THE HINDU

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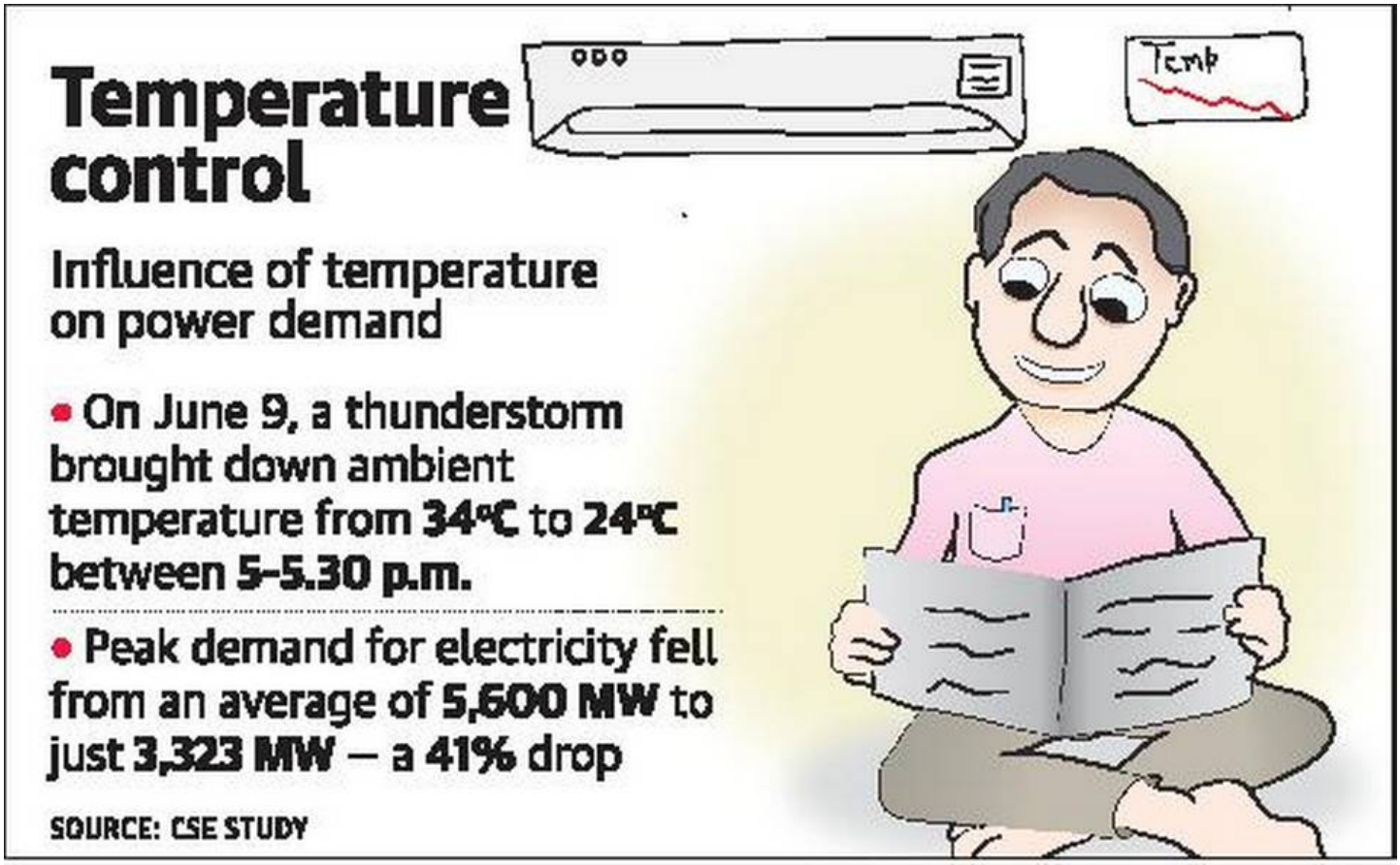
'Sub-par ACs, low tariffs driving power demand'



STAFF REPORTER

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Study says weak standards for AC efficiency partly to blame

Heavy use of 'sub-par' air conditioners in residential areas, low electricity tariffs, and poorly regulated subsidies are driving high levels of energy consumption in the Capital, revealed a study by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE).

Delhi on average consumes more energy during the summer season than Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai combined, the CSE said.

This year, the Capital's peak power demand hit an all-time high of 6,934 MW on June 8. Authorities anticipate that power demand might touch 7,100 MW this year.

During summers, power demand usually peaks twice on any given day: once in the afternoon and once in the evening. Power consumption in the afternoon is usually driven by demand from offices, educational institutions and other establishments.

The afternoon power demand peaks are usually higher than the night time peaks, when demand is driven by residential usage.

The CSE study, however, pointed out that in May this year, the night time power demand peaks were higher that the afternoon peaks for 21 out of 31 days.

Last year, the night time peaks were higher for 14 days in May. Additionally, the average daily afternoon peak of 5,280 MW was only 0.5% more than the average daily night-time peak of 5,526 MW.

The study said that a part of the reason for the increase in residential power consumption was the weak standards for ACs.

Star rating

It claimed that the Indian Seasonal Efficiency Ratio, which is used to assign "star ratings" for energy efficiency to ACs, followed a "generic" system that leads to under-reporting of energy consumption.

A report on energy efficiency in ACs conducted by the International Energy Agency titled Future of Cooling, pointed out that India has the worst "market average of measure of energy efficiency" compared to other major economies.

The study by the CSE also pointed out that electricity tariffs in Delhi are much lower compared to other major cities.

In Delhi, the highest rate of Rs. 7.75 per unit is charged once consumption crosses 1,200 units, while in Mumbai the maximum tariff of Rs. 9.95 per unit is charged when consumption exceeds 500 units.

Electricity is also highly subsidised in the Capital. Households that consume less than 400 units are given a 66% subsidy and an additional rebate of Rs. 100 is given to households that consume less than 100 units a month.

The study noted that while the power subsidies are aimed at low-income households, data from the Delhi government revealed that 86% of households in the city are benefiting from the subsidy.