CURRENT NEWS

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TAMIL NADU ELECTRICITY OMBUDSMAN - GRIEVANCE ANALYSIS REPORT (2021-2025)

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Tamil Nadu is one of the leading states in power generation, with a diversified energy mix that includes thermal, hydro, and a share of renewable energy, particularly wind and solar. The Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (erstwhile Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation) is responsible for electricity distribution across the state, serving millions of domestic, agricultural, commercial and industrial customers. Despite improved infrastructure, consumers in Tamil Nadu continue to face several grievances related to billing disputes, voltage fluctuations, and meter- related issues. This article seeks to highlight the nature of grievances raised by consumers to the Electricity Ombudsman, using a case-analysis approach.

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Consumer Grievances and Redressal Mechanisms

Under the Electricity Act, 2003, a "grievance" refers to any complaint filed by a consumer regarding electricity supply, including billing errors, supply interruptions, meter faults, disconnection without notice, voltage fluctuations, or any deficiency in service provided by the electricity distribution licensee. To ensure timely and effective resolution of such grievances, Section 42(5) of the Act mandates every distribution licensee to establish a Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum (CGRF). The CGRF serves as the first tier of dispute resolution, where consumers can file their complaints directly with the licensee's internal forum. However, if the CGRF fails to address the complaint within the prescribed time (within 60 days), or if the consumer is dissatisfied with the CGRF's decision, the Act provides for an appellate mechanism, i.e Electricity Ombudsman

As per Section 42(6) of the Electricity Act, the Electricity Ombudsman is appointed by the State Electricity Regulatory Commission to hear appeals against orders passed by the CGRF. The Electricity Ombudsman serves as an independent appellate authority under the **Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission** (TNERC), providing consumers with a forum to resolve electricity-related grievances after they have exhausted remedies through the Consumer Grievance Redressal Forums (CGRFs) of their respective Electricity Distribution Circles. The Electricity Ombudsman reviews the grievance, the CGRF's decision, and evidence from both parties before delivering a final order.

Rationale for Analysing Electricity Ombudsman Cases

While CGRFs serve as the first point of redress, the escalation of cases to the Electricity Ombudsman indicates either unresolved grievances or dissatisfaction with CGRF outcomes. This report analyses the pattern of grievances registered with the Tamil Nadu Electricity Ombudsman during the years 2021 to 2025. It classifies complaints, quantifies them year-wise, and identifies the most common nature of complaint for each year. The data has been gathered from the Ombudsman orders issued on the TNERC website during this period.

Objective

- To categorise and analyse electricity consumer grievances reported to the Electricity Ombudsman from 2021 to 2025.
- To quantify complaints year-wise and determine the most frequent grievance category for each year.
- To recommend improvements at the level of the CGRF intervention itself, to ensure a shorter redressal process for consumers.

Summary of Electricity Ombudsman Cases Reviewed

Category	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Billing Related	34	33	41	39	16
Infrastructure Related	4	22	18	19	11
Service related	38	41	37	22	10
Total Cases	**76**	**96**	**96**	**80**	**37**

A total of 385 cases were reviewed. The table indicates that billing-related complaints are the most frequently registered each year. In the upcoming issues, we will provide a detailed analysis of the nature of complaints on a year-by-year basis.

(To be continued)

CONSUMER FOCUS

The appellant is a domestic customer who installed rooftop solar in 2017, subsequent to which he had been closely monitoring his electricity consumption through a bi-directional meter. In July 2022, the appellant noticed a larger than usual bill, and therefore (on 14th July 2022) registered an online complaint, requesting an inspection. He received an acknowledgement stating that the inspection would be carried out the next day. The Assistant Engineer (AE) inspected the site on July 16th 2022 and found that the meter was functioning normally. This information, however, was not provided to the consumer.

After registering the complaint , the appellant left the country and was monitoring the house via CCTV. One day, he found that the CCTV was not working - which he assumed was a malfunction. After his arrival, on 11th September 2022, he noticed that his service connection had been disconnected, causing damage to essential items such as medicines, and food kept in the refrigerator. Immediately, he registered another complaint via email to the AE requesting the reason for excess charges, the date of disconnection and his current electricity bill.

Based on the complaint, the AE inspected the complainant's meter and explained that the excessive bill was not based on the electricity consumption. The additional charges in the July bill were network charges which were added along with the consumption charges. These network charges are framed by the TNERC as regulations for all consumers who have installed rooftop solar systems. The AE noted in his records that the appellant was not convinced.

In order to settle his grievances, the appellant registered a complaint with the Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum (CGRF) on 05/11/2022.

