

MLAs resolution contemptible: MLAs are protecting their own by demanding a stop to demolitions, say URJA members.

New Delhi, 21st Dec 2005: URJA has reacted sharply to the move by legislators to scuttle the ongoing demolitions by passing a resolution demanding a stop to it as a mock sympathy stance on the one hand, while attempting to protect the labyrinthine network of corruption which goes all the way down to the Councillor and the builder lobby.

“This is nothing but an attempt to protect their supporters and henchmen,” said Promod Chawla. “In the first place they have no right to pass resolutions that run counter to the orders of the High Court. In this matter, they should be held for contempt and jailed”, he added.

RWAs of Delhi, while welcoming the order of the High Court have demanded that Court orders must be enforced equitably to generate public support for the demolitions.

Suggesting that RWAs have a cynical view of this as just another drive that will soon end due to the collusion of political interests and builder lobbies, RWAs have demanded that demolitions should have started from Sainik Farms where a number of politicians have built palatial homes.

“Residents are glad that the High Court has acted on a long standing plaint of citizens but the demolition of properties of powerful and well connected people will remain the real test of this entire action. Unless representative models of illegality like the Sainik Farms are razed, this action will have little impact on the collective psyche of the people of Delhi”, said Promod Chawla Convenor of URJA.

R.K. Setia of Lajpat Nagar RWA which saw large demolitions on Ring Road also echoed the same concerns. “As residents we welcome this drive, but this must continue on a long term basis to ensure that these demolitions are not rebuilt as has been the case most often”.

Rajiv Kakria of Greater Kailash RWA has been fighting along with his RWA against rampant encroachment in his area and he has welcomed this order. “We are glad that the process of law has taken over and RWAs must ensure that local political groups do not create problems and difficulties in the implementation of this order.”

Press Release

Start demolitions from Sainik Farms, says URJA: Court orders must be enforced but don't allow MCD to go scot free, say members.

New Delhi, 19rdDec 2005: RWAs of Delhi, while welcoming the order of the High Court have demanded that Court orders must be enforced equitably to generate public support for the demolitions.

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Debobani Bannerji of Govindpuri Extension has her reservations on the drive. “ We know that only the weak will be targeted after the first few days of drama. Then people will once again run from pillar to post trying to salvage their homes and spend more money greasing the palms of the MCD officials”, she said.

RWAs have also expressed displeasure about the manner in which the Delhi Government has handled the situation. “The Government has been guilty of putting thousands through this mess only because it cannot make up its mind as to whose interests it wants to protect – the residents or the builders,” said Promod Chawla.

Press Release

Present action of MCD unsustainable, says People's Action: **penalisation of councillors, MCD officials must be a pre-condition along with demolition orders, says group.**

New Delhi, 19th Dec 2005: The current spate of demolitions being carried out by the MCD after stringent orders by the High Court are likely to be hijacked by elected representatives and presented as a political *fait accompli* unless accompanied with an equitably stringent view towards collusion of MCD officials and local councilors. This was the official reaction from People's Action group members along with URJA representatives at a discussion today.

“To imagine that residents or builders can extend their built up structure without the active involvement of the other two parties – the MCD official and the local councillor or MLA of the area - is to look at the scene with blinkers. If there is any chance that the order of the High Court will not yield the results we are all expecting, it will be due to just this imbalance in meting out justice”, said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action.

“It will be our fervent prayer to the Hon'ble High Court to immediately order visible concurrent penal action against the local Councillor and the MCD official under whose domain the illegal structure falls to allow this drive a **sustainable legitimacy** for the future”, he added.

RWAs from all over the city have welcomed the direction of the order but the residents are unable to understand why people who have forked out lakhs for these flats or structural additions are being targetted while the people who pocketed the amounts are getting away”, said Promod Chawla, Convenor of URJA, the all-Delhi RWA collective.

Arguing for the caveat as a precondition to future demolitions he said, “this drive will fail just as many others have failed only because all components of the machinery were not attended to at the same time.”

“There is very likelihood that the elected representatives will try and defeat this entire exercise by mobilizing supporters and creating a riot-like situation and provide the Government with ways of putting this order in abeyance by seeking time”, said Anant Trivedi of Ishwar Nagar RWA.

Sanjay Kaul said, “People's Action is seeking the Court's intervention in addressing this issue by making this demand public and suggesting that the crime is not first of the people who have overstepped the line but of those who permit and perpetuate this action time and again inspite of being custodians of law. To that extent, the Delhi Government should have been in the dock for surreptitiously allowing this to happen on a daily basis.

1. We demand that with every demolition order passed, the name of the MCD officials who were responsible for the area in the time the construction occurred are named along with a *suo moto* case being registered against the Councillor of the area.
2. We demand that the Councillor and MCD official or officials are penalized to the extent of the value of the property demolished and that these funds be debited to their accounts. After all, they made money in allowing this to happen, why shouldn't they pay for the damage it is causing to everybody.”

“This order is fine in that it is seeking to right a wrong and asking for upholding the law. But it can be said that the order is gunning for the small fish while the real perpetrators of this culture of illegality are getting away with a slap on the wrist”, said D.M. Narang of Rajendra Nagar RWA

S.P. Gupta of Old Rajendra Nagar RWA added: “Unless the MCD official and the Councillor is brought into the ambit of the punishment, this well intentioned order is liable to be deftly neutralized by crafty politicians to the detriment of the future of our city and to the detriment of the establishment of a lawful society.”

“It is ironic that the demolishing teams that are going about breaking down structures are the very people who allowed these structures to come up in the first place. If it does not cost them anything, what have they learnt from this exercise,” asked R.C. Kamboj of Rohini RWA Federation..

People's Action is expecting to call an extraordinary meeting of all RWAs and Market Associations to discuss this issue.

Press Release

People's Action welcomes divesting Power charge from Principal Secretary. Demands similar treatment for Power Minister. The power mess is a result of depleting quality of governance, say group members.

