"Nothing ever goes away until it teaches us what we need to know."
—Pema Chodron

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Country that cares

For decades, one of the biggest criticisms of India's education system has been its disconnect from the real world. Students graduate with degrees, yet many struggle to find jobs that match their skills. Employers, on the other hand, often complain that graduates lack practical knowledge and industry exposure. It is this gap that Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently highlighted while calling for faster efforts to link India's education sector with the real-world economy. The message is both timely and necessary. In a country where millions of young people enter the workforce every year, education cannot remain confined to textbooks and examinations. It must prepare students for the realities of a rapidly changing economy. The Modi government's emphasis on aligning education with employment and enterprise is therefore a step in the right direction. Education and skill development are not just sectors of governance. They are instruments through which the aspirations of millions of Indians can be fulfilled. A strong education system creates opportunities, builds confidence and ultimately strengthens the nation's economic foundation. When students are equipped with relevant skills, they do not merely seek jobs, but also create enterprises and generate employment for others. In recent years, efforts have been made to bridge this gap between classrooms and careers. The National Education Policy (NEP) provides an important framework in this direction. It recognises that the future of learning must stay aligned with market demands and emerging technologies. Fields such as artificial intelligence, automation and the digital economy are no longer distant possibilities. They are already shaping industries and transforming the way societies function. For India to remain competitive in this global environment, its education system must keep pace with these changes. The faster institutions adapt, the better prepared the country's youth will be to participate in and lead the next wave of economic transformation. India is steadily moving towards an innovation-driven economy. This shift requires a new approach to learning. Universities and colleges must evolve from being mere centres of instruction into hubs of research, innovation and industry collaboration. Students should not encounter the real world only after graduation. Their exposure to industry practices, entrepreneurship and research must begin during their academic years. This is where stronger partnerships between academia and industry become essential. Internships, collaborative research projects, startup incubation centres and skill-based programmes can give students practical experience while still in college. Such initiatives allow young minds to understand the demands of the job market and develop the confidence to navigate it. Equally important is the creation of a robust research ecosystem. Young researchers must be encouraged to experiment, explore new ideas and challenge conventional thinking. Innovation rarely emerges from rigid structures. It flourishes in environments where curiosity is supported and failure is seen as part of learning. India today stands at a unique moment in its development journey. With a large and energetic youth population, the country possesses an immense reservoir of talent. When this youth power is nurtured through relevant education, practical skills and opportunities for innovation, it transforms into true national strength. The direction is clear. The policies are being shaped. What remains is the pace of implementation. If India can successfully bridge the gap between education and the real economy, the possibilities are limitless. In many ways, the world is already opening its doors to India's talent. All that is needed now is to accelerate the journey.

Oil & Gas Crisis

Economy Likely To be Affected

DHURJATI MUKHERJEE

Predictions and projections may not turn out to be accurate. While promises of politicians mostly are found to falter, this may not be the same in case of professional economists who predict something based on some scientific calculations. In this connection, the West Asian crisis has complicated the situation in most countries of the Third World, including India, which is heavily dependent on oil and gas imports.

It is a well-known fact that the world remains dependent on reliable oil and gas supplies, even though two-thirds of global spending in the energy sector now go to cleaner alternatives such as solar power. While oil now meets a smaller share of global energy needs than it earlier used to – less than 30 per cent, according to the International Energy Agency – the world uses almost twice as much of the fuel as it did in the early 1970s. And natural gas used to heat homes and generate electricity, underpins much more of the economy than it used to. According to experts, the post-oil world is still a future proposition. The world can be said to be just in the middle stages of an energy transition as such change takes time.

Meanwhile, a sustained rise in crude oil prices could widen India's current account deficit, push up inflation and affect economic growth, pointed out most economists. However, Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, informed the Lok Sabha that the government does not expect inflation to rise substantially due to the recent spike in global crude prices. It hovers below $100 per barrel presently from just below $70 per barrel in end February. However, prices analysts believe that the price may eventually stabilise at around $85 per barrel compared to last year's average of $69 per barrel though Fitch projected a few days back the global crude oil to average $70 per barrel in 2026.

According to SBI Research and many other studies, if the oil prices reach the $120 mark per barrel, which at present appears quite unlikely, GDP growth may fall to around 6 per cent. One may mention here that before the continuation of the tensions in West Asia, may lead to food inflation. Up to $100 per barrel, the impact on current account deficit, inflation and growth is expected to be manageable but if it crosses that mark, the impact may be exponential, rightly stated Soumya Kanti Ghosh, the Chief Economic Adviser of SBI.

If that situation occurs, which may be ruled out at this juncture, the country may face a problem situation and in the present atmosphere it remains to be seen how the RBI balances inflation management with currency stability. It is gratifying to note that Moody's Rating and its Indian affiliate, ICRA, stated that the West Asian conflict should have limited near-term impact on India's banking system though real GDP growth would be 6.4 per cent of GDP.