During the hearing, the appellant contended that the charges were excessive despite there being no excess consumption. Additionally, the appellant alleged that the respondent (TNPDCL) was non-responsive to his complaints. The respondent contended that there was no error in the appellant's meter. The respondent further stated that the appellant's service connection had been disconnected on 05/08/2022 due to the non-payment of the amount due for the period of 07/2022. Additionally, the respondent explained that the amount noted as high by the appellant was for network charges related to his solar connection. (as per Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission GISS No. 8 of 2021)

On hearing both the parties' arguments, the CGRF, in its order dated 30/01/23, held that the solar network charges could not be cancelled. Furthermore, the Forum directed the licensee to address the complaints of customers more effectively by clarifying the regulations.

Dissatisfied with the Forum's order, the appellant approached the Tamil Nadu Electricity Ombudsman with an Appeal Petition on 02/05/23, with the same prayer.

The Ombudsman observed the following issues, based on the arguments presented by the appellant and respondent during the hearing:

1. What is the reason for the bill amount despite zero consumption?
2. Did the respondent provide the necessary billing details to the appellant following the appellant's complaint?
3. Is there a lack of information on the network charges?
4. Was the respondent justified by law in disconnecting the appellant's service?

Ombudsman's findings:

Regarding the **first issue**, the Ombudsman noted that the additional charge in the appellant's consumption bill, despite no excess consumption, was not due to any error. Instead, it was pointed out that the amount charged was network charges in accordance with TNERC Order No. 8 of 2021, which stated:

> *8.Network charges:*
> *8.1.4 Thus the component of the charges pertaining to essential linkage of grid to generate solar power has to be necessarily made a part of charges to be determined holistically for generic solar tariff.*
> *8.2 This network charges shall be applicable to consumers of net-metering and netbilling mechanism for the total units generated by the solar systems. Such charges to be recovered from the prosumers will be covered within the total Aggregate Revenue Requirement as envisaged in the amendment to the Terms and conditions for Tariff Regulation 2005 as notified vide TNERC/TR/5/3 dated 26.05.21."*

TNPDCL's infrastructure (grid-interactive) support is an essential component of any grid-connected solar system, without which the system would be non-functional. The charges for linking energy generated from the rooftop solar to the TNPDCL's grid is what constitutes network charges. This is applicable to all existing and new consumers / prosumers categorised under net metering or net billing or net feed in mechanism, as determined by the Commission under Regulation 70 of TNERC (Terms and conditions for determination of Tariff) Regulations, 2005.

On the **second issue**, the appellant pays their electricity bills through the online portal based on the consumer ledger. Upon examination, it can be observed that the break -up for current consumption charges is provided. The consumer portal displays details such as Import Reading, Export Reading, Consumption in Units, Split-up of Charges (which includes Charges, Electricity Tax, Welding, Excess Demand, PF Penalty, Fixed Charges, Network Charges with GST), and the Total Charges and Deductions. Additionally, by clicking on the Network charges amount, a page opens, explicitly stating the methodology for calculating the network charges. Therefore, necessary details regarding the network charges are readily accessible to the appellant through the consumer portal.

On the **third issue**, the Ombudsman observed that the appellant had expressed that he was not informed and was unaware of the network charges imposed on his solar service connection. Also, he has stated that, according to Clause 8.11.12 of the GISS order, the network/wheeling charges should be Rs.0.25/Unit only. As per the observation, the Ombudsman found that

> *"8.9.5 The Network charges towards the Distribution wire business is chargeable to HT prosumers at 83 Paise / kWh and for LT prosumers at Rs.1.27 / kWh. The above charges is applicable to all existing and new prosumers as specified under respective category until the "Network charges" is revised by the Commission in the next Tariff Order or in any other special order."*
> *Regulation 42 in TNE Distribution code is reproduced below. "42. Knowledge of Acts, Rules, Regulations, Orders, etc: Subject to the provisions contained in Note 1 to sub-regulation (13) of Regulation 29, the consumer will be deemed to have full knowledge of the provisions of „applicable Acts, Rules and all Regulations and Notifications" made there under. The consumer shall act in due conformity with all the applicable Acts, Rules and all Regulations and Notifications mentioned above."*

Based on the above regulations, the details requested by the appellant, including the network charges which were mentioned in GISS Order No.8 of 2021 dt. 20.10.2021 are readily available in the public domain on the TNERC and TANGEDCO websites. The appellant can obtain the necessary information from these public domains, and therefore, they are equally responsible for being informed about the applicable billing procedures.