New Delhi, 13th December 2005: The removal of Principal Secretary from the post of Power secretary has been welcomed by People's Action as a step in the right direction.

“It is common knowledge that the Power Secretary was carrying undue influence in the Ministry owing to his proximity to the CM and it has been demonstrated that he would override the Power Minister on many occasions”, said Col D.K. Shandilya “However, we do believe that the Power Minister has shown very little initiative or imagination in solving anything so far and a similar adjustment in his portfolio may be a good idea at this time,” he added..

People's Action had on Monday asked for an admission of failure by the Power Minister and the Power Secretary on the power issue that has been hanging fire for the last six months, suggesting a purge of the entire department.

“ Our expectation from a new dispensation would be to address the issue of meters and amounts collected by DISCOMS in the absence of information to consumers of inflated bills due to mis-matched wiring and the question of authorisation to change meters en masse whether working or faulty’ said Ajay Jain, Convenor People's Action New Delhi.

People's Action has since started the third phase of campaigning for a review of the DVB privatisation which has been castigated by three independent authorities on many counts and a return of tariff to pre-privatisation levels on the basis that the tariff increases over the last three years were done to subsidise theft of over 50% in the state.

“You can't make honest consumers pay for the dishonesty of others and therefore we ask the Government of Delhi to immediately return the electricity tariff to pre-privatisation levels and offer compensation to consumers who were thus over charged”, said Sanjay Kaul, president People's Action.

Roshan Seth member of the group has pointed out that the entire power mess has been caused to a palpable drop in governance quality in the city. “The consequent unrest is a direct attribute of this poor governance we have been seeing for some time”, he said.

Shiv Khera has also indicated that “the crux of the problem is the quality of people we have elected to represent us. Until they are above board, nothing will work”

Press Release

Preet Vihar protest bring East Delhi RWAs together : pledge support to the agitation against tariff and privatisation issues.

New Delhi, 13th December 2005: The protest meeting held at Preet Vihar today found voluntary support from five other RWAs in the vicinity who agreed to work together to press for a rationalisation of tariffs and a review of the DVB privatisation.

Preet Vihar Market Association President J.P. Garg highlighted the plight of residents and traders who have had to bear the brunt of poor power at twice the rates before privatisation. He complained bitterly against the treatment meted out to consumers by the government who has 49% stake in the DISCOMS.

K.L. Bhatia of Preet Vihar RWA came down heavily on the status of electronic meters which have given residents 'sleepless nights' without a single move by the state to acknowledge the condition of consumers.

Dr. Darshan Singh of Swasthya Vihar RWA pressed on the need to force the Government to realise the need for a fair deal for consumers. This regime is anti-people and anti-consumer, he said.

The meeting was also joined by R.K. Dimri of Mayur Vihar RWA and Vijay Mishra of Mandawali RWA, who echoed the sentiments of the other RWAs and offered full support to the campaign to revise the tariff to pre-privatisation levels. Krishan Nagar RWA has also indicated their interest in taking this agitation further.

Promod Chawla, Convenor of URJA indicated that the campaign will continue until the Government removes the theft subsidy from the current tariffs and brings it down to a rational level. "We have not seen a single step by this government to ease the situation since the last six months. Our campaign will illustrate this fact in every corner of Delhi".

Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action said that "Elected representatives of the people have been informed of the situation and it is now up to them to take action before their credibility is completely lost among the people".

"East Delhi RWAs will continue to protest until the Government takes proactive steps to offer relief to the citizens of Delhi," said Varinder Arora, Convenor of the meeting today.

Press Release

People's Action expresses no-confidence in Power Minister and Secretary: Campaign against power bills and DVB privatisation kicks off from Preet Vihar

New Delhi, 12h December 2005: People's Action has followed up on the start of its third phase of the campaign against high power bills and the issue of DVB privatisation with a call to review the privatisation model in Delhi and revise the power tariff which has a high component of theft subsidisation built into it.

“It is strange that while privatisation was supposed to deliver better quality power and lower tariffs, we continue to suffer power cuts and are paying through our nose for such aberrant supply”, said Col. [Retd.] D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary, People's Action.

Roshan Seth, noted actor and member people's Action said, “It has been almost six months that this issue has been hanging fire but the Delhi Government has been unable to offer any relief to consumers. **We hereby state that we have no confidence in the Power Minister and his administrative set-up.** They must admit that they have failed comprehensively”.

People's Action has initiated a series of protest meets supported by URJA, the all-Delhi RWA collective beginning Tuesday with the first one due for kick off at Preet Vihar.

“URJA will collaborate with the resolutions passed on the July 14th Convention to realise the mandate of the RWAs of Delhi,” said Promod Chwala, Convenor URJA. “Protests are being planned in all areas of Delhi beginning tomorrow. After Preet Vihar, Karol Bagh will be next,” he added.

“The Delhi Government is adamant that power companies must not lose revenue at any cost. We are adamant that citizens must not be made to pay for no fault of theirs. There is no option but to take this issue to the streets once again”, said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action.

Earlier, People's Action had sent a 63-point dossier to all elected representatives of Delhi to educate them on crucial issues regarding the power issue and the problems being faced by people. The 63-questions included issues related to meters, billing, tariff, theft, the role of DERC, the complicity of Delhi Government in the flawed privatisation of DVB and the reports by the CAG, PAC and the standing committee.

Press Release

People's Action sends 63-point dossier on the electricity issue to Delhi MLAs and councillors: asks elected representatives to seek answers from their Government on people's queries and concerns; joint meeting of MLAs and RWAs on the issue on 23rd Dec.

New Delhi, 8th December 2005: People's Action has today sent letters enclosing a compendium of 63 questions and issues that relate to the entire gamut of the electricity issue and range from the role of the DERC, the complicity of State Government in the actions of the DISCOMS and various authorities. The questions are poised pointedly to the lack of proper processes, absence of due diligence and a cavalier attitude of DISCOMS as regards consumer issues as the root of the problem. The dossier also seeks answers to issues related to meter replacements, inflated billing, and high cost of tariff since privatisation.

