

**BEFORE THE VIDYUT OMBUDSMAN**

**::Present::**

**C.Ramakrishna**

Date: 26-03-2014

Appeal No.121 of 2013

Between

Sri. Abdul Rahim,  
S/o. Late Md. Galab,  
D.No.24-2-5, Mastan Street,  
Vizianagaram - 02.

**... Appellant**

**And**

1. The Assistant Engineer, Distribution-2, APEPDCL.
2. The Assistant Account Officer, ERO, APEPDCL.
3. The Assistant Divisional Engineer, Distribution Sub-Division, APEPDCL.
4. The Divisional Engineer, Operation, APEPDCL.

**... Respondents**

The above appeal filed on 16-02-2014 has come up for final hearing before the Vidyut Ombudsman on 24-03-2014 at Vizianagaram. The appellant as well as respondents were present. Having considered the appeal, the written and oral submissions made by the appellant and the respondents, the Vidyut Ombudsman passed the following:

**AWARD**

2. The appeal arose out of the grievance of the appellant that in the month of July, 2013 his meter was not read and that instead the bill was issued on an ad hoc basis. This has resulted in his getting an abnormal bill in the subsequent month and he had to pay bill for the month of July twice.

3. The appellant is a domestic consumer of average means having a service connection under LT I category. The meter of the service is located in an open veranda of the house and it is easily accessible to any meter reader at any time. In other words, the question of “door lock” will never arise. \_

4. In his appeal the appellant stated that he gave a complaint to the Assistant Engineer for getting an excess bill; that the meter reader noted it incorrectly as “door locked”; that the CGRF failed to appreciate the actual facts; that the mentioning of 118 units as having been consumed in the month of July, 2013 is incorrect. He also enclosed handwritten sketch of his house to buttress his arguments.

5. A notice was issued for hearing the matter on 24-03-2014 at Vizianagarm. In response to the notice, only the AAO, Town, Vizianagaram submitted written response stating that the service connection is released in the name of Sri.J.B.A Rahim on 12-02-1960 under category I with a contracted load of 0.31kW; that the service has been billed under normal status up to July 2013; that in the month of August, 2013 it was billed under “door locked” status with a consumption of 118 units; that in the month of 9/2013, the service is billed again under normal status with a consumption of 451 units for the months of 8/2013 and 9/2013 duly adjusting the amount of the bill issued

under “door locked” status; that for 8/2013 the consumer paid the entire amount of Rs.1,937/- and that there is no discrepancy in billing the service; and that the CGRF has noted in its order that that the grievance is redressed and his bills were revised and the appellant has paid the remaining amount.

6. At the time of hearing, the appellant as well as the respondents were present and submitted some more information to support their contentions. The appellant submitted that as the meter reader had incorrectly stated the status as “door locked” even though there is no such possibility; and that this has resulted in his getting an excessive bill in the next two successive months due to the telescoping method of calculation of electricity charges consumed; and that the excess charges should not only be waived but that he should also be compensated for having been forced to unnecessarily incur expenses of about Rs.600/- for going round the offices making appeal after appeal for getting justice.

7. The respondent AAO produced the account copies of the service connection and clearly explained as to how there never was excessive billing against this service connection for the months of 8/2013 and 9/2013 and how proper adjustment of the “door locked” status billing was done. All the respondents submitted that it was the month of agitation due to “Jai Samaikyandhra” movement and that there was a curfew imposed in that part of Vizianagaram where this particular service is located. This has what prevented the meter reader to note the meter reading in the month of July 2013. The respondents’ contention about the existence of curfew was not supported by them by way of any documentary evidence.

8. On a consideration of the written as well as oral submissions of the appellant as well as respondents, it clearly emerged that there was excessive billing against the service for one particular month, purportedly due to “Jai Samaikhyandhra movement” related curfew. However nothing could have stopped the meter reader from performing the duty even in curfew conditions, as electricity is an essential service and it is the normal practice in curfew conditions to issue passes for various authorities to go about performing their duties. A service which was there since 1960 and which never had any billing related problems ever since, could hardly invite raising of demand under “door locked” status. This is clearly a failure under the part of meter reader and is not acceptable.

9. The contention of the respondents that there was no excess billing is borne by record. The record clearly shows that the billing was done correctly in the subsequent months and the amounts raised on an ad hoc basis are properly accounted for. Thus, there is no merit in the contention of the appellant that he was forced to pay excess amount due to the fault of the meter reader. That there is fault on the part of the meter reader is beyond doubt. But to say that it has resulted in the consumer paying excess amount if not correct, as the amounts paid were subsequently and properly accounted for.

10. Keeping in view the average means of the appellant consumer, his advanced age and health conditions, and the hassle that he was put through, it is felt desirable that he be compensated for unnecessarily marking him go round the offices of the various respondents in search of justice for the fault of the meter reader. Therefore, it is hereby ordered that a cost of Rs.600/- shall

be paid by the DISCOM to the appellant consumer by adjusting this amount in his ensuing bills. The respondent officers shall do so within a period of 15 days from the date of receipt of this order and report compliance within 15 days from thereafter to this authority.

11. The DISCOM is free to recoup this cost from the meter reader who is at fault for not reading the meter and causing undue hassle for the appellant herein.

This order is corrected and signed on this 26<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2014.

**VIDYUT OMBUDSMAN**

To

1. Sri. Abdul Rahim, S/o. Late Md. Galab, D.No.24-2-5, Mastan Street, Vizianagaram - 02.
2. The Assistant Engineer, Distribution-2, APEPDCL.
3. The Assistant Account Officer, ERO, APEPDCL.
4. The Assistant Divisional Engineer, Distribution Sub-Division, APEPDCL.
5. The Divisional Engineer, Operation, APEPDCL.

Copy to:

1. The Chairperson, CGRF, APEPDCL, P & T Colony, Seethammadhara, Near Gurudwara Junction, Visakhapatnam - 530 013.
2. The Secretary, APERC, 11-4-660, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Singareni Bhavan, Red Hills, Hyderabad-04.