Maharashtra electricity distribution body fudging loss figures to justify tariff hike: Pratap Hogade

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NAGPUR: Power consumer activist Pratap Hogade has charged that MSEDCL had fudged figures to artificially reduce the distribution losses and thereby seek a sharp hike in tariff. The distributor has sought a tariff hike of 18% for 2012-13. Maharashtra Electricity Regulatory Commission (MERC) had increased power rates by almost 10% in December 2011.

Hogade claimed that MSEDCL's distribution loss figure for the state - 16.27% - was completely misleading. "The losses in supplying high tension (HT) industrial consumers was only up to 6% and for low tension (LT) industries it was between 6% and 12%. MSEDCL inflates unmetered agricultural consumption - as this cannot be verified - to reduce the losses by 7% to 10%. If these factors are taken into account, the LT loss is still between 35% and 40%.

"MSEDCL, however, is trying to create an impression that it has brought down the losses and whatever tariff hike is needed is due to increase in cost of generation, infrastructure projects, etc. If the facts come to light, consumers will demand that MSEDCL first sets its house in order before seeking a tariff hike," Hogade, who is the president of consumer organization MRVGS, charged.

Hogade rued that MERC had turned a blind eye to these facts in spite of consumers bringing them to its notice several times. "During the hearing on load-shedding, MERC had told the consumers that as price of coal was increasing by the day, consumers should be ready for higher power bills. This way it indirectly supported MSEDCL's stand instead of taking it to task for corruption and inefficiency," he said.

"If MSEDCL's tariff hike is approved as it is, it will increase the cost of power to consumers by an average 85 paise per unit. In June 2009, the average cost was Rs 3.62 per unit. Now MSEDCL wants it to increase to Rs 5.19 per unit, which is very high compared to other states," he pointed out.