

**CENTRAL ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION  
NEW DELHI**

**Petition No. 11/MP/2017**

**Coram:  
Shri P.K. Pujari, Chairperson  
Dr. M.K. Iyer, Member  
Shri I. S. Jha, Member**

**Date of Order: 5<sup>th</sup> of February, 2020**

**In the matter of:**

Petition under Section 79(1)(c) of the Electricity Act, 2003 read with Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (Grant of Connectivity, Long-term Access and Medium-term Open Access in inter-State Transmission and related matters) Regulations, 2009 and the detailed procedure for grant of LTA, seeking relinquishment of Long-term Access of 386 MW in Western Region out of the total quantum of 816 MW as per the BPTA dated 31.3.2010

**And  
In the matter of**

Petition under Section 79(1)(c) of the Electricity Act, 2003 read with Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (Grant of Connectivity, Long-term Access and Medium-term Open Access in inter-State Transmission and related matters) Regulations, 2009 and the detailed procedure for grant of LTA, seeking deferment of operationalization of Long-term Access of 430 MW in Northern Region as per the BPTA dated 31.3.2010.

**And  
In the matter of**

GMR Chhattisgarh Energy Limited (GCEL)  
25/1, SKIP House  
Museum Road  
Bengaluru-560025

**.....Petitioner**

**Vs**

- 1) Power Grid Corporation of India Limited  
B-9, Qutab Industrial Area  
Katwaria Sarai, New Delhi-110016
- 2) Central Electricity Authority  
Sewa Bhawan  
Rama Krishna Puram, New Delhi-110066

**.....Respondents**

**Parties present:**

- 1) Shri Sanjay Sen, Senior Advocate, GCEL
- 2) Shri Hemant Singh, Advocate, GCEL
- 3) Shri Lakshyajit Singh, Advocate, GCEL
- 4) Ms. Suparna Srivastava, Advocate, PGCIL
- 5) Ms. Nehul Sharma, Advocate, PGCIL
- 6) Dr. V.N. Paranjape, PGCIL
- 7) Ms. Jyoti Prasad, PGCIL

**ORDER**

The Petitioner, GMR Chhattisgarh Energy Limited (GCEL), has filed the present Petition under Section 79(1)(c) of the Electricity Act, 2003 (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”) read with Regulation 32 of the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (Grant of Connectivity, Long-term Access and Medium-term Open Access in inter-State Transmission and related matters) Regulations, 2009 (hereinafter referred to as the “Connectivity Regulations”) for relinquishment of 816 MW of LTA as per the BPTA dated 31.3.2010.

**Brief Facts of the Case**

2. The Petitioner is a generating Company under Section 7 of the Act and has setup a 1370 MW (2x685 MW) super critical coal based thermal power plant in Village Raikheda, Tilda Block, Raipur in the State of Chhattisgarh in accordance with and pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) dated 4.6.2007 and the Implementation Agreement dated 10.9.2008 (as amended on 12.4.2010) executed by GMR Energy Limited (in its capacity as the holding company of the Petitioner) with the Government of Chhattisgarh. The Petitioner vide its letter dated 30.8.2008 applied for long term access in inter-State transmission system for evacuation of 1215 MW power from its power project out of which 455 MW was to be transferred in Chhattisgarh through its trading utility, 300 MW to the Western Region and 460 MW to the Northern Region. CTU granted LTA for 438 MW for the trading utility in

Chhattisgarh (263 MW: Western Region & 175 MW: Northern Region). The Petitioner was granted LTA for 816 MW of which 386 MW was for Western Region and 430 MW was for Northern Region. The Petitioner entered into Bulk Power Transfer Agreement (BPTA) dated 31.3.2010 with CTU for evacuation of power on target basis i.e. 386 MW in Western Region and 430 MW in Northern Region. The Petitioner furnished the Bank Guarantee of Rs. 40.08 crore in favour of CTU in terms of BPTA. LTA was granted with additional system strengthening as indicated in Clause 3 of the BPTA. The timeframe for commissioning of the Petitioner's power project as indicated at Annexure I of the BPTA were August 2013 and January 2014.

3. For evacuation of power from the generation projects and to meet the requirements of long term open access by IPPs, CTU, in consultation with the CEA and other stakeholders, finalized the construction of 9 nos. of high capacity transmission corridors and accordingly, approached the Commission, vide Petition No. 233/2009, seeking, amongst others, regulatory approval for development of the above high capacity transmission corridors. The Commission in its order dated 31.5.2010 granted regulatory approval for execution of 9 High Capacity Power Transmission Corridors (HCPTCs). HCPTC-V was identified for facilitating transfer of power from six generation projects including that of the Petitioner.

4. The progress of the power project of the Petitioner was monitored in various Joint Co-ordination Committee (JCC) meetings wherein the Petitioner continued to represent that it was proceeding with implementation of the project. Unit 1 and Unit 2 of the Project achieved commercial operation on 1.6.2015 and 31.3.2016 respectively. The Petitioner vide its letter dated 7.12.2016 informed the CTU that it has not been able to ensure firm tie-up for the supply of power to be generated from

its power project on account of refusal of Chhattisgarh State Power Trading Company to offtake 35% power as agreed in the implementation Agreement and on account of limited number of bids for procurement of power. Accordingly, the Petitioner requested CTU for deferment of the date of operationalization of 430 MW LTA in Northern Region till 30.6.2017, surrender of 386 MW LTA in Western Region and return of BG of Rs.40.08 crores. The Petitioner argued that the above events are beyond its control and therefore, covered under force majeure in terms of the BPTA. CTU vide its letter dated 13.12.2016 informed the Petitioner that the refusal of CSPTCL to off-take 35% of power does not have any bearing on the LTA of 816 MW and the failure in entering into long term PPAs is a part of competition in the market and cannot be claimed as covered under force majeure event. The Petitioner vide its letter dated 17.5.2017 informed the CTU that in view of the annulment of bid process for procurement of power by UPPCL, it intended to surrender/relinquish 430 MW LTA to Northern Region. CTU vide its letter dated 13.6.2017 informed the Petitioner that its letter dated 17.5.2017 did not constitute notice in terms of Clauses 5 and 9 of the BPTA, that the Clause 9 of the BPTA provides temporary amnesty to the party affected by force majeure and that a LTA Customer may relinquish the LTA on payment of relinquishment charges. CTU demanded an unequivocal undertaking for payment of relinquishment charges as a condition for consideration of the request of relinquishment. CTU vide its letters dated 4.7.2017, 3.8.2017 and 23.8.2017 asked the Petitioner to open an LC of Rs.44.96 crores for operationalisation of LTA as the required transmission systems were expected to be commissioned by 31.8.2017. The Petitioner vide its letter dated 24.8.2017 reiterated its request for relinquishment of 816 MW LTA, return of BG of 40.08 crore and no further demand for opening the LC. Thereafter, the Petitioner has filed the present petition with the following prayers:

“(a) hold and declare that the inability on the part of the Petitioner to execute long term Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) on account of inadequate number of long term power procurement processes being undertaken by the distribution licensees in Northern and Western Regions, is a result of events beyond the control of the Petitioner and a force majeure event with respect to the Bulk Power Transmission Agreement (BPTA);

(b) declare that the Bulk Power Transmission Agreement dated 31.3.2010 stands annulled, without any liability, on account of occurrence of force majeure events which are beyond the control of the Petitioner;

(c) without prejudice to anything contained in prayers (a) and (b), hold and declare that the Long Term Access (LTA) of 386 MW in Western Region under BPTA dated 31.03.2010 stands surrendered/relinquished with effect from 7.12.2016, without any liability, including payment of relinquishment charges, upon the Petitioner;

(d) without prejudice to anything contained in prayers (a) and (b), hold and declare that the Long Term Access (LTA) of 430 MW in Northern Region under BPTA dated 31.03.2010 stands surrendered/relinquished with effect from 17.05.2017, without any liability, including payment of relinquishment charges, upon the Petitioner;

(e) direct the Respondent No. 1 to return the bank guarantee amounting to Rs. 40.08 Crs. furnished by the Petitioner;

(f) in the interim, grant prayer (e).”

### **Submissions of the Petitioner**

5. The Petitioner, in support of its contention and prayers, has submitted as under:

(a) The Petitioner applied for grant of LTA/BPTA under the repealed Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (Open Access in Inter-state Transmission) Regulations, 2004 (hereinafter referred to as “Open Access Regulations, 2004”) but BPTA was executed on 31.3.2010 pursuant to and under Connectivity Regulations which replaced the Open Access Regulations, 2004. The provisions of the Open Access Regulations 2004, the Connectivity Regulations and the Detailed Procedure framed thereunder read with the Billing, Collection and Disbursement Procedure (BCD Procedure) approved

by the Commission permit the grant of LTA on target region basis. As per Clause 22.7 of the Detailed Procedure, LTA can be granted for target regions. However, an applicant who has been granted such LTA shall have to firm up exact source of supply or destination, as the case may be, at least 3 years prior to the intended date of availing LTA at least for a capacity equivalent to 50% of the quantum of power for which LTA has been sought for through signing of PPA with such grid connected entity(ies)/ State Utilities.

(b) At the time of planning, seeking regulatory approval and development of the HCPTC, LTA requirement of the Petitioner was never under consideration and as such the LTA requirement of the Petitioner never formed part of the augmentation of the transmission system by the CTU. The LTA granted to the Petitioner was on the basis of margins available qua the then planned/under construction transmission system. The Petitioner has placed its reliance on order dated 31.5.2010 in Petition No. 233/2009.

