

Enquiry Report in the Appeal No.08 & Appeal NO.9 (Sh. Vijendra Vs BYPL)

1. Introduction

This enquiry report is prepared in compliance with the order of the Electricity Ombudsman dated 15.05.2025 in the Appeal Nos.08 & 09(Sh. Vijendra Vs BYPL), regarding non-installation of a prepaid auto-cut meter at the premises of Shri Vijendra despite earlier directions issued by the CGRF-BYPL in Complaint No. 350/2024. The purpose of the report is to establish reasons for non-compliance, assess responsibility, and document the corrective steps taken or proposed.

2. Background

The consumer, Shri Vijendra, raised grievances before the CGRF in 2021 and again in 2024 about the non-functional prepaid meter that failed to disconnect upon exhaustion of credit balance. The CGRF directed BYPL to take corrective steps, including installation of a functioning prepaid meter with an auto cut-off feature. However, the Ombudsman noted non-compliance and called for an enquiry.

On the directions of the Head (Business), an enquiry committee was formed to conduct enquiry on the delay in compliance of the CGRF order

The findings of the committee are as below

3. Key Findings

a) Technical Malfunctions in Installed Meters

After installation of certain prepaid meters right after the introduction of the Mukhyamantri Kiraydhar Scheme, even though the pre-paid meters were purchased after necessary factory tests, the pre-paid meters started to function differently in actual site conditions due to site related complications like network connectivity issues. Gradually BYPL received consumer complaints about software glitches, meter hang-ups, and inconsistent disconnections. In view of this, BYPL decided to temporarily halt procurement and installation of pre-paid meters until rectification was ensured by the vendor.

b) Delay Due to Vendor Activation Issues

After the faced glitches in the pre-paid meters, the vendor was asked to take corrective action and rectify the problems. Hence the auto cut-off feature in the pre-paid meters was not activated due to delays from the meter vendor. Firmware updates and testing were pending, which prevented timely activation.

c) No Staff Accountability

In light of the above vendor and technical issues, there appears to be no willful negligence or misconduct on the part of BYPL staff. Hence, no accountability is fixed in the delay of activation of auto cut feature of non-installation of pre-paid meter in compliance with the directions of the Hon'ble CGRF.

d) Industry-Wide Challenges in India

Several electricity boards across India have faced issues with prepaid/smart meters. Some examples include:

- UPPCL: Faced protests over abrupt disconnections, billing mismatches, and recharge failures - <https://www.consumercomplaints.in/uppcl-uppcl-prepaid-meter-recharge-c3237487>

- JBVNL: Reported software glitches causing unauthorized deductions and unresponsive meters

Source: <https://gyanok.com/state/jharkhand/ranchi-smart-meter-billi-bill-problem-consumers-in-trouble-jbvnl-may-cut-electricity-connection>

- BSPHCL: Auto cut-off and billing issues during server outages caused widespread consumer distress.

Source: <https://patnaexpress.com/week-long-outage-of-bihars-smart-meter-server-sparks-consumer-fears-over-high-bills/>

4. Conclusion

The delay in implementation was due to genuine technical issues and not due to negligence. BYPL is now ready to install prepaid meters, subject to submission of valid tenancy documentation by the appellant as BYPL, in spite of ongoing tests from the Vendor end, has specially procured limited quantity of pre-paid meters in order to comply with the order of the Hon'ble Ombudsman

J. P. H. K.
10.07.2025

Jagatheesh Kannan

Secretary - Enquiry Committee