PrepAlpine

The Next-Generation UPSC Institution

Where Research Meets Mentorship & Precision

Preparation Meets Precision

A Next-Generation Learning Institution

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PrepAlpine — Where Research-Grade Content Meets Mentorship, and AI Makes It Personal

PrepAlpine is India's next-generation UPSC institution — built by educationists, retired bureaucrats, IITians, and experienced educators, and powered by a 500+-member technology firm specialising in AI-driven education infrastructure.

We're not another coaching platform — we're a complete preparation ecosystem that unites:

- **Research-Grade Content:**
Every content is crafted and reviewed by civil servants, educators, and scholars, and follows UPSC's Intro–Body–Conclusion format. Content is built from official reports, verified data, and visual pedagogy — flowcharts, frameworks, maps, and comparative tables.

- **Two-Tier Mentorship:**
Interview-qualified mentors and Subject-Matter Experts provide structured strategy, accountability, doubt-solving, and exam-aligned depth — bridging the gap between preparation and performance.

- **AI Precision Engine:**
Developed with our 500+-member AI & EdTech partner firm, the PrepAlpine AI system integrates Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG), adaptive MCQ engines, AI-based answer evaluation, and intelligent revision tracking. It continuously identifies each learner's strengths, weaknesses, and learning patterns — ensuring preparation evolves dynamically with every step.

This fusion of research-grade content + expert mentorship + enterprise-grade AI technology has created a credible, scalable, and aspirant-first platform.

Every PrepAlpine module is built not just to inform, but to transform — converting effort into precision and hard work into predictable progress.

We're reimagining UPSC preparation as a research-led, mentor-guided, AI-personalised journey that adapts to every aspirant.

PrepAlpine — From Aspirant to Authority. Lead the State, Not the Struggle.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS DATED 18.11.2025

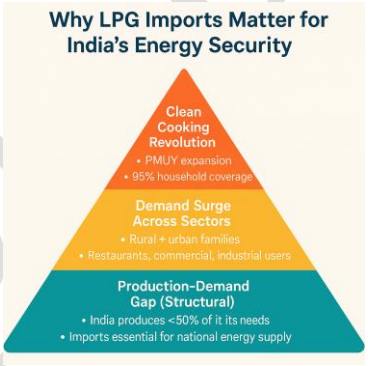
GS Paper II: International Relations

1. India–United States Liquefied Petroleum Gas Import Agreement

a. Introduction

India has signed its first structured, long-term arrangement to import Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) from the United States. The deal covers 2.2 million tonnes per year, nearly 10% of India's total LPG imports.
For years, India depended mainly on Middle Eastern suppliers, but this agreement marks a clear shift in sourcing strategy. It is also important for understanding India's energy security, diversification efforts, and the growing India–US economic partnership.

b. Why LPG Imports Matter for India



i. Rising Domestic Consumption

India is now the world's second-largest LPG consumer.
This surge is due to:

- Expansion of clean cooking programs, especially the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY).
- LPG penetration crossing 95% of Indian households.
- Rising demand from both rural and urban families, as well as from commercial and industrial users.

ii. Heavy Dependence on External Sources

India produces less than half the LPG it needs.
Traditionally, imports came mainly from:

- Saudi Arabia
- United Arab Emirates
- Qatar
- Kuwait

This heavy regional dependence created supply vulnerability.

iii. Need for Diversification

Depending on a few suppliers can expose India to risk during:

- Geopolitical tensions
- Conflicts in the Middle East
- Price volatility
- Sudden supply disruptions

Diversifying import sources strengthens national energy security.

c. Core Features of the Agreement

i. One-Year Structured Term Contract

India's three major public-sector oil companies—IOC, BPCL, and HPCL—will collectively import 2.2 million tonnes annually from the United States under a fixed arrangement.

ii. Stability Despite Short Duration

Though initially a one-year contract, it:

- Ensures predictable supply volume
- Supplements existing Middle East contracts
- Diversifies India's energy partnerships

d. Significance of the Deal

i. Strengthening Energy Security

Widening the supplier base beyond the Middle East:

- Reduces dependency risks
- Provides insulation during geopolitical tensions
- Ensures supply stability during global crises

ii. Enhancing India–US Trade Relations

India usually has a trade surplus with the US.
Higher energy imports:

- Help balance trade
- Create goodwill during bilateral negotiations
- Strengthen long-term economic engagement

iii. Improving India's Bargaining Power

Multiple supplier options allow India to secure:

- Better prices
- Flexible delivery terms
- Stronger negotiating leverage globally

iv. Stabilising the Domestic Market

A term contract ensures:

- Predictable domestic supply
- Less impact from global price shocks
- Smoother planning for LPG distribution networks

v. Boosting Strategic Cooperation

LPG adds to the existing energy ties involving:

- Crude oil
- Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)