(c) Grant of LTA to a generator does not guarantee flow of power or operationalization of the LTA. A firm long term PPA is a condition precedent for operationalization of the LTA which is evident from Clause 7.1 of the Billing, Collection and Disbursement Procedure (BCD Procedure) issued under the 2010 Sharing Regulations read with the order dated 2.12.2013 in Petition No. 244/MP/2012.

(d) Since the year 2009, there have been only three successful long term bids floated by the Discoms in the Western Region till December, 2014 with requisitioned capacity of around 10,000 MW as against 42,471 MW of

installed capacity commissioned by the Independent Power Producer (IPPs) in the country.

(e) According to Section 38 of the Act, CTU is vested with the function of planning and co-ordination relating to development and operation of the inter-State Transmission System (ISTS) for smooth evacuation and delivery of electricity as per the market condition. CTU has failed to develop the high capacity transmission corridors as per the statutory mandates as contained in Section 38(2)(b) and 38(2)(c) of the Act. Further, Regulation 9 of the Connectivity Regulations envisages augmentation/development of transmission corridor only for the purpose of LTA, and not for MTOA/STOA. Taking cognizance of this fact in the coordination meeting that generators have not executed long-term PPAs, CTU ought to have withheld construction of the system, as otherwise the system built would be un-economical and inefficient. In the present case, LTA was granted to the Petitioner on the basis of the available margins in the high capacity transmission corridor, which was already under development and meant for generators other than the Petitioner. Hence, the Petitioner cannot at all be fastened with any liability to pay any relinquishment charges when it was not the target beneficiary when the said system was being planned and developed by the CTU.

(f) Under Regulation 18 of the Connectivity Regulations, the Petitioner has a statutory right to relinquish LTA before the expiry of the full-term of the LTA subject to payment of compensation towards the stranded capacity resulting from such relinquishment in the manner provided in the said regulation. However, the question of stranded capacity in the present case does not arise

as per the Connectivity Regulations read with the BCD Procedure since the LTA granted to the Petitioner cannot be implemented in the absence of adequate number of long-term power procurement exercise being conducted by Discoms and consequently, no relinquishment charges are payable by the Petitioner.

(g) In order to invoke any liability qua payment of any relinquishment charges under the Connectivity Regulations, CTU has to establish existence of 'stranded capacity' and only thereafter claim for compensation can be made. With regard to stranded capacity, the Commission had referred the matter to the CEA and since CEA has not been able to resolve the same, the Commission by order dated 21.7.2015 in Petition No. 92/MP/2015 constituted a committee to go into all the aspects of the stranded capacity and relinquishment charges. Since no methodology could be developed by the Committee in existence for working out the stranded capacity on account of relinquishment of LTA quantum, any relinquishment charges calculated and subsequently imposed by CTU would amount to an arbitrary and misguided imposition.

(h) The charges that are leviable for open access to the transmission system are expressly specified in Sections 38 and 40 of the Act. The Act does not mandate/sanction levy of relinquishment charge. Accordingly, the Commission has no jurisdiction to introduce a charge by way of regulation which is not expressly sanctioned by the Act/parent statute. In this regard, the Petitioner has placed reliance on the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of Bharathidasan University & Anr. Vs. All-India Council for Technical



Education & Ors., reported in [(2001) 8 SCC 676]and the APTEL judgment in the case of Damodar Valley Corporation vs. CERC & Ors., in Appeal Nos. 271, 272, 273, 275 of 2006 & 8 of 2007 .

6. Subsequent to the filing of the Petition, the Petitioner filed IA No. 34/2017 seeking amendment to the main Petition on account of subsequent development post filing of the main Petition. Vide Record of Proceedings for the hearing dated 27.7.2017, the Petitioner was permitted to file amended Petition. Accordingly, IA was disposed of.

### **Reply of the Respondent**

7. CTU vide its reply affidavit dated 6.9.2018 has submitted as under:

(a) The LTA was granted to the Petitioner with the additional system strengthening as set out in LTA grant pursuant to which the Petitioner entered into BPTA dated 31.3.2010. In terms of Clause 2 of the BPTA, the Petitioner has agreed to share and pay to CTU the transmission charges in accordance with the Regulations/Tariff Orders issued by the Commission corresponding to the capacity of power contracted from the generation project through open access from the scheduled date of commissioning of the project irrespective of actual date of commissioning. Accordingly, irrespective of the actual commissioning of the generating units, the Petitioner is required to pay the transmission charges in accordance with the BPTA.

(b) Under Clause 5 of BPTA, the Petitioner has undertaken not to relinquish or transfer its rights and obligations under the BPTA without the prior approval of PGCIL and the Commission and subject to the payment of compensation in accordance with the Regulations issued by the Commission

from time to time. Regulation 18 of the Connectivity Regulations provides for payment of relinquishment charges, which are in effect nothing but the transmission charges payable upon the relinquishment of the LTA and thus are not *de hors* the provisions of the Act.

(c) Clause 9 of the BPTA deals with occurrence of force majeure conditions which is in the context of compliance of the terms of the BPTA. Any issues of the long term customer prior to operationalization of LTA were neither conceived nor were a matter of contractual agreement with PGCIL under the BPTA which is evident from the last sentence of Clause 9 which provides that “transmission/drawal of power shall be started as soon as practicable by the parties concerned after such eventuality has come to an end or ceased to exist”. Therefore, the BPTA contemplated such events of force majeure owing to occurrence of which the ongoing transmission/drawal of power had been disrupted. In the light of the clear provisions in the BPTA, the Petitioner cannot contend that non-availability of long term bids in the target region was a force majeure condition within the meaning of Clause 9 of the BPTA. Therefore, the issues affecting the Petitioner regarding power purchase tie-ups cannot be covered under Clause 9 of the BPTA.

(d) While undertaking regulatory approval for different high capacity transmission corridors proposed to be implemented by PGCIL, the Commission in its order dated 31.5.2010 in Petition No. 233/2009 had taken due cognizance of the fact that the IPPs had not been able to sign the PPAs because the States had not gone ahead with the bidding process for evacuation of power. Therefore, the Commission had observed that linking

the signing of the PPAs with regulatory approval was to hamper the progress of transmission projects. Keeping in view the provisions of Tariff Policy, the Commission had observed that signing of PPAs between IPPs and beneficiaries has no linkages with regulatory approval of transmission corridors for power evacuation were to be implemented after taking account the *bonafide* nature of generating projects which were likely to be materialized in near future. That being so, non-signing of PPAs with beneficiaries due to absence of adequate bids in target regions, could not be construed as a force majeure event under the BPTA.

(e) Regulation 12 of the Connectivity Regulations provides for submission of the bank guarantee by an LTA applicant to CTU during construction phase when augmentation of transmission system is required, in accordance with the provisions of the Detailed Procedure notified under the Connectivity Regulations. As per the Detailed Procedure, LTA grantee is required to keep available with PGCIL at all material times, the prescribed Bank Guarantee, which may be encased on occurrence of the specified events. Starting from the grant of LTA and upto its operationalization and even thereafter during the period that the LTA remain operational, Payment Security mechanism with respect to ISTS transmission charges/relinquishment charges is to remain available with PGCIL.

(f) The Petitioner has misconstrued the scope and operation of Clause 7.1 of the BCD Procedure to contend that till the PPAs are executed with the beneficiaries, LTA cannot be operationalized and no liability to pay transmission charges arise. In terms of proviso to Clause 7.1 of BCD, the

transmission charges liability for DIC shall be corresponding to total quantum for which LTA is granted, with or without firm beneficiaries. The reliance placed by the Petitioner on order dated 2.12.2013 in Petition No. 244/MP/2012 is also misplaced as in the said order the Commission observed that for scheduling of power under LTA, execution of long-term PPA was necessary condition for availing the said LTA. Such scheduling of power is distinct and independent of the incidence/liability of transmission charges payment in terms of BPTA and Regulations.

(g) The Petitioner has admitted that it has not been able to execute a firm PPA for evacuation of power. The LTA was granted to the Petitioner with High Capacity Power Transmission Corridor-V system inter-alia including Champa–Kurukshetra  $\pm 800$ kV, 3000MW HVDC Bipole link which was ultimately commissioned with all its elements on 16.9.2017. However, all such generation projects which were granted LTA with HCPTC-V corridor were afforded an opportunity to evacuate power from the part-system already commissioned and the margins available. For operationalization of LTAs earlier granted with Jabalpur- Orai 765 kV corridor/Champa – Kurukshetra HVDC Phase II against 559 MW transmission capacity was effectively made available after the surrender of the LTA by different LTA applicants in terms of directions of the Commission in Petition No. 84/MP/2016. The Petitioner did not opt for up-gradation/operationalization of its LTA even though its generation project was at a higher priority than the other applicants who opted for up-gradation/operationalization of LTA. Subsequently, the HVDC bipole link was commissioned in two phases of 1500 MW each. The first phase (1500 MW of 3000 MW) was completed in March 2017 and prior to

completion of the first phase, the eligible LTA customers (including the Petitioner) were again afforded an opportunity to provide their consent towards operationalization of LTA with Phase-I of the HVDC link in a meeting held on 23.3.2017 in accordance with the Commission`s directions vide RoP dated 14.2.2017 in IA Nos. 30/2016 and 7/2017 in Petition No. 84/MP/2016. However, the Petitioner also did not attend the meeting even though the Petitioner`s power plant was generating at that time, which makes it amply clear that the Petitioner was not interested in early operationalization of LTA.

