

ALL INDIA POWER ENGINEERS FEDERATION

AIPEF FEDERAL EXECUTIVE MEETING 28 MAY - HYDERABAD

REPORT OF Er Shailendra Dubey, Chairman A I P E F

Respected office bearers/Federal Executive Members of AIPEF and all delegates,

I welcome all the delegates to this meeting of All India Power Engineers Federation, which is being held after a long time. Although there have been many virtual meetings of AIPEF during the Covid-19 pandemic, due to the restrictions of Covid-19 and the pandemic we could not hold such physical meetings. After the last meeting held in Chennai in February 2020, now we are meeting in Hyderabad: During the Covid-19 pandemic, the country's power sector and power engineers had to go through a period of great pressure and mental stress. On the other hand, the Central Government, looking for opportunities in the disaster, started the game of privatizing the power sector. I do not want to go into detail but I want to remind you that on April 5, 2020, the challenge thrown by the Hon'ble Prime Minister to shut down the electricity for 9 minutes at 9:00 pm was successfully handled by the Power Engineers.

After AIPEF took the issue to the highest level most of the Power Utilities of States and Central Power Utilities POSOCO, PGCIL, FOLD started preparations to safeguard the grid against any eventuality of sudden upsurge of Voltage arising out of switching off all domestic lights. This proved again that we as power engineers are always prepared to perform under any difficult situations. During the night of 05 April at 09 o'clock for 09 minutes, the power consumption in the national grid decreased from 117000 MW to 85300 MW in just 4-5 minutes and during this period the grid frequency varied from 49.7 to 50.25 maintaining amidst the biggest events in the history of India's electricity grid. Thanks and congratulations to the power engineers and employees of the power sector for conducting this extraordinary work efficiently. Yes, these are all public sector people, there was no role or participation of the private sector in this challenging event.

After a few days of this event Govt of India floated Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2020 on 17th April 2020 when there was a total lock down. A vigorous campaign was started by MoP to get it passed. Not only this, on May 13, 2020, in the name of self-reliant India (Aatm Nirbhar Bharat), the privatization of the power system of the Union Territories was announced by the finance Minister. Thus in the name of self-reliant India, the work of selling the wealth of India started. All these were successfully countered by the electricity workers across the country. Power Engineers & Employees bravely came on the streets during Covid-19. This is the result of our struggle only that the Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2020 has now gone into the pit of history and a new bill has emerged in the name of Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2021.

The process of privatization of the power sector of union territories is going on at a fast pace. But the power engineers and employees are also stoic about it. We are fighting, our struggle continues everywhere from the road to the Supreme Court.

Today, when we are meeting in Hyderabad, it becomes our sacred duty to remember those we have lost during the Covid-19 pandemic. We have lost thousands of companions across the country. We lost Er R B Savaliya, a very active hard working office bearer of AIPEF, during this pandemic. I bow to all our companions who lost their lives in performing their duties and pay my humble tribute to all of them.

UNDUE PRESSURE TO IMPORT COAL

Even today the challenges are not less and the power sector is facing all round attacks. In order to find opportunities in disaster, the most recent case is the undue pressure on State Gencos to import the coal, the burden of which shall ultimately be passed on to common consumers. AIPEF in a letter to Union Power Minister has said that from a plain reading of Sec 11 along with the definition of Appropriate Government, it is concluded that the jurisdiction of Central Govt, in applying section 11 of Electricity Act 2003, is limited to a generating company that is wholly or partly owned by it. In case of State Govt owned generating stations, it is the jurisdiction of the State Government in the matter of applying Sec 11.

