

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. [GS1 Related](#)

B. [GS2 Related](#)

### POLITY/POLICY WATCH

1. [N.K. Singh is 15th finance panel chief](#)
2. [National Mineral Policy: GreenMin wants "polluter pays" principle included](#)
3. [Govt. working on new "gas standards"](#)
4. [Can't force govt. to frame a law: SC](#)
5. [Views sought on data protection law](#)

C. [GS3 Related](#)

### ECONOMY

1. [GST, note ban impact bottoming out: Survey](#)
2. ["Infrastructure status: a first step for logistics"](#)
3. [Draft national energy policy proposes aligning energy prices with international rates](#)

### AGRICULTURE

1. [Maharashtra reports 2,414 farmer suicides in January-October period](#)

D. [GS4 Related](#)

E. [Prelims Fact](#)

F. [UPSC Prelims Practice Questions](#)

G. [UPSC Mains Practice Questions](#)

**Nothing here for Today!!!**

**Category: POLITY/POLICY WATCH**

1. [N.K. Singh is 15th finance panel chief](#)

#### Key Points:

- The Centre on Monday announced that the Fifteenth Finance Commission would be headed by former Secretary to the government of India N.K. Singh.
- The panel is tasked with looking into tax collections and how they are to be divided between the Centre and the States, the principles that should govern the grants in aid to the States and to review the levels of fiscal deficit, among other issues.

2. [National Mineral Policy: GreenMin wants "polluter pays" principle included](#)

#### Context:

- The Union environment ministry has suggested to the Union mines ministry that the "polluter pays" principle which states that those who produce pollution should pay for the damage done to human health and the environment should be included in the national mineral policy (NMP) so that the miners become "cautious" and "responsible".

#### Reasons for such a move:

- Earlier in August, the Supreme Court had passed a judgment, wherein it directed the Central government to revisit the NMP, 2008, and announce a "fresh and more effective, meaningful and implementable policy" before the end of this year.
- The mines ministry formed a committee which included officials from various ministries including Union environment ministry after this judgment and its first meeting took place in August.
- The committee in its recent meeting suggested that "polluter pays" principle may be incorporated in the policy so that the miners become cautious and undertake mining in a responsible manner.

#### SC judgment regarding Polluter Pays principle

- In 1996, the Supreme Court held the "polluter pays" principle to be part of the environmental law of the country in the case of Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum vs. Union of India and Others.
- The Supreme Court stated that the "polluter pays" principle means that the absolute liability for harm to the environment extends not only to compensate the victims of pollution but also the cost of restoring the environmental degradation.
- Remediation of the damaged environment is part of the process of "Sustainable Development" and as such polluter is liable to pay the cost to the individual sufferers as well as the cost of reversing the damaged ecology.
- Currently, National Green Tribunals across the country work on the "polluter pays" principle as it is mentioned in its governing law: National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.

#### Committee suggestions:

- The committee added that prospecting license (PL) should not be allowed in very dense and thick forests as it is very difficult to give clearance in those cases.
- A reconnaissance permit (RP) is granted for preliminary prospecting through regional, aerial, geophysical or geochemical surveys and geological mapping.
- A PL is required for exploring, locating and proving mineral deposits.
- A mining lease (ML) is required to finally extract minerals.
- Also, while developing mining infrastructure in the area, it should be ensured that the process should cause only minimum damage to flora and fauna of that area by using state-of-the-art techniques.
- Conservation of biodiversity, forest wildlife should be an integral part of NMP.
- In order to ensure rehabilitation and reclamation of mined areas, specific timelines or clear guidelines should be formulated.
- According to the Ministry of Mines, reclamation has to be taken up by the forest department of MOEFCC as they have collected NPV (Net Present Value) / CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority) funds.
- But, CAMPA funds are for compensation for the trees felled on account of mining and NPV is for the damage caused to the eco-system and emphasized that it is the responsibility of miners to undertake reclamation work.

### 3. [Govt. working on new "gas standards"](#)

#### In news:

- The government is looking to prepare a unified testing methodology to ensure that all agencies that map air pollution use accurate instruments.
- The **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-National Physical Laboratory (NPL)** is in the process of setting up "gas standards", or reference samples of **Carbon Monoxide (CO), Sulphur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), Nitrous Oxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and Particulate "Pb (lead), "As (Arsenic) and "Ni (Nickel)**.
- Currently, the **National Ambient Air Quality standards** specify the upper limits for pollutants and, based on this, the **Air Quality Index** that grades air quality in cities from "Good" to "Severe" is prepared for several Indian cities.
- CPCB has prescribed guidelines for the maximum permissible levels of 12 gases and pollutants, depending on residential, rural or industrial locations.
- The NPL has developed a custom air sampler that claims to measure PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels far more accurately than existing devices.

### 4. [Can't force govt. to frame a law: SC](#)

#### In news:

- The Supreme Court said it respected the government's "political compulsions" and would not compel it to ratify the **UN Convention against Torture**, or command it to frame a standalone anti-torture legislation.

#### No ratification

- Though India signed the convention in 1997, it is yet to ratify it. Efforts to bring in a standalone law have failed.
- The National Human Rights Commission has been urging the government to recognise torture as a separate crime and codify the punishment in a separate penal law.

#### Law Commission report:

- In its 273rd report handed over to the Law Ministry on October 30, the commission has proposed the Prevention of Torture Bill, 2017, which gives a wide definition to torture, not limited to physical pain but also including "inflicting injury, either intentionally or involuntarily, or even an attempt to cause such an injury, which will include physical, mental or psychological in nature".