(h) Since the System Strengthening for the Petitioner`s project was completed on 1.10.2017, the Petitioner became liable to pay transmission charges to CTU from 1.10.2017 in accordance with the provisions of the BPTA.

(i) During the pendency of the said Petition, the Petitioner sought to surrender 430 MW LTA in NR vide its letter dated 17.5.2017 raising force majeure issues reiterating the provisions of Clause 9 of the BPTA. Owing to surrender of the entire 816 MW LTA by the Petitioner, there is no question of any deferment of part LTA. Since the surrender of 816 MW LTA was not in accordance with the provisions of the Connectivity Regulations, the Petitioner is liable to pay relinquishment charges and also the applicable transmission charges till the relinquishment of its LTA.

### **Rejoinder of the Petitioner**

8. The Petitioner, vide its rejoinder dated 22.10.2018, has mainly reiterated the submissions made in the Petition and has also submitted as under:

(a) Clause 9 of the BPTA has an overriding effect over the other clauses of the BTPA, which impose certain amount of liability on either of the party for making payment to the other party to the said BPTA including Clause 2 of BPTA.

(b) Upon execution of the BTPA, all rights and obligations as per the Connectivity Regulations, including relinquishment charges as provided in Regulation 18, are subject to the said BPTA. Accordingly, right of PGCIL to claim any relinquishment charges based upon the exist/surrender/relinquishment of LTA is subject to the provisions of the BPTA only and in the event of occurrence of a situation beyond the control of the generating company, as per Clause 9 of BPTA, it is discharged from various obligations under the BPTA including payment of relinquishment charges.

(c) Inability to ensure firm long term tie up power supply is clearly a reason beyond the control of the Petitioner and falls within the ambit of Clause 9 of BPTA. The Petitioner, in this regard, has relied upon the 37<sup>th</sup> report of Standing Committee on Energy presented before Lok Sabha on 7.3.2018, wherein it has been noted that there have been unforeseen circumstances which have led the IPPs suffering from huge cash flow and falling in trouble without any source of recovery whatsoever.

(d) PGCIL has failed to prove any stranded capacity in order to make the beneficiary/Petitioner liable for payment of relinquishment charges. Ascertainment of stranded capacity is a condition precedent to the liability towards relinquishment charges.

(e) PGCIL is wrongly interpreting order dated 31.5.2010 in Petition No. 233/2009. The said order cannot override Clause 9 of the BPTA in the event of occurrence of any force majeure event.

(f) The Commission in its order dated 8.12.2017 in Petition No. 203/MP/2017 has categorically observed that in the event, the construction obligations by a generator have been fulfilled as per the BPTA, then the construction Bank Guarantee has to be returned. Accordingly, the Bank Guarantee furnished by the Petitioner is liable to be returned by PGCIL. In any case, on account of occurrence of force majeure event as pointed out by the Petitioner, PGCIL ought to return the Bank Guarantee to the Petitioner.

(g) The Commission in its order dated 2.12.2013 in Petition No. 244/MP/2012 has clearly held that the long-term PPA is a necessary condition for availing long-term access in accordance with Para 7.1 of BCD and inadequate number of bids, being force majeure event beyond the control of the Petitioner, its LTA could not have been operationalized by PGCIL.

(h) The Commission in its order dated 8.6.2013 in Petition No. 118/MP/2012 has observed that non-availability of coal linkage for the Petitioner therein was an event beyond the control of the Petitioner. Accordingly, applying the same principle in the present case, non-availability of long-term bids for procurement of power in the WR and NR by Discom qua BTPA of the Petitioner is also a force majeure event.

### **Submissions during the hearing**

9. During the hearing of the petition, learned senior counsel for the Petitioner submitted as under:-

(a) Once a contract has been entered into on account of provisions in the statute or regulations and the principles in the regulations have been incorporated in the contract, it cannot be said that the regulation will operate independent of the contract. Since the incident of relinquishment charge is on account of a contract executed in terms envisaged under Regulation 15 of the Connectivity Regulations, Regulation 18 would then be required to be applied in a manner envisaged by the parties in the contract/BPTA. Accordingly, Clauses 5 and 9 of the BPTA becomes relevant and would control the obligations of the parties.

(b) The Commission in Petition No. 69/MP/2014 (Aryan MP Power Generation Pvt. Ltd. Vs. PGCIL) and in Petition No. 317/MP/2013 (Navbharat Power Pvt. Ltd. Vs. PGCIL) and other orders has interpreted Clause 9 of the BPTA to cover a temporary phase when the project developer is unable to utilize the transmission system or when the licensee is unable to make its transmission system available due to any force majeure event and has held that the said provision cannot be used for making an exit from BPTA. Force Majeure cannot be of "temporary nature" for the reason that the definition of force majeure includes war, rebellion, mutiny, fire, flood, change in law etc. and some of these events creates a permanent disability to jeopardize the ability of the Petitioner to start operation again. Therefore, Clause 9 of the



BPTA is without any limitations as to the time for which force majeure period can be claimed.

(c) Clauses 1 to 11 of the BPTA unambiguously provide that the obligation contained under the terms relating to payment of transmission charges (Clause 2) and relinquishment charges (Clause 5) shall stand discharged in the event of occurrence of force majeure situation (Clause 9). Therefore, Clause 9 is an omnibus clause that cuts right through the agreement and includes the failure to carry out the obligation to pay the transmission charges and relinquishment charges as envisaged in Clauses 3 and 5 of the BPTA. The functional basis of a power project is long term PPAs and if the same are not executed due to reasons not attributable to the project developer, the existence of force majeure events as provided in Clause 9 cannot be denied. Further, Clause 6 of the BPTA has no application to the present case as this is not a case of exit/abandonment of the project.

(d) The event narrated by the Petitioner i.e. non-availability of long term PPA is an event of force majeure within the meaning of Clause 9 of the BPTA and on occurrence of such force majeure event, the obligation to pay the relinquishment charges under Regulation 18(1) of the Connectivity Regulations stands extinguished. An analysis of the various provisions of the BPTA would show that the statutory right of CTU to collect transmission charges was made in terms of the contract/BPTA. As per the minutes of the 37<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Reports of the Parliamentary Standing Committee issued in March, 2018 and August, 2018 respectively, there was no possibility of signing of PPAs which resulted in the assets being stranded/stretched and

several companies being declared NPAs. Lack of agreement for supply of power between generators and distribution licensees is an event of force majeure which is recognized by the Central Government.

10. Learned Counsel for CTU submitted as under:

a) The Commission in its order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No. 92/MP/2015 has decided the issue of stranded capacity and payment of relinquishment charges. The Commission has held that Regulation 18 of the Connectivity Regulations was in conformity with the provisions of the Act and in advancement of the objects of the Act with regard to Open Access. Further, the Commission has held that the Relinquishment Charges were in the nature of the compensation which a long term customer was obliged to pay as transmission charges in accordance with the mechanism envisaged in the Regulation 18 of the Connectivity Regulation. Therefore, the issue as regards the liability of payment of relinquishment charges has been settled by the Commission which is binding on the petitioner being a party in the Petition No. 92/MP/2015.

b) In line with the direction of the Commission in order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No. 92/MP/2015, CTU has computed the stranded capacity and relinquishment charges of the various generators including the Petitioner. The Petitioner is liable to pay Rs. 44.12 Crs. as Relinquishment Charges.

c) The allegations made by the Petitioner as regards the responsibility of the CTU to execute the transmission corridors taking into account the actual

long term PPAs entered by the Petitioner has been dealt with by the Commission in Para 94 of the Order dated 8.3.2019 in the Petition No. 92/MP/2015. Since, signing of the PPAs is not a pre-condition for implementation of transmission corridors, the same cannot be pleaded as a Force Majeure event relieving the Petitioner from paying the relinquishment/transmission Charges under the BPTA.

d) The Commission in the Order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No. 92/MP/2015 has held that since BPTA is in terms of the Connectivity Regulations, it is in the nature of a statutory contract. The relationship between the CTU and the LTA customer being statutory in nature has to be governed by the provisions of the Connectivity Regulations. Further, the liability for payment towards the relinquishment charges is to be determined based on Regulation 18 of the Connectivity Regulations. Since, the issue as regards the applicability of the Regulation 18 in the context of BPTA stands adjudicated, the submission of the Petitioner in this regard is liable to be rejected.

e) Under Clause 5.0 of the BPTA, the obligation to pay the transmission charges under the BPTA is absolute and the Petitioner cannot transfer/relinquish its rights and obligations without the prior approval of the Commission. Since, the relinquishment is to be upon the payment of necessary compensation in accordance with the regulations, Regulation 18 of the Connectivity Regulation has been included as an operating contractual provision under the express terms of Clause 5.0 of the BPTA. Therefore, the inter argument of the statute ousting the Regulation is of no consequence.

f) While interpreting a contract what is of essence is the intention of the parties in the context which it appears and the nature of the rights and obligations agreed there under`. As such the Force Majeure Clause under BPTA must be construed accordingly and cannot be given a wider area of applicability than what has been intended by the parties. The BPTA is a contract for use of transmission line of a transmission licensee by a DIC wherein the DIC agrees to bear the transmission charges as a consideration for use of the said transmission lines irrespective of the actual power flow. In other words, so long as a DIC is connected to the transmission lines of the licensee and retains the rights to access the system, it is liable to pay transmission charges to the licensee. It is in this context that Clause 9 of the Connectivity Regulations provides for an exclusion Clause in the nature of the force majeure event which temporarily absolves the parties from any liabilities arising from a breach of contract. This is evident from the last sentence of the Clause 9 which says that power flow should be started as soon as the force majeure event is over. Therefore, Clause 9 of the BPTA being temporary in nature and being restrictive in application cannot be relied upon by the Petitioner to contend that the entire BPTA including Clause 5.0 of the BPTA ceases to operate as between the parties. The liabilities under Clause 5 of the BPTA and Regulation 18 of the Connectivity Regulations must be distinguished from the liabilities under Clause 9 of the BPTA. Clause 9 of the BPTA only provides for a departure of payment from the transmission charges and by no means can provide for departure from obligation under the Clause 5 of the BPTA.

g) As per the findings of the Commission in various cases and of the Appellate Tribunal in Appeal No. 54 of 2014, the absence of long term PPA cannot be construed as a force majeure event. The Petitioner is accordingly liable to pay the Relinquishment Charges.

