

Tata Power has always been a technology forward discom that has played a pivotal role in shaping the power industry in India. The company's success can be attributed to its prompt adoption of cutting edge technology. From being the first in adopting RFID Technology in smart metering to providing customers with its revolutionary first of its kind Spot Billing facility there are various tech specs that make Tata Power a Technocrat. Recently, Tata Power also rolled out its Mobile App that has made its customers life easy and convenient. Ashok Sethi, COO & Executive Director, Tata Power is a B.Tech graduate from IIT, Kharagpur. He was Chief-Corporate Operations Management and Executive Director of Maithon Power Ltd, a subsidiary of Tata Power. He has experience in power sector, ranging from Thermal & Hydro Generation, Transmission & Distribution, Commercial & Regulatory as well as Advocacy. In conversation with Dominic Rebello, he talks about Tata Power's robust adoption of technology and the impact it has had in propelling Tata Power to becoming India's best performing Power Discom.

**Ashok Sethi,**  
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## 'CONSUMER DEMAND SHOULD BE THE MANDATE FOR POWER NETWORK & DEVELOPMENT'

**What are the difficulties in making electricity tariff of Mumbai uniform?**

We have to see this issue with respect to up to what level we want to make it uniform. If it is to be made uniform for only 0 to 100, then the consumption levels are significantly less. So, there won't be any difficulty. We feel that the category between 0-100 should be uniformly treated across the region. Also, since the cost structures of each utility are different for category above 100, it could become difficult to make uniform across those categories.

**Is there any further progress in solar power generation?**

Yes, we do have solar panels at our hydro power sites. As far as solar power is concerned, you must have heard we have done acquisitions recently. The most recent acquisition is the Welspun Renewables assets which is 990 MW. We had 57 MW solar power earlier.

**The govt is promoting LEDs for power conservation. Is Tata Power also supporting this cause?**

Yes, we are promoting LEDs for power conservation. All the power utilities are doing it for that matter. The government's is bringing LEDs and giving it at a very lower rate

**Can you please provide an update on Mumbai Power scenario?**

In 2014, we got our license and it is established that there are going to be four utilities, which are supplying power in Mumbai. Mumbai is a city where consumers will have enough choices available. The new MYT (Multi Year Tariff) will be an-

nounced in a month or two and based on that we will know what is the difference between tariffs of all utilities.

**What are the latest technologies adopted by Tata Power?**

Mumbai is a very congested city. There are lots of restaurants, buildings, which make laying network here a challenge. Through all our technological improvements, we have tried to overcome these challenges. We try to reduce the size of substation, utilize spaces at the basement by making transformers of ester oil, which is more fire resistant and is safer. Then we also developed feeder pillars underground, and then HDVC, which means pole-mounted also can be done. So, all these improvements have been done with respect to the challenges that exist.

The second thing which has been done is that we are constantly improving in the field of digitalization so that we can provide customer service at the doorstep. This has been our endeavor to improve year on year, and we will keep on continuing to do that. Two significant things in this is, one, we have now got

our customer app which will provide consumers with end-to-end interaction. Two, we are also trying to explore ways to serve our consumers more without paperwork.

**What are Tata Power's plans of network expansion in Mumbai and the kind of investment and the areas in which the company would focus in future?**

Tata Power has put in about 1200 crore in the last few years in developing a backbone network in the north area that was specified by the commission. However, our experience has been that network and development should be based on the load demand. Or a better way to put it is consumers' demand. So, wherever there is a demand of consumer, we should develop a network so that we can supply to them as it is more eco-

nomie and efficient.

Utility should be free to decide this, rather than mandated that you lay network at this area or that, as it has to be decided based on the consumer demand and the ground realities. Only then will it be economic and efficient the way it is. That's the way we will like to go. And as of today, there is going to be a hearing on 21st for Tata Power about this and we will put these points across in front of the commission for their consideration.

**How has Tata Power increased its operational efficiency and performance?**

You have to constantly counter the increasing prices to control the tariffs, and that means one has to utilize the advancements in technology, advancements in the world of

digitalization, and also the advancements in what you call enterprise resource management modules. So, as a company, we always keep these three things in view so as to be the best adopter of these things. Tata Power in the past has been known as the best technology adopter. The Company is also a service mechanism adopter and whatever comes. This means that you have to always keep pace to increase your efficiencies.

**Can you enumerate a few consumer friendly initiatives that Tata Power has initiated?**

I think the customer application mobile app, which provides you end to end interaction with Tata Power with respect to complaints, seeing your bill, seeing your consumption, and how to save electricity, etc. The second thing that we have started piloting already is spot billing to reach the consumers. We have reduced space requirements in the societies to put our installations so that is again a consumer friendly initiative. As part of our consumer safety initiatives, we train electricians, develop technologies which are fire resistant, etc. So, I think, if you see, we are constantly working on it.