

BEFORE THE ELECTRICITY OMBUDSMAN (MUMBAI)

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

REPRESENTATION NO. 38 OF 2025

In the matter of high bill in the month of April 2024

Ruksana Ansari (Occupier)Appellant
(Late. Vahidabibi Abdul Azim Ansari
Cons. No. 312-519-031)

V/s.

Brihanmumbai Electricity & Transport Undertaking, A WardRespondent
(BEST Undertaking)

Appearances:

Appellant: Ruksana Ansari (daughter of consumer)

Respondent: 1. Mrs. Kirti M. Jarode, Superintendent CC A Ward
2. Mrs. Vidhya S. Wagh, Dy.E


Coram: Vandana Krishna [I.A.S. (Retd.)]

Date of hearing: 9th July 2025

Date of Order: 25th July 2025

ORDER

This Representation was filed on 5th June 2025 under Regulation 19.1 of the Maharashtra Electricity Regulatory Commission (Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum & Electricity Ombudsman) Regulations, 2020 (CGRF & EO Regulations 2020) against the Order dated 11th April 2025 in Grievance No. A-512-2025 passed by the Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum, BEST Undertaking (the Forum). The Forum dismissed the grievance in Grievance No. A-512-2025.


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2. Aggrieved with the Forum's order dated 11.04.2025, the Appellant has filed this representation. A hearing was held on 09.07.2025 wherein all the parties were physically present. Parties were heard at length. The Respondent's submissions and arguments are stated as below: - *[The Electricity Ombudsman's observations and comments are recorded under 'Notes' where needed.]*

- (i) The Appellant is a three-phase residential consumer (No. 312-519-031) at present. The sanctioned load, address, abnormal bill for April 2024, and other particulars are summarized below:


Table 1:

Name of Consumer on bill	Consumer No.	Address on Bill	Date of Supply	Sanctioned Load	Abnormal High Bill in April 2024	Remarks
Vahidabibi Abdul Azim	312-519-031	Floor-6th, Plot - 267, Kumud House, Dadabhai Nawroji Road, Fort, Mumbai 400001	28.12.1990	10.7 KW	3047 units for Rs. 43,240/-	The consumption during 2024-25 ranged between 262 to 443 units per month

Brief History of the Case

- (ii) On 03.04.2024, the meter reading (Meter No. M092068 of Secure Make, 3x10-40 A) was recorded as 27,440 kWh. The consumption for April 2024 was calculated as 3,047 units (=27,440 – 24,693), which was significantly higher than usual. This abnormal consumption was flagged in the system. As per standard practice, a site visit was conducted, and the reading was verified as correct and progressive. Accordingly, the bill was generated, and a detailed investigation was scheduled due to the high deviation.
- (iii) The Appellant lodged a high bill complaint on 16.04.2024. For the past year, average monthly consumption was only about 340 units. A site inspection on 24.04.2024 revealed the connected load as:

Geyser – 1, Fan – 5, TV – 1, Fridge – 1, Washing Machine – 1, LED lights – 11, Mixer – 1, Cooler – 1, Sewing Machine – 1.



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There are 15 consumers on service no. 17760-X-X, of which only 2 are residential and the rest are commercial.

Meter Testing and Replacement

- (iv) On the consumer's request, ID No. 8773954 was generated for official testing and meter replacement. Accordingly, meter No. M092068 was replaced by a new meter No. M206169 (L & T Make of 10-60 A Capacity) on 11.05.2024. The removed meter No. M092068 was tested in the official meter lab on 22.05.2024 in the presence of the consumer's representative, Mr. Abdul K. Ansir. **The test results confirmed that the meter was accurate. Only a defect in the Real-Time Clock (RTC) was observed, which does not impact the energy recording function. The MRI data indicated a sharp spike in consumption between 19.03.2024 and 22.03.2024,** with an average daily usage of approximately 940 kWh. The load profile reflected a continuous demand of around 19.50 kW in every half-hour interval during this period.
- (v) Before and after this period, and up to the meter replacement on 11.05.2024, daily consumption was normal at around 10–12 kWh. As there is no history of Secure make meters developing faults leading to sudden high readings (such defects were seen only in ABB and Elster Make meters, for which management has issued replacement guidelines), no amendment was recommended.
- (i) Since the consumer was not satisfied with the test result of meter No. M092068, vide letter dated 25.09.2024 the consumer was advised to carry out third party testing in any NABL Lab as mentioned in MERC guidelines. However, there was no response from the consumer in this regard.
- (ii) The Appellant filed a grievance application in the Forum on 20.02.2025. The Forum by its order dated 11.04.2025 dismissed the grievance application, there being no merit in the case.
- (iii) The meter (Secure make) has no history of defects causing sudden jumps. The consumer's grievance was promptly attended to by replacing and officially testing the meter in presence of their representative. Since the meter was found to be accurate, no


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amendment was made. The consumer was also guided to carry out third-party testing as per regulatory provisions.

