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Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020

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Why in News

Recently, the government has notified the **Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020**, which would allow consumers in India to access a continuous supply of reliable electricity.

Electricity is a **Concurrent List or List-III (Seventh Schedule)** subject and the central government has the authority and the power to make laws on it.

Key Points

- **Coverage:**

The rules cover **various aspects of power supply to consumers** in the country, including obligations of distribution licensees, metering arrangements, the release of new connections, modifications of existing connections, grievance redressal and compensation mechanisms.

- **Significance:**

- This will make the **distribution companies more accountable** to consumers, thus **reducing their monopolies** and **giving consumers more alternatives**.
- To ensure compliance, the government will **apply penalties that will be credited to the consumer's account**.
- These rules are also an important step towards **furthering the ease of doing business** across the country.
- Implementation of these Rules shall ensure that new electricity connections, refunds and other services are given in a **time-bound manner**.

Areas Covered in the Rules

- **Rights and Obligations**
 - Duty of every distribution licensee to supply electricity on request made by an owner or occupier of any premises in line with the provisions of Act.
 - Right of consumers to have minimum standards of service for the supply of electricity from the distribution licensee.
- **Release of New Connection and Modification in Existing Ones**
 - Transparent, simple and time-bound processes.
 - An applicant has an option for online application.
 - The maximum time period of 7 days in metro cities and 15 days in other municipal areas and 30 days in rural areas identified to provide new connections and modify an existing connection.
 - Disconnection and Reconnection Provisions
- **Metering Arrangement**
 - No connection shall be given without a meter.
 - Meter shall be the smart prepayment meter or a prepayment meter.
 - Provision of Testing of meters.
 - Provisions for replacement of defective or burnt or stolen meters specified.
- **Billing and Payment**
 - Transparency in applicable consumer tariff and bills.
 - A consumer shall have the option to pay bills online or offline.
 - Provision for advance payment of bills.
- **Reliability of Supply**
 - The distribution licensee shall supply 24x7 power to all consumers. However, lower hours of supply for some categories of consumers like agriculture could be specified.
 - The distribution licensee shall put in place a mechanism, preferably with automated tools to the extent possible, for monitoring and restoring outages.
- **Consumer as Prosumer**

While the prosumers will maintain consumer status and have the same rights as the general consumer, they will also have the right to set up **Renewable Energy** (RE) generation units including **rooftop solar photovoltaic** (PV) systems.

A prosumer is an individual who **both consumes and produces**.
- **Standards of Performance of License**
 - Standards of performance for the distribution licensees will be notified.
 - Compensation amount to be paid to the consumers by the distribution licensees for violation of standards of performance.
- **Compensation Mechanism**

Automatic compensation shall be paid to consumers for which parameters on standards of performance can be monitored remotely.

- **Call Centre for Consumer Services**
 - Distribution licensee shall establish a centralised 24x7 toll-free call centre.
 - Licensees shall endeavour to provide all services through a common **Customer Relation Manager (CRM) System** to get a unified view.
- **Grievance Redressal Mechanism**
 - **Consumer Grievance Redressal Forum (CGRF)** to include consumer and prosumer representatives.
 - It has been made easy by making it multi-layered and the number of consumer's representatives have been increased from one to four.
 - The licensee shall specify the time within which various types of grievances by the different levels of the forums are to be resolved. **Maximum timeline of 45 days** specified for grievance redressal.

Source: IE