11. Learned Senior Counsel for the Petitioner has submitted as under:

(a) Relinquishment Charges have been made as part of the contractual obligations under Clause 5 and therefore, the same is amenable to the Clause 9 of the BPTA. While the relinquishment charges can be computed in terms of the protocol provided under Regulation 18, levy of the same is subject to the terms and subject of the BPTA. Further, the BPTA does not contain any exception or non obstante clause specifying that the relinquishment charges will be levied as per the Connectivity Regulations. In the absence of such stipulations, CTU cannot argue that the compensation for relinquishment is a statutory charge which is payable de-hors the provisions of the BPTA.

(b) The argument by PGCIL that PPA is not at all relevant while considering the LTA application is fundamentally flawed. Regulation 12 of the Connectivity Regulations provides that an agreement for sale/purchase of power is a consideration at the time of applying for LTA. Clause 22.7 of the Detailed Procedure under the Connectivity Regulation casts an obligation on an LTA customer to confirm the exact details of the PPA executed 3 years prior to the intended date of operationalization of the LTA. Clause 7.1 of the BCD Procedure provides that an LTA cannot be operational in the event firm long term PPA is not available. Regulation 15-B of the Connectivity Regulations provides that LTA can only be availed by having a contract of above one year.

In view of the above provisions, the Commission is precluded from taking a view that non-availability of long term PPAs as a result of non-initiation of a long term power purchase processes by the distribution licensees will have no impact on the BPTAs.

(c) Ministry of Power issued the guidelines for procurement of power under Design, Build, Finance, Own and Operate (DBFOO) basis on 8.1.2013. As per DBFOO, coal cost is a pass through in certain scenarios which relate to the source of coal. For example, if the bids are called for scenarios relating to domestic coal linkage or from domestic coal mines, then power plants based on imported coal cannot participate in such bids. The said stipulation is a departure from the earlier Case 1 bidding regime where coal source was at the discretion of the bidders. This factor has materially affected the Petitioner from entering into long term PPA. The aforesaid reason cannot be ignored by the Commission and in the event of relinquishment of BPTA/LTA on account of the said force majeure reasons, no relinquishment charges can be levied.

(d) The BPTA is not an underlying contract for underwriting the costs of PGCIL. Where a generator is not able to evacuate power on account of reasons which are beyond its control, the said generator cannot be made liable to underwrite the cost of PGCIL on account of non-usage of the transmission system. As per Section 38(2)(b) of the Act, CTU is required to effectively coordinate the construction of transmission systems with various entities including the generators. It follows therefrom that when the generators have raised their concerns pertaining to non-evacuation of power on account of reasons beyond their control, CTU cannot just proceed with the

transmission corridors only on the basis of BPTAs being signed with the generators. As per Para 5.3.2 of the National Electricity Policy, CTU is required to undertake network expansion after identifying requirements in consultation with the stakeholders and taking up the execution after the due regulatory approval. When PGCIL develops transmission corridors without execution of contracts/BPTA with the beneficiaries, the risks in developing the transmission network cannot be entirely attributable to the LTA customers. CTU has to take the risk of developing transmission infrastructure in the event of occurrence of any unforeseeable or uncontrollable event.

(e) CTU's interpretation of clause 9 of the BPTA is only applicable to the extent of "transmission of electricity in a transmission system", and not for the purpose of injection or withdrawal of power is completely erroneous. After injection of power by the generator from its generating station, it has no role qua such generation of power. If the force majeure clause is interpreted as per the argument of CTU, then it will be applicable for the benefit of CTU, and for no other entity. Any issues qua the flow of power in the transmission system can only be attributable to CTU and in such an event, any benefit of force majeure will always be availed by CTU. The above interpretation will render clause 9 otiose as only CTU can invoke the said clause since the generator does not have any role after injection of power in the transmission system from its power plant.

(f) Reliance on Regulation 8(5) of the Sharing Regulations with regard to the liability of generators to pay the transmission charges irrespective of the force majeure clause is misplaced. Regulation 13(1)(l) of the Sharing

Regulations provides that “force majeure clause” shall be inserted in the TSA which means that in case of an event beyond the control of a generator, the said clause will be applicable and the generators are not bound to pay the transmission charges on account of force majeure events. Since the liability to collect the transmission charges has been subjected to TSA which is a statutory contract, the Sharing Regulations will have to be implemented as per the provisions of the TSA. Accordingly, the Regulation 8(5) of the Sharing Regulations cannot be independently invoked. In the event of occurrence of force majeure, the liability to pay transmission charges by the generator is discharged.

### **Analysis and Decision**

12. We have considered the submissions of the Petitioner and Respondents and perused all relevant documents on record and the regulations of the Commission and the orders issued by the Commission having bearing on the adjudication of disputes raised in the petition. The following issues arise for our consideration:

**(a) Issue No. 1: Whether Clause 9 of the BPTA dealing with force majeure is an omnibus provision cutting across all provisions of the BPTA including clause 3 and 5 and in the event force majeure is proved, relieves an affected party from its liability to pay the transmission charges or relinquishment charges as the case may be, or is a standalone provision applicable for disruption in injection/supply of power of temporary nature?**

**(b) Issue No.2: Whether the case of the Petitioner is covered under clause 9 of the BPTA?**

**(c) What should be the date of relinquishment of LTA under the BPTA dated 31.3.2010?**

**(d) Issue No.4: What are the reliefs admissible to the Petitioner in terms of its prayers in the Petition?**



These issues have been dealt with ad seriatim in the succeeding paragraphs of this order.

**Issue No. 1: Whether Clause 9 of the BPTA dealing with force majeure is an omnibus provision cutting across all provisions of the BPTA including clause 3 and 5 and in the event force majeure is proved, relieves an affected party from its liability to pay the transmission charges or relinquishment charges as the case may be, or is a standalone provision applicable for disruption in injection/supply of power of temporary nature?**

13. The Petitioner has set up a 1370MW (2x685) power project at village Raikheda in the State of Chhattisgarh. The Petitioner vide its application dated 30.8.2008 applied for LTA for 1215 MW having 300 MW to the Western Region, 460 MW to the Northern Region and 455 MW within the State of Chhattisgarh. The Petitioner was granted LTA of 438 MW for CSPTCL within the State of Chhattisgarh and 816 MW outside the State (386 MW in Western Region and 430 MW in Northern Region). The Petitioner entered into a BPTA with CTU on 31.3.2010 for 816 MW for transfer of power to Western Region and Northern Region. The Petitioner has submitted that it has not been able to ensure firm tie up for supply of power on account of refusal of CSPTCL to off-take 35% of power and also for limited number of long term bids by the distribution companies for procurement of power and vide its letter dated 7.12.2016 sought to relinquish 386 MW of power to the Western Region. Further, the Petitioner vide its letter dated 17.5.2017 sought to relinquish 430 MW LTA to Northern Region on account of annulment of bids by UPPCL.

14. The Petitioner has submitted that CTU accorded long term access in terms of the Connectivity Regulations. The Petitioner and CTU entered into BPTA as required under Regulation 15 of the Connectivity Regulations for payment of transmission charges (Clause 2 of the BPTA). Clause 5 of the BPTA recognized the ability to relinquish or transfer obligations specified in the BPTA subject to approval of CTU and the Commission and further subject to payment of compensation. In terms of

Clause 9 of the BPTA, the parties have agreed to limit their liability for loss or damage arising out of failure to carry out the terms of the agreement if such loss or damage is on account of force majeure. Further, force majeure has been defined in broad terms to include change in law or any other cause beyond the control of the defaulting party. Therefore, the statutory right of CTU to collect the transmission charges was made in terms of the contract/BPTA. The Petitioner has submitted that the agreed terms of the BPTA, being Clauses 1 to 11 are unambiguous which provide that the obligations contained under the terms relating to payment of transmission charges (Clause 2) and relinquishment charges (Clause 5) shall stand discharged in the event of occurrence of force majeure situation (Clause 9). The Petitioner has submitted that Clause 9 is an omnibus clause that cut right through the agreement since it provides that “no party is liable to any claim for any loss or damages whatsoever arising out of the failure to carry out the terms of this Agreement”. The Petitioner has submitted that use of the phrase “this agreement” includes the failure to pay the transmission charges and relinquishment charges as envisaged in Clauses 3 and 5 of the agreement. The parties entering into contract are fully aware of the nature of the contract including the contingencies (i.e. Clause 9 of the BPTA) and it would not be proper if any other interpretation or meaning is given to the same which is contrary to the original intention of the parties i.e. inspite of occurrence of force majeure events under clause 9, the contractual obligations under Regulation 5 to pay the relinquishment charges continues to be alive.

