

BEFORE THE ELECTRICITY OMBUDSMAN (MUMBAI)

(Appointed by the Maharashtra Electricity Regulatory Commission
under Section 42(6) of the Electricity Act, 2003)

REPRESENTATION NO. 9 OF 2025

In the matter of permanent disconnection of agricultural connection, withdrawal of fictitious
billing and refund of Security Deposit

Shritaj Suleman Shaikh Appellant
(Ag. Con. No. 204263872856)

V/s.

Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Co. Ltd., Vaduj Dn.. Respondent
(MSEDCL)

Appearances:

Appellant : Salim Shiraj Shaikh, Son

Respondent : Bhimrao Maske, Executive Engineer, Vaduj Dn.


Coram: Vandana Krishna [IAS (Retd.)]

Date of hearing: 28th July 2025

Date of Order: 5th August 2025

ORDER

This Representation was filed on 4th March 2025 under Regulation 19.1 of the Maharashtra Electricity Regulatory Commission (Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum and Electricity Ombudsman) Regulations, 2020 (CGRF & EO Regulations 2020) against the order dated 28th October 2024 in Case No. 28 of 2024 passed by the Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum, Baramati (the Forum). The Forum by its order basically allowed the grievance application of the Appellant. The main points of the operative order (originally in Marathi) are as follows:


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2. *The Respondent is directed to withdraw all electric bills of Agricultural Con. No.204263872856 and the connection should be permanently disconnected.*
3. *The Consumer has to apply online application for refund of security deposit and the Respondent has to refund the said security deposit.*


2. Aggrieved by the order of the Forum, the Appellant filed this Representation. An e-hearing was held on 28th July 2025 through video conference where both the parties were heard at length. The Respondent's submissions and arguments are as below. *[The Electricity Ombudsman's observations and comments are recorded under 'Notes' where needed.]*

- (i) The Appellant applied for a 5 HP agricultural electricity connection on 13.06.2022 and submitted all the required statutory documents. Following the application, the Respondent conducted a site survey of the proposed metering point. Based on the survey, a Demand Notice of Rs. 5,212/- was issued under the Dedicated Distribution Facility (DDF) scheme. Under this scheme, no service connection charges are levied by the utility; instead, the Appellant is responsible for carrying out the work related to the service connection, such as laying the cable, installing the meter box, earthing, etc. The Appellant paid the Demand Notice of Rs. 5,212/- on 31.10.2022, and a system-generated consumer number was allotted thereafter. The relevant details including the consumer number, address, and sanctioned load, etc., are provided in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Consumer Details

Name of Consumer	Consumer No.	Address	Date of Application	San. Load	Demand Note of DDF Connection by paying 1.3 % Supervision Charges	Remarks
Shriraj Suleman Shaikh	204263872856	1390, Mohi, Tal. : Man, Dist.: Satara	13.06.2022	5 HP	Rs. 5212/- paid on 31.10.2022 (Deposit Rs. 5000/- + Processing Fee: Rs. 160/- Supervision Charges: Rs. 20/- & GST: Rs. 32/- (Work to be done by Consumer)	Ag. Connection was not released, however quarterly bills were sent for the period from 04.11.2022 to March 2025 accumulated to Rs. 24,360/- which was withdrawn on 02.05.2025.


- (ii) The Appellant submitted the Test Report Certificate after executing the required works under the DDF scheme. The connection was not released. However, the Assistant Engineer, Section Office, Dahiwadi (Rural), without obtaining confirmation from the


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field staff, erroneously recorded the connection release date as 04.11.2022 in the system assuming meter AG HP Based Tariff Category, based purely on assumption and oversight. The Respondent acknowledges this error and has expressed regret for the same.

