

		Date	Month	Year
1	Date of Receipt	25	06	2025
2	Date of Registration	26	06	2025
3	Decided on	13	08	2025
4	Duration of proceeding	48 days		
5	Delay, if any.			

BEFORE THE CONSUMER GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL FORUM

B.E.S. & T. UNDERTAKING

(Constituted under section 42(5) of the Electricity Act 2003)

Ground Floor, Multistoried Annex Building,

BEST's Colaba Depot

Colaba, Mumbai - 400 001

Telephone No. 22799528

Grievance No. A-520-2025 dtd. 26/06/2025

Neha Parveen Wahab KhanComplainant

V/S

B.E.S.&T. UndertakingRespondent

Present Coram : Hon'ble Chairman (CGRF) : Mr. M.S. Gupta

Hon'ble Independent Member : Mrs. A.A. Acharekar

Hon'ble Technical Member : Mr. J.W. Chavan

On behalf of the Complainant : Asif Khan

On behalf of the Respondent : BES&T Undertaking

1. Mrs. K.M. Jarode, Superintendent Customer Care 'A' Ward
2. Mr. V.S. Wagh, Dy. Engineer (CRM) Customer Care 'A' Ward

Date of Hearing : 05/08/2025

Date of Order : 13/08/2025

JUDGEMENT

- 1.0 The core of the complaint is the drastic increase in the electricity bill from a consistent amount of Rs. 150/ 230 to Rs. 13,085 for December'2024 pertaining to Consumer no. 495-791-010 (Meter No. 5004169) at Ground floor, Ganesh Murthi Nagar, Captain Prakash Pethe marg, Backbay Bus Depot, Cuff Parade, Mumbai-400005 (for short "the said premises").
- 1.1 Mrs. Neha Parveen Wahab khan (Consumer no. 495-791-010, Meter No. 5004169), the Complainant is disputing a "High bill" received for December'2024. She claims that her previous bills were significantly lower (Rs. 150 to Rs. 230 approx.) before Smart meter replacement in November/ December 2024. After the replacement, her December'2024 bill was for Rs. 13,085/-, which she considers excessively high and an "excess bill". She states that she had not received such large bills before and requests the Forum to look into the matter and allow her to pay the bill regularly presumably based on actual lower consumption. The Complainant argues that the high bill is a result of a meter interchange incident that occurred during mass Smart meter deployment on 11/12/2023. This incident caused incorrect mapping of meters among three Consumers, including her, where her consumption was debited to Consumer No. 495-791-005.
- 2.0 The Respondent (BEST Undertaking) requests the Hon'ble Forum to dismiss the Grievance. They argue that the amount of Rs. 13,085/- debited to the Consumers account for December 2024 was for the uncharged 1439 units consumed during the interchange period. They assert that these 1439 units were legitimately consumed by the Complainant and were billed as per actual consumption. The Respondent acknowledges the meter interchange incident on 11/12/2023 affecting Consumer No. 495-791-010 (the Complainants new Consumer number, as her original one was 495-791-005). The Respondent states that the issue was identified following a high billing complaint from Consumer No. 495-791-005. A site inspection on 24/09/2024 revealed discrepancies and confirmed that meters were interchanged. The Respondent states that the data from the respective meters was used to recalculate bills and appropriate debit & credit adjustments were made to the accounts of all three affected Consumers in December'2024 to reflect their true electricity usage.
- 2.1 The Respondent specifically mentioned that the Complainant Neha Wahab's meter no. 5004169, which belonged to another Consumer had a mixed-up consumption leading to her being billed for only 1204 units previously, whereas her actual consumption was higher. The difference of 1439 units was added to her account, resulting in a debit adjustment of Rs. 13,085/- in her December'2024 bill. This amount represents the previously unbilled units

consumed during the interchange period. The actual monthly bill for December'2024, excluding this adjustment was Rs. 1,760.85.

- 2.2 The Respondent emphasizes that robust verification procedures were put in place to avoid such mismatches in the future. They confirm that the consumer had been informed about the unbilled 1439 units and was asked to pay the total bill via a letter dated 24/02/2025. In summary, the Complainant believes the bill is inflated due to a meter error and seeks a reduction, while the Respondent as Utility Company maintains that the high bill is due to the recovery of previously unbilled consumption resulting from a meter interchange and charge is for actual usage.
- 3.0 From rival contentions of the parties following points arise for our determination with findings thereon for the reasons to follow :

Sr. No.	Points for determination	Findings
1	Whether the electricity bill of Rs. 13,085/- raised by the Respondent is valid ?	Negative
2	What Order ?	As per final order.