The letters also finally asks how it is possible that in spite of being castigated by three independent authorities, the DVB privatisation deal is not examined by the highest level of enquiry.

“Serious allegations of misappropriation of funds are making the rounds and now a Rajya Sabha MP has asked direct questions as to who benefited from the DVB privatisation deal. We need to know why we have to pay more for what we do not get; why we should pay for those who do not pay; why we have to suffer three monopolies instead of one; why we have a privatisation model that increases costs and reduces quality of service,” asked, Col. D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary People's Action.

People's Action has proposed a joint meeting of MLAs and RWAs on the 23rd of December to press for a consensus on the issue among elected representatives. “The people of Delhi want to know where their representatives stand on this issue and whether they will speak up for them or not. The people of Delhi want to know whose side the MLAs are – on the side of DISCOMS or on the side of the people,” said Promod Chawla, Convenor of URJA, the all-Delhi RWA collective.

“This will be a good occasion to let representatives understand the people's views and vice versa,” he added.

Press Release

DERC notice on bill settlement is flawed, favours DISCOMS:
Matter is technically sub-judice, says People's Action. URJA asks residents not to entertain the option until the meters issue is resolved.

New Delhi: 6th Dec 2005: The DERC notice in today's papers allowing settlement of surcharges and other dues during a month-long period is being seen by residents as a method to mop up large amounts of funds for the DISCOMS lying in litigation or blocked for various reasons, before there is any chance of an adverse ruling by the Courts.

"Clearly, the idea is to collect crores in disputed amounts and induce people to settle out of court. But a number of such disputes are related to inflated billing due to electronic meters and this is germane to the ongoing case in the High Court and technically sub-judice. One can argue that the DERC is actually scuttling due process of law and covering up evidence through such a notice," said Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action.

[In a situation where a bill is in dispute, even the surcharge is in dispute and under question. By offering customers the facility to settle on these terms, one illegality is leading to another illegality.]

"We are appalled that the DERC has chosen to entertain the 'request' of the DISCOMS in an atmosphere where the DISCOMS are under suspicion for various acts of omission and commission and in the environment where the meters issue is hanging fire in the courts," said Promod Chawla, Convenor of URJA, the all-Delhi RWA Collective.

URJA will also write to the State Consumer Redressal Commission to take notice of this act and restrain DERC from going ahead with this order in the context of the mounting cases of inflated billing all over the city. "We are advising all RWAs and residents to ignore this notice and not go for settlements until the court has delivered its verdict on the meters issue", said Promod Chawla.

"One has to only look at the language of the DERC notification to see how concerned they are about the DISCOMS 'requests'. But the requests of RWAs have no impact on them," said URJA member D.M. Narang of Rajendra Nagar RWA.

"It stands to reason that a number of defaults are due to abnormal billing to customers and given the submissions of various experts, these could be due to meters recording fictitious energy consumption. By enticing such harassed and hard pressed residents to concede to the ploy of DISCOMS is a highly suspicious, and anti-consumer step. We cannot imagine how the DERC allowed such an option," said Col. [Retd.] D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary People's Action

"We are intending to request the intervention of the Court by virtue of the fact that the entire dispute mechanism will come to nought if DISCOMS are allowed to hoodwink consumers in such a manner. This is plainly profiting from the threat of harassment," said Anant Trivedi, member URJA and President of Ishwar Nagar RWA.

"The DERC has come out looking clearly partisan, and appearing to benefit the DISCOMS. They should not have issued this notice in the context of the current environment on the issue of power in Delhi," said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action.

Press Release

Court orders FIR against BSES for theft of equipment during replacement of meters: options open for *en masse* cases against DISCOMS, says URJA.

New Delhi, 28th Nov., 2005: The campaign run by URJA [then CAPTH] enabling large scale registration of FIRs against DISCOMS and the Delhi Government [who are partners in the DISCOMS] has got a shot in the arm with a Metropolitan Court ruling that has ordered that an FIR be registered against BSES in a case filed by a resident of Lado Sarai, near Saket.

The copy of the order passed on 31st October was only made available on 24th November. The case was initiated on 3rd October 2005 at the Patiala House Courts.

In August, during the peak of the campaign against the tariff hike, members of People's Action had argued for *en masse* registration of cases against the Delhi Government and DISCOMS for arbitrarily replacing meters all over Delhi by means that were described as unlawful on many counts. "The original complaint accommodated a range of transgressions by DISCOMS under authority from the Delhi government that included trespassing, criminal intimidation, misrepresentation of facts, cheating, selling substandard goods, harassment and causing financial loss to consumers. However we found that the Police would resist doing so in most cases to the extent that we could not register any case. This order has opened up a whole new range of options for consumers," said Promod Chawla, Convenor of URJA, the all-Delhi RWA collective.

Vinay Walia, the resident of Lado Sarai whose complaint was represented by advocate Abhishek Nayan was unable to get the Police to register a complaint in spite of RWA appeals and meetings. "The complainant was forced to seek relief from the court after all efforts had failed," said R.C. Dhingra, Vice President of Lado Sarai RWA.

The order of the Metropolitan Magistrate, Laxmi Kant Gaur states, "I have seen the Para 7 of the complaint in which there is a specific allegation that besides the change of old meter the contractor....had also taken away the main switch-1, MCB, 7x20 copper wire 4 meters etc. without the consent of the complainant. It appears that there is an offence u/s 379 IPC has been committed. I am sending this complaint to the SHO in exercise of power u/s 156 (3) IP to register a case under the appropriate provisions..."

