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.
- The committee commissioned a field study by the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT-B),
- Based on which it was to submit a report and suggest methods to improve the functioning of MSEDCL by December 2015.

What are issues with the report?

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

How such issues can be addressed?

- Electricity bills need to be revised by the committee.
- The reports need to collected on losses and the board need to refund the excess amount to the farmers.
- 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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