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Current News

மின் செய்திகள்

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

The role of the state government under the Electricity Act, 2003

The State Electricity Regulatory Commission (SERC) is established to regulate generation, transmission, wheeling and distribution of electricity within the State. This also includes regulating power purchase agreements (electricity supply agreement between two parties), issuing licences, determining tariff and dispute resolution. The SERCs follow national electricity and tariff policy for all these duties. In certain exceptional cases, the state government has powers to pass directions that SERC is bound to follow.

As an example, recently, the State Government of Kerala had given a letter to the Kerala State Electricity Regulatory Commission (KSERC), asking them to revalidate previously cancelled power purchase agreements. During May 2023, KSERC had refused to approve three power purchase agreements due to procedural violations. This letter is the State government directing the KSERC to reconsider a decision already passed. This advice was given through Section 108 of the Electricity Act, 2003 which discusses the powers of the State Government.

Section 108. Directions by State Government:

(1) *In the discharge of its functions, the State Commission shall be guided by such directions in matters of policy involving public interest as the State Government may give to it in writing.*

(2) If any question arises as to whether any such direction relates to a matter of policy involving public interest, the decision of the State Government thereon shall be final.

This Section is applicable for policy matters that involve public interest. In Kerala, the public interest was the power deficit caused by the reduction in rains during monsoon season. There was only half of the usual inflow of water in dams which generated lesser power, leading to a shortage. The state government has suggested revalidating the power purchase agreements to address this power shortage, to ensure that the consumer demand is fulfilled.

The Section also states that the state government is the deciding authority when it comes to determining if a policy decision involves any public interest. Thus, it is clear that KSERC has to follow the direction given to it in light of protecting public interest.

The Supreme Court has analysed this Section in the case of C.I.T., Jabalpur vs M/S. J.P. Tobacco Product Pvt. Ltd. The judgement explains that this power is applicable even in the matters relating to giving subsidies to consumers. The state government can provide a direction concerning subsidy to any consumer or class of consumers, and such a direction has to be followed by the SERC.

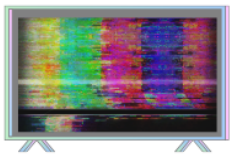
It is important for consumers to be aware of this power because when it comes to matters of high tariff rates, power shortages, lack of subsidies etc, it is clear from the cases discussed that they qualify as matters of a public interest. Concerned consumers can also approach the state government to protect the public good, in cases where the SERC has passed an order that violates the same. It is vital for the State Governments to take into consideration the rights of electricity consumers and utilise this power to guide the SERC.

(Concluded)

Simple measures for Electricity consumers to participate in the circular economy - Do It Yourself series (Part-6)

The previous issue discussed how the R's (Refuse, Reduce, Repair and Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle) of the circular economy can be put into everyday use, concerning electric lighting. This part explores the practice of R's of televisions within the circular economy.

5. Television: Television (TV) is an electronic telecommunication medium that receives and converts electrical signals into moving images and sounds. Many components such as display panels, receivers, speakers and sound amplifiers, video processors, power supply and various input and output connections make up a TV. Light-emitting diode televisions (LED TVs) have become a common household appliance in India. Simple habits and maintenance measures can ensure the appliance's longevity and efficiency with resultant energy bill savings.



TELEVISION- CIRCULAR CONSUMPTION

REPLACE

Modern LED TVs consume less electricity than LCDs or plasmas. When purchasing a new television or replacing your old LCD or plasma TV, compare and opt for an energy-efficient LED TV. The larger the size of the screen, the more energy it consumes. Select a TV of screen size suitable for your needs and room dimensions.

Use a stabiliser to protect your TV against voltage fluctuations, power surges or other accidents that can reduce lifespan.

REDUCE

Ensure the right placement and proper ventilation of your TV to prevent overheating. Place your TV in a dark corner to avoid glare and also for using it at a low brightness level, which results in energy conservation.

With fewer active features, your television consumes less electricity. If your TV has the following options, use them to conserve energy:

- eco/energy-saving settings with options like optimal brightness level and screen-off timer,
- turn the screen off when only listening to music.

This can protect your device against a problem called image retention or screen burn-in, i.e. a permanent or temporary residual image on the screen caused by a static image displayed on the screen for an extended period.

Above all, switch it off at the wall when not in use to avoid standby power loss.

REPURPOSE

In creative ways, under proper technical assistance/guidance,

- old-style TVs can be repurposed as cabinets, planters etc,
- old flatscreen LCD or LED TVs can be converted into an artificial lighting setup,
- components like the LED light strips can be removed and used for lighting.

REPAIR

Maintain optimal performance of your LED TV by regular dusting, cleaning and servicing. Check for software updates regularly and install them according to the manufacturer's guidelines.

Repairing is more cost-effective than purchasing a new one. When your TV develops issues like distorted images, poor audio or video, or other damages, choose repair/replacement of its damaged component(s) over the purchase of a new television.

RECYCLE

Your television or its components after its end of life become electronic waste(e-waste) which contains re-mineable valuable materials as well as harmful substances like mercury, lead, chromium and cadmium. While disposing, give it responsibly to an authorised e-waste reclamation or recycling facility that can handle it safely to prevent resource wastage, chemical leaches and heavy metal/plastic pollution.