This order can act as a precedent for lakhs of consumers who faced similar treatment by DISCOMS during the forcible meter change and offers a recourse to seek compensation from Consumer Court. "This opens up a possibility of pursuing this case through the Consumer Court to seek relief and compensation first for this illegal act of the DISCOMS and then for the higher bills that consumers have been paying since the replacement of the old meters," said Anant Trivedi of Ishwar Nagar RWA.

"This order also points to a serious lacuna in the manner meters were replaced *en masse* by DISCOMS and without any apparent authorisation and we will use this order to have the entire process examined with immediate effect", said Promod Chawla.

Press Release

Parliamentary Standing Committee invites People's Action to sitting: *group will present holistic view of the problem.*

New Delhi, 24th Nov 2005: People's Action has received an invitation to a meeting with the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Energy headed by Mr. Gurudas Kamat. M.P. The Group will be led by President People's Action Sanjay Kaul and will include Col. {ret'd.} D.K. Shandilya, Promod Chawla, Anant Trivedi and M.K. Choudhry.

The Standing Committee has 21 members of Parliament on the panel who are studying the issue of power reforms. The Committee's observations about the Delhi reforms had earlier indicted the Delhi Government for various reasons, some of which have found reflection in the media earlier.

"Our role will be to present the facts of the case in a neutral fashion, and as they concern the common citizen of Delhi. The Delhi Government's role and attitude on this issue has been remarkably anti-people and this will be clearly communicated to the Standing Committee," said Sanjay Kaul.

"We are presenting all arguments and documentation to support our stand and we will make sure the Committee gets to see the real truth about the issue of tariff hikes, meter replacements and the flawed DVB privatisation model," said Promod Chawla.

"The DVB Privatisation is the only instance in independent India where three separate commissions or authorities have cast aspersions on a particular case. It is only a matter of time that a CBI Enquiry is ordered to fix responsibility of the key players in this entire episode that has cost the state crores in revenues and loss of assets," said Anant Trivedi.

M.K. Choudhry, who broke the news about the design of Electronic Meters, will also be part of the group.

People's Action is scheduled to meet the Standing Committee at 4 p.m. on 25th November at the Parliament Annexe.

Press Release

Consumer Court judgement on lines of Electricity Act rules; concurrence with Section 56 1 (b) unmistakable, says group.

New Delhi, 22nd Nov 2005: People's Action has pointed out that the State Commission order was directly representative of the rules under Section 56 1 (b) of the Central Electricity Act 2003 which states that in the event of a dispute, a consumer can pay according to the average of the last six months of his bills until the dispute is settled and that within this period his electricity cannot be disconnected.

“We see the State Commission's order as highly representative of consumer protection as is sanctioned by the rules under which the DISCOMS are governed, said Sanjay Kaul, President of People's Action. “To that extent, consumers should be able to invoke this particular rule to obtain relief from the Courts directly, or collectively as is being arranged by URJA,” he added.

“We see the Government and the DISCOMS on the back foot due to this order and their consequent actions are completely predictable. We are neither daunted in our resolve to fight for the rights of the right, nor distracted from our final objective of forcing a review of the DVB privatisation deal which has been castigated by three separate probes”, he said.

“People's Action had on earlier occasion made a representation to the Power Minister to allow this caveat as a precaution against the large scale confusion on the meters issue and the Minister promised to get back after studying the option”, said Col. [Retd.] D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary of People's Action. “ Of course, we have not heard from him yet”, he added.

People's Action has reiterated that the issue of meters must be settled only after evaluation of evidence that is mounting against the DISCOMS and must include quizzing the DERC on the role it has played in this situation developing.

“Is there an order from the DERC that has set the technical specifications of Electronic Meters, and if yes, where is it? Is there any order from DERC allowing mass replacement of meters, and if yes, why can't it be shared with the public? Is there any evidence that can be corroborated by any official or recognised institution that declared all such changed meters as defective, and if yes, where is that certificate?” asked Ajay Jain, Convenor People's Action New Delhi.

People's Action is working closely with RWAs of Delhi to ensure that a fair settlement is offered to consumers on the issue of electronic meters, which has exercised a sizeable population of the city. Col. Shandilya pointed out to the injustice to the half of Delhi's power consumers for being subjected to electronic meters while the other half is in limbo.

Press Release

URJA launches PROBE – a campaign to confederate residents with electronic meters in Delhi and offer them legal help.

New Delhi, 22nd Nov 2005: URJA, the United Residents Joint Action has today announced the launch of a campaign called **Protesting Residents Over Billing by Electronic meters [PROBE]** to unite residents whose meters have been changed and who find their bills inordinately higher than before.

“PROBE is an attempt to create an effective lobby of aggrieved residents who do not have multi million rupee lawyers to represent them. PROBE will represent their voice,” said Promod Chawla, Convenor of URJA.

“We have been following a disciplined system of validation of claims through **Bill Comparison Forms** where residents can compare their bills six month prior to meter change and after, and our conclusion seems to match the order of the Consumer Court – people are receiving higher bills than before”, said Anant Trivedi of Ishwar Nagar RWA.

“PROBE will operate like an association of consumers whose meters have been replaced by DISCOMS and who are receiving inordinately higher bills as compared to the earlier meters and as a methodology for securing refunds from utilities that have consequently collected crores due to the recently released information on such EMs by experts,” said Wing Commander J.S. Chadha of East of Kailash RWA. **“However, we are fighting not only for relief, but also for compensation and fixing of responsibility for this mess,”** he added.

“This is unprecedented – half of Delhi’s consumers have electronic meters while the other half has the old ones. A highly imbalanced situation has been created with one half of Delhi suffering for no fault of theirs while the other half is counting the days they can get by without being inflicted the same punishment”, said Arvind Mehta of Rajendra Nagar Double Storey RWA

Residents will be provided a pre-designed format for filing consumer cases against the DISCOMS/Govt. for securing higher amounts from them under the pretext of putting a more accurate meter as compared to the older one. Residents will be able to stake claim to compensation for amounts paid as excess and interest thereon as well as for harassment they have suffered over the last few years at the hands of the DISCOMS which have offered them no redressal.