- (iii) Accordingly, billing commenced from the recorded date of connection, i.e., 04.11.2022. Upon receiving quarterly bills, the Appellant initiated multiple correspondence with MSEDCL authorities, requesting cancellation of the bills. This was due to a change in the Appellant's priorities regarding the new agricultural connection, which he no longer intended to pursue owing to internal issues. *[Note: The Appellant clarified during the hearing that since he started receiving bills without there being a connection or consumption, he decided not pursue release of the connection; to avoid unnecessary bills.]*
- (iv) Despite this, the Appellant continued to receive SMS notifications regarding outstanding bill amounts and disconnection warnings. In February 2023, the Appellant lodged an online complaint stating that no meter had been provided by MSEDCL and that no actual connection had been established. However, a misleading message was sent, and the Appellant was shown to be in fictitious arrears from the issuance of the first bill, with subsequent bills being generated thereafter.
- (v) During this period, the IT system at Head Office had locked the status of temporarily disconnected consumers, preventing their conversion to Permanently Disconnected (PD) status unless and until arrears were fully paid, due to a policy directive. As a result, the local office was unable to process the Appellant's status change to PD.
- (vi) The Appellant filed a grievance application with the Forum on 19.06.2024. The Forum, through its order, partially upheld the Appellant's grievance. The main points of the operative order are outlined in the first Para.
- (vii) The Appellant approached the Electricity Ombudsman (Mumbai) on 04.03.2025 for compliance of this order of the Forum. The IT system Team at the Corporate Office took a review of their policy by enabling field officers to convert disconnected consumers to PD status. Consequently, the fictitious billing amount of Rs.24,360/- was withdrawn on 02.05.2025. *[Note: There was pressure from the Electricity*


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Ombudsman's office to revise the bill as per Forum's order prior to the hearing.) The quarterly bill for the period ending June 2025 was subsequently issued with PD status, reflecting no outstanding dues. Hence, the reply of MSEDCL to the EO office was delayed.

- (viii) The Appellant was advised to submit an online application for the refund of his security deposit, along with the required KYC documentation and a blank cheque. The deposit amount of Rs.5,000/- will be refunded through the system upon completion of this formality.
- (ix) This representation has already been resolved. Nothing remains to be solved except for the Security Deposit which will be refunded after completion of the KYC formalities and considering quarterly billing. In view of the above, the representation of the Appellant be rejected.

3. The Appellant's submissions and arguments are stated as below:


- (i) The Appellant, a senior citizen aged 75 years and a farmer residing at Village Mohi, Taluka Man, District Satara, had applied for a 5 HP agricultural electricity connection on 13.06.2022. The application was duly submitted along with all requisite documents as prescribed by MSEDCL. In compliance with the demand notice issued by MSEDCL of allotted Consumer No. 204263872856, the Appellant subsequently made a payment of Rs.5,212/- on 31.10.2022.
- (ii) A bill of for Rs. 2,720/- was generated without any actual release of connection and meter installation, which was received in Jan. 2023. The Appellant lodged an online complaint on 23.02.2023.
- (iii) The Appellant put on record the various events of this case. The important events are tabulated as below:


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Dates/Month	Important Events
13.06.2022	Date of Application (no. 41178258) for Agricultural - LT Supply-5HP-3 Phase connection
13.06.2022	Electrical Contrators Completion and Test Report
31.10.2022	Date of payment of Security Deposit of Rs.5000 and other processing fees totalling to Rs. 5212/-
04.11.2022	Bogus SMS by MSEDCL about Electricity connection being operational
23.02.2023	Online complaint no. 0000027095903 through MSEDCL App towards false bill of Rs.2720/-.
Feb. 2023	Complaint text: <i>I had applied for electricity connection for water pump purpose in the month of Oct 22 vide application number 41178258. However, no meter was supplied by MSEDCL neither any connection has been made till date. Surprisingly a false message was sent....</i>
25.05.2023	SMS by MSEDCL intimating bill of Rs.6840/- payable by 24 May 23 and avoid disconnection of electricity supply by paying the bill within 15 days.
May / June 2023	Online complaint no. 0000029971805 through MSEDCL App towards false bill of Rs.6840/-.
	Complaint Text: <i>Please refer to complaint no. 0000027095903. No change in status quo with regard to aforesaid complaint. Meter not installed till date. Bill generated not in order. Request cancellation of full existing bill as on date. No further bill generation be.....</i>
	MSEDCL Response on APP - Kindly meet the Section Officer of your area in this regards <i>Assumption based on MSEDCL SMS content - that site inspection will be done by MSEDCL staff according to this SMS which will eventually prove that there is no connection or meter installed for my consumer number. This will help in correction of the bill to Zero amount.</i>
06.11.2023	MSEDCL Response by email - Your bill is not subjected to any revision and it is requested to pay the Energy Bill immediately. Kindly meet the Section Officer of your area in this regards
Nov.2023	<i>The original reason for which connection was applied fails due to disagreements between farmer members for repair of the common well and sharing expenditure due to absence of water in the well for most of the time.</i>
	<i>Authorised staff of MSEDCL in village informs that no need to worry about bills as the issue will get sorted out once the meter is installed and the reading on actual consumption is taken</i>
	<i>Hence issue kept on hold upto May 2024.</i>
Jun-24	Representation dated 03 Jun 24 made to Dahivadi office of MSEDCL requesting for disconnection of Electricity Connection for consumer no. 204263872856 informing that there has been no meter connection till date and therefore no consumption of electricity. Reference was made about two online complaint made in this regard on MAHAVITRAN APP. Request was made for cancellation of the connection, cancellation of bills as on date and refund of Security Deposit.
	Shri AE Kadam, Assistant Engineer at MSEDCL, Dahivadi office - ill treatment and rude behaviour with the Appellant.
19.06.2024	Grievance raised with the Forum with Request for Disconnetion based on application dated 03 Jun 24 & Refund of Security Deposit of Rs.5000/-