The jurisdiction and applicability of GOI letter FU-21/2020-FSC dated 18-05-2022 is therefore limited to NTPC or NTPC JV, since the appropriate Govt for State generating stations is the respective State Govt and not the Central Govt. Since State Generation Companies are in no way responsible for coal crisis and it's result of utter failure of Ministry of Power, therefore Ministry of Power must now take up the responsibility to import coal on Govt to Govt basis and ensure that the imported coal is made

available to State Gencos at the prevailing CIL rates. For the coal shortage resulting from policy lapses of GOI, the States must not be penalised. For the policy lapses on the part of MoP the financial burden must not be loaded on States by way of high cost imported coal.

Central Govt direction says that considering the fact that present PPA's do not provide for pass through of high cost of imported coal, the rates at which the power shall be supplied to PPA holders shall be decided by a committee constituted by MoP with representatives of MoP, CEA & CERC. This committee shall ensure that benchmark rates of power so worked out meets all the prudent cost of imported coal for generating power, including present coal price, shipping cost and O&M cost etc with a fair margin. The PPA holders shall have the option to make payment to the generating company according to benchmark rates so worked out or at mutually negotiated rates with GENCO. Payment shall be made to GENCO on weekly basis. Where State DISCOM is not able to enter in mutually negotiated rates with GENCO and is not willing to procure power at benchmark rate worked out by committee or is not able to make weekly payments then such quantity of power shall be sold in power exchange. This order is valid till 31 October 2022. In another direction of MoP it has been said that the States who will not place orders for imported coal by 31st May and shall not start blending till 15th June then such States will be required to import 15% coal for blending. Coal import shall continue till 31st March 2023. The Central Government has also said that after June 1 in the allocation of domestic coal, 5% less coal will be given to such thermal power stations who have not ordered for imported coal. This is clearly an inappropriate response being extended to import coal which is not justified. On the one hand, the Central Government has been claiming till April that the production of Coal India is higher than the previous year and there is no crisis of coal, on the other hand, on the contrary, the Central Government is saying that Power houses should import coal and now this coal import programme has been extended till 31 March, 2023. Present coal crisis has arisen due to the acute lack of coordination between the various ministries of the Central Government, Power, Coal and Railways. Therefore, undue pressure and black mail should not be put on the states to import coal and if the states are forced to import coal, then the central government should bear the additional burden of imported coal.

PRIVATIZATION SPREE

On the instructions of the Central Government, the process of privatization of electricity distribution is being carried out arbitrarily in the Union Territories of Chandigarh, Puducherry, Dadra Nagar Haveli, Daman Diu and Lakshadweep. In another Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the process of merging the state transmission utility of electricity with Power Grid Corporation to form a new joint venture company and later handing it over to a private company was put on hold after the successful strike of J&K Power Employees & Engineers. In December 2021 the power workers and engineers of Jammu and Kashmir bravely demonstrated their steely unity by holding a complete strike and putting an end to this deadly process.

In the month of January, the Central Government approved the privatization of electricity of Dadra Nagar Haveli Daman Diu by holding a cabinet meeting. Unfortunately the number of electricity workers in Dadra Nagar Haveli is very less and there is no strong union. As a result, power distribution of Dadra Nagar Haveli Daman Diu has been handed over to the Ahmedabad company Torrent Power with effect from 1st April 2022. Keep in mind Dadra Nagar Haveli's line losses are only 3.2% and it is a huge profit making area from power distribution point of view. Here Torrent Power has been given ownership by selling 51% of the equity.

Electricity workers in Chandigarh continue their fight with bravery. On 1 February, the electricity workers of Chandigarh showed their solidarity by going on strike. In the month of February, the electricity workers of Chandigarh gave a notice of 3 days strike and the strike started from the night of 22nd. It was a historic strike. Chandigarh's electricity system completely collapsed due to the workers' strike. There was darkness all over Chandigarh including PGI. Power supply in Chandigarh was started in the areas of some important hospitals including PGI at 4:00 am on the 23rd by the administration after putting pressure on the electricity employees. The employees started the electricity supply in the larger interest of the public, but at the same time the Union Territory Administration of Chandigarh also started the disgusting action of suppressing the employees. An FIR has been registered against about 150 employees and efforts are being made to intimidate the employees in other ways. The morale of the employees is very high. Meanwhile, the matter reached the High Court of Punjab and Haryana and the administration of Chandigarh Union Territory had to give in writing to the employees on February 23 that no further process of privatization would be carried out till the hearing in the High Court. On March 10, the Chandigarh High Court took cognizance of this and posted the date of next hearing to March 28. On March 28 also, it was

again mentioned in the High Court that till the next hearing, the administration will not proceed with the process of privatization as per its promise.

