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**EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

# Energy Security Under Threat — The Ras Laffan Attack and India's Vulnerabilities

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 The Indian Express

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GS2

GS3



The Indian Express

MAINS RELEVANCE:

GS Paper 2

GS Paper 3



## INTERVIEW ANGLE

*"India imports ~50% of its LNG from Qatar — if Ras Laffan is disrupted, what should India's immediate and long-term energy security response be?"*

## WHY IN NEWS

Missile attacks targeted Qatar's Ras Laffan LNG facility amid escalating West Asian conflict, exposing India's acute vulnerability to energy supply disruptions. With India sourcing approximately 50% of its LNG from Qatar, the attack has put energy security at the centre of strategic planning.

## THE RAS LAFFAN ATTACK — WHAT HAPPENED

**Ras Laffan Industrial City** in northern Qatar is the world's largest LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) and gas-to-liquids complex, home to **Qatar Energy** (formerly Qatar Petroleum) operations. It is the hub through which Qatar — the world's second-largest LNG exporter — ships gas to buyers across Asia and Europe.

Missile strikes targeting this facility as part of the wider West Asian conflict (Israel-Iran-Houthi theatre) sent shockwaves through global energy markets — not because production stopped, but because the attack demonstrated that even critical energy infrastructure in supposedly stable Gulf states is now within the conflict's blast radius.

## INDIA'S LNG DEPENDENCE — THE NUMBERS

Indicator	Data
India's LNG import share from Qatar	~50% of total LNG imports
India's total natural gas consumption	~55–60 billion cubic metres/year
LNG share of India's gas supply	~45–50%
India's LNG import terminals	Dahej, Hazira, Dabhol, Kochi, Mundra, Ennore
Qatar's global LNG rank	2nd largest exporter (after Australia)
Ras Laffan LNG capacity	~77 million tonnes per annum (MTPA)

### Key dependencies:

**Petrochemicals:** India's fertiliser plants (urea production) depend heavily on LNG/natural gas

**City gas distribution:** CNG for vehicles and PNG for households rely on domestic gas + LNG

**Power generation:** Gas-based power plants (though declining share) still significant in peak demand

**Industrial sector:** Ceramics, glass, steel reheating — all gas-intensive

## THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ CHOKEPOINT

The Strait of Hormuz — the narrow channel between Iran and Oman — is the world's most critical energy chokepoint:

**Width at narrowest:** ~33 km (navigable channel: 3 km each way)

**Daily oil flow:** ~20–21 million barrels/day (~20% of globally traded oil)

**LNG flow:** ~20% of global LNG trade transits through it (Qatar, UAE, Kuwait, Iraq)

**India's crude import dependence:** ~85–88% on imports; ~60% from West Asia

Any closure or conflict escalation around Hormuz would be catastrophic for India's energy supply chain.

## INDIA'S STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVE (SPR)

India has a limited buffer:

**SPR capacity:** ~5.33 million metric tonnes (MMT) at three locations

**Locations:** Vishakhapatnam (1.33 MMT), Mangaluru (1.5 MMT), Padur (2.5 MMT) — all underground rock caverns, operated by **Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd (ISPRL)**

**Coverage:** ~9.5 days of consumption — far below the IEA’s recommended **90-day** buffer

**Phase II expansion:** Under planning — Chandikhol (Odisha) and Padur expansion proposed

**Comparison:** US SPR: ~370 million barrels (~25 days); China: ~90 days; Japan: ~150 days.

## THE EDITORIAL’S CORE ARGUMENT

The Indian Express argues that the Ras Laffan attack is a wake-up call requiring India to move from **reactive energy security** to **proactive structural diversification**:

### 1. DIVERSIFY LNG SUPPLIERS

India should urgently expand LNG sourcing to reduce Qatar’s 50% dominance:

**Australia (Gorgon, Wheatstone, ICHTHYS):** India-Australia relations are strong; Australia is world’s largest LNG exporter

**USA (Sabine Pass, Freeport):** Long-term contracts under discussion; India’s Energy Security with American LNG (ESALN) bilateral dialogue

**Mozambique (Coral Sul FLNG):** ONGC Videsh has a stake; first African LNG to India a possibility

**Canada (LNG Canada):** Under development; long-term source for India’s western coast

### 2. ACCELERATE DOMESTIC GAS PRODUCTION

**KG-D6 block (Reliance/BP):** Production ramping up after long delay; target ~30 MMSCMD by 2025-26

**Coal Bed Methane (CBM) and shale gas:** Policy framework exists but exploration slow

**City Gas Distribution (CGD) expansion:** PNGRB’s 12th round — connecting 295 districts; reduces import dependency at margins

### 3. EXPAND SPR RAPIDLY

**Phase II expansion** — India must target at least **30 days** of coverage (from current 9.5 days), ideally matching IEA’s **90-day** standard. International Strategic Alliance: India joined the IEA as an **Association Country** in 2017; formal membership would enhance emergency oil-sharing access.

