

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS

DATED : 25/2/2021

C O R A M

THE HONOURABLE Mr.JUSTICE B.PUGALENDHI

Writ Petition Nos.4192, 4194, 4195, 4196 and 4198 of 2021
a n d
W.M.P.Nos.4785, 4787, 4788, 4789 and 4790 of 2021

Oriental Plants and Equipments (P) Ltd
rep. By its Authorised Signatory
Mr.N.Raju.

... Petitioner in
W.P.Nos.4192 and
4196 of 2021

Shrivaikunth Paper and Boards Private Limited
rep. By its Managing Director
Mr.S.Ramakrishnan

... Petitioner in
W.P.No.4194 of 2021

Dura Rock Products Ltd
rep. By its Authorised Signatory
N. Raju

... Petitioner in
W.P.No.4195 of 2021

Sanmarco Texmac (P) Limited
rep. By its Authorised Signatory
Mr.N.Raju

... Petitioner in
W.P.No.4198 of 2021

Vs

1. The Tamil Nadu Generation and
Distribution Corporation Ltd (TANGEDCO)
rep. By its Chairman & Managing Director
10th Floor, No.144 Anna Salai
Chennai 600 002.

2. The Chief Financial Controller - Revenue
TANGEDCO 7th Floor, 144 Anna Salai
Chennai 600 002. ... Respondents 1 and 2
in all the writ petitions.

3. The Superintending Engineer
TANGEDCO
Coimbatore Metro Electricity Distribution Circle
Coimbatore ... Third respondent
in W.P.Nos.4192, 4196
and 4198 of 2021

The Superintending Engineer
TANGEDCO
Erode Electricity Distribution Circle
Erode

... Third respondent
in W.P.No.4194 of 2021

The Superintending Engineer
TANGEDCO
Coimbatore South Electricity Distribution Circle
Coimbatore

... Third respondent
in W.P.No.4195 of 2021

Prayer in all the writ petitions: Petitions filed under Article 226 of the Constitution of India praying for the issuance of a writ of mandamus to direct the respondents to extend the benefit of the order of this Court, dated 14/8/2020, passed in W.P.No.7678 of 2020, in a similar batch matter and to apply the order of this Court, as per Article 14 of the Constitution of India, to the petitioners also and consequently, direct the third respondent to issue the fresh CC bills, for the months of March 2020 - September 2020 falling in the lockdown periods and also to further direct the respondents to refund the excessively collected demand charges from the petitioners.

For petitioners ... Mr.R.S.Pandiyaraj

For respondents ... Mr.Vijay Mehanath
Standing Counsel for TANGEDCO

C O M M O N O R D E R

These Writ Petitions have been filed to direct the respondents to extend the benefit of the order of this Court, dated 14/8/2020, passed in W.P.No.7678 of 2020 to the petitioners as well, without discrimination as guaranteed under Article 14 of the Constitution of India and consequently, direct the third respondent to issue the fresh CC bills, for the months of March 2020 - September 2020 falling in the lockdown periods and also to further direct the respondents to refund the excessively collected demand charges from the petitioners.

2. The brief facts which are necessary for the disposal of the writ petitions are as follows:-

The petitioners Industry are involved in the manufacture of Crusher Machine and Paper related products, respectively, and have obtained HT Electricity service connection from the

respondent Board. During the pandemic period, pursuant to the lock down announced by the Government, operations of the petitioner Companies were stopped. But the respondent Board has raised a bill at the rate of 90% of the sanctioned demand. Proviso 6 (b) of the Supply Code provides for collection of minimum charges of 20% of the billable demand or recorded demand, whichever is higher, besides charges for the actual consumption of electricity.

3. Considering this relevant provision, this Court, in a batch of writ petitions in W.P.No.7678 of 2020 held that maximum demand charges and the compensation charges levied by the TANGEDCO against the HT consumers as illegal, unsustainable and in violation of statutory regulations. This Hon'ble Court, allowed those writ petitions with certain directions which read as follows:-

"45 The above discussion leads this Court to the only conclusion that the maximum demand charges and the compensation charges levied by TANGEDCO against the petitioners who are HT consumers, is illegal, unsustainable and in violation of the statutory regulations. Accordingly, the Maximum Demand Charges and the compensation towards low PF that have been questioned in the impugned bills raised by the TANGEDCO for each of the consumers who are parties in these batch of writ petitions, is hereby quashed. The following directions are also issued by this Court:

a) TANGEDCO shall issue a revised bill to the petitioners by applying Regulation 6(b) of the Supply Code for the entire period when the establishment was under shut down;

b) If TANGEDCO has already recovered the entire dues from any of the petitioners, the bill shall be reworked in accordance with the direction given in Clause (a) and the excess amount shall be adjusted towards the future bills;

c) If the demand made by TANGEDCO has been adjusted from the security deposit and any of the petitioner has been asked to pay any amount towards additional security deposit on that count, the said claim shall be withdrawn forthwith and the calculation of the additional security deposit shall be independently done under Regulation 5 of the Supply Code and demand/ adjustment shall be done in accordance with the said Regulation;

d) The TANGEDCO shall not levy

compensation charges towards low PF from the petitioners during the period of lockdown. Even if such levy is made in future, show cause notice shall be issued to the consumer and an opportunity shall be given to the consumer before levying any compensation under Clause 6.1.1.6 of the Tariff Regulation;

e) If any amount has already been recovered towards levy of compensation charges for low PF from any of the petitioners, the said amount shall be adjusted towards future bills;

f) These directions will apply only for the period during which the establishment was under total lockdown due to the orders issued by the Government and it is made clear that it pertains only to the Minimum Charges payable under Regulation 6(b) of the Supply Code and there is no exemption or concession insofar as the charges payable for the actual consumption of electricity (Energy Charges); and

g) If any of the establishments continue to be under lockdown due to the Government Orders passed in this regard, the minimum charges alone shall be collected till the lifting of the lockdown.

4. Mr.P.R.Dhilip Kumar, learned Standing Counsel for the Electricity Board submits that as against the abovesaid order, writ appeals have been filed before the Hon'ble Division Bench and the same are yet to be taken. Industries were not in operation due to the lock down announced by the Government.

5. Since Regulation 6 (b) of the Supply Code provides for collection of minimum demand charges at the rate of 20% whereas in all these cases, the demand has been made at the rate of 90%, on the sanctioned demand, these writ petitions are allowed, on the directions issued by this Court in W.P.No.7678 of 2020 batch. No costs. Consequently, the connected Miscellaneous Petitions are closed.

Sd/-

Assistant Registrar

//True Copy//

Sub Assistant Registrar

Mvs.

To

1. The Chairman & Managing Director,
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3. The Superintending Engineer
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4. The Superintending Engineer
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Erode Electricity Distribution Circle
Erode
5. The Superintending Engineer
TANGEDCO
Coimbatore South Electricity Distribution Circle
Coimbatore.

+5cc to Mr.R.S.Pandiyaraj, Advocate, S.R.No. 11778

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4195, 4196 and 4198 of 2021

SMI (CO)
GN(17/03/2021)

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