

Q. Discuss the problem of rural electricity programme. Also highlights the features of Saubhagya scheme and benefits. 10 marks

From the 9th Five Year Plan government introduced the concept of 'basic minimum needs' where one of them is rural electricity which is considered as a major tool for social development.

For rural electricity the government came out with:

- (i) Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidhyutikaran Yojna
- (ii) Bharat Nirman Scheme
- (iii) Rural Electrification Programme (REP)

and in more recent times, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojna and 'Saubhagya' Scheme

The funds related to the Saubhagya Scheme comes from the Rural Electrification Corporation of India Limited

Over time the REP has been affected by the many problems:

1. It is a superficial process to only install a transformer in rural areas without making sure that if electricity is available to everyone or not.
2. Still in so many villages, grid separation is not up to the mark.
3. Frequent events of theft of electricity in rural areas.
4. There is still higher dependency on thermal power plants and power distribution companies.
5. Due to frequent events of theft DISCOMs are not in a condition to supply electricity in rural areas efficiently.
6. Electricity is available only for a few hours.
7. Even during election, political parties do promises associated with providing proper electricity supply.

As a solution, government came out with the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojna which is known as the 'Saubhagya' scheme.

Under this scheme, the various provisions are:

1. An electricity connection only for selected households only and not for the whole village.
 2. Available to both BPL and APL households where the connections are provided free of cost to the farmer and with a charge of Rs.500 in ten installments through electricity bills to the latter.
 3. If the household is situated in remote areas where grid connections are not possible then there is a provision of renewable energy as well.
 4. This scheme is both for rural as well as urban areas.
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5. Through this we can achieve the target of universalization of electricity and further helps in alleviation of poverty.

Rural electricity is a component of Sustainable Development Goals.

As per economic survey majority villages come under Saubhagya scheme and this is possible only because of participation of both the centre and the states along with the panchayats.

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