One may mention here that crude imports from Russia remained at the top of India's oil basket despite US warning New Delhi against purchases from Moscow for which an additional levy of 25 per cent was imposed. Indian oil purchases from Moscow picked up in 2023 after the Ukraine war, which went up to 1.5 to 2.1 million barrels a day. It is interesting to note that India never stopped sourcing crude from Russia despite President Trump linking the withdrawal of a 25 per cent penalty tariff in the proposed trade deal framework to New Delhi's purported pledge to halt such purchases. Much to the relief of India, the US recently announced a 30-day waiver to India to purchase Russian oil. It "removed a point of friction" that was never in anyone's interest to sustain.

The problem arises regarding gas imports. India may face serious disruptions in supply of fertilizers and raw materials in the next Kharif season, starting June, if the blockade of the Hormuz Strait continues due to the conflict in West Asia, according to insiders. Any reduction in the supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to urea manufacturers in the coming weeks could impact production of the key soil nutrient ahead of the Kharif planting season. As is well known, Kharif crops account for more than half of India's foodgrain production as major crops such as rice, pulses, oilseeds, cotton and sugarcane are sown during the season. On average, fertilizer companies produce around 2.5 million tonnes of soil nutrients per month.

If LNG supplies are not normalised, production could be affected, industry experts pointed out, highlighting that production of fertilizers usually begins in end March. At present 60 per cent of LNG used in urea manufacture is imported from Qatar. The blockade of shipping routes in the Gulf would obviously push up prices of DAP and urea and impact the government's food subsidy expenses. Regarding LPG, India imports 60 per cent from West Asia and the longer the conflict lasts, households as well as commercial users are expected to suffer though indications point to an early settlement.

Right now, it is important for the country to tap other sources like Australia and Canada but, in the long-term, there is need to scale up biogas production in India. Simultaneously also, India has enough compostable biomass to meet at least 75 to 80 per cent of our gas needs. And compost can easily replace fertilisers whereby valuable foreign exchange would be saved.

With nearly 40 per cent of India's LNG flow hit due to the present conflict, the government is reportedly working on an alternative plan for industries, including priority segments such as fertiliser. The Petroleum Ministry is working on the plan and an early solution is awaited. Fertiliser units may be given enough supply to operate on optimum level, according to informed sources. This is a lean season for the industry as the Kharif season starts in June and production of fertilisers picks up from early May or late April. The Union Fertiliser Ministry stated that agencies had imported soil nutrients in large quantities, which added up to 9.8 M.T. till the end of February. Import of another 1.7 M.T. has been tied up for the next three months and their arrival is awaited.

An interesting plan that would be of great help in availability of gas is through coal gasification that converts coal to synthetic gas, consisting of carbon monoxide and hydrogen. Through this process, it would be possible to harness the vast coal reserves efficiently and sustainably. But the most interesting and encouraging aspect in this regard is the use of ethanol. While India scrambles to secure LPG supply, its ethanol distilleries are operating below full capacity. India's ethanol capacity has grown to 1822 crore litres supported by 500 distilleries nationwide.

Experts believe that diverting 250 crore litres towards cooking would serve nearly 20 million households without compromising E20 blending targets. It may be mentioned here that ethanol burns cleanly producing primarily CO2 with water vapour. Meanwhile, HPCL and IIT, Guwahati have developed an ethanol-fuelled cookstove and the former recently announced plans for ethanol ATMs at retail outlets to enable households' refills. Street vendors can safely rely on such stoves without causing any pollution. Bioethanol cooking can be considered a safe alternative as it is with domestic production rather than import- dependent LPG. It would be prudent to evolve a long-term plan that needs to be evolved immediately, especially in the gas sector, and how much dependence can be eased not just on West Asia but also reducing imports as a whole. Even the post-oil scenario could further add momentum to increase production of clean energy in India in the coming years.---INFA

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Strengthening India's Path to Power Leadership: How India Is Energising a New Growth Story

MANOHAR LAL

The ancient prayer "Tamso Ma Jyotirgamaya" – lead us from darkness to light – captures not just a spiritual aspiration but the story of modern India. Over the last decade, we have translated this ethos into reality, transforming an electricity ecosystem once defined by chronic shortages into one of the world's fastest growing, most diversified and reform driven power markets.

As India positions itself as a global manufacturing hub, a burgeoning digital economy and a responsible clean energy leader, the power sector has become the bedrock of our national competitiveness. In the last decade, we have added significant generation and transmission capacity, bringing national energy shortages down from 4.2% in FY 2013 14 to 0.03% by FY 2025 26. In FY 2025 26 alone (up to January 2026), a record 52.53 GW capacity from all sources has been added, the highest ever in a single year, surpassing the previous best of 34.05 GW in 2024 25.