Other Factors and Regulatory Provisions:

- (iv) It is important to note that sudden spikes in consumption can also occur due to:
- Unauthorized load extensions or tapping,
 - Defective internal wiring or faulty appliances,
 - Use of outdated electrical devices.
- (v) Energy meters are designed to record actual consumption accurately. There is no scientific or technical basis for a reliable digital meter to show abnormally high readings for a short period and then continue recording normally.
- (vi) As per Regulation 4.4.1 of the Maharashtra Electricity Regulatory Commission (Electricity Supply Code and Standards of Performance of Distribution Licensees including Power Quality) Regulations, 2021 (Supply Code & SOP Regulations 2021):
- “4.4 Charges for Electricity Supplied*
- 4.4.1 The Distribution Licensee is authorized to recover charges for electricity supplied in accordance with such tariffs as may be fixed from time to time by the Commission.”*
- (vii) In view of above, the Respondent prays that the Appellant’s representation be rejected.

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

- (i) The Appellant is a three-phase residential consumer (Consumer No. 020012062215). The sanctioned load, registered address, and details of the abnormal bills for April 2024 are summarised in Table 1. The Appellant’s daughter, Ruksana Ansari along with her father and sister are the occupiers / users of the electric power, having a small room of 220 sq. feet on the Terrace of 6th Floor. There are no heavy electrical appliances in use.
- (ii) The Appellant’s average monthly consumption typically ranges between 200 and 350 units. However, for April 2024, she received an alarming bill reflecting a


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consumption of 3,047 units amounting to Rs. 43,240/-, which was completely unexpected.

- (iii) Upon receiving this bill, the Appellant promptly lodged a complaint with customer care on 16.04.2024. Subsequently, the existing meter (No. M092068) was inspected and found to be 'defective'. It was replaced with a new meter (No. M206169). After replacement, the consumption reverted to normal levels, clearly indicating that the previous meter was malfunctioning.
- (iv) Despite the meter defect, the exorbitant bill for April 2024 was neither revised nor corrected, and the full amount was debited from her account. The Appellant sent multiple written complaints via email to the office of the Divisional Engineer (A Ward). She also submitted a complaint in Annexure C on 23.09.2024 but has not received any response to date. Finally, the Appellant approached the Forum on 22.02.2025 in Case No. A-512 of 2025. The Forum dismissed the grievance of the Appellant.
- (v) It is pertinent to note that:
- The old meter was very aged and possibly beyond its guarantee period.
 - BEST Undertaking failed to conduct periodic testing of the meter as required.
 - The only testing carried out was internal by BEST itself, raising concerns about the impartiality and independence of the results.

(vi) **Reliefs Sought**

In view of the above, the Appellant prays for the following reliefs:

- a. To review and revise the bill for April 2024, considering the defective meter and historical consumption pattern.
- b. To waive the incorrect charges levied during the period of the faulty meter.
- c. To direct that there shall be no disconnection of electricity supply until the resolution of this grievance.


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Analysis and Ruling

4. Heard both the parties and perused the documents on record. The Appellant is a three-phase residential consumer (No. 312-519-031) residing at the address, sanctioned load, etc., mentioned in Table 1. The consumption for April 2024 was calculated as 3,047 units which was unusually high. The system flagged the abnormal usage, a site visit was conducted, and the reading was confirmed to be correct and progressive. The bill was accordingly generated, and a detailed investigation was initiated. The Appellant lodged a high bill complaint on 16.04.2024. The average monthly consumption for the past year was about 340 units. A site inspection on 24.04.2024 recorded the connected load as: 1 geyser, 5 fans, 1 TV, 1 fridge, 1 washing machine, 11 LED lights, 1 mixer, 1 cooler, and 1 sewing machine.(about 4.1 KW load). During the hearing, the Respondent mentioned that with the above load and gadgets, the consumption cannot go beyond 450 units per month at the maximum.