Together, they deepen India–US strategic energy partnership.

e. Challenges and Concerns

i. Higher Freight Costs

Shipping LPG from the Gulf of Mexico costs more due to:

- Longer distance
- Higher transport and insurance charges

This may slightly raise the landed price.

ii. Exposure to US Market Dynamics

American LPG prices are linked to:

- Benchmarks like Henry Hub
- Global spot markets

This can introduce new price uncertainties.

iii. Infrastructure Requirements

Handling large, long-distance imports requires:

- Strong port facilities
- Large storage terminals
- Efficient coastal infrastructure
- Reliable pipeline connectivity

All of these need significant investment.

f. Balancing External Partnerships

While diversifying, India must maintain:

- Strong ties with Middle Eastern suppliers
- A balanced portfolio across regions

Overdependence on any one country—even the US—can create new risks.

g. Way Forward

For long-term stability, India should:

i. Secure Multi-Year Contracts

Longer agreements offer:

- Price stability
- Reduced market volatility
- Guaranteed supply for planning

ii. Expand Storage and Infrastructure

Investments should focus on:

- More storage capacity
- Better port handling
- Faster pipeline links
- Modern coastal terminals

iii. Explore an LPG Strategic Reserve

Just like crude oil, India may gradually build an LPG reserve to handle emergencies or global disruptions.

iv. Maintain Balanced Diplomacy

India must sustain:

- Long-standing partnerships in the Middle East
- New and emerging ties with the United States
- A diversified global supplier network

This balanced approach helps achieve SDG-7: Affordable and Clean Energy while safeguarding national energy security.

GS Paper III: Environment

2. China's Strategy for Reducing Air Pollution and Its Lessons for India

a. Introduction

India faces severe air pollution each winter, especially due to rising PM2.5 levels, with cities like Delhi ranking among the world's most polluted. China faced a similar crisis during the 2000s—often described as an "airpocalypse"—where thick smog regularly covered major cities.

Over the next decade, China dramatically improved its air quality through strict regulation, centralised planning, scientific monitoring, and large public investment.
Studying China's approach helps India identify strategies that can work within our own federal and developmental context.

b. Why China's Situation Once Resembled India's

i. Shared Structural Pressures

- Rapid urbanisation created heavy pressure on air quality.
- Vehicle numbers grew rapidly in both countries.
- Industries relied heavily on coal-based processes.
- Many households historically used biomass or coal for cooking and heating.

ii. Divergence in Policy Approaches

China opted for:

- Long-term planning
- Centralised coordination
- Strict enforcement

India typically uses:

- Localised actions
- Short-term emergency responses
- Seasonal measures like the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)

c. China's Key Strategies for Reducing Air Pollution

i. Strong Political Commitment and Accountability

- Air quality improvement became a national priority.
- Environmental performance was added to the Cadre Evaluation System, influencing promotions of local officials.
- Clear responsibility networks reduced delays and improved implementation.

ii. Controlling Industrial and Coal-Based Emissions

- Shutdown of old coal-fired power plants and boilers.
- Relocation or restriction of highly polluting industries.
- Shift of households from coal-based heating to cleaner fuels.
- Stricter emission norms with firm penalties for violations.

iii. Transforming Urban Transport

- Expansion of electric vehicles, especially buses.
- Shenzhen became a global example by converting 16,000+ buses entirely to electric by 2017.

- This reduced tailpipe emissions in dense cities.

iv. Large Monitoring and Enforcement Systems

- Creation of dense networks of real-time air quality monitors.
- Public access to data improved transparency and accountability.
- Strict action against industries that tampered with emission data.

v. Substantial Financial Support

- Heavy government funding for clean energy programmes.
- Financial incentives for industries to upgrade to cleaner technologies.
- Long-term investment in public transport reform.

d. Outcomes of China's Measures

i. Rapid Decline in PM2.5 Levels

- Major cities recorded a sharp fall in average PM2.5 levels.
- Winter smog events reduced in frequency and intensity.

ii. Cleaner Urban Transport

- Widespread adoption of electric buses and taxis.
- Reduced dependence on diesel-based vehicles.

iii. Industrial and Household Shift

- Closure or modernisation of polluting industrial units.
- Decline in coal-based heating in many provinces.

iv. Remaining Challenges

- Ozone pollution persists.
- Some sectors still depend heavily on coal.

e. Why India's Situation Differs

i. Larger Share of Household Emissions

- Many rural families still rely on biomass for cooking.
- PMUY improved LPG access, but sustained usage depends on affordability.

ii. Complex, Multi-Layered Governance

Air quality management involves:

- Central Government
- State Governments
- Municipal bodies
- Pollution Control Boards
- Courts and tribunals

This fragmentation leads to blurred accountability.

