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Inflated electricity bills

Why in news?

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A fact-finding committee reported that farmers had received inflated power bills in 2014-15.

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What is the Status of Indian farmers?

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 - Majority of Indian farmers are doing marginal and subsistence agriculture.
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 - The farmers meet high amount of operational costs.
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 - Operational costs include fertilizers, seeds, wages, expenses for tilling, ploughing, irrigation etc.
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 - Electricity is one of the important operational costs for the farmers.
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 - But in few instances the farmers face inflated electricity bill which creates distress among them.
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What is the report about?

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 - In 2015, the Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB) had appointed a three-member committee.
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- It looked into allegations that farmers had received inflated electricity bills in 2014-15.
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- Apart from officials, energy activists are also a part of the committee.
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- The committee commissioned a field study by the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT-B),
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- Based on which it was to submit a report and suggest methods to improve the functioning of MSEDCCL by December 2015.
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What are issues with the report?

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- Recently the report was submitted to the Maharashtra State Electricity Board (MSEB),
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- The report didn't had the signature of the three-member committee's chairperson.
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- The director of MSEB, claimed to have no knowledge of the submission of the report.
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- There was difference of opinion arose when the committee discuss the findings before presenting it to the MSEB.
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How such issues can be addressed?

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- Electricity bills need to be revised by the committee.
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- The reports need to collected on losses and the board need to refund the excess amount to the farmers.
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- Many of the states had given waiver of electricity bill to the agrarian community, such models can also be followed.
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Source: Indian Express

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