Total electricity generation has increased from 1,020.2 BU in FY 2014 to 1,830 BU in FY 2025. Per capita consumption has risen from 957 kWh in 2014 to 1,460 kWh in 2025, reflecting economic growth and improved access. This has ensured that every home, farm and industry has the reliable power it needs, and India is now the third largest producer and consumer of electricity in the world.

While we can generate over 520 GW of electricity, the real test of a system is its ability to manage peak load without operational stress. In the summer of 2024, peak demand reached a record 250 GW and was 242.49 GW in FY 2025 26. Earlier, such spikes might have strained the grid, but our load dispatch centres successfully managed them with almost zero energy loss. This resilience is enabled by one of the world's largest synchronous grids, with 120 GW inter regional transfer capacity, integrating the country into "One Nation One Grid One Frequency".

Equally inspiring is not just how much power we generate, but how we generate it. The share of non fossil capacity has risen rapidly, enabling India to achieve its NDC target of 50% cumulative non fossil electric capacity nearly five years ahead of schedule, underscoring our clean energy transition and climate commitment.

Since 2014, the power sector has been reshaped by mission mode schemes that have expanded access while driving a sustainable transition. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana electrified every village in India, followed by Saubhagya, which brought electricity to millions of households, making energy access a reality for all.

Another transformational reform is the introduction, in September 2025, of separate connectivity for solar and non solar hours at the same ISTS substations. Solar projects receive access during solar hours, while storage and wind projects receive non solar hour access. This unlocks large unutilised transmission capacity, accelerates commissioning of renewable and storage projects without surplus lines, reduces transmission costs and improves utilisation.

Digital empowerment is a vital component of our modernisation story. Under the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS), with an outlay of ₹3.03 lakh crore, we are rolling out smart prepaid meters nationwide, transforming the interface between utilities and citizens. The scheme has already delivered results: AT&C losses have fallen from 21.91% in 2021 to 15.04% in 2025, and under recovery per unit supplied has dropped from 69 paise to 6 paise.

As our digital economy accelerates, anticipating future demand is as crucial as managing the present. Data centre capacity is expected to grow from 1.4 GW to 9 GW by 2030, with these facilities alone likely to consume about 3% of India's total electricity.

Meeting this massive, continuous power demand from AI, R&D and other technology driven ecosystems sustainably is our next milestone. As renewable energy expands, energy storage becomes critical. India is developing pumped storage projects and battery energy storage systems at scale to ensure that our burgeoning digital infrastructure is powered by clean energy. The National Green Hydrogen Mission is positioning India as a global hub for clean fuels, supporting grid stability and higher renewable penetration.

We are also taking decisive steps in nuclear energy, an essential part of a low carbon, reliable power mix. Our target of 100 GW of nuclear capacity by 2047 and the SHANTI Act, 2025, affirm our technological sovereignty and create the legal and policy framework for private sector participation. What we now need, and what this summit can catalyse, are global partnerships in technology, financing and supply chains.

To power Viksit Bharat, accelerate electrification across the Global South and build a resilient, future ready energy ecosystem, we must move from ambition to coordinated action. This is the moment for governments, industry leaders, innovators and global partners to co create a new energy architecture that is clean, reliable, digitally integrated and globally interconnected.

India must champion cross border electricity collaboration; invest boldly in next generation transmission, digital grid intelligence and OSOWOG aligned market mechanisms; and accelerate deployment of renewables, hydropower innovation, flexible gas assets and clean energy for the digital economy. This momentum must be reinforced by stronger coordination between Transmission System Operators and Distribution System Operators, and by a unified Power Sector Roadmap to 2047 that makes India a global model of resilient, sustainable and affordable electrification.

Against this backdrop, the Bharat Electricity Summit 2026 at New Delhi, assumes special significance. It comes at a pivotal time as the nation accelerates its transition toward a sustainable, secure and technology driven power ecosystem.

With its theme "Electrifying Growth. Empowering Sustainability. Connecting Globally," the summit will showcase India's leadership in the global energy transition, bringing together different stakeholders. It will highlight India's commitment to modernising infrastructure, expanding renewable capacity and strengthening grid reliability. The Summit will serve as a national and global platform for collaboration, policy dialogue and investment mobilisation.

We estimate investment potential of over US$345 billion in electricity generation and over US$68 billion in transmission and distribution by 2032, with energy storage alone offering an opportunity of over US$35 billion. This is anchored in real demand, as India's total generation capacity already exceeds 520 GW and is expanding rapidly, even as grid emissions intensity declines.

Let us unite to energize Viksit Bharat and illuminate the Global South's path to shared prosperity.

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