REASONS

- 4.0 We have heard the parties in this matter along with their representatives and carefully gone through various documents submitted by them.
- 4.1 The Complaint perceives the bill as "excessive" and questions its legitimacy, suggesting it doesn't align with her typical consumption. This sudden surge, immediately following a Smart meter replacement, naturally raises concerns for a Consumer. The Complainant explicitly links the high bill to the Smart meter replacement on 11/12/2023. This highlights a critical point of failure or mismanagement during the upgrade process.
- 4.2 The Complainant asserts that her consumption was wrongly debited to Consumer No. 495-791-005 due to a "Meter interchange incident" during a mass smart meter deployment on 11/12/2023. This is a serious allegation of procedural error.
- 4.3 The Complainant wishes to pay her bill regularly, implying a return to her usual consumption base billing, not an inflated one due to past errors. The Respondent states that procedures were put in place to avoid future mismatches, indicating an acknowledgment of past inadequacy. Crucially the

Respondent admits to the meter interchanged incident on 11/12/2023, affecting the Complainant and to other consumers. This validates the Complainant's primary assertion regarding the fault in system. The Respondent justifies Rs. 13,085/- bill as the recovery of 1439 units consumed by the Complainant but uncharged during the period of meter interchange. It is claimed to be based on actual consumption. The billing of 1439 units consumed in an earlier period as a lumpsum in the December 2024 bill constitutes retroactive billing. The incident is stated to have occurred on 11/12/2023 and the inspection was carried out on 24/09/2024, this suggests a significant delay in identifying and rectifying the error. During the hearing, the Respondent was not able to justify the discrepancy tallying the credit / debit against the three consumers who had been charged adjustment in the total amount of Rs. 13,085/- due to interchanging of the electric meters.

- 4.4 The fact that the Consumer was significantly under-billed for a period due to the meter interchange error and then retroactively billed for a large sum is the issue. While the Licensee has the right to recover legitimate dues, the manner and timing of such recovery are subject to regulations. Section 56 of Electricity Act, 2003 deals with the recovery of dues with a provision for limitation of two years of recovery of charges. The MERC Supply Code Regulations has directed as to how unbilled consumption due to meter defects or errors should be billed, including provisions for average billing and installment payments to ease the burden on consumers. Since the error was on the part of the Distribution Licensee, the Respondent should have followed the prescribed procedure for billing unbilled units. Considering above, the Respondent is liable for a compensation under MERC Supply Code 2021, clause 25 (Sr. No. 7 of Annexure -II, Other Services) for improper reading of consumers' meters.
- 4.5 The meter interchanged incident itself represents a failure in the Licensees' service delivery. A mass Smart Meter deployment should ideally be executed with stringent quality control to prevent such errors. The admitted meter interchange incident indicates a lapse in Licensees' operational standards. Consumer expects accurate metering and billing as a fundamental aspect of service.
- 4.6 The fact that the explanatory letter dtd. 24/02/2025 was sent after the contentious bill for December 2024 was generated, could be seen as a deficiency in consumer communication. Consumers have a right to clear and timely information regarding their bills, especially when adjustments for past errors were made. The initial bill sent to the consumer in December 2024 might not have clearly segregated the current month's consumption from the past adjustments, leading to confusion and distress. Transparency requires clear itemization. Hiding a large retroactive charge within a current month's

bill without clear segregation and explanation can be considered non-transparent.

- 4.7 The Consumer experienced inconvenience and mental distress due to the sudden high bill and the underlined error caused by the Respondent. The Respondent's submission focuses on recovery of dues but does not explicitly mention any compensation or any option for the inconvenience caused by their admitted error. The Consumer should have been adequately informed before or concurrently with the issuance of the high bill about the meter interchanged, the recalculation and the reason for the large adjustment.
- 4.8 The Forum has considered the submissions and finds that the Respondent has admitted to the meter interchange incident. This incident, which is the root cause of the dispute, represents a clear failure in the Respondent's service delivery and a lapse in operational standards. The subsequent retroactive billing of uncharged units in a lump sum in December 2024, without clear segregation from the current month's charges, is non-transparent and a deficiency in consumer communication. The regulations stipulate the procedure for billing unbilled consumption due to meter errors and include provisions for average billing and installment payments to mitigate the burden on consumers. The Respondent's failure to offer an installment payment option or provide clear, timely communication before issuing the bill is a violation of the regulation.
- 5.0 In this view of the matter the point no. (1) is answered in negative and we pass following order as answer to point no.2.

ORDER

1. The Grievance No. A-520-2025 dtd. 26/06/2025 is partly allowed.
2. The Respondent is directed to withdraw the disputed bill of Rs. 13,085/- for December 2024 and issue a revised bill for December 2024, clearly itemizing and segregating the actual monthly consumption charges (Rs. 1,760.85/-) from the retroactive charges for the previously unbilled 1,439 units, excluding Delay Payment Charges (DPC) & Interest on arrears (IOA) and deducting the payments already made by the Complainant.
3. The Respondent is also directed to offer an installment payment plan to the Complainant for the retroactive amount of revised bill. This amount shall be payable in six equal monthly installments, without any additional interest or late fees.
4. The Respondent is further directed to pay compensation of Rs. 2,000/- to the Complainant for the inconvenience and mental distress caused by the Respondent's acknowledged error and deficient communication.

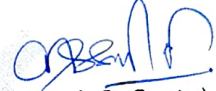
5. It is directed to submit a compliance report to the Forum within 30 days from the date of this Order, confirming the implementation of the above directions.
6. The Complainant is directed to pay the current monthly bills as and when they are issued including the arrears as mentioned above in installments.
7. Copies of this Order be given to all the concerned parties.



(Mr. Jitendra W. Chavan)
Technical Member



(Mrs. Anagha A. Acharekar)
Independent Member



(Mr. Mahesh S. Gupta)
Chairman