5. The Appellant contended that Ruksana Ansari, along with her father and sister, occupy a small 220 sq. ft. room on the terrace of the 6th floor. No heavy electrical appliances are in use. The Appellant's average monthly consumption typically ranges from 200 to 350 units. However, in April 2024, she received an inflated bill showing consumption of 3,047 units amounting to Rs. 43,240/-, which was highly abnormal. Following this, a complaint was lodged on 16.04.2024. The meter (No. M092068) was inspected, found defective, [*Note: The timer was defective.*] and replaced with Meter No. M206169. After replacement, consumption normalized, indicating that the previous meter was faulty. Despite this, the April 2024 bill was neither revised nor corrected, and the full amount was debited from her account. The Appellant also pointed out that the old meter was aged and likely out of warranty. Moreover, BEST Undertaking failed to conduct the mandatory periodic testing of the meter.

6. The Respondent contended that Meter M092068 was replaced with Meter M206169 (L&T Make, 10–60 A) on 11.05.2024. The removed meter was tested on 22.05.2024 in the presence of the Appellant. The meter was found accurate; only an RTC (Real Time Clock) defect was observed, which does not affect energy recording. MRI data showed a sharp spike


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in usage between 19.03.2024 and 22.03.2024, with daily consumption around 940 kWh and continuous load of 19.50 kW at every half-hour interval. Before and after this period, usage was normal (10–12 kWh/day). Secure Make meters have no known issues causing sudden high readings (unlike ABB and Elster), so no amendment was proposed. As the consumer disagreed with the result, she was advised on 25.09.2024 to pursue third-party testing through any NABL-accredited lab as per MERC guidelines. However, no action was taken by the consumer for third party testing.

7. The consumption pattern of the Appellant, as per the Consumer Personal Ledger (CPL), is tabulated below:

2022-23		2023-24		2024-25		2025-26	
Month	Units	Month	Units	Month	Units	Month	Units
April	444	April	436	April	3047	April	248
May	417	May	443	May	338	May	344
June	417	June	336	June	255	June	309
July	366	July	314	July	281		
August	366	August	323	August	249		
Sept	342	Sept	344	Sep	280		
October	325	Oct	360	Oct	275		
Nov	343	Nov	287	Nov	338		
Dec	327	Dec	314	Dec	268		
Jan	282	Jan	389	Jan	221		
Feb	266	Feb	265	Feb	233		
March	258	March	262	March	245		

An analytical assessment of the consumption data indicates that the recorded consumption of 3,047 units in April 2024 is abnormally high and lacks technical justification. This figure represents a sharp and unexplained deviation from the consumer's historical usage trends. Notably, the highest recorded monthly consumption over the past years was only 443 units, making the April 2024 reading nearly ten times higher than the established norm.


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The MRI data of the three-phase meter revealed an unusual and concentrated spike in consumption between 19.03.2024 and 22.03.2024, with an average daily usage of approximately 940 kWh. The load profile during this period showed a constant demand of around 19.50 kW in every half-hour interval, reflecting a 100% load factor sustained over 72 hours. From a technical standpoint, such a perfectly symmetrical and uninterrupted load is highly improbable in a residential setup and inconsistent with the actual connected load at the site.


This pattern also effectively rules out the possibility of unauthorized tapping or temporary load connection, as such uniformity cannot be achieved through typical usage or manipulation. The load characteristics observed suggest abnormal meter behavior, possibly induced by an external magnetic field or internal malfunction.

Furthermore, there is no diagnostic report or technical assessment on record from the meter manufacturer to investigate or substantiate the anomaly, despite the meter being a Secure Make three-phase electronic meter. This lack of independent technical verification raises further concerns about the integrity of the recorded data.

In light of the above, it is technically unsound for the Respondent to bill the consumer based on such anomalous data limited to three specific days of 19.03.2024 and 22.03.2024. A more reasonable and equitable approach would be to revise the bill based on the highest recorded monthly consumption over the preceding 12 months, in alignment with regulatory prudence.

8. The Forum's order is thus liable to be set aside, as it suffers from a mechanical approach. It fails to appreciate the past history, the critical technical inconsistencies, particularly the abnormal consumption pattern and the implausible load profile recorded over the disputed period. In view of the above, the Respondent is directed:

- a. To revise the Appellant's bill of April 2024 considering consumption of 443 units in May 2023, the highest recorded consumption in the preceding 12 months, and


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- b. To withdraw any interest and Delayed Payment Charges (DPC) from April 2024 onwards till the date of the order.
- c. To submit a compliance report within two months from the date of this order.

9. The Secretariat of this office is directed to refund the amount of Rs.20,000/- taken as deposit to the Respondent for adjustment in ensuing bill of the Appellant.

10. The instant Representation is disposed of accordingly.

Sd/
Vandana Krishna)
Electricity Ombudsman (Mumbai)


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Secretary
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