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In what may come as a relief for consumers, government is mulling over a plan to impose penalties on discoms for load-shedding from next year. The government is formulating the Draft Tariff Policy, under which load-shedding after March 2019 would invite penalties for power distributors, said Power and New and Renewable Energy Minister R K Singh. The government has also asked the discoms to keep aggregate transmission and commercial (AT&C) losses to below base mark of 15 percent.

The Centre's draft policy has included twin proposals which would be put in the public domain to invite suggestions from the public, R K Singh said. Speaking at the press conference, the minister also said that the government has been able to reach every village, meeting its target, now it will ensure that power soon reaches every household. The load-shedding would become history by March 2019, he added.

The quantum on penalty would be decided by the power regulatory authority of the respective state, the minister said. A feedback has been invited by the public on policy till June 20.

Among the major reasons for load shedding, cost considerations, unsupportive regulatory mechanisms, and underutilisation of coal plants are the foremost.

On May 31, the Union Ministry of Power has unveiled a draft amendment to the National Tariff Policy, 2016, which proposed to impose penalties on electricity distribution companies or discoms for 'unscheduled' load-shedding without 'valid' reasons.

"It shall be mandatory for the distribution company to show to the respective Electricity Regulatory Commission that they have tied up long term/medium term power purchase agreements to meet the annual average power requirement in their area of supply, failing which their licence shall be liable to be suspended. 24-hour supply of adequate and uninterrupted power may be ensured to all categories of consumers by March, 2019 or earlier", said the draft amendment.

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