- (iv) The Forum, by its order dated 28.10.2024 has allowed the grievance application filed by the Appellant. The main points of the operative order are quoted in the first para.



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- (v) The Respondent has withdrawn the fictitious billing, as detailed in Table 1. However, the security deposit has not been refunded till date.
- (vi) The experience narrated above is not isolated and could similarly affect many poor and uneducated farmers who may not have the means or knowledge to pursue such grievances.
- (vii) In view of the above, the Appellant respectfully prays that the Respondent be directed to:
 - (a) Refund the security deposit, as the Appellant is willing to complete the required statutory formalities; and
 - (b) Pay compensation of Rs.1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lakh only) to the Appellant for the mental agony, harassment, and financial loss.

4. During the course of the hearing, the Appellant expressed a desire to offer suggestions for improving MSEDCL's functioning. Upon receiving permission, the Appellant promptly submitted the following suggestions:


- a) **Awareness of Financial and Procedural Implications:** MSEDCL officials at field offices must ensure that applicants, especially farmers, are adequately informed about key procedural and financial aspects when applying for new connections. This will help prevent future inconvenience and disputes.
- b) **Verification of Electrical Contractor's Test Report:** The "Electrical Contractor's Completion and Test Report" should not be treated as a formality. MSEDCL must verify the authenticity of these reports, as many are issued without actual execution of work.
- c) **Avoid Arbitrary Billing Without Connection Installation:** Bills should only be issued after proper verification of physical installation. Initiating billing merely on the basis of application or SMS communication is arbitrary and reflects misuse of authority.
- d) **Responsible Responses via MAHAVITRAN App:** Responses to complaints lodged via the MAHAVITRAN App are often vague or dismissive. Each response


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should be meaningful, citing relevant rules, sections, or provisions to ensure accountability.

- e) **Complaint Transcript must be Accessible:** Consumers must receive the full transcript of their complaint—either within the MAHAVITRAN App or by email. This is essential for transparency and record-keeping.
- f) **Video Conferencing Option for Consumer Interaction:** Where physical visits to MSEDCL offices are requested by MSEDCL, consumers should be given the option of resolving issues via video conferencing. This is particularly beneficial for the elderly, ailing, or those residing far away.
- g) **Empathy and Sensitivity Training for Staff:** Periodic training should be provided to staff on empathy, communication, and consumer handling, especially when dealing with senior citizens, illiterate, or distressed consumers.
- h) **Accountability in Responding to Consumer Emails:** Emails to MSEDCL offices (e.g., CGRF Baramati, EE Vaduj, SE Satara) often go unanswered. A formal mechanism must be instituted for tracking, monitoring, and ensuring timely, responsible replies to consumer correspondence.
- i) **Timely Compliance with CGRF/Ombudsman Orders:** There is a disturbing delay in compliance with CGRF orders and Ombudsman notices. In my own case, a simple issue took nine months to resolve—highlighting a culture of impunity. Strict measures must be introduced to enforce timely action.
- j) **Speedy Redressal of Billing Grievances:** Consumers facing incorrect or inflated bills should not be compelled to pay first. Responses such as “Your bill is not subject to revision, pay immediately” are unfair. Grievances must be addressed swiftly, ideally within one billing cycle to avoid hardship and prevent misuse of authority. These steps will not only improve consumer satisfaction but also prevent resource wastage caused by unresolved complaints and poor handling of grievances.