15. Learned Senior Counsel for the Petitioner submitted that a question which needs to be considered is whether the Petitioner would be liable for payment of relinquishment charges in terms of Regulation 18 of Connectivity Regulations read with the order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No.92/MP/2015 irrespective of whether the

Petitioner has demonstrated existence of force majeure events. The Petitioner has submitted that once a contract has been entered into on account of provisions in statute/regulations and the principles in the regulations have been incorporated in the contract, it cannot be said that the regulation will operate independent of the contract. The Petitioner has submitted that the incidences of relinquishment charge is on account of the contract executed in terms envisaged under Regulation 15 and hence Regulation 18 would require to be applied in a manner envisaged by the parties in the BPTA. It is in this context that Clauses 5 and 9 become relevant and would control the obligations of the parties, irrespective of whether such obligation has reference to determination made under the regulations.

16. CTU has submitted that the issue regarding liability of payment of relinquishment charges and method of determination of stranded capacity has been settled by the Commission in order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No.92/MP/2015 and is binding on the Petitioners who were also parties in the said proceedings (subject to order in the appeals). The Petitioners cannot now be heard to contend that they are not liable to make payment of the compensation in the manner provided under Regulation 18 of the Connectivity Regulations. CTU has submitted that the Petitioner in terms of Clause 2.0 of the BPTA has undertaken to share and pay to the CTU the transmission charges in accordance with the Regulations/Tariff orders of the Commission. Further, Clause 6 of the BPTA have bound the generators to pay the transmission charges when they are abandoning the project or making an exit. CTU has emphasized that it is in pursuance of the said provision that the Petitioner has furnished to the CTU the bank guarantee corresponding to the LTAs granted to them which can be encashed by the CTU in case of any adverse progress of the generating unit assessed in the Coordination Meeting. CTU has further submitted

that Clause 5.0 of the BPTA prevents the Petitioner to relinquish or transfer its rights and obligations specified in the BPTA without the prior approval of the Commission and CTU and subject to payment of compensation in accordance with the regulations of the Commission issued from time to time. Therefore, Regulation 18 has been included as an operating contractual provision under the express terms of Clause 5.0 of the BPTA and therefore, the entire argument of the contract ousting the regulation is of no consequence. CTU has submitted that the contention of the Petitioner that the right to claim relinquishment charges based upon exit/surrender/relinquishment of LTA is subject to provisions of BPTA which has become frustrated on account of force majeure event, already stands adjudicated in order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No.92/MP/2015 wherein the Commission has held that BPTAs or LTA Agreements are in accordance with the Connectivity Regulations and they are in the nature of statutory contract and are to be governed by the provisions of Connectivity Regulations. CTU has submitted that the interpretation supplied by the Petitioner to Clause 9 of the BPTA so as to broaden its applicability to situations which were never intended to be covered, is absolutely erroneous and has occurred on account of the unwarranted comparison by the Petitioner of the force majeure clause in the BPTA with the force majeure clause in the Power Purchase Agreement between the generating companies and distribution licensees. CTU has submitted that the force majeure clause in the BPTA must be interpreted on the principle of interpretation of contract i.e. the intention of the parties, the context in which they appear and the nature of rights and obligations agreed thereunder and cannot be given a wider area of applicability than what has been intended by the parties. CTU has submitted that the BPTA is a contract for use of transmission lines of a transmission licensee by a DIC wherein the DIC agrees to

bear the transmission charges as a consideration for use of the said transmission lines irrespective of the actual power flow, meaning thereby that so long as a DIC is connected to the transmission lines of the licensee and retains the right to access the system, it is liable to pay the transmission charges to the licensee. It is in this context that Clause 9 provides for an exclusion clause in the nature of force majeure which temporarily absolves the parties from any liability arising out of the breach of contract if the same has occurred on account of force majeure which prevents the use of the transmission lines and suspends the power flow. That is why the clause says that power flow is to be started as soon as force majeure event is over. CTU has submitted that clause 9 of the BPTA being temporary in nature and restrictive in its application cannot be relied upon by the Petitioner to contend that once it becomes applicable, the entire BPTA including clause 5.0 ceases to operate between the parties. CTU has emphasized that the applicability of Clause 9 cannot be extended to matters which are beyond the eventualities affecting “transmission/drawal of power”. CTU has submitted that the attempt of the Petitioner to misinterpret the provisions of Clauses 9 and 5 of the BPTA read with Regulation 18 of the Connectivity Regulations so as to evade its liability of payment of relinquishment charges at the time of relinquishment of the LTA, is also negated by the clear language of Clause 9 of the BPTA.

17. We have considered the submissions of the Petitioner and CTU. The main contention of the Petitioner is that once the BPTA has been signed as required under Regulation 15 of the Connectivity Regulations, the rights and liabilities of the parties to the BPTA shall be governed by the provisions of the BPTA and not in accordance with the provisions of the Connectivity Regulations. To be specific, the Petitioner’s contention is that the relinquishment charges determined under Regulation 18 of the

Connectivity Regulations cannot be levied if the Petitioner is excused for performance on account of force majeure in terms of Clause 9 of the BPTA. Therefore, the question for consideration is whether the relinquishment charges are statutory or contractual in nature. The Commission has dealt with the issue in its order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No.92/MP/2015. Relevant observations and findings of the Commission in the said order are extracted as under:

“97. We have considered the submissions of the parties. Long Term Access rights have been granted to the LTA customers under provisions of Regulation 12 of the Connectivity Regulations and such access rights carry with itself the corresponding commitment under Regulation 26 to pay the transmission charges for the transmission systems included in the LTA grants. Further, in terms of the Connectivity Regulations, the LTA customers have signed the Bulk Power Transmission Agreements or Long Term Access Agreement making unconditional commitment to pay the transmission charges throughout the term of the LTA. Regulation 18 deals with the relinquishment of long term access rights by the LTA customers. Regulation 18 provides for an exit provision for the long term customers to relinquish the LTA rights subject to payment of transmission charges for a maximum period of 12 years with a notice period of one year or payment of transmission charges in lieu thereof. Since BPTA or LTA Agreements are in terms of the Connectivity Regulations, they are in the nature of statutory contract. Therefore, the relationship between the CTU and the LTA customers are basically statutory in nature and has to be governed by the provisions of the Connectivity Regulations. As a corollary, the relinquishment of access rights of the LTA customers has to be strictly construed in terms of the provisions of the Connectivity Regulations.

98. Regulation 18 which deals with the relinquishment of long term access rights by LTA customers is extracted as under:

“18. Relinquishment of access rights

(1) A long-term customer may relinquish the long-term access rights fully or partly before the expiry of the full term of long-term access, by making payment of compensation for stranded capacity as follows:-

(a) Long-term customer who has availed access rights for atleast 12 years

(i) Notice of one (1) year – If such a customer submits an application to the Central Transmission Utility at least 1 (one) year prior to the date from which such customer desires to relinquish the access rights, there shall be no charges.

(ii) Notice of less than one (1) year – If such a customer submits an application to the Central Transmission Utility at any time lesser than a period of 1 (one) year prior to the date from which such customer desires to relinquish the access rights, such customer shall pay an amount equal to 66% of the estimated transmission charges (net present value) for the stranded transmission capacity for the period falling short of a notice period of one (1) year.

(b) Long-term customer who has not availed access rights for at least 12 (twelve) years – such customer shall pay an amount equal to 66% of the estimated

transmission charges (net present value) for the stranded transmission capacity for the period falling short of 12 (twelve) years of access rights:

Provided that such a customer shall submit an application to the Central Transmission Utility at least 1 (one) year prior to the date from which such customer desires to relinquish the access rights;

Provided further that in case a customer submits an application for relinquishment of long-term access rights at anytime at a notice period of less than one year, then such customer shall pay an amount equal to 66% of the estimated transmission charges (net present value) for the period falling short of a notice period of one (1) year, in addition to 66% of the estimated transmission charges (net present value) for the stranded transmission capacity for the period falling short of 12(twelve) years of access rights.

(2) The discount rate that shall be applicable for computing the net present value as referred to in sub-clause (a) and (b) of clause (1) above shall be the discount rate to be used for bid evaluation in the Commission's Notification issued from time to time in accordance with the Guidelines for Determination of Tariff by Bidding Process for Procurement of Power by Distribution Licensees issued by the Ministry of Power.

(3) The compensation paid by the long-term customer for the stranded transmission capacity shall be used for reducing transmission charges payable by other long-term customers and medium-term customers in the year in which such compensation payment is due in the ratio of transmission charges payable for that year by such long term customers and medium-term customers."

