

Higher tariff applicable only for common areas & STPs used commercially: Bengaluru utility | Bengaluru News - The Times of India

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Bengaluru: Apartment dwellers' fear that they may have to shell out more for their monthly maintenance with the common area lighting and operation of sewage treatment plants (STPs) drawing tariff at commercial rates and hiked fixed charges from this month may be unfounded.

Bescom officials clarified that commercial rates would be applicable only to apartments deriving commercial benefits, and not to all.

The apartment associations and federations, however, said if their electricity bills do go up, they have no alternative but to pass the increased costs on to community members.

Bangalore Apartments' Federation (BAF) office-bearers said according to the new tariff structure mandated by the Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC), power used for common area lighting and STP operations will be charged at Rs 7.3 per unit along with a fixed charge of Rs 290 per KVA. "This translates into increased electricity charges for common area consumption in apartments while this has been kept very low for individual households. The fixed charges almost resemble commercial tariffs and are exorbitant," said Satish Mallya, vice-president of BAF.

Bescom, however, said these rates don't apply to all apartments. "This commercial electricity tariff is only for a few apartments in East, North, and Southern Bengaluru. A few of these apartments have shopping malls, public recreation areas, including sporting and cultural arenas that witness commercial transactions. Hence, the latest tariff is targeted at such apartments rather than binding all apartments," said a senior engineer from Bescom.

The engineer said the STPs will draw power tariff at commercial rates only if the treated water is used commercially.

The BAF's argument is that no apartment in Bengaluru derives any commercial benefit from its common areas, which are lit up only to benefit the movement of its residents. In addition, BAF also expressed surprise over charging apartment STPs under HT-4 tariff rates. "All the apartments use STPs for environmental benefits, and none of us get any commercial benefit from STP operations. Now, STP charges also appear to have been clubbed under HT-4," said an office-bearer of another apartment RWA from East Bengaluru.

Mallya said in many apartments, nearly 40-50% of the maintenance funds collected from the residents go towards payment of electricity charges, including for water treatment, STPs, lighting, and operation of elevators. "Any minute change in the tariff pertaining to common area lighting will definitely push up the maintenance charges, resulting in increased charges for every owner or tenant. In the case of a small apartment, the monthly charges