(Concluded)

Tamil Nadu News

Energy audit to be conducted in village panchayats as part of energy efficiency measures

The Rural Development and Panchayat Raj department proposes to take up energy audits in several panchayats as part of the sustainable energy and efficiency measures in the coming months.

The measure comes in the wake of energy audit being carried out in five village panchayats in Tiruvallur district, said P. Ponniah, Director of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, while delivering his address in the Sustainable Energy Forum 2023 organised in the city on Wednesday.

Speaking at the 4th edition of the conference, he said several energy efficiency measures were being taken by the State government with more than three lakh solar green houses having been built and street lights being converted from conventional bulbs to light emitting diode (LED) bulbs for energy conservancy. He said among the other sustainable energy measures was the commissioning of biomass gasifiers numbering around 14 and the installation of solar street lights in remote villages.

R. Velraj, Vice Chancellor of Anna University, said the high heat pollution generated from the burning of fossil fuels of which only 33% could be converted into useful energy was a big threat to the environment for which use of solar energy was the option for depleting the fossil burning and for a sustainable energy future. Mr. Velraj said energy audit plays an important factor in the industries for achieving carbon neutrality. He also talked about the need for adopting battery storage in a big way for tapping the full potential of renewable energy but battery storage alone would not be enough. He said: “Storing energy in hybrid form including keeping energy in compressed air for which a study has already been conducted need to be evolved in a big scale.”

Retired IAS officer K. Allaudin talked about the various energy efficiency measures taken in the local bodies and for creating awareness among the public during his tenure as the chairman of Tamilnadu Energy Development Agency (TEDA) in 2003.

Source : The Hindu, 09 November 2023.

India News

National Efficient Cooking Programme (NECP) and Energy Efficient Fans Programme (EEFP) launched to promote energy efficiency

Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a joint venture of Public Sector Undertakings under Ministry of Power, launched its groundbreaking National Efficient Cooking Programme (NECP) and Energy Efficient Fans Programme (EEFP), unveiled by the Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy Shri R. K. Singh, at an event held in New Delhi on November 2, 2023. These initiatives are aimed at revolutionizing cooking practices in India and emphasizing on the importance and urgency of energy-efficient fans.

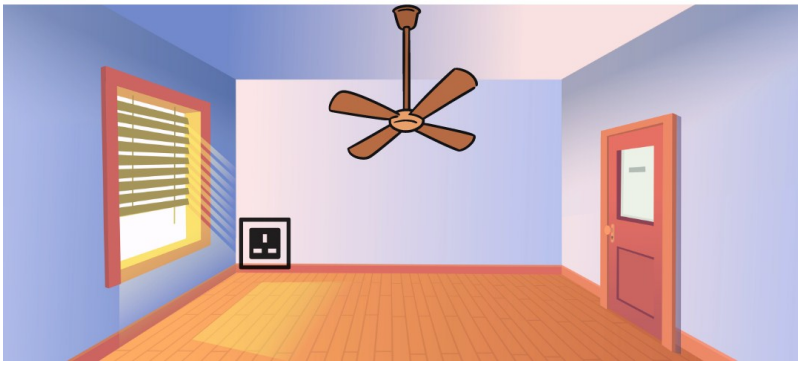
The National Efficient Cooking Programme (NECP) introduces induction-based cook-stoves, offering a cost advantage of 25-30% over traditional cooking methods, promising both energy savings and cost-effective cooking solutions. By deploying 20 Lakh Induction cook-stoves across India, EESL seeks to reduce the environmental impact of cooking methods, ensuring cleaner air and improved health for citizens. EESL has also partnered with Modern Energy Cooking Services (MECS) for the large-scale deployment of induction cooktops. The deployment is expected to accelerate the acceptance and large-scale adoption of modern electric cooking devices in Indian kitchens.

The Energy Efficient Fans Programme (EEFP) focuses on deploying energy-efficient BLDC fans, with the goal of distributing 1 crore ceiling fans. These initiatives not only reduce energy consumption and environmental impact, but also enhances consumer comfort while lowering electricity bills, creating a win-win situation for all. The program for deploying one crore ceiling fans was initiated during the G20 Energy Transitions Working Group in Goa in July 2023. In continuation of this, EESL is inviting the first bid of 20 lakh fans, under a programme titled Energy Efficient Fans Programme (EEFP).

Source : PIB, 02 November 2023.

Consumer Focus

The respondent (consumer) owns a small shop room with a power connection from the appellant (utility) and this connection powers only a ceiling fan and a tube light. The regular monthly consumption was around 20 units. The electricity bill for October 2022 though was very high (Rs. 1973/-). The consumer filed a complaint asking for a revision of the bill at the Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum (CGRF).



