

## UJJWALA LPG SCHEME: 90-LAKH BENEFICIARIES DON'T TAKE REFILLS

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

In the financial year 2021-22, 90-lakh beneficiaries of the Narendra Modi government's flagship welfare scheme, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), did not take refill gas cylinders. And over one crore beneficiaries got their refills only once.

These revelations come against the backdrop of the much-feted *labharthi*, or beneficiary, class which reportedly voted in good numbers for the BJP in the recent elections, especially to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly. This was revealed in reply to a Right to Information (RTI) application filed by activist Chandrashekhar Gaur with the three oil marketing firms Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOCL), Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (HPCL) and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL).

The scheme was originally launched on May 1, 2016, in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with a target of releasing eight crore connections by March 2020. So far, over nine crore connections under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana has been released. The PMUY 2.0 was launched in 2021-22, making a provision for release of additional one crore connections.

According to the RTI replies, the IOCL, for the connections released by them till March 2021, 65 lakh customers have not refilled their connections during the past financial year. The figures for the HPCL and the BPCL are 9.1 lakh and 15.96 lakh, respectively.

The BPCL specified that the figure of 15.96 lakh is only for the connections released up to September 2019, which was the first round of the Ujjwala Yojana. The number of customers who got refill cylinders only once for the IOCL was 52 lakh, for HPCL 27.58 lakh and BPCL 28.56 lakh.

As per a reply filed by the government in the Lok Sabha in March this year, the LPG consumption under the Ujjwala Yojana remains 3.66 refills per connection annually.

### COVID effect

These figures should also take into account the fact that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the government provided up to three free of cost LPG refills to PMUY beneficiaries from April 1, 2020, and this was extended up to December 31, 2020.

PMUY beneficiaries have availed themselves of 14.17 crore free refills under the scheme, across the country, as per the same reply filed by the Union Petroleum Ministry in the Lok Sabha.

Congress leader Pradyut Bordoloi, a member of standing committee on Petroleum, told *The Hindu* that while the scheme was started with a good intent, it had inherent flaws which the government had failed to address. "The people are shocked to realise that they have to pay the full amount even under the scheme for the subsequent cylinders. The subsidy is transferred into their accounts by the oil marketing firms. While the firms claim that they have disbursed the subsidy, we don't know whether it reaches the beneficiaries on time. The cylinders end up being

used as showpiece in their homes,” he said.

He said he had requested the committee to do a detailed study on the yojana.

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