The matter of privatization of Chandigarh is quite different from that of other Union Territories. Where 51% equity is being sold in other Union Territories, it has been decided to sell 100% equity in Chandigarh to a Kolkata based company. Chandigarh also has line losses of only 9.2%, turnover of around Rs 1000 cr and profit of Rs 300 cr per annum. Electricity rates have not been increased by a single paisa for the last 5 years, yet there is profit. Keep in mind that the electricity tariff of Chandigarh is the lowest in Northern India. In such a situation, the question arises: why privatization of Chandigarh?

There is one more question. Right now, in an RTI reply, on March 29, the Central Government has written informing that the standard bidding documents have not been finalized yet. In such a situation, the question arises that when the standard bidding document is not final, then on which basis privatization of electricity distribution of union territories is being done. This is a sheer scam, totally illegal. And the need of the hour is to show unity and solidarity at the national level against the way electricity is being privatized in the Union Territories, especially in Chandigarh.

Long discussions were held with CM Nagaswamy & Power Minister in the Chief Minister's Chamber on Feb 02. CM demanded agreements of UP and J&K regarding withdrawal of Govt decisions on privatization. I said I can give it just now from my mobile. The Power Minister told CM that he has got both the agreements and briefed CM about it. After this CM categorically said that although the Central Govt is pressurising to go ahead for privatization but our Cabinet has not taken any decision regarding privatization. CM further said that his Govt will send all feedback of Power Employees & other stakeholders to Central Govt and no further step will be taken for privatization without discussing the issue with employees. The Power Minister announced this decision publically in Press along with me and other employee leaders.

This was a Historic Day for Power Employees & Engineers. Salutations to Electricity Employees & Engineers Action Committee against Privatization and their prime office bearers for exhibiting a great show of Unity & Strength.

Struggle against handing over O&M of the Sri Damodaram Sanjeevaiah Thermal Power Station (SDSTPS) to a private company has been continuing for more than two months. It is a serious matter of concern that the State Government is considering a chosen private company to run the power station on a long-term basis, for no justifiable reason. From the technical reviews available from the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), SDSTPS has been operating on par with comparable units anywhere else in the country. The three 800 MW units at SDSTPS are among the first super critical technology units supplied by BHEL in its effort to indigenise the technology for the higher unit size. After APGENCO has made such a crucial investment, it is unacceptable that APGENCO/ AP Power Development Company Ltd (APPDCL) should be forced to give away that plant to a private company.

APGENCO is one among the best generation companies in India, with its highly competent human resources and it stands to no reason that its station should be summarily handed over to a private company, whose track record in comparison with APGENCO is certainly no better and which belongs to a group that already stands heavily indebted to the PSU banks.

The proposal of merger of 33 KV power substations in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir with J&K Transmission Corporation Limited and formation of Joint Venture Company with PGCIL was thwarted by JK Power Employees. The way the power workers & engineers of Jammu and Kashmir roared against the process of privatization from the backdoor to form a joint venture with Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd is highly commendable. The result of a successful strike from the midnight of 17-18 October was that after 96 hours of strike, the administration of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir - in a way, the Central Government had to back down and the proposal of joint venture had to be stopped.

On March 09,2022 a massive rally of more than 25000 power employees & engineers at historical Azad Maidan of Mumbai was really historical, the largest ever. This rally reminded me of another freedom struggle against Corporate rule. Kudos to Maharashtra power employees with special reference to Team SEA,MSEB.