iii. Seasonal and Reactive Policies

- Most actions activate only during winter pollution spikes.
- Unlike China's year-round enforcement, Indian measures are often temporary.

iv. Financial and Structural Constraints

- India cannot shut large coal plants abruptly due to energy needs.
- Expanding natural gas networks is costly.
- Industries rely on inexpensive coal for competitiveness.

f. Lessons for India

i. Move from Seasonal Response to Year-Round Planning

- Pollution is a continuous problem, not a winter issue.
- Policies must operate throughout the year with sustained enforcement.

ii. Create Clear Accountability Mechanisms

- Define responsibility at city, district, and state levels.
- Include environmental performance in administrators' evaluations.

iii. Expand Access to Clean Household Fuels

- Make LPG refills more affordable.
- Expand piped natural gas networks.
- Promote induction cooking and rooftop solar solutions.

iv. Strengthen Industrial and Vehicular Controls

- Enforce emission norms strictly.
- Expand electric bus fleets in urban areas.
- Adopt rigorous inspection systems for industries and vehicles.

v. Invest in Monitoring and Technological Enforcement

- Increase real-time monitoring stations.
- Use satellite data and AI tools for better detection.
- Ensure public access to air quality information.

vi. Prioritise Clean Public Transport

- Scale up electric buses rapidly.
- Improve last-mile connectivity to reduce private vehicle use.

Conclusion

China's success shows that consistent policies, strong political backing, transparent monitoring, and targeted investment can significantly reduce air pollution. India cannot replicate China's highly centralised model due to federal complexities, developmental needs, and energy constraints. However, many elements—such as continuous monitoring, expanded clean fuel access, clear accountability, and electric mobility expansion—are adaptable and well-suited to Indian conditions.

If implemented steadily over the next decade, these reforms can meaningfully improve India's air quality and safeguard public health.

GS Paper III: Environment

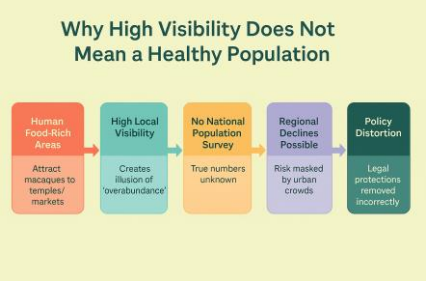
3. Why Rhesus Macaques Require Legal Protection Despite Appearing Abundant

a. Introduction

Rhesus Macaques are highly visible in India—near temples, on city streets, along forest edges, and around markets. Their constant presence creates the impression that they are "overabundant," but visibility does not automatically indicate population health. Many species appear common in human-dominated areas even when their numbers are declining elsewhere.

For many years, the legal status of the Rhesus Macaque remained uncertain, creating challenges for conflict management, scientific monitoring, and welfare standards. The Government's decision to restore the species to Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 is therefore a crucial step for responsible conservation and humane management.

b. Why Legal Protection Matters



i. The Role of Schedule II

- Offers statutory protection from hunting, capture, injury, or killing.
- Regulates transport and research use of the species.
- Restricts illegal trade and handling.
- Enables forest departments to intervene when conflict arises.
- Prescribes penalties for cruelty or unauthorised capture.

These provisions form the backbone of scientific wildlife governance by clearly identifying responsible authorities and defining lawful interventions.

ii. Why Rhesus Macaques Require Protection Even When They Seem Numerous

Visibility Does Not Equal Abundance

- Macaques prefer food-rich human edges, making them easy to spot.
- No nationwide population estimation exists for the species.
- Local abundance can hide declines in other regions.
- Scientific data—not casual observation—must guide policy.

Gaps Created When Legal Protection Was Removed

- Forest departments lost clear authority to manage conflict.
- Municipal bodies—lacking primate expertise—became default managers.
- Increased risk of mishandling, injury, and poor capture methods.
- Higher chances of illegal trade due to regulatory gaps.
- Researchers faced legal uncertainty when conducting field studies.

Unsafe and Ineffective Relocation Practices

- Urban monkeys shifted into forests carried disease risks for wild troops.
- Released macaques struggled to survive in unfamiliar habitats.
- Many became vulnerable to predators or disrupted existing groups.
- Without statutory oversight, relocation became unscientific and inhumane.

Lessons from the Bonnet Macaque's Silent Decline

- Once thought abundant in southern India due to frequent sightings.
- Long-term monitoring revealed an 80% decline over 35 years.
- IUCN reclassified it from "Least Concern" to "Vulnerable."
- Shows how familiar species can collapse unnoticed without monitoring and legal protection.

iii. Why Mismanagement Rises Without Legal Backing

Unclear Administrative Responsibility

- Forest departments cannot intervene effectively without Schedule II status.
- Municipal bodies rely on untrained personnel.
- Leads to stressful captures, injuries, and poorly designed conflict responses.
- Results in inconsistent, fragmented management.

