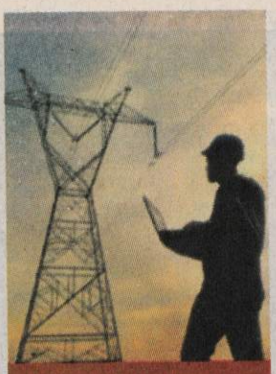
stribution utilities:
es remain

holders. State governments have improved their due subsidy disbursal to over 100 per cent in FY22, along with clearing arrears. Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have shown significant improvement in subsidy disbursement, and the absolute cash-adjusted gap in these states has collectively improved by around ₹40,000 crore over FY20-22.

■Discoms have achieved 96 per cent collection efficiency from consumers, driven by initiatives such as digital billing and collection, use of default tracking software, AI-based meter-reading tools etc. Rajasthan, Telangana and Madhya Pradesh exhibited significant reduction in AT&C losses, driven primarily by improvement in collection efficiency. Gujarat discoms have consistently maintained low payables and receivables.

■Regulators have also started playing their part by issuing timely tariffs — with 45 tariff orders issued before the March 2022 deadline as compared to 30 in the previous year.

However, there is still much ground to cover before we cheer. The sector remains loss-making; AT&C losses for some discoms are in excess of 25 per cent. State governments have to clear subsidy arrears of around ₹66,000 crore, and overall debt levels in the sector need to be brought down.



Like in other sectors, automatic pass-through of fuel costs has been implemented in the distribution sector — thus allowing discoms to timely recover the changes in input costs, rather than waiting for the next year in the true-up cycle

The way forward

Billing efficiency is still stagnant at around 85 per cent; it should be at least 92 per cent. Under RDSS, the installation of "pre-paid" smart meters would bring the AT&C losses down, improve billing accuracy and create transparency for customers. Pre-payment would help in reducing receivable days, especially from institutional consumers. For instance, various government departments and associated institutions had outstanding dues of around ₹60,000 crore as of March 31, 2022. The target of installing 250 million smart meters would make it the largest smart meter programme globally. Prepaid smart metering in RDSS is being implemented on a service level agreement (SLA)-based monthly payment mode, which integrates system development and maintenance under a single vendor. There is a strong consumer focus with a user-friendly mobile app providing all functionalities at the touch of a button. Almost all the states have committed to participate in the scheme. Upon the completion of RDSS in FY25, we expect a sectoral billing efficiency of more than 92 per cent and AT&C losses of less than 12 per cent.

RDSS also links the eligibility for and quantum of fund disbursals with the achievement of predetermined reform conditionalities and mutually agreed year-wise goals. If not complied with, fund flow will stop on yearly basis. The goals consist of various trajectories of AT&C losses, payables to gencos and transcos, clearance of subsidy arrears, liquidation of regulatory assets, timely publication of tariff orders etc.

Energy audit and accounting has been made mandatory for all discoms. This would enable the discoms to analyse their power supply and billing in detail and identify areas of energy theft, unmetered power supply, sale to subsidised consumers, etc. With the implementation of the smart metering infrastructure, including DT metering, communicable meters on feeders, etc and mandatory energy accounting, the sector would see a 360-degree automation of energy accounting.

Going forward, there is a need to reform tariffs and the tariff-setting mechanism. Some states continue to have high cross-subsidisation, i.e. industrial / commercial consumers heavily subsidise agricultural / residential consumers. This should be limited and disincentivised.

Like in other sectors, automatic pass-through of fuel costs has been implemented in the distribution sector — thus allowing discoms to timely recover the changes in input costs, rather than waiting for the next year in the true-up cycle. Many states have come on board. This will de-politicise power tariff. States can give subsidy to needy sections.

India's per capita power consumption is expected to grow multifold in the coming decades, in line with economic development and improved standards of living. The electricity distribution sector will need to be healthy and agile to respond to the challenges and opportunities like the growth of electric mobility, increasing renewables integration and highest level of customer service. The power distribution sector is on the cusp of a turnaround, and the improvement is already visible.

The writer is Secretary, Ministry of Power, Government of India

மக்கள்குரல்

11 ஆயிரத்து 820 வாக்காளர்களின் பெயர்கள் இடப்பெயர்ச்சி, இறப்பு மற்றும் இரட்டை

அதிக வாக்காளர்கள் – சோழிங்கநல்லூர்

பாலினத்தவர் 2).

இவ்வாறு அதில் கூறப்பட்டுள்ளது.

இடம் : மும்பை
தேதி : மே 31, 2023