With regard to the **fourth issue**, The appellant's service connection was charged for network charges starting from May 2022. The appellant made the payment for these charges without raising any objections during May 2022. However, due to non-payment of network charges for the month of July 2022, the service was disconnected on 05.08.2022. During that period, he was out of the country and did not inform the respondent about this fact, nor did he pay any advance Current Consumption (CC) charges as per TNERC Regulation 16 in TN Electricity Supply Code, Option to pay charges in advance as discussed below;

> *"16. Option to pay charges in advance The consumers who opt for depositing electricity charges in advance shall be permitted to do so. Such deposits shall be recorded in the consumer meter card. Interest at Bank rate or such rate as specified by the Commission shall be calculated on such balance advance amount and credited to the consumer ledger accounts."*

However, it is noticed that only after returning in September 2022 were the Reconnection charges paid by the Appellant, following which, the service was reconnected. It was stated that the respondent was justified in disconnecting the appellant's service connection under Rules 14 and 21 of the Tamil Nadu Energy Supply Code. Such regulation allowed the Licensee to disconnect the supply upon default of payment. Hence, the conduct of the respondent was justified by law.

On the basis of his findings, the Ombudsman ruled that the appellant's claim for cancellation of charges is not tenable.

SOURCE: OMBUDSMAN CASE

NEWS FROM TAMIL NADU

Electricity consumption by public EV charging stations in T.N. increased 20% in 2024-25

Tamil Nadu's public electric vehicle charging stations (EV-PCS) used 16.17 million units (MU) of electricity in financial year 2024-2025, up about 20.8% from 13.383 MU in 2023-2024, as per data from Central Electricity Authority. However, Tamil Nadu lagged behind certain regions. Delhi had the maximum EV-PCS electricity consumption at 328.03 MU, followed by Maharashtra 216.82 MU, Karnataka 79.61 MU and Gujarat (64.11 MU), as per the data. According to data from Climate Trends, Tamil Nadu's total EV sales stood at 76,359 units in the financial year 2024-2025, with penetration of about 3.94 per cent. The two-wheeler EV penetration stood at about 4.12%, three wheeler penetration stood at about 14.27% and four-wheeler penetration stood at about 1.65 per cent.

"For Tamil Nadu to enhance its position in the EV market, it must prioritize expanding charging infrastructure, implement consumer and manufacturer incentives and increase public awareness about the benefits of electric vehicles," Archit Fursule, research associate, e-mobility, Climate Trends, said. "As Tamil Nadu continues to enhance its charging network and implement supportive policies, we can expect a significant increase in EV adoption. The State's proactive approach towards renewable energy integration makes it well placed to meet the growing demand for electricity from EVs. This growth phase is not just about numbers; it represents a strategic shift towards a more sustainable energy mode," Mr. Fursule said. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) report titled 'Electric Vehicle Public Charging Infrastructure: 2030 Roadmap' released in December 2024, said there was a high variability of electricity tariffs across States and stressed on the need to shift to single tariff with consistency across States.

SOURCE: THE HINDU, 09 JUNE2025

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Nearly half of India's power generation capacity non-fossil: Govt data

Nearly half of India's installed power generation capacity of a total of 476 GW is non-fossil fuel-based as of June, but coal-based thermal electricity plays a critical part, according to government data. According to a government explainer on energy and environment issued on Sunday, India's total installed power capacity has reached 476 GW as of June 2025. Non-fossil fuel sources now contribute 235.7 GW (49%) of total capacity, including 226.9 GW renewable and 8.8 GW nuclear, it stated. As of June 2025, India's renewable energy includes 110.9 GW of solar and 51.3 GW of wind power installed capacity. In addition to the installed capacity, 176.70 GW worth of RE projects are under implementation, with 72.06 GW under bidding stages.

It explained that thermal power remains dominant, accounting for 240 GW or 50.52 per cent of installed capacity. It noted that India's energy sector is heavily reliant on non-renewable thermal sources, which together account for the largest share of the country's electricity generation capacity. Among them, coal alone contributes over 91 per cent of the total thermal energy, highlighting its critical role in powering the nation, it pointed out. The country is successfully balancing the twin goals of meeting rising electricity demand and promoting sustainability. Power shortages dropped from 4.2 per cent in 201314 to 0.1 per cent in 202425. Per capita electricity consumption in India rose by 45.8 per cent to 1,395 kWh in 2023-24 from 957 kWh in 2013-14. India's power sector is among the most diversified in the world, with generation from conventional sources like coal, gas, hydro, and nuclear, as well as renewable sources such as solar, wind, biomass, and small hydro, it stated. With rising electricity demand, India continues to expand its energy capacity to support economic growth and sustainability goals.

SOURCE: BUSINESS STANDARD, 22 JUNE 2025

WORLD NEWS

Energy access has improved, but more funding is needed to address disparities: WHO

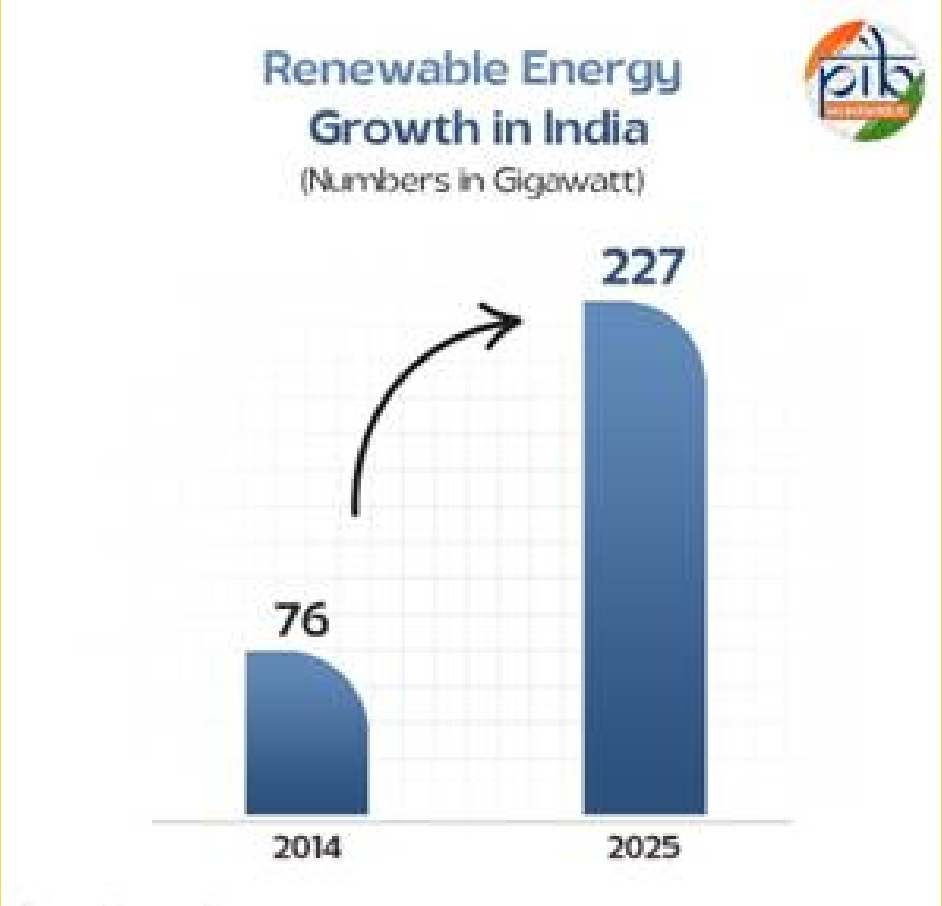
While the rate of basic access to energy has increased since 2022, the current pace is insufficient to reach universal access by 2030, one of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), according to a report published by the WHO and partners this Wednesday. The report highlights the role of cost-effective distributed renewable energy — a combination of mini-grid and off-grid solar systems — in accelerating energy access, particularly as the populations who remain unconnected mostly live in remote, lower-income, and fragile areas. "Despite progress in some parts of the world, the expansion of electricity and clean cooking access remains disappointingly slow, especially in Africa," said Fatih Birol, Executive Director of the International Energy Agency (IEA), as 85 per cent of the global population without electricity access reside in sub-Saharan Africa. In the region, renewables deployment has rapidly expanded; however, on average, it remains limited to 40 watts of installed capacity per capita — only one eighth of the average in other developing countries. As regional disparities persist, an estimated 1.5 billion people residing in rural areas still lack access to clean cooking, while over two billion people remain dependent on polluting and hazardous fuels such as firewood and charcoal for their cooking needs. Yet, the use of off-grid clean technologies, such as household biogas plants and mini-grids that enable electric cooking, can offer solutions that reduce the health impacts caused by household air pollution. This year's report shows that now is the time to come together to build on existing achievements and scale up our efforts," said Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the UN Statistics Division, as the report called for strengthened international cooperation between the public and private sectors to scale up financial support for developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

SOURCE: NEWS.UN.ORG 25 JUNE 2025

PUBLICATIONS

- **Tracking SDG 7 - The Energy Progress Report 2025, World Bank**
- **Solar electricity every hour of every day is here and it changes everything, 2025, Ember**
- **Determination of Tariff for Distribution for FY 2025-26, TNERC**
- **Fostering Effective Energy Transition 2025 , World Economic Forum**
- **EnviStats India 2025: Environment Statistics, MoSPI**

RENEWABLE ENERGY GROWTH IN INDIA



SOURCE: PIB, JUNE 2025

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