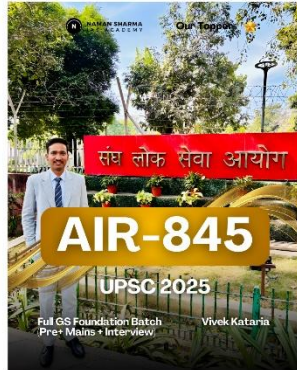
Way Forward

The petitioner has requested that the case be referred to a Constitution Bench for an authoritative ruling. He argues that the Court has previously intervened in religious matters (like the triple talaq case) and that inheritance is a civil, not a religious, right. The Supreme Court has agreed to list the case for further hearing, indicating that the legal process will continue, potentially with a larger bench examining the constitutional validity of the inheritance provisions.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court has signalled a cautious approach in the plea challenging Muslim inheritance law, emphasising that sweeping social reforms like gender-equal inheritance or a Uniform Civil Code may fall within the domain of Parliament rather than the courts. While agreeing to examine the matter further, the Bench highlighted the complexities of striking down personal laws, including the risk of creating a legal vacuum. The case raises fundamental questions about the judiciary's role in reforming age-old personal laws in pursuit of constitutional equality.

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