Public Health and Safety Concerns

- Unregulated relocation increases disease transmission risks.
- Monkey bites and aggression often rise when feeding goes unchecked.
- Lack of oversight worsens human–primate conflict.

c. Scientific Zonation: A Better Way to Manage Rhesus Macaques

i. Conservation Zones

- Forest habitats with minimal human contact.
- Focus on ecological integrity and limiting disturbance.

ii. Co-existence Zones

- Rural and semi-rural areas where interactions occur naturally.
- Management through awareness, food-secure storage, and community participation.

iii. Management Zones

- High-conflict urban spaces needing professional intervention.
- Require trained forest staff rather than ad hoc municipal responses.

Such zonation becomes practical only when the species enjoys legal protection, enabling coordination between wildlife researchers and forest authorities.

d. Why Legal Protection Is Necessary

i. Ensures Humane and Regulated Management

- Prevents cruel handling and unregulated capture.
- Empowers forest departments to use scientific methods.

ii. Prevents Harmful Relocation and Disease Spread

- Restricts ecologically harmful releases into forests.
- Reduces pathogen risks for humans and wild troops.

iii. Enables Systematic Population Monitoring

- Official protection motivates scientific surveys and long-term tracking.
- Prevents silent declines like that of the Bonnet Macaque.

iv. Strengthens Overall Governance

- Restores clarity of authority.
- Improves coordination in conflict-prone areas.

Conclusion

Rhesus Macaques may seem abundant because they thrive in human-dominated landscapes, but visibility is not a reliable indicator of population health. Weak regulation, unsafe relocation, lack of monitoring, and unclear authority put the species—and human communities—at risk. Restoring

Schedule II protection strengthens conflict management, safeguards welfare, prevents illegal trade, and ensures scientific oversight.

The broader conservation lesson is simple: public perception cannot replace ecological evidence. Protecting even familiar species requires strong law, clear governance, and continuous scientific monitoring.

Reader's Note — About This Current Affairs Compilation

Dear Aspirant,

This document is part of the PrepAlpine Current Affairs Series — designed to bring clarity, structure, and precision to your daily UPSC learning.

While every effort has been made to balance depth with brevity, please keep the following in mind:

1. Orientation & Purpose

This compilation is curated primarily from the UPSC Mains perspective — with emphasis on conceptual clarity, analytical depth, and interlinkages across GS papers.

However, the PrepAlpine team is simultaneously developing a dedicated Prelims-focused Current Affairs Series, designed for:

- factual coverage
- data recall
- Prelims-style MCQs
- objective pattern analysis

This Prelims Edition will be released separately as a standalone publication.

2. Content Length

Some sections may feel shorter or longer depending on topic relevance and news density.
To fit your personal preference, you may freely resize or summarize sections using any LLM tool (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.) at your convenience.

3. Format Flexibility

The formatting combines:

- paragraphs
- lists
- tables
- visual cues

—all optimised for retention.

If you prefer a specific style (lists → paras, paras → tables, etc.), feel free to convert using any free LLM.

4. Monthly Current Affairs Release

The complete Monthly Current Affairs Module will be released soon, optimized to a compact 100–150 pages — comprehensive yet concise, exam-ready, and revision-efficient.

5. Join the PrepAlpine Discord Community

Be part of India's Smartest UPSC Peer Ecosystem → https://discord.gg/yrcDpXxv

What You'll Experience

- **Peer-to-Peer Discussions**
  Subject-wise channels for GS papers, Ethics, Economics, Polity, Geography, Environment, and Optional subjects.

- **Focused Study Circles**
  Deep-dive groups for Optionals (PSIR, Sociology, Geography, Anthropology, etc.) and critical GS themes.

- **Insight Threads**
  Collaborative micro-notes, doubt resolutions, PYQ-linked discussions, and peer-reviewed clarity.

- **Community Sessions**
  Weekly "Open Mic" sharing sessions where learners discuss strategies, mistakes, breakthroughs, and lessons from their UPSC journey.

- **An Evolving Learning Culture**
  A serious, supportive, and intelligent peer environment — no noise, no clutter. Learning grows here through interaction, reflection, and structured peer collaboration.

"From Isolation to Interaction — Learn the UPSC Way, the Smart Way."

6. Suggest Topics for Coverage

If you feel any important theme is missing or under-covered, simply post it in the "Suggestions" channel on our Discord server.

Our content team regularly reviews inputs and includes relevant suggestions in upcoming Monthly Current Affairs Modules.

Beyond daily updates, the PrepAlpine Discord functions as a complete UPSC learning ecosystem — offering free peer mentorship, structured discussions, practice threads, AI-powered micro-learning tools, and a community of serious aspirants working together.

Together, these resources embody the PrepAlpine vision:

Better Content. Smarter Mentorship. Intelligent Preparation.