Residents whose meters have been changed would become automatic members of this grouping which will also protect their interests through legal means. Residents have only to fill out a form empowering URJA to proceed on their behalf in a consumer or other court. This form will also serve as an official signature

campaign against suspect meters which have been replaced *en masse* in a process which is hugely suspect and dubious and not according to norms established by law according to various experts.

These forms are being distributed through all RWAS in Delhi and residents need only contact their local RWA bodies for copies. Some RWAs are also making preparations to have these delivered *en masse* to residents in their localities.

Wind up DERC, says URJA Convenor. Convenor of URJA, Promod Chawla has demanded that the Government disbands the DERC and saves tax-payer money since the regulator has for all practical purposes ceased to operate within its mandate. "It is a regrettable fact that the DERC is now seen by most RWAs as a proxy for power companies that seems to care only about protecting their powerful interests," he said.

"We have seen no proactive step from the regulator all through the entire episode and it is time somebody wakes up the sleeping body", he added.

Press Release

People's Action proposes compensatory support for residents whose meters have been changed. Allow 50% payments for the interim, suggests the group. Don't penalise consumers for the negligence of DISCOMS, says letter to DERC.

New Delhi, 20th November 2005: People's Action has written to the DERC to consider seriously the suggestion to provide interim compensatory support to residents who are facing abnormal inflated bills due to electronic meters.

“Irrespective of the technicalities, it stands to reason that the consumer has suffered substantial financial pressure and loss due to this entire situation. It is natural for us to expect that the Regulator will step in to control the situation and offer immediate relief to the suffering parties,” said, Col. [Retd.] D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary, People's Action.

Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action said, “It is no secret that almost everyone has suspected something amiss since the meters were replaced with such speed and urgency. It now transpires that due diligence was not carried out, checks and balances were not in place and a proper audit of the changeover was never effected or even perhaps considered.”

People's Action has suggested that such residents who have been facing unpayable bills should be allowed *prima facie* to deposit 50% of their bills until the issue is resolved or their case is settled. “This would not only be a fair move, it would ameliorate the condition of the suffering consumers immediately and create grounds for a balanced look into the issue of the over-billing they have been subjected to over the past few years”, said Ajay Jain, Convenor People's Action New Delhi.

Sanjay Kaul, added, “My concern is that the government led by the CM is once again taking an antagonistic position vis-à-vis the consumers who are the victims in this case. This incendiary tone and tenor emanating from the CMO is only going to aggravate the situation and create more difficulties in the resolution of the issue. This is a serious lapse and the culpability of the Ministry and the entire administrative apparatus has to be examined in full detail before this issue can be settled. It is no use going into denial mode at this time,” he warned.

Wind up DERC, says URJA Convenor.

The Regulator has lost the confidence of the people, say members. RWAs instructed to file *en masse* consumer cases against DISCOMS.

New Delhi, 19th November 2005: Convenor of URJA, Promod Chawla has today demanded that the Government disbands the DERC and saves tax-payer money since the regulator has for all practical purposes ceased to operate within its mandate. "It is a regrettable fact that the DERC is now seen by most RWAs as a proxy for power companies that seems to care only about protecting their powerful interests," he said.

Anant Trivedi, President of Ishwar Nagar RWA has posed serious questions at the DERC suggesting that the regulator has completely failed to discharge its fundamental duties in protecting the interests of the consumers and at ensuring a fair operating environment in the sector. "The Regulator has completely lost the confidence of the people and is dancing to the tunes of the DISCOMS", he said adding that the Government was doing pretty much the same.

In a scathing letters sent to newspapers, he has said, "Citizens have suffered long enough. They don't wish to hear from the CM "there will be no more electronic meters installed until consumers are educated"? They want to know how soon you will order removal of these meters and refund the extra money illegally fleeced by Discoms"

Whose responsibility is it? : Trivedi has asked in his letter, "Why was the consumer not pre warned that shared neutral can result in fictitious billing and why should the consumer have to shell out large sums to rewire their houses as a safeguard against fraudulent meters? Why indeed were Discoms allowed to extort extra money out of each and every consumer on the pretext of stopping a few thieves. DERC has repeatedly failed to perform for the consumer who is still awaiting implementation of performance standards and compensation procedures. "

Who should pay for the losses suffered by unsuspecting consumers? Wing Commander J.S. Chadha, Gen. Secretary of B-Block RWA East of Kailash has also taken a stern view of the situation and asked "It is a simple question that must be addressed by the government - irrespective of the technical issues, who is responsible for the excess payments that have been deposited by unsuspecting consumers for the last three years? How will they be compensated – that is all that we want to know".

Failing any move from the Government to offer support to consumers, URJA has begun instructing RWAs to enable residents to file collective consumer cases to protect themselves. "We are requesting all RWAs in Delhi to assist residents to file consumer cases against DISCOMS in view of the recent expose ", said Promod Chawla. "We will be sending out pro-formas to RWAs for filing such cases, like we did in the case of the Bill Comparison Forms," he added.

Press Release

People' s Action asks DERC to recall delinquent electronic meters; provide compensation to those who were over-billed. RWAs to launch campaign. Dismissal of Power Secretary and Resignation of Minister sought.

New Delhi, 17th Nov 2005: In a letter to DERC, Col. [Retd.] D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary, People's Action has asked for a total recall of electronic meters until such time the systems were fool proof and abnormalities of the type explained by experts were removed. Col. Shandilya also asked for a Compensatory Allowance for such consumers that have been suffering due to these delinquent meters by affording them the opportunity of depositing only half of their current value of bills.

URJA has today announced the launch of the *Meter Hatao - Paise Lautao* [Replace Meters - Return Monies] campaign to demand the recall of tainted electronic meters and compensation to those who have had to pay inflated bills over the last two years on account of such meters.