The meter was tested and found to be in working condition, but the meter data indicated an earthing leakage. Furthermore, the ceiling fan was damaged. It was held that this damage had occurred due to lightning striking either in the building or through the electric line. The CGRF passed an order to share the responsibility and the consumer had to pay only 50% of his charges. The utility disagreed with this and filed an appeal to the Ombudsman requesting that the consumer pay the full amount. The appellant argued that the meter was working in normal condition as declared in the test report. In addition to this, the appellant argued that leakage can be avoided by installing a simple device, the Earth Leakage Circuit Breaker (ELCB). The appellant submitted that this event had occurred due to negligence of the consumer and hence they were liable to pay the full bill amount. The appellant also used meter data to prove that earth leakage had occurred many days prior to lightning strikes at the consumer's region. Even the consumer agreed that lightning strikes occurred in the area on 14.09. 2022 and 15.09.2022. But as per the meter data, the earth leakage started on 05.09.2022 and continued till 25.09.2022.

Source: ELCB

The respondent did not submit any written arguments. In the hearing, he stated that this room was used for the meeting of a friendship group of agricultural farmers. This room was opened only once a week, on Sundays, for a meeting not exceeding 2 hours. The current bill was typically around Rs. 140/- per month. The bill in question could not be afforded by this group as they were all poor farmers. They requested that this amount be waived off.

The Ombudsman observed that the bill was high compared to the consumption pattern of the consumer. The Ombudsman also stated that despite being an accidental increase, it has occurred due to the consumer's failure to install an ELCB. Considering the facts of the case, arguments put forth, and the statutes relied upon, the Ombudsman passed the following order:

- The consumer is liable to pay the bill issued by the licensee.
- The licensee shall allow the consumer to pay this amount in 12 instalments.

Note: It is the duty of the consumer to install ELCB in their premises to avoid such issues. Installation of ELCB has been made mandatory in the state of Tamil Nadu from 5th July, 2021.

Source: **Ombudsman Case**, Kerala Electricity Ombudsman

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Initiative of

CAG
Citizen consumer and civic Action Group

Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG) is a non-profit, non-political and professional organization that works towards protecting citizen's rights in consumer and environmental issues and promoting good governance processes including transparency, accountability and participatory decision making.

World News

Energy efficiency needs to double, says report

Global energy intensity improved by just over 2% in 2022, but it needs to double to 4% annually by 2030 to meet global efficiency targets, according to International Energy Agency (IEA) data. If achieved, this would result in a 40% increase in economic output per unit of energy used.

More than half of the 150 countries analysed by the IEA have achieved a 4% improvement at least three times in the past decade, and five G20 countries – China, France, Indonesia, Japan, and the UK – have sustained an average of 4% or more over a five-year period.

The global energy crisis after Russia invaded Ukraine led to a new focus on energy efficiency, Energy Post explains. This was seen as a way to tackle energy security, affordability, and the climate crisis all at once and governments responded by implementing measures to promote energy efficiency while offering incentives for efficient technology.

According to the IEA, over 70% of the global economy introduced new or strengthened efficiency measures. As a result, there has been a surge in investment in energy efficiency and consumers are more interested in reducing their energy use than ever before.

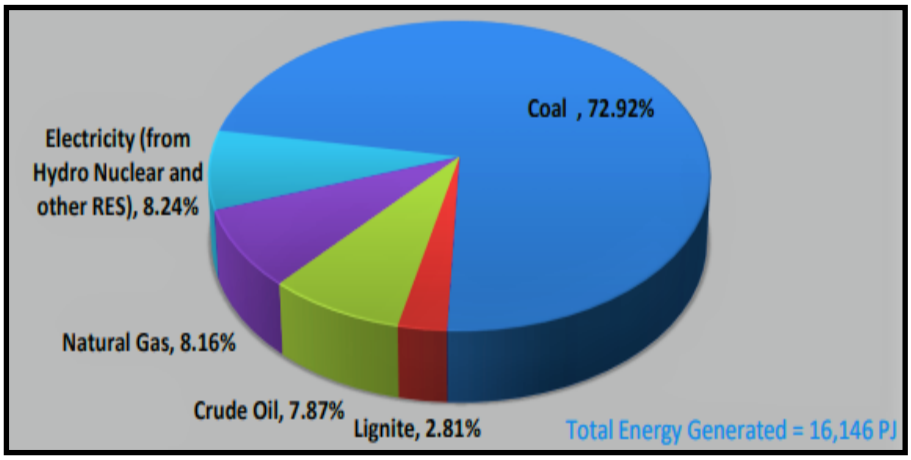
The agency says its Energy Efficiency Policy Toolkit can help guide governments towards taking the necessary steps to achieve these targets. Energy Post argues that the right technologies exist in key areas like air conditioners, lighting, building codes, car fuel economy, electric motors and heavy industry; so now is the time for the right policies, support and incentives to be implemented.

Source : World Economic Forum, 06 November 2023.

Publications / Regulations

- Emissions Gap Report 2023, UNEP
- Community Solar for Advancing Power Sector Reforms and the Net-Zero Goals, CEEW
- A Framework for Climate Change Mitigation in India, IMF
- World Energy Employment 2023, IEA

Share of Total Energy Generated (in petajoules) from different commercial sources in India during FY 2021-



Source: Energy Statistics India 2023