



Current Affairs of the Day

GS III

- 'New tools needed to control the spread of TB'
- Ready to discuss GST on fuel if States want it: FM

‘New tools needed to control the spread of TB’

News: Amid concerns over a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, experts have warned that there is a need for new interventions and tools to control the increasing pace of the spread of tuberculosis (TB) and also improve the cure rate of the disease.

Highlights:

1. Those with lower immunity are prone to develop tuberculosis and TB patients with low immunity may develop COVID-19 and this was inter-related.
2. On the positive side, the use of masks during the pandemic has reduced cases of TB and chronic respiratory diseases. It is a useful tool to prevent the spread of TB, he said.
3. New interventions like vaccines and new drugs would help reduce the burden of TB. Nearly 55% of the TB cases emerge due to malnutrition, which also hampers response to drugs.

Ready to discuss GST on fuel if States want it: FM

News: The Centre is ready to consider bringing fuel under the Goods and Services Tax regime if the States bring up the issue at the GST Council, Finance Minister said on Tuesday, arguing that all decisions related to the indirect tax are driven by the Council and not the Ministry of Finance.

Highlights:

1. The Minister introduced 127 amendments to the Finance Bill, 2021, which was passed by the Lok Sabha. These included an income tax break for the proposed development finance institution to fund infrastructure and a tweak in the proposed tax provisions for employees' provident fund (EPF) contributions.
2. Defending the decision to impose an Agriculture Infrastructure Development Fund Cess on several items including fuel in the Budget, Ms Sitharaman said that the proceeds from the collections would be shared with the States as they were the ones in charge of farm infrastructures such as APMCs and marketing yards.
3. The cess may not get devolved to States, but eventually, it will be used for improving infrastructure in agriculture and the farmyards and the marketing



yards, which are with the State governments and so the funds will have to go the States only.

4. The Minister also sought to assuage States' concerns about a possible reduction in fund allocations owing to the Finance Commission's recommendation to set up a non-lapsable Defence and Internal Security Modernisation Fund.

Taxing fuel

1. Responding to many MPs' concerns about the high taxes on petrol and diesel and suggestions to bring them under the GST regime, Ms Sitharaman said that both the Centre and States were taxing fuel and the Centre's taxes had to be shared with the States.
2. "Issues related to GST, being posed to Finance Minister, are not Finance Ministry matters," she said. "They are GST Council matters in which all States are members. It's a collective decision and without their clearance, things can't happen," Ms Sitharaman pointed out.