“The *Meter Hatao - Paise Lautao* campaign will be undertaken on the ground by the consortium of RWAs of Delhi, URJA with protest meetings and public display of resentment over the manner in which the Government allowed DISCOMS a free hand in fleecing honest bill payers”, said Promod Chawla, Convenor of URJA. “RWAs are being briefed on the programme for such a series of protests all over the city,” he added.

Anant Trivedi, President of Ishwar Nagar RWA and a member of URJA has also questioned the serious lapses on behalf of the DERC in protecting the interests of the consumers. “What was the DERC doing while all this was going on,” he asked, castigating the regulator for abandoning its responsibility completely. “Who approved the norms for such meters? Who approved the *en masse* replacement of meters? Why doesn't the DERC clarify ?,” he demanded.

R.L. Dua of Old Rajendra Nagar RWA has asked for the removal of the Power Secretary under whose nose this entire episode was played out with a free hand. “Is the Power Secretary going to make good the losses of the consumers,” he fumed, demanding his immediate dismissal on “grounds of abetting, aiding and allowing this shameful fleecing of honest consumers”.

O.P. Sahdev of Kotla Mubarakpur RWA said, “Why should the Power Minister be spared when he has presided over such brazen loot. Let the Minister resign on moral grounds, if he has any conscience at all”.

Ajay Jain, Convenor of People's Action said, "In view of the series of continuous and serious omissions by the entire establishment, we have reached the opinion that it would be best if the government dismissed the Power Secretary; dislodged the Power Minister and disbanded the DERC"

Press Release

Ex-Transco expert debunks electronic meters: “They cannot be called Real energy measurement devices”, he says in a note for distribution to URJA members.

New Delhi, 16th November 2005: M.K. Choudhuri, an ex-Transco official who is currently deposing before the Delhi High Court in a case where he has been admitted as an expert on the issue of fast running meters has prepared a note where he has conclusively claimed that the current stipulations of the electronic meters have intrinsic arrangements which make them fundamentally unfit as authentic instruments of measurement.

In a point by point appraisal of the Electronic meter he has claimed that the current batch of new meters are designed to record energy by calculating the product of voltage input, current in *phase or neutral whichever is higher*, power factor and the time duration for the energy consumed by the customer. Critically, he points out that the old Electro-mechanical meters measured the other indices as well but the *current in phase only*. This crucial variation, he says makes all the difference.

In the 3-phase 4-wire supply system, one single phase and neutral are fed to the customer where phase is on higher potential and the neutral is connected to earth at the source i.e. at the transformer. Any connection of the neutral at consumer premise connected to earth results in flow of current in the neutral through electronic energy meter. The quantum of this current depends upon the magnitude of unbalanced voltages of three-phase system of supply company, which cannot be nullified, being 3-phase 4-wire system.

Explaining how this could affect a person’s meter readings he says, “In a group of meters in a particular premise where common services like motor pump etc. is used through individual connection with common neutral, the non-user connection meter also records energy apart from the user meter. This is on account of flow of neutral current and measurement logic of phase or neutral current whichever is higher. The energy meter records the fictitious energy by making the product of voltage available to the meter and the current flow in the neutral and increases the energy recording, whereas neither the energy delivered by the supply company nor the energy is utilized by customer.

[This is the major drawback in recording by electronic energy meter and thus needs isolation of neutral current measurement in similarity to Electro Mechanical meters for energy measurement.]

“This type of energy measurement violates the basic fundamental of energy measurement i.e. the customer should only be charged for the real actual energy drawn whereas the leakage current between neutral and earth is not energy drawn by the consumer and not fed by the supply company.

Choudhuri admits that this feature is designed to avoid fraudulent abstraction of energy by reversing phase and neutral and consuming the power through earth to avoid energy recording by the meter. “However, the reversing of phase and neutral is only possible from the supply pole and it is not easy for an ordinary customer to do so without the involvement of the staff of the Supply Company,” he said.

M.K. Choudhuri has confirmed that the modification made in the meter unnecessarily records more energy which is not logical since neither the energy has been supplied by the supply company nor utilized by the customer, while the meter records fictitious energy consumption. **“Thus literally, these meters cannot be qualified as real energy measurement equipment”**, he adds conclusively.

Col. [Retd.] D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary, People’s Action said. “This new information confirms what a lot of people, who have been receiving inflated bills, have been saying for so long”.

Promod Chawla, Convenor of the United Residents Joint Action [URJA] an all-Delhi RWA collective has said that this information is being shared with URJA members all over Delhi so the could educate residents on the issue and start demanding accountability from the Government, DISCOMS and DERC. “Consumers have been suffering for no fault of theirs and this fact brought to light has made it clear that it is the responsibility of the DISCOMS to return the amounts collected so far on account of fictitious readings on the newly supplied meters”, he added.

Press Release

Support for Gurgaon Planning Board gains momentum: RWAs block Sohna Road on Saturday to press for demand; Palam Vihar expresses solidarity with the cause on Sunday.

Gurgaon 14th November 2005: Residents and RWAs of colonies along the Sohna road stretch held up traffic on Saturday as a symbolic act of demanding the immediate constitution of the Planning Board for Gurgaon. Residents expressed serious concern at the current situation of infrastructure in the city and agreed consensually that in the next two years the situation will become irrevocable. The meeting which was held at the South City-II entry gate on Sohna road spilled over on to the road where residents demonstrated against the lack of any planning in the city and demanded a super ceding body to take corrective actions on the state of the city. Apart from residents of South City-II, the meeting was supported by RWAs of Southend Floors, Mayfield Garden, Sun-City, Malibu Towne, South City-I, Sector 14 and Sector 23.