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Analysis and Ruling

5. The parties were heard, and the documents on record were duly examined. The Appellant had applied for a 5 HP agricultural connection on 13.06.2022 and submitted all necessary documents. Following a site survey, a Demand Notice of Rs.5,212/- was issued under the Dedicated Distribution Facility (DDF) scheme. The Appellant made the payment on 31.10.2022, and a system-generated consumer number was allotted (refer Table 1).

6. However, the connection was not released, and without actual field verification, the Assistant Engineer erroneously marked 04.11.2022 as the connection release date. No meter was installed, nor was the HP-based tariff applicable. This error was later brought to light by the Appellant. Despite the absence of an installed meter or power supply, billing commenced from 04.11.2022. The Appellant, having changed his plans for getting a connection due to internal disputes between farmers related to the well pump, requested for cancellation of the agricultural connection (which was anyway not released). Nonetheless, he continued to receive bills, SMS alerts, and even disconnection notices, despite no actual supply being provided. This is a clear example of mismanagement and lack of proper responsiveness towards consumers.

7. The Respondent stated that the Appellant filed an online complaint in February 2023, seeking withdrawal of the fictitious billing. Due to the system policy in place at that time, Permanent Disconnection (PD) status could not be processed unless all outstanding dues were paid. However, this still does not explain why unnecessary SMS messages and notices continued to be issued to the Appellant, even though the Respondent had been well informed about the actual status. Subsequently, the IT team enabled PD conversion within the system. The fictitious billing amount of Rs.24,360/- was finally withdrawn on 02.05.2025, and a corrected quarterly bill for June 2025 was issued, reflecting PD status and zero dues. The Appellant was requested to submit KYC documents along with a blank cheque to process the refund of the amount of Rs.5,000/- security deposit. The grievance was considered resolved


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except for the refund of the deposit, which remains pending until completion of the required formalities.


8. The Appellant contended that he, a 75-year-old senior citizen and farmer from Village Mohi, Taluka Man, District Satara was unnecessarily harassed by the Respondent for paying fictitious bills which it refused to cancel even after receiving a complaint in Feb. 2023. This case highlights a broader issue that there may be similarly affected poor and uneducated farmers who lack the resources to seek redress.

9. We note with displeasure the utter apathy, callousness and lack of consumer responsiveness of the Respondent, which is evident from this case. Even after receiving an online complaint from the consumer on 23.02.2023, clearly informing it that “no meter was supplied by MSEDCL, neither any connection has been made till date”, the only response of the concerned MSEDCL officer was “Please visit nearest Mahavitaran office for bill correction.” In other words, the Respondent was consistently refusing to take responsibility for pro-active timely action, and expected the consumer to run around and seek redress. Ideally it should have immediately verified through a site inspection whether the connection was actually released, and till then should have refrained from sending bills, reminders and notices via SMS. The suggestions given by the Appellant in para 4 for improving the functioning of the Respondent are valid and appropriate in this regard.

In view of the above, we impose a cost of Rs. 10,000/- on the Respondent MSEDCL, to be paid to the consumer immediately, irrespective of the return of SD or otherwise.

10. The grievance stands resolved except for the refund of the security deposit. The Respondent has assured that the amount of Rs.5,000/- deposit will be refunded within 15 days of completing the KYC formalities. In light of the above, the Forum’s order is modified as follows. The Respondent is directed to:


- a. Refund the amount of Rs.5,000/- taken as security deposit after completion of the required KYC formalities.


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- b. Pay the cost of Rs. 10,000/- (Rs. Ten thousand only) to the Appellant immediately.
 - c. Submit a compliance report within two months of the date of this order.
11. The Respondent is advised to go through the suggestions made by the Appellant for improving the functioning of MSEDCL, particularly the responsiveness to consumers.
12. The representation of the Appellant is accordingly disposed of.

Sd/
(Vandana Krishna)
Electricity Ombudsman (Mumbai)


(Dilip Dumbre)
Secretary
Electricity Ombudsman Mumbai