### 4. ACCELERATE ENERGY TRANSITION

The fastest long-term energy security measure is **reducing dependence on fossil fuel imports altogether**:

**Solar + wind + green hydrogen** reduces gas need for power generation

**National Green Hydrogen Mission (2023):** ₹19,744 crore outlay; target 5 MMT green H<sub>2</sub> by 2030

**PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana:** 1 crore rooftop solar installations

## 5. DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT

India must use its strategic relationships to:

Keep Hormuz open — support for US-led freedom of navigation without formally joining Operation Prosperity Guardian (maintaining strategic autonomy)

Deepen ties with Saudi Arabia, UAE as alternative energy partners

Use **SCO and BRICS** frameworks for energy security cooperation

## WEST ASIAN CONFLICT — THE EXPANDING THEATRE

The conflict has moved beyond Israel-Gaza to:

**Yemen's Houthis (Ansar Allah):** Attacking Red Sea shipping and now Gulf energy infrastructure backed by Iran

**Iran-Israel direct confrontation:** Iran's proxy network (Hezbollah, Houthis, Iraqi militias) increasingly active against Israeli and US assets

**Qatar's position:** Qatar hosts the **US Central Command (CENTCOM) Forward HQ** at Al Udeid Air Base — making it both a critical US ally and a potential conflict target

**India's position:** India has carefully avoided taking sides, maintaining relations with Iran (Chabahar port), Israel (defence ties), and Gulf Arab states (8 million Indian diaspora, \$40B+ remittances). This diplomatic balancing becomes harder as the conflict escalates.

**UPSC RELEVANCE**

Ras Laffan location (Qatar), Strait of Hormuz width (~33 km), India's SPR capacity (5.33 MMT, 9.5 days), SPR locations (Vizag, Mangaluru, Padur), ISPRIL, India's LNG imports from Qatar (~50%), India's crude import dependence (~85–88%), Qatar's LNG rank (2nd globally), National Green Hydrogen Mission outlay (₹19,744 crore).

**MAINS GS3:**

Energy security — LNG dependence, SPR policy, gas diversification, Green Hydrogen Mission, domestic gas production (KG-D6).

**GS2:**

West Asia geopolitics, India's strategic autonomy, Hormuz chokepoint diplomacy, India-Qatar relations, CENTCOM.

**★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA**
**RAS LAFFAN:**

Location: Northern Qatar  
 Operator: Qatar Energy (formerly Qatar Petroleum)  
 Capacity: ~77 MTPA LNG  
 Qatar global LNG rank: 2nd (after Australia)  
 India's LNG import from Qatar: ~50%

**STRAIT OF HORMUZ:**

Width: ~33 km (navigable: 3 km each way)  
 Daily oil flow: ~20–21 million barrels (~20% of global traded oil)  
 Controlled by: Iran + Oman on either side

**INDIA'S SPR:**

Total capacity: 5.33 MMT (~9.5 days of consumption)  
 Locations: Vishakhapatnam (1.33 MMT), Mangaluru (1.5 MMT), Padur (2.5 MMT)  
 Operator: Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd (ISPRL)  
 IEA recommended buffer: 90 days

**INDIA'S ENERGY SECURITY:**

Crude import dependence: ~85–88%  
 West Asia share of crude imports: ~60%  
 IEA membership: Association Country (since 2017)

**OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:**

Al Udeid Air Base (Qatar): US CENTCOM Forward HQ  
 National Green Hydrogen Mission (2023): ₹19,744 crore; target 5 MMT by 2030  
 India's gas production boost: KG-D6 block (Reliance/BP) targeting ~30 MMSCMD  
 Operation Prosperity Guardian: US-led Red Sea naval coalition (India not a member)  
 Indian diaspora in Gulf: ~8 million; annual remittances ~\$40 billion

Sources: Indian Express, PIB, IEA

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