V.K. Srivastava of South City II was emphatic that as the movement has gained strength since the RWA Convention held on last Sunday, the administration has started making overtures towards the residents. Gen. Satbor Singh of Sector 23 informed the gathering that a meeting was called by the HUDA administrator on Friday last to better understand the demands of the people. At the meeting, Shashi Sharma Convenor People's Action Gurgaon established for the HUDA administrator the importance of having a super structured body that has the power to guide development of the city along sustainable lines.

On Sunday, Palam Vihar organised a support meeting at Vyapaar Kendra which was attended by RWAs of Sector 23, Sector 22, Sector 18, Sector 12 A and New Palam Vihar apart from residents of Palam Vihar. Solidarity was also expressed by RWA representatives of DLF City on the occasion. Members of Sectopr 12A RWA had come to the meeting to establish contact with People's Action and seek a meeting in their own areas.

Shashi Sharma explained that the Planning Board was not a replication of a GDA which could become a representative of the corruption endemic in organisations like the DDA in Delhi and the GDA in Ghaziabad. Confirming that the Planning Board was envisaged as a fountain-head of all administrative and civil requirements of Gurgaon, he said that this body will correct the current anomalies, and lay the foundations for a balanced developmental blueprint for Gurgaon for the future.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. P.S. Sablok, President of Palam Vihar RWA who expressed total support of Palam Vihar residents in the demand for the Planning Board. He termed the Board as the need of the hour and for which all inhabitants of the city must work.

Col. Mohinder Singh of Malibu Towne exhorted all residents to continue to join every such meeting at various locations in Gurgaon in the coming weeks to build pressure on the government. **RWA heads of Malibu Towne and Southend Floors have declared support meetings in their colonies on coming Saturday and Sunday respectively.**

Col. Ratan Singh of Old DLF Colony and Gen. Secretary of GRP reported that the DC Gurgaon had called a meeting for discussions on the issue of the people's demand for a Planning Board.

Press Release

People's Action demands increased compensation for Delhi blast victims. Association for Blast Victims mooted to protect their interests. RWAs asked to extend all help and assistance. Residents decry insecurity of life in Delhi. People's Action asks for compulsory ID regime.

New Delhi 5th November 2005: At a meeting called by the United Residents Joint Action [URJA] to discuss issues of current concerns of residents of Delhi, President, People's Action Sanjay Kaul lambasted the Delhi Government for taking no concrete step to ensure that incidents like the recent blasts do not happen again. "There has not been a single step announced by the Government to tell us what they intend to do to make our lives safer", he said.

Urging residents to take stock of the safety of their lives in the city he said. "It cannot be that the government creates the conditions for a disaster and when disaster strikes, they absolve themselves of the responsibility and pass it on to terrorists".

"Security in every country in the world rests on the bedrock of compulsory identification of population. Except ours. The person least likely to commit a crime in Delhi is identified six to eight times with authorities - through a PAN number, through bank accounts, through registration of vehicles or immovable property; but the person most likely to commit a crime is left untouched. This is a regime designed for disaster: in fact it is the kindness of terrorists they do not strike more often," he thundered.

Kaul pointed out that the Rs. 2 lakh announced by the Government was a shame considering that entire families and earning hands had been wiped out. "How can this government fix a man's life and his earning value at Rs. 2 lakh. How do we assess the future potential of a man's earning capacity and the quality of life he can promise his family. Who decided that a teenage orphan deserves to eke out his life at Rs. 2 lakhs", he said, asking for an immediate revision of the compensation to the victims on a life term basis.

Col. {Retd} D.K. Shandliya , Gen. Secretary, People's Action said that there was an immediate need to help the victims in their hour of need and we have requested all RWAs to extend full support and assistance in all means possible to help such families. "Let no person affected by these blasts feel alone at this hour," he said.

URJA members supported the idea of forming an Association of the blast affected with a view to protecting their interests and facilitating their rehabilitation and have authorised People's Action to initiate such a process in the coming weeks.

RWAs demand probe into DVB privatisation deal; reject replacement of meters. No improvement in situation, say members: New meters will not be allowed to be installed by any RWA; repeal of tariff structure imminent to solve the problem.

New Delhi, 5th November 2005: At the URJA Convention of Delhi RWAs today vehemently opposed the view promoted by the Government about electronic meters and expressed no confidence in the new installations. Members also denounced the attempts made by the government to bulldoze public opinion by arranging sham testing without having any agreement on the procedures. "First we had meter-terrorism. Now with SDM's let loose on people at large, we have meter-testing terrorism", said Arvind Mehta of Double Story RWA in Rajendra Nagar. "We do not accept the testing or the clean chits the Government has been giving to DISCOMS on the issue", he added.

Members passed a resolution to disallow any installation of electronic meters and demanded a fair hearing to those whose meters had been replaced and were receiving inflated bills.

The gathering also severely castigated the government on refusing to order an enquiry into the DVB privatisation deal. "This is perhaps the only instance in free India that a case has been commented upon adversely by three independent commissions or authorities and we still do not see any enquiry ordered on the issue. We demand an immediate enquiry into the DVB privatisation deal and an investigation into the beneficiaries of this deal including government officials and politicians", said Promod Chawla, Convenor URJA.

URJA has authorised its parent organisation People's Action to create a Citizen's Enquiry Committee to monitor the investigation into the DVB privatisation deal. "This committee will be a watch dog group to ensure that the enquiry is initiated, and carried out without being subjected to political pressure", said Anant Trivedi of Ishwar Nagar RWA. The committee will be constituted in the coming week and will have prominent citizen's, NGO group heads and RWAs as members.

The gathering also passed a resolution demanding a repeal of the current tariff rates which have been inflated to subsidise the theft of power in Delhi. "This theft is illegal and it is the duty of the Government to stop it. However, extracting this deficit of theft from honest consumers is also illegal and we demand an immediate reduction of tariff to the levels before privatisation", said Raj Kishore Dimri of Mayur Vihar RWA.

Press Release

People's Action demands concrete steps by Delhi Government to avert a repeat of blasts: a citizen's right to life is a fundamental responsibility of the government, says the group.