99. Regulation 18 provides for relinquishment of access rights fully or partly before expiry of the full term of long term access by making payment of compensation for the stranded capacity. The regulation has fixed a period of maximum of 12 years for the purpose of compensation for access rights even though the tenure of the LTA is 25 years. Further, the compensation has been fixed at an amount of 66% of the transmission charges (net present value) for the stranded transmission capacity for a period falling short of 12 years. In other words, the long term customers relinquishing the access rights are exempted from paying 34% of the transmission charges (net present value) for a period falling short of 12 years. Thus on account of the exit of a long term customer through relinquishment, the entire transmission charges from 13th year to 25th year and 34% of the transmission charges from 1st year to 12th year for the relinquished capacity has to be borne by other long term customers and medium term customers. This aspect becomes clear from Regulation 18(3) which provides that the compensation received on account of relinquishment shall be applied for reducing the transmission charges of other long term and medium term customers which are required to bear the additional transmission charges which would have been borne by the relinquishing long term customers but for the relinquishment of long term access rights. Therefore, Regulation 18 statutorily provides for a compensatory mechanism for relinquishment of access rights by long term customers by apportioning the risks between the relinquishing long term customers and the other long term and medium term customers keeping in view the likely utilization of the relinquished transmission assets. It is pertinent to mention that neither BPTA nor Long Term Access Agreements between the long term customers and CTU provide for any compensatory mechanism but only mention that it shall be determined as per the regulations of the Commission. In other words, the compensatory mechanism for long term access rights is statutory in nature. Therefore, the Commission does not agree with the contention of relinquishing long term customers that the compensation on account of relinquishment of long term

access rights shall have to be decided on the principles of section 73 and 74 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872.....”

In the light of the above findings of the Commission, the issue whether the relinquishment charges shall be governed by the Connectivity Regulations or the provisions of the BPTA stands settled. Since appeals have been filed against the said order, it is needless to say that the above findings are subject to the decision of the Appellate Tribunal. As the matter stands today, the issue is settled and cannot be reopened in the present proceedings.

18. Another argument of the Petitioner is that Clause 9 of the BPTA is an omnibus clause that cut right through the agreement and the use of the words “this agreement” includes the failure to carry out the obligation to pay the transmission charges and relinquishment charges, as envisaged in Clauses 3 and 5 of the BPTA. The Petitioner has submitted that the Commission has taken a view qua Clause 9 in Aryan Coal and other related matters that the said clause provides temporary amnesty and appeals are presently pending against these orders. Despite being aware that the Commission has become functus officio qua the interpretation of Clause 9 of the BPTA, the Petitioner has urged the Commission to take an independent view on account of the submissions made in the petition. Therefore, without any prejudice to our findings in our earlier order, we are examining the submissions of the Petitioner.

19. The relevant provisions of the BPTA dated 31.3.2010 between the Petitioner and CTU are quoted hereunder:

“1.0 In accordance with Central Electricity Regulatory Commission Regulations, 2009 and Electricity Act 2003 (including there amendment, if any) and in accordance with the term mentioned above, POWERGRID agrees to provide such open access required by these Long Term Transmission Customers from the date and in the manner mentioned in the Annexure 1, Annexure 2 , Annexure 3 and Annexure 4 of



this agreement for a period of 25 years from the schedule date of open access of individual long-term open access customers (as specified in Annexure I).

2.0 (a) Long term transmission customer shall share and pay the transmission charges in accordance with the regulation/tariff order issued by Central Electricity Regulatory Commission from time to time of POWERGRID transmission system of concerned applicable Region i.e. Northern Region, Western Region, Southern Region including charges for inter-regional links/ULDC/NLDC charges and any additions thereof. These charges would be applicable corresponding to the capacity of power contracted from the said generation project through open access from the, scheduled date of commissioning of generating projects as indicated at Annexure-I irrespective of their actual date of commissioning.

(b) Long term transmission customer shall share and pay the transmission charges of the transmission system detailed in Annexure-3 in accordance with tile sharing mechanism detailed in Annexure-4. In case, in future, any other long-term transmission customer(s) is/are granted open access through the transmission system detailed at Annexure-3 (subject to technical feasibility), he/they would also share the applicable transmission charges.

(c) Each Long transmission customer (including its successor/assignee) shall pay the applicable transmission charges from the date of commissioning of the respective transmission system which would not be prior to the scheduled commissioning date of generating units as indicated by the respective developer as per Annexure-I. The commissioning of transmission system would be preponed only if the same is agreed mutually by concerned parties.

(d) In addition to opening of LC for 105% of estimated average monthly billing for charges mentioned at 2(a) and 2(b) above, Long-Term Transmission customer would provide security in the form of irrevocable Bank Guarantee (BO), in favor of POWER GRID, equivalent to two months estimated average monthly billing, three months prior to the scheduled date of commissioning of generating units as indicated at Annexure-I. Initially the security mechanism shall be valid for a minimum period of three (3) years and shall be renewed from time to time till the expiry of the open access.

3.0 POWERGRID agrees to provide Long Term Access required by Long term transmission customer as per the details mentioned above and in accordance with the Regulations under the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (Open Access in Interstate Transmission) Regulations 2009 and conditions specified by the CERC from time to time.

However, during the tenure of this agreement if any of the covenants and conditions recited in this agreement including agreements at Annexure- A, Band C found inconsistent with the provisions of the Electricity Act 2003 and/or applicable notifications/rules/regulations issued either by CERC or by GOI as per the provisions of the Electricity Act, then notwithstanding anything contained in the agreement referred to above, the said rules and regulations shall prevail.

5.0 The Long term transmission customer shall not relinquish or transfer its rights and obligations specified in the Bulk Power Transmission Agreement, without prior approval of POWERGRID and CERC and subject to payment of compensation in accordance with the CERC Regulations issued from time to time.

6.0 (a) In case any of the developers fail to construct the generating station or dedicated transmission system or makes an exit or abandon its project, POWERGRID shall have the right to collect the transmission charges and/or damages as the case may be in accordance with the notification/regulation issued by CERC from time to time. The developer shall furnish a Bank guarantee from a nationalised bank for an amount which shall be equivalent to Rs.5 (five)Lakhs/MW to compensate such damages. The bank guarantee format is enclosed as Annexure-Y. The details and categories of bank would be in accordance with clause 2 (h) above. The Bank guarantee would be furnished in favour of POWERGRID in accordance with the time frame agreed during the meeting held at CEA on 1.2,2010.

(b) This bank guarantee would be initially valid for a period upto six months after the expected date of commissioning schedule of generating units) mentioned at Annexure-I (however, for existing commissioned units, the validity shall be the same as applicable to the earliest validity applicable to the generator in the group mentioned at Annexure I), The bank guarantee would be encashed by POWER GRID in case of adverse progress of individual generating units assessed during coordination meeting as per para 7 below. However, the validity should be extended by the concerned Long Term transmission customer(s) as per the requirement to be indicated during co-ordination meeting.

(c) The POWERGRID shall build transmission system included at Annexure-3 keeping view of various commissioning schedules, however, till the completion of identified transmission elements the transfer of power will be based on the availability of system on short term basis.

(d) In the event of delay in commissioning of concerned transmission system from its schedule, as indicated at Annexure-4 POWERGRID shall pay proportionate transmission charges to concerned Long Term Access Customer(s) proportionate to its commissioned capacity (which otherwise would have been paid by the concerned Long Term Access Customer (s) to POWERGRID) provided generation is ready and POWERGRID fails to make alternate arrangement for dispatch of power.

9.0 The parties shall ensure due compliance with the terms of this Agreement. However, no party shall be liable for any claim for any loss or damage whatsoever arising out of failure to carry out the terms of the Agreement to the extent that such a failure is due to force majeure events such as war, rebellion, mutiny, civil commotion, riot, strike, lock out, fire, flood, forces of nature, major accident, act of God, change of law and any other cause," beyond the control of the defaulting party. But any party claiming the benefit of this clause shall satisfy the other party of the existence of such an event and give written notice of 30 days to the other party to this effect. Transmission/drawal of power shall be started as soon as practicable by the parties concerned after such eventuality has come to an end or ceased to exist.

10. In the event of finalisation of beneficiaries by the developers the applicable transmission charges and other charges covered under this agreement would be payable by the concerned beneficiary. These charges would be effective only from the date of signing of agreement by concerned beneficiary with POWERGRID for the validity period of open access."