At the end of year 2020 UP Power Employees gave the message by thwarting privatization proposal of Poorvanchal Vidyut Vitaran Nigam Varanasi,

Electricity privatisation is directly related to farmers' struggle. My salutations to them. This is like a second struggle for independence. Their demands include the repeal of Electricity (Amendment) Bill

2021. They have understood the consequences of Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2021. Farmers need power to pump water from tube wells. What will be the consequence if farmers have to pay the cost to serve. Today, the average cost of electricity is about Rs. 7.50 per unit. As a minimum 16% increase is allowed to private companies, it will then cost Rs. 9 per unit. So on an average Rs. 80,000 to 90000 will be the annual bill of the small farmer having 7.5 hp tube well.

Power Employees & Engineers of Uttarakhand broke the silence by resorting to total strike in July 2021. Again in October 2021 Uttarakhand Power Employees strike notice forced CM Uttarakhand to directly intervene and hold talks with the Joint Action Committee.

POLITICAL SUPPORT

During Covid-19, the central government was engaged in privatization of the power sector and the electricity workers were mobilizing across the country and fighting against it. In such a situation it is very important to remember the political parties in the country and the honorable Chief Ministers who have openly supported our cause against privatization and strongly protested. Hon'ble Chief Minister of Telangana Chandrashekhar Rao ji had even declared that if the Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2020/2021 is placed in the Parliament, then our MPs will not allow the proceedings of the Parliament. Of course, this struggle against the privatization of the power sector was led by Telangana and Kerala Chief Minister who took the initiative. Later the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Delhi openly opposed privatization. Their support also became a big reason due to which the central government has not yet been able to pass the Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2021 from the Parliament. Today, through this meeting, I express my heartfelt thanks to all these Chief Ministers.

OPS & REGULAR APPOINTMENTS

Old pension scheme (OPS) restoration has become an important issue for the power employees of the power sector. In many provinces of the country, the old pension was abolished at the time of unbundling of electricity boards and the employees recruited after unbundling were deprived of OPS and were put in CPF or EPF or NPS. When now two provinces of the country, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh have restored old pensions for government employees and teachers, it has become very important that old pension schemes should be restored for electricity employees as well. Making this issue the main issue, we will have to fight for mobilization.

Regular recruitment on regular posts in the power sector and abolition of outsourcing/ contractual workers is a very important issue. Power sector is a very complex technical subject, it is very necessary to employ skilled people on regular posts. In this respect also I want to take the name of Chandrashekhar Rao honorable Chief Minister of Telanganawith great respect. The Honorable Chief Minister of Telangana, in a meeting took the historic decision and set an example to regularize 23000 power workers working in the power sector. It is an example for us to take this campaign to success in other provinces of the country.

ARISE, AWAKE, FIGHT & STOP NOT TILL GOAL IS ACHIEVED

Friends! During the last two years of the Pandemic, we have been fighting against privatization, the struggle of Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Chandigarh, Puducherry and Uttarakhand has become an example for us. Only passing resolutions is not going to solve our problems. We have to make a plan to implement it. It was almost certain during the monsoon session of Parliament in August 2021 that the Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2021 would be passed. Despite the announcement of the Union Minister, we made a plan and registered our presence for four days at Jantar Mantar. Despite all the restrictions, we were not afraid, we continued our protest by way of breaking silence on streets of Delhi. The result is that the Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2021 could not come in that session. We should never forget the struggle of the farmers which has now become a page in history of struggles. There is a need to take a lesson from it. The resolutions on all burning issues are in front of you in the meeting, we will pass these resolutions, but to implement these resolutions, we will have to show our unity at every level and break the silence of the road.

Long live Power Engineers Unity - Inquilab Zindabad

Jay Hind.

SHAILENDRA DUBEY
Chairman