New Delhi: 3rd November, 2005: People's Action has today demanded to see a list of steps taken by the Delhi Government to explain what modifications have been made in the security preparedness to avoid similar situations from developing in the near or distant future. The group has asked fundamental questions regarding the role of the Government in securing an individual's life and pointed to serious lack of planning and practices on the issue of a security code for the city. The questions include:

What is the long term plan to improve security for citizens; who is responsible for the ease with which such crime can be perpetrated; who is responsible for allowing such anti-national elements safe haven in this city; whose responsibility is it to ensure that such criminal acts against citizens do not take place; what are the short term, immediate steps taken by the government to ensure this does not happen again; what changes have been initiated to improve security preparedness of the city; what are some of the concrete steps taken by the Delhi Government to immediately identify this network of anti-national people.

“Regrettably, the CM has come across sounding like an accountant reading out compensation figures for the dead, the maimed and the injured and those who lost business, “ said Ajay Jain, Convenor People's Action New Delhi Zone.

“What about the failure of this government to predict, and prevent this attack; what about an adequate information system; what about a plan to identify and weed out such elements from the city; how about telling us how many such people are still in the city; where are the figures; who knows how many of them are still around looking for another opportunity; where is the information on the number of unidentified illegal immigrants in this city; migrant labour; transit labour”, he added.

Col. [Retd.] D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary People's Action said. “Before congratulating ourselves, as we are now being advised by the CM for the wonderful tenacity we have all exhibited, let us ask this question of those who lost everything in the blasts: are they celebrating the tenacity of their brothers and sisters on their ability to damn the dead and get on with their shopping like nothing ever happened.”

“The Government is cleverly fuelling a desire for denial – encouraging us to imagine that ‘these things happen’ so nobody asks the simple, logical questions. But we are asking: what happened? How did it happen? Who is responsible? Who commits to safety of our life when they take office? Who frames the law? Who runs the show? Who pays up? ”, he added.

Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action said: A terrorist act is eventually a criminal act: the angle of terrorism does not absolve this, or any government of its responsibility to provide for the safety of its citizens. It is the environment in the city that provides the seed of an easy target to a criminal mind; the same mind could not do it unless a casual attitude was not presented to them.

Sure, you could be taken by surprise; like America was. Or London. But we have been fighting this for decades now and it is inexcusable to say that it could happen to anybody. We charge this Government of endangering the lives of the citizens of the state by their *sang froid*; their utter lack of understanding of the criticality of the issues involved and their callous attitude towards the safety of the citizens of the city. And we charge it further of taking not a single step to ensure that it does not ever happen again.

This is a city that has seen an attack on the parliament; it has just delivered a verdict on the Red Fort case and this is a city that is oblivious of the dangers it faces for the systems it has *not* created. There is no security consciousness; there is no security discipline; no doctrine specific to the case - there is a patent absence of appreciation of the seriousness of the problem; there is a fatalism that defies logic and every tenet of sensible governance. This city is an orphan.

Justice Lahoti is right when he draws a comparison with other cities in the world and says the political will is missing. When similar blasts occurred in two other world capitals, the response was quick; it was effective and it was comprehensive. And it was sustained. Not because the Mayor of London showered praises on the Londoner's ability to take the tube back to work, [for what else was he supposed to do, take the Concorde?] but because they put together a water-tight security regimen in place and would not allow any tinkering with it by any quarter. Our government, on the other hand, is depending on the kindness of Al-Qaida to avoid a repeat of the events for it cannot even take a head count of the number of Bangladeshi, Nepali and Pakistani nationals living in relative comfort in the capital of India.

We have been pressing for the same issue in Gurgaon. The spurt in crime in Gurgaon is only due to one single factor; the number of unidentified migrants in Gurgaon and we have settled this in no uncertain terms that the security situation will never improve unless there is identification and registration of such migrants. The failure of Gurgaon is the failure of Delhi; indeed it is the failure of India.

Jingoism cannot replace hard-headed logic: it is not a matter of pride that a few guys just walked into the capital of your country and blasted your ass away. It speaks volumes about the quality of Governance we have. Let's focus on that, not pride ourselves on the fact that we went shopping for Diwali anyway.

People carried on in New York; in London and they do so everywhere else in the world where this sort of thing takes place. It is human nature to carry on: life does not stop for anything. But focusing on this would tantamount to learning nothing. What is inexcusable is that some people could wreck such havoc in the capital of India with such ease and the only response we have is calling up Uncle Musharraf to complain. Unless of course, it is being advised to pat ourselves on the back for all the wrong reasons.

Press Release

First URJA Convention on 5th November: RWAs will decide on meter replacement, tariff and privatisation issues at the meeting at Lok Kala Manch auditorium at 11 a.m. on Saturday. Water issue may also come up.

New Delhi: 2nd November, 2005: The Convention called by URJA [United Residents Joint Action] the all-Delhi RWA collective is expected to step up the agitation against the Delhi Government for its failure to address the issues of the people suffering due to high power bills for the last six months or more;

In addition, the Convention will vote for measures to be taken to challenge the government on the issue of the DVB privatization which has resulted in a chaotic situation in the power sector in the capital, with abnormal tariff increases on the one hand and poor service and deficiency of power availability on the other.

Compounding the issue is the fact that almost half of Delhi's residents have been subjected to a forced meter change while the other half remains in the electro-mechanical regime creating a severe imbalance between the ones whose meters have been changed and the ones whose meters have not been changed.

URJA members from all over Delhi will convene to resolve steps to be taken in regard of these meters; and the logical extension of the Satya-Agraha campaign designed to secure the truth about DVB privatization which is commonly thought to be fraught with serious corrupt practices resulting in huge profits to chosen companies apart from suspicions of pay offs to several political and administrative functionaries.

Promod Chawla, Convenor URJA said, "This Convention will determine what the people of Delