

மின்துறை பொறியாளர்கள் & தொழிலாளர்கள் தனியார் மய / கார்ப்பரேஷன் மய எதிர்ப்பு போராட்டக்குழு

மின்துறை புதுச்சேரி.

ELECTRICITY DEPT. ENGINEER'S & EMPLOYEE'S PRIVATISATION / CORPORATION PROTEST COMMITTEE

ELECTRICITY DEPT. PUDUCHERRY

President
Er. V. THANIGASALAM
9443534550

General Secretary
P. VELMURUGAN
9894977078

Treasurer
E. SENTHILKUMAR
9566820333

Lr.No.1/2025

Date: 09.01.2025

To,

1. The Hon'ble Lt. Governor,
Puducherry.
2. The Hon'ble Chief Minister,
Puducherry.
3. The Hon'ble Power Minister,
Puducherry.
4. The Chief Secretary,
Chief Secretariat, Puducherry.
5. The Secretary to Govt. (Power),
Chief Secretariat, Puducherry.
6. The Superintending Engineer-cum-HoD.,
Electricity Department, Puducherry.

Subject: Request to stop the Post-Paid Smart Meter Installation Project in TOTEX Model under RDSS to the project implementing agency M/s. PFCCCL and Replace Existing Electronic Static Meters – Reg.

Ref : G.O.Rt.No.56/Dt:30-12-2024 issued by the Industrial Development (Power) Department, Puducherry.

Respected Sirs/Madam,

This is with reference to the above sanction issued to implement the Post-Paid Smart Meter Installation Project in TOTEX (Total Expenditure) model in UT of Puducherry under Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme.

Under the "Smart grid Pilot Project," around 33,000 smart meters were installed in the whole town areas of UT of Puducherry as a pilot initiative. The cost of these meters, their installation, and the 5-year maintenance under the TOTEX model has been borne by the Government.

Recently, Puducherry Govt. has issued G.O. vide reference cited above and decided to implementation of Post-Paid smart metering project in the UT of Puducherry under RDSS with a total project cost of ₹383,58,96,840/- (Rupees three hundred and eighty three crores fifty eight lakhs ninety six thousand eight hundred and forty only). The smart metering project is proposed to be implemented by M/s.PFCCCL through L1 bidder M/s. Apraava Energy Pvt. Ltd.,. The Puducherry Electricity Department has proposed 4,07,052 smart prepaid meter to fix remaining consumers of four regions of Puducherry UT. The copy of G.O. is herewith enclosed for your kind perusal.

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In this regard, it is to be highlighted that most of the existing electronic static meters were purchased by the consumers under their own cost which may still covered under warranty is a matter of great concern. Based on the points outlined below, we urge you to stop award of work process, initiate detailed discussions with the Puducherry Electricity Department Engineers and Employees Anti Privatization Protest committee and the public, and reevaluate the approach.

Key Concerns

1. Introduction of Multi-Licensing for Private Players

The Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2023, introduces "multi-licensing," allowing multiple private companies to distribute electricity over the same network. Smart meters enable real-time data collection, which facilitates high end consumers switching to private companies. This appears to be a covert attempt to introduce private participation without legislative approval, undermining public welfare.

2. Higher Tariffs During Peak Hours

With a total power allocation around 570 MW and a peak demand of 500 MW (as of December 2024), there is no justification for increased tariffs during peak hours. However, smart meters allow utilities to impose additional charges during peak hours (6:00 AM–10:00 AM and 6:00 PM–10:00 PM), which will unfairly burden ordinary and middle-class citizens.

3. Cost of Implementation

In some states, the cost of smart meters is being recovered by charging consumers ₹180 per month for 7 years. Puducherry Electricity Department must clarify whether this financial burden will be passed on to consumers. The replacement of functional electronic meters with smart meters, necessitating additional loans, must be transparently justified.

4. Job Reductions in Electricity Dept.

Smart meter adoption makes tasks such as meter reading, disconnection for non-payment, and reconnection without manual interference. Moreover, fieldwork related to meter replacement will be outsourced to private contractors for seven years under the TOTEX model. This threatens 250 Nos. of jobs in accounting and field operations, impacting employees' livelihoods and pensions.

5. Dependence on Unreliable Wireless Infrastructure

The TOTEX model relies heavily on telecom networks for operations like disconnections and reconnections, which may result in delays during natural disasters or emergencies. Furthermore, data privacy concerns arise as consumer information will be controlled by private companies, eroding public trust.

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6. Prepaid Tariff Collection and Subsidy Removal

The prepaid functionality of smart meters forces consumers to pay in advance for electricity. This, combined with the introduction of multiple private players, could compromise the state's ability to provide subsidies or implement free electricity schemes.

7. Cancellation of the Smart Meter Project in Kerala

Kerala recently canceled its smart meter project under the TOTEX model due to strong resistance from unions and concerns over privatization. Instead, Kerala adopted the CAPEX model, prioritizing public welfare. Puducherry Govt. should consider this precedent and adopt a similar approach.

Conclusion

The Union Government's claim that smart meters will reduce losses is unsubstantiated. The Puducherry Government provides a subsidy amount by calculating around 25 percent of the average purchase cost per unit for free electricity for agriculture and hut services, not meter related issues.

We request Puducherry Government to abandon the TOTEX Model smart meter implementation, adopt the CAPEX model, safeguard employees' rights, and preserve public trust in the electricity distribution system.

We hope that you will give this matter your immediate attention and act in the best interests of the people of Puducherry UT.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,


(P. VELMURUGAN)
(General Secretary)