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Wapda workers protest Pepco dissolution

By A Reporter

RAWALPINDI, Nov 1: Wapda Hydro Electric Central Labour Union on Tuesday staged a protest demonstration at Benazir Bhutto Road against the dissolution of Pakistan Electric Power Company (Pepco), privatisation of power distribution companies and appointment of chief executive in Islamabad Electric Supply Company (Iesco).

More than 200 Wapda workers gathered outside their office at Marir Chowk and took out the rally. They staged a sit-in at Committee Chowk and blocked the main artery of the garrison city for more than three hours leaving hundreds of commuters and vehicles stranded. As a result of which, the massive traffic jam was witnessed in the city.

They also warned they would disconnect the electricity from Attock to Jhelum including federal capital if government did not remove newly appointed Chief Executive of Iesco from his office.

Officer-bearers of Iesco Engineering Association and officers with scores of other workers also participated in the rally, which was organized by Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Central Labor Union (CBA) under the leadership of Regional Chairman Mian Rehman Ghani.

The protesters were carrying placards and banners inscribed with slogans: "Iesco privatization, unacceptable, unacceptable and unacceptable". They were also shouting against wrong policies of federal government, inflation and unemployment.

While addressing the protesters, Wapda Hydro Electric Central Labour Union Chairman Mian Rehman Ghani said that the federal government was following the anti-labour and anti-masses policies of the dictator. He alleged that the privatisation of Pepco and appointment of chief executive against hefty pay was ample proof of the erroneous policies of the government.

"The people and Wapda workers will never accept the privatisation of distribution companies and will agitate against the illogical decision of the government," he declared.

Iesco Engineers Association Chairman Wajid Kazmi said that the government was responsible for the bad financial condition in Wapda.

"Iesco is generating Rs7 billion profits annually, and it is being privatised through a conspiracy. Moreover, the government was appointing inexperienced persons on key posts," he alleged.

"The workers and engineers of Wapda would disconnect the electricity from Attock to Jhelum including federal capital if government did not remove newly appointed Chief Executive of Iesco from his office," Wajid Kazmi threatened.

Other speakers also lashed out at the government for its decision to dissolve Pepco and privatize power supplier companies on the recommendation of World Bank and IMF.