

Power firm workers protest across Sindh

Dawn Report

HYDERABAD, Nov 1: On a call given by the Wapda Hydro Electric Central Labour Union, employees of power distribution companies took out processions and held demonstrations across Sindh on Tuesday in protest against dissolution of Pepco and the proposed leasing of powerhouses throughout the country.

In Hyderabad, Hesco workers took out a procession from Labour Hall to the press club.

Addressing the protesters, president of the union Abdul Latif Nizamani warned the government that if powerhouses were leased out, Wapda employees would shut down powerhouses.

The government should not remain under any illusion that by dissolving Pepco it would crush the workers' movement, he said. He alleged that corrupt rulers were trying to destroy the power sector like railways, under pressure of the World Bank and IMF.

"We will not allow this, come what may," Mr Nizamani warned. If the decision about dissolution of Pepco was not reversed and the powerhouses were leased out despite protests, "we will be justified in observing a complete shutdown of all the powerhouses even if it affects the President House and Prime Minister House".

He said the government was reported to have decided to lease nine powerhouses to favourites and friends at throwaway prices, which would not be allowed.

He demanded that instead of leasing out powerhouses, the closed powerhouses should be made functional and equipped with modern technology. This will end loadshedding and generate low-cost power.

He said the decision to dissolve Pepco was absolutely illegal and unconstitutional because it had been set up under a law. He claimed that the consent of all the four federating units was necessary for its dissolution.

He opposed the proposed appointment of

chief executive officers of distribution companies from private sector when there were experienced senior chief engineers in the companies. He said the union intended to file a petition in the Supreme Court of Pakistan against the decisions.

In Sukkur, a meeting was held by the union at Mohammad Bin Qasim Park which was attended by employees of various departments of Wapda/Sepeco participated.

Later, a procession was taken out from the park to the press club where participants held a sit-in, suspending flow of traffic between Sukkur and Rohri for an hour.

In Jacobabad, Sepeco employees observed a pen-down strike, wore black armbands and hoisted black flags on company's offices. They took out a procession and after marching through different roads, they held a sit-in on the National Highway. As a result, traffic flow remained suspended on the road connecting Sindh with Balochistan.

Later, the protesters marched to the press club and held a sit-in.

Rallies were also taken out by Sepeco employees in Ghotki, Pano Akil and other towns. In Larkana, Sepeco workers observed a strike, took out a procession and held a sit-in at the main gate of Jinnah Bagh.

In Khairpur, union office-bearers and workers of Sukkur Electric Power Company (Sepeco) boycotted office and site work and took out a procession from Old Power House to the press club. They held a sit-in on the Katchehry road.

Rallies were also held in Ranipur and other towns of the districts.

In Nawabshah, workers of the union took out a procession from the old power house in Manuabad to the press club. They were carrying placards and raising slogans.

A similar procession was taken out in Shikarpur.