

Pre-paid power supply system next month

It will not be mandatory for consumers, says BESCOM Managing Director

B S Satish Kumar

BANGALORE: A novel system of pre-paid power supply akin to the pre-paid mobile phone services is to be implemented in some select areas of Bangalore from the first fortnight of January.

Managing Director of Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (BESCOM) Gonal Bheemappa told *The Hindu* that the new "power sale" system will not be mandatory for the consumers. Those opting for temporary connections will be given the option of switching over to the pre-paid system.

To begin with, the pre-paid system will be implemented in the southern parts of Bangalore such as Koramangala, Austin Town and Marathahalli.

BESCOM has given clearance to a private operator, Secure Meters Limited (SML), for implementing the pre-paid system of power supply.

SML Assistant General Manager V. Rajaram said that the new system of power supply would be extended to the Additional East areas comprising Shivajinagar, Lingarajapuram, Banaswadi, Commercial Street and Infantry Road in the second phase.

He said consumers have to pay in advance under the pre-paid system of power supply depending on their requirement. It follows the keypad

• To be introduced in Koramangala in the first phase

• Private operator Secure Meters Limited will implement it

method of recharging. Under this method, consumers will be given a 20-digit number that has to be entered in their meters that will have keypads. Consumers can visit the recharge booths and buy recharge code of different denominations by paying cash. They can also send SMS or call up the recharge booths to get the recharge code. In that case, they have to transfer the required money through Internet banking, debit or credit cards or through the electronic clearance system.

Consumers, however, have to install a special meter to avail themselves of the service. These meters will have a display unit that can be installed at any location convenient to the consumers.

Apart from providing information on the power consumption and the credit balance, the display unit will give details on the number of units consumed on any particular day, week, month, besides the average daily power consumption for the last six months.

BESCOM officials observed that the pre-paid system

would help in energy conservation. The pre-paid system would also help in reducing financial risks as the power utility would obtain the requisite payment for its service in advance unlike the present system where it had to wait for at least 30-45 days after providing service.

It would help in reducing overhead cost as there was no need for meter reading and billing. Further, there was scope for planning the demand for power in advance under the pre-paid system. But the worrying factor is the high cost of the meters. While the normal (post-paid) meter is priced at about Rs 1,000, the pre-paid meter will cost Rs. 4,300.

However, Mr. Rajaram claimed that the difference in the cost would not cause hardship to the consumer as there was no need to pay security deposit for the pre-paid system.

The cost difference could also be made up through energy conservation in about six months.

Mr. Bheemappa said BESCOM would procure 100 pre-paid meters to set the stage ready for the implementation of the new system. Depending upon the response, it was planning to increase its procurements to 500. It was, however, yet to decide on whether to ask the consumer to pay for the meter for temporary connections.