20. Perusal of the above provisions makes the scheme envisaged in the BPTA clear. As per Clause 1, CTU has agreed to grant long term access to the Petitioner in

accordance with the Act and Connectivity Regulations from the date and in the manner mentioned in Annexure 1 to 4 of the BPTA for a period of 25 years from the scheduled date indicated in Annexure 1. According to Clause 2, the Petitioner is under obligation to pay the transmission charges in accordance with the regulations and tariff order of the Commission issued from time to time. The applicable charges are payable by the Petitioner from the date of commissioning of the transmission system which should not be prior to the scheduled date of commissioning of the generating station irrespective of actual date of commissioning of the generating station. Further Clause 2 (d) provides for opening of LC and BG as security. As per Clause 3, CTU has agreed to provide the long term access as per the BPTA in accordance with the regulations and conditions as specified by the Commission from time to time. During the tenure of the agreement, if any of the covenants and conditions recited in the agreement are found inconsistent with the provisions of the Act or applicable notification, rules/regulations issued by the Commission or by GOI as per the provisions of the Act, then the said rules and regulations shall prevail. Therefore, the parties to the BPTA have expressly agreed that the provisions of the applicable notification/rules/regulations issued by GOI or the Commission shall prevail over any covenant or conditions of the BPTA. Clause 5 enjoins upon the Petitioner not to relinquish or transfer its rights and obligations under the BPTA without prior approval of CTU and the Commission and subject to compensation determined in accordance with the regulations of the Commission issued from time to time. This means that the BPTA incorporates the relinquishment charges determined under Regulation 18 of the Connectivity Regulation as compensation for relinquishment in terms of Clause 5 of the BPTA. Clause 6 deals with four eventualities attributable to the Petitioner i.e. failure to construct the generating

station, failure to construct the dedicated transmission system, exit from the project or abandonment of the project, on occurrence of which CTU has the right to collect the transmission charges and/or damages in accordance with the regulation/notification issued by the Commission from time to time. For compensating the damages, the Petitioner is required to give a bank guarantee @Rs.5 lakh/MW which could be encashed on account of adverse progress of the individual generating units assessed during the coordination meeting as per Clause 7. Clause 9 enjoins upon both parties to ensure due compliance of the terms of the agreement. However, a party is discharged from its liability for claim for any loss or damages if it fails to carry out the terms of the agreement to the extent such failure is due to force majeure events. There is also provision for notice by the party claiming force majeure to the other party. The Clause further enjoins on the parties to resume transmission/drawal of power as soon as practicable by the parties concerned after the eventuality ceased to exist or come to an end.

21. The parties have argued at length with regard to applicability of force majeure clause in case of relinquishment of LTA and liability of parties to pay the relinquishment charges. It is a settled principle that while interpreting the contract, the intention of the parties, the context in which they appear and the nature of rights and obligations agreed thereunder are relevant considerations which should be kept in view. Therefore, Clause 9 of the BPTA has to be interpreted with due consideration of the above principle of construction. Different elements of Clause 9 are as under:

- (a) The parties shall ensure due compliance with the terms of the agreement.

(b) No party shall be liable for any claim of damages or loss arising out of failure to carry out the terms of the agreement.

(c) The party shall be relieved of the liability to the extent that such a failure is due to force majeure events such as war, rebellion, mutiny, civil commotion, riot, strike, lock out, fire, flood, forces of nature, major accident, act of God, change of law and any other cause beyond the control of the defaulting party.

(d) The defaulting party shall satisfy the other party of the existence of such an event and give a written notice of 30 days.

(e) Transmission/drawal of power shall be started as soon as practicable by the parties concerned after such eventuality has come to an end or ceased to exist.

It is evident from the above that the intention of the parties is to ensure due compliance of the terms of the BPTA. BPTA is a contract for use of the transmission lines of a transmission licensee by a long term customer wherein the transmission licensee agrees to provide open access to its transmission lines and the long term customer agrees to pay the transmission charges as a consideration of use of the said transmission lines. In other words, so long as the long term customer is connected to the transmission lines of the licensee and retains the right to access to the system, it is liable to pay the transmission charges irrespective of actual power flow. Clause 9 provides for an exclusion in the form of force majeure which absolves a party from its liability to any loss or damages arising out of its failure to carry out the terms of the BPTA if it has occurred on account of force majeure which prevents the use of the transmission lines by the long term customer and suspends the power

flow. The clause does not visualize the failure to be of permanent nature, It says that as soon as the event ceases to exist, the transmission/drawal of power shall be started as soon as practicable, meaning thereby that the clause is envisaged to be applicable for a temporary period. Therefore, Clause 9 of the BPTA covers situation of temporary in nature and has a restrictive application. The scope of the said clause cannot be given wider application to cover the cases under Clause 5 wherein the long term customer has an option to relinquish the LTA on payment of compensation in accordance with the regulations issued from time to time. We are of the view that Clause 9 of the BPTA cannot be considered as an omnibus provision to cover under its sweep clause 5 which deals with relinquishment of the LTA. Therefore, the Petitioner cannot escape its liability to pay the relinquishment charges under Clause 5 of the BPTA and Regulation 18 of the Connectivity Regulations by resorting to Clause 9 of BPTA.

22. The Commission in its order dated 31.10.2017 in Petition No.69/MP/2014 (Aryan MP Power Generation Pvt Limited Vs. Powergrid Corporation of India Ltd) has dealt with clause 9 of the BPTA in the context of clause of the BPTA as under:

“18. Next we consider whether the Petitioner is entitled to be discharged from its liability to pay the transmission charges on account of force majeure under clause 9 of the BPTA. Clause 9 of BPTA says that no party shall be liable to any claim for any loss or damage arising out of the failure of the other party to carry out the terms of the agreement to the extent such failure is on account of force majeure events such as war etc. and any other causes beyond the control of the defaulting party. In our view, losses or damages referred to in clause 9 of the BPTA shall not cover the liability of payment of transmission charges. In this connection, clause 6 of the BPTA is relevant which is extracted as under:

“6.0 (a) In case any of the developers fail to construct the generating station/dedicated transmission system or makes an exit or abandon its project, POWERGRID shall have the right to collect the transmission charges and/ or damages as the case may be in accordance with the notification/regulation issued by CERC from time to time.....”

Thus clause 6 says about both transmission charges and damages. Therefore, if a project developer is affected by force majeure, it will only be discharged from paying

the damages only and not the transmission charges. Further, Clause 9 of the BPTA cannot be used to relinquish the LTOA under the BPTA. It is clear from the last sentence of the said clause which says that "Transmission/drawal of power shall be started as soon as practicable by the parties conferred after such eventuality has come to an end or ceased to exist." Therefore, the situation covered under clause 9 of the BPTA covers a temporary phase when the project developer is unable to utilise the transmission system or the when licensee is unable to make its transmission system available due to any force majeure event. It cannot be used for making an exit from BPTA which is governed in terms of clause 6.0 of the BPTA."

Further in order dated 14.7.2017 in Petition No.317/MP/2013 (Navbharat Power Private Limited Vs. Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd & Another), the Commission has treated clause 9 of the BPTA as providing temporary amnesty and not for seeking an exit from the LTA. Relevant portion of the order is extracted as under:

"19. The Petitioner has abandoned the project for the purely commercial reasons and the Petitioner cannot be said to be affected by reasons beyond its control. The Petitioner has relied upon the findings of the Hon'ble Appellate Tribunal for Electricity dated 4.2.2014 in Appeal No. 123 of 2012. In the said case, the Appellate Tribunal held that the approval under the Bombay Tenancy and Agricultural Land (Vidarbha Region and Kutch Area) Act,1958 and for water source under the Environment Protection Act,1986 and CRZ Regulations are statutory/ legal approvals under the PPA and accordingly, it fall under *force majeure* events and the period of delay is required to be suspended or excused and to that extent the period of Commercial Operation Date, Date of construction default and Scheduled Commercial Operation Date were to be extended under the LTA Agreement. In the present case, the Petitioner has abandoned the project on account of delay in obtaining clearances and is seeking to wriggle out of the LTA Agreement. From the analysis of Clause 9 of the LTA Agreement, it clearly emerges that the said clause is for providing temporary amnesty to the parties affected by force majeure in order to make their agreement work. The provision of Clause 9 of the LTA Agreement does not permit a defaulting party to abandon the LTA which is evident form the last sentence of the said clause which states that drawal/transmission of power shall be started as soon as practicable by the parties concerned after such eventuality has come to an end or ceased to exist."

23. In the light of the analysis on the issue and our findings in the orders as quoted above, we hold that Clause 9 of the BPTA dated 31.3.2010 gives a temporary amnesty from the compensation for loss or damages to the party affected by force majeure and cannot be used for evading relinquishment charges on account of relinquishment of LTA. Both Clause 5 of the BPTA and Regulation 18 of the Connectivity Regulations require that in case of relinquishment of LTA, the Petitioner

is required to pay the relinquishment charges. Since CTU has determined the liability of the Petitioner for relinquishment charges pursuant to the order of the Commission dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No.92/MP/2015, the Petitioner is liable to pay the relinquishment charges.

**Issue No.2: Whether the case of the Petitioner is covered under force majeure in terms of clause 9 of the BPTA?**

24. The Petitioner has submitted that pursuant to the execution of the BPTA, it made best efforts to enter into PPA with the distribution companies in the Western Region and Northern Region but could not succeed. Since the long term power procurement in the regions is substantially disproportionate to the commissioned IPPs, the situation is beyond the control of the Petitioner. The Petitioner has submitted that its inability to enter into long term PPA is an event of force majeure rendering the LTA impossible to perform and therefore, the Petitioner be allowed to relinquish the LTA of 816 MW of LTA (386 to Western Region and 430 MW to Northern Region) without any liability for relinquishment charges.

25. CTU has submitted that nowhere in the BPTA, there is any reference to the PPA to be executed by the LTA Customers. Since LTA was granted to the Petitioner without executing the PPAs, non-execution of PPA cannot be interpreted as a force majeure event. CTU has further submitted that the Petitioner has relinquished 386 MW of LTA in the Western Region on account of refusal of CSPTCL to off-take 35% of power of the project. CTU has submitted that refusal of CSPTCL has no bearing on the LTA to Western Region as the LTA granted to Chhattisgarh was never a part of the present PPA.



