

# Countrywide protest against proposed privatisation of Wapda, Discos

Protesters demand govt to end loadshedding, cut power rates; threaten countrywide power shutdown if decision not taken back

Compiled from dispatches and agencies

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: Employees protested against the proposed privatization of Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) and power distribution companies (Discos) across the country on Tuesday.

The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (Iesco) officials along with the engineers and labour union gathered outside the head office and protested against the privatisation of Wapda. The labour union said that the protest was taking place in the entire Iesco region and all the employees except the emergency staff were taking part in the demonstrations.

The protesters demanded of the government that loadshedding should be ended and power rates should be decreased.

While in Lahore, employees

of Wapda and Lahore Electricity Supply Company (Lesco) staged a demonstration against proposed privatisation of generation companies and induction of non-technical officials in the distribution company under the aegis of the Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Central Labour Union.

Thousands of charged protesters blocked The Mall. They also demanded merger of distribution and generation companies under the Wapda management. They also asked the federal government not to appoint new chief executives in distribution companies. They vowed that they would not accept privatisation of power sector companies.

Employees of the Gujranwala Electric Power Company (Gepco) city subdivision office also observed a complete strike against the dissolution of Pakistan Electric Power Company (Pepco) and the proposed privatisation of

Wapda. The protesting employees locked their offices, wore black armbands and took out a rally.

In Mandi Bahauddin, Gepco employees observed a pen-down strike and locked their offices against the proposed privatisation of Wapda. Employees also took out a rally against proposed privatisation of Wapda in Okara.

The protesters observed a pen-down strike under the auspices of Hydro Electric Central Labour Union.

In Depalpur, the local Wapda employees also took out a rally against the privatisation.

Workers in Faisalabad, Gujrat, Hafiz Abad, Narewal, Sialkot, Mandi Bahauddin, Shakargarh, Sarae Alamgir and other Punjab cities closed down customer service centres, leaving the consumers to face hardships. On the other hand, Sukkur Electric Power Company employees in Ghotki's tehsil Dehrki,

Sindh, halted their work at the company and took to roads, carrying red flags and play cards in protest against privatization of power companies.

Similar protests were also held in Sanghar, Jacobabad, Kashmore and other cities in Sindh, with the employees threatening countrywide power shutdown if decision was not taken back. In Larkana a large number of employees of Wapda took out a rally from powerhouse to Jinnah Bagh roundabout where they set the tyres on fire to lodge protest against privatization of power houses and appointment of outsiders as chief executives in distribution companies.

Meanwhile, in different cities of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Wapda employees carried out rallies against the proposed privatization of Wapda and power generating companies.

## Proposed Wapda privatisation opposed

Bureau report

PESHAWAR: Activists of the Wapda Hydro Electric Central Labour Union on Tuesday staged protest against the proposed privatisation of the authority and hike in the electricity tariff.

Led by central chairman and provincial secretary Ghazal Taj, deputy chairman Iftakhar Mazdooriyan, deputy secretary Ali Syed, Ahmad Amir, Liaqat Ali and Jamil Ghazal Tanoli, the protesters gathered outside the Wapda House and chanted slogans in favour of their demands.

Speaking on the occasion, Ghazal Taj and others criticised the government for privatising Wapda due to the pressure from the international financial institutions.

They said they would foil all the costs the government's move to privatise Wapda.

They said the government could control the corruption, unemployment, price-hike and worsening law and order situation instead of privatising profit-making institutions.



PESHAWAR: Employees protesting on Tuesday outside the Peshawar Electric Supply Company headquarters to oppose the Wapda privatisation plan. — Khurram Pervez

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