### 5. [Views sought on data protection law](#)

#### In news:

- The government released a white paper looking into the scope of a data protection law, and opened up for public discussion till December 31, issues pertaining to its ambit, what constitutes personal data, what is sensitive data, and the international applicability of such a law.
- The **N. Srikrishna committee**, set up under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**, in the white paper recommended that the law be applicable to all processing of personal data that takes place within India or by an entity that has a presence in India.
- The paper noted that it may be necessary to make the law applicable to all kinds of processing that the government may have a "legitimate interest in regulating" even though it may not be entirely based in India or may be carried out by non-Indian entities that do not have a presence in India.
- The committee set limits on this extended jurisdiction, though, saying that the law should not be so wide as to constitute an unnecessary interference with the jurisdiction of other countries or have the effect of making it a general law of the Internet.
- For instance, the mere fact that a website (operated from abroad) is accessible from India should not be a reason for subjecting the website to Indian law
- According to the paper the personal data "ought to include any kind of information including opinions or assessments irrespective of their accuracy."

#### Category: ECONOMY

### 1. [GST, note ban impact bottoming out: Survey](#)

## **In news:**

- **FICCI's latest Economic Outlook Survey:** The slowdown in the economy due to demonetisation and the impact of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) seems to have bottomed out.
- Regarding inflation, the FICCI survey said that wholesale price index-based inflation for the year 2017-18 is likely to be about 2.8% and consumer price index-based inflation would be at 3.4%.

## **2. [Infrastructure status: a first step for logistics](#)**

### **In news:**

- The Centre's decision to assign infrastructure status to the logistics industry is a good first move, but there are several other problems that need to be addressed such as the lack of proper regulatory oversight and the lack of skilling in the sector.
- The e-waybill system also needs several improvements before it can viably be rolled out across the country, such as the removal of the need for e-waybills for intra-city or intra-State transport and the modification of the validity of the e-waybills.

### **Main Problems:**

- The first obvious problem is that generally this is an industry that is not very regulated, which means that it has become a highly fragmented industry.
- The second problem is that it employs a large number of blue collar workers but there isn't enough infrastructure to train them.
- The e-waybill system "timed at tracking the transport of goods worth ₹150,000 or more across the country" is probably one of the most critical and contentious points as far as the GST system is concerned.

## **3. [Draft national energy policy proposes aligning energy prices with international rates](#)**

### **Context:**

- A draft national energy policy proposing aligning energy prices with international rates will be put up for the approval of the Cabinet.

### **Impact:**

- If approved, energy prices across sectors would become market-driven and subsidies would be limited to identified beneficiaries via direct benefit transfer, much on the lines of the LPG subsidy.

### **Background:**

- The government think tank Niti Aayog in June released a draft National Energy Policy (NEP), on which it had been working since 2015.
- Prime Minister had chaired interministerial consultations on the policy after the coal ministry expressed reservations over market-driven prices that would pose a threat to the monopoly and margins of Coal India.

### **Highlights of draft NEP:**

- The policy will help India integrate with the global energy world without compromising on the energy needs of the poorest of the poor, who will continue to get subsidy on all forms of energy directly into their bank accounts through direct benefit transfer.
- The outward-looking policy is against any kind of subsidies at the production and distribution levels as it distorts the system.
- Instead, it has strongly vouched for DBT as the technological platform to transfer subsidies to the poor after the success of LPG.
- In its draft policy, Niti Aayog said India's energy demand was likely to soar around three times by 2040, leading to increase in overall primary energy imports.
- It had also made a case for a single regulator to govern India's energy market to make "India's economy energy-ready" by 2040.
- The NEP will replace the Integrated Energy Policy of the UPA regime and lay the road map for government push towards clean energy and reducing fuel import.
- According to the draft NEP, the period 2017-2040 is expected to witness a quantum leap in the uptake of renewable energy, drastic reduction in energy intensity, doubling of per-capita energy consumption and tripling of per-capita electricity consumption.

## **Category: AGRICULTURE**

### **1. [Maharashtra reports 2,414 farmer suicides in January-October period](#)**

#### **In news:**

- As per the data reported by the six divisional commissionerates across the state, 2,414 farmer suicides were reported in the state between 1 January and 31 October. This is happening five months after a Rs34,022-crore farm loan waiver

#### **Farm loan waiver scheme:**

- Ministers, farm sector experts, and activists say bureaucratic bottlenecks and technical snags have hampered the implementation of the scheme, aggravating the crisis

### **Corruption the main culprit:**

- The online system has bared several problems and bogus accounts, it has also caused delays
- Since there is no money to be made, there is no incentive for government staff and bank officials(especially the cooperative banks) to speed up the implementation

### **Fake accounts:**

- Government had announced the farm loan waiver on 24 June, which it claimed would benefit 8.9 million farmers
- But the online application system coupled with Aadhaar identification helped banks and the government weed out nearly 2 million names
- The final list of eligible beneficiaries the government drew up has 5.6 million farmers
- But due to administrative reasons, the government could transfer benefits to only 2.5 lakh farmers

### **Financial assistance to the families of deceased farmers**

- Of the 2,414 farm suicides reported till October end, the government has identified 1,277 cases as "eligible" for ex-gratia financial assistance
- Of these, relatives of 1,246 farmers have already been given the assistance of Rs1 lakh each
- The government has rejected financial assistance in 728 cases terming them "ineligible" and another 409 cases are being probed further

***Nothing here for Today!!!***

***Nothing here for Today!!!***

### **F. Practice Questions for UPSC Prelims Exam**

### **G. UPSC Mains Practice Questions**

#### **GS Paper I**

- How do the Indian debates on Secularism differ from the debates in the West?

#### **GS Paper II**