26. The Petitioner has submitted that PPA became a material requirement while granting as well as operationalizing the LTA. Therefore, absence of PPA resulted in frustration of the LTA. The Petitioner has quoted the following provisions of the Regulations, Procedures and orders of the Commission in support of its contention:

(a) Regulation 12 of the Connectivity Regulations requires the applicant for long term access to indicate the entity to whom power is to be supplied or procured and the quantum of power to be supplied or procured and therefore, the agreement for sale/purchase of power is a consideration at the time of applying for LTA.

(b) Para 22.7 of the Detailed Procedure issued under the Connectivity Regulations requires the LTA Customer to confirm to CTU with the exact details of the PPA executed by the said customer, three years prior to the intended operationalization of the LTA.

(c) Clause 7.1 of the BCD Procedure provides that LTA cannot be operationalized in the event a firm long term PPA is not available.

(d) The Commission in order dated 2.12.2013 in Petition No.244/MP/2012 relying on Clause 7.1 of the BCD Procedure has held that execution of long term PPA is a necessary condition for availing long term access.

(e) The Commission after recognizing the impossibility of availing LTA on account of lack of long term PPA inserted Regulation 15B through 6<sup>th</sup> amendment of the Connectivity Regulations and provided that LTA can be availed by having a contract of above one year.

(f) Even under Shakti Scheme, it was mandated that coal could be provided only for those generating companies who have long term or medium term PPA.

(g) Ministry of Power issued the guidelines for procurement of power under Design, Build, Finance, Own and Operate (DBFOO) basis on 8.1.2013. As per DBFOO, coal cost is a pass through in certain scenarios which relate to the source of coal. For example, if the bids are called for scenarios relating to domestic coal linkage or from domestic coal mines, then power plants based on imported coal cannot participate in such bids. This factor has materially affected the Petitioner from entering into long term PPA.

(h) The 37<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Parliamentary Standing Committee Reports recognized the issue of lack of long term PPAs with distribution licensees being uncontrollable.

The Petitioner has submitted that non-availability of long term PPA has close link with the utilisation of the LTA and therefore, lack of long term PPA is a force majeure condition which is beyond the control of the Petitioner.

27. We have considered the submissions of the Petitioner and Respondent CTU. The subject transmission system based on which LTA was granted to the Petitioner were executed on the basis of the regulatory approval granted by the Commission vide its orders dated 26.3.2010 and 31.5.2010 in Petition No.233/2009. The Petitioner was a party to the said petition. The issue of signing of the PPA was considered at the time of according regulatory approval. Relevant para of the order dated 26.3.2010 is extracted as under:

“17. As regards the requirement for signing of PPAs with the beneficiaries, we observe that the IPPs have not been able to come forward to sign the PPAs, primarily because the States have not yet gone ahead with the bidding process for evacuation of power. However, linking the signing of the PPAs with regulatory approval will hamper the progress of the transmission projects. The Tariff Policy issued vide Govt. of India in para 7.1.4 does not make it mandatory for network expansion by the CTU/STU. The said para reads as under:

*“In view of the approach laid down by the NEP, prior agreement with the beneficiaries would not be a pre-condition for network expansion. CTU/STU should undertake network expansion after identifying the requirements in consonance with the National Electricity Plan and in consultation with stakeholders, and taking up the execution after due regulatory approvals.”*

In view of the above mandate of the Tariff Policy, we are of the view that the CTU should carry out consultation with the stake holders and satisfy itself about the bonafide nature of generation projects which are likely to materialize during the next three years and submit the detailed report about such projects, including the physical progress made wherever feasible and approach the Commission by first week of April, 2010.”

Therefore, the Petitioner is aware that the regulatory approval was granted to the Petitioner on the basis of the LTA and without linking it to PPAs. It was left to the Project Developer for tie-up with the beneficiaries for PPA. When availability of PPA was not a condition precedent either for applying for LTA or for regulatory approval, therefore, it cannot be pleaded at this stage that PPA is a necessary pre-condition of the LTA and hence its absence cannot be considered as force majeure frustrating the operation of the LTA. The Petitioner has in fact entered into long term PPA for 558 MW and the Petitioner’s failure to enter into PPA for the balance capacity cannot be considered as force majeure.

28. As regards the reasons adduced by the Petitioner (as summarized in para 26 of this order) to prove that the existence of long term PPA is a necessary condition for availing the LTA and absence of long term PPA has led to frustration of the LTA, we are of the view that these provisions in the Connectivity Regulations and Detailed Procedure have been specified to cater to different requirements and cannot be pleaded as the basis for grant of LTA in the absence of which LTA stands frustrated. Regulation 12 requires an applicant for long term access to indicate the entity from which power is to be procured or supplied and the quantum of power to be supplied. But the first proviso provides that where the source or quantum has not been fixed up, then the applicant has to indicate the quantum of power alongwith the name of

the region where the electricity is to be interchanged. Thus, PPA is not an essential condition for applying for LTA. Para 22.7 of the Detailed Procedure requires the LTA Customer to give details of the PPA three years prior to operationalization of LTA, the purpose being that the last mile connectivity could be planned and implemented. As regards Clause 7.1 of the BCD Procedure, scheduling can be done against the LTA quantum when there is long term, medium term and short term PPA. This provision is regarding scheduling and from the said provision, inference cannot be drawn that in the absence of long term PPA, LTA would be frustrated. In fact, Regulations allow for scheduling of medium term and short term power against the LTA quantum and offset is allowed. Regulation 15B of the Connectivity Regulations facilitates operationalization of LTA with PPA of the duration of more than one year. In other words, if the LTA Customer is able to make a medium term PPA of more than one year, it can schedule its power under MTOA. This provision does not support the case of the Petitioner that in the absence of long term PPA, LTA stands frustrated. The requirement for participating in Shakti Scheme or procurement under DBFOO or the observation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee cannot absolve the Petitioner from its liability towards LTA under the BPTA. In our view, the Petitioner had applied for and was granted LTA in the absence of long term Power Purchase Agreements and the Petitioner has taken the business risk by entering into BPTA in the absence of long term PPA. Failure of the Petitioner to enter into long term or medium term PPA for 816 MW cannot be considered as the reasons beyond the control of the Petitioner and hence, is not covered under Clause 9 of the BPTA.

**Issue No.3: What should be the date of relinquishment of LTA under the BPTA dated 31.3.2010?**

29. The Petitioner has sought relinquishment of LTA of 386 MW with effect from 7.12.2016 and LTA of 430 MW with effect from 17.5.2017. The dates of relinquishment are based on the dates of the letters when request for relinquishment was made. The Commission in order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No.92/MP/2015 has held that relinquishment of long term access is a statutorily permissible option which entails payment of compensation for the stranded capacity on account of such relinquishment. The Commission vide Order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No. 92/MP/2015 has directed as under with respect to date of relinquishment:

“161.....(b) Notice period for relinquishment shall be considered from the date the application was made to CTU for relinquishment and if no application was made, the date from which the Commission directs the CTU to accept the relinquishment.”

30. CTU in its written submission has stated that in accordance with the directions in order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No.92/MP/2015, CTU has computed the stranded capacity and relinquishment charges of various generators including the Petitioner who have relinquished the LTA. CTU has considered the date of relinquishment as 1.10.2017. In the light of our decision in para 161(b) of the order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No.92/MP/2015, the date of relinquishment shall be considered as 7.12.2016 for 386 MW and 17.5.2017 for LTA of 430 MW. The relinquishment of the LTA from the above dates are subject to payment of relinquishment charges in terms of our order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No.92/MP/2015.

**Issue No.4: What are the reliefs admissible to the Petitioner in terms of the prayers in the petition?**

31. The first prayer of the Petitioner is for a declaration that inability on the part of the Petitioner to execute long term PPAs on account of inadequate long term power

procurement processes being undertaken by the distribution licensees in Northern and Western Regions is beyond the control of the Petitioner and a force majeure event. The said prayer is rejected in the light of our decision on Issue Nos. 1 and 2 in this order.

32. The second prayer of the Petitioner is for a declaration that BPTA dated 31.3.2010 stands annulled without any liability on account of occurrence of force majeure event. The said prayer is rejected in the light of our decision on Issue Nos. 1 and 2 in this order. The Petitioner is liable to pay the relinquishment charges for the capacity relinquished as determined in accordance with our order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No.92/MP/2015.

33. The third prayer of the Petitioner is for a declaration that LTA of 386 MW to Western Region under the BPTA stands relinquished with effect from 7.12.2016 without any liability. The fourth prayer is for a declaration that LTA of 430 MW to Northern Region stands relinquished with effect from 17.5.2017 without any liability. The prayers are decided in terms of our direction in para 30 above.

34. In fifth prayer, the Petitioner has sought a direction to CTU to return the Bank Guarantee of Rs.40.08 crore. We observe that the Petitioner shall be liable for payment of relinquishment charges as calculated by CTU in terms of this Order and Order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No. 92/MP/2015. We direct that BG shall be kept alive by the petitioner till it makes payment of relinquishment charges as calculated by CTU. In case the Petitioner does not make payment of relinquishment charges to CTU in accordance with timeline provided in order dated 8.3.2019 in Petition No. 92/MP/2015, CTU shall encash the BG and adjust the same against relinquishment charges and return the balance amount, if any, to the Petitioner.

35. Petition No.11/MP/2017 is disposed of in terms of the above.

**sd/-**  
**(I.S. Jha)**  
**Member**

**sd/-**  
**(Dr. M.K. Iyer)**  
**Member**

**sd/-**  
**(P.K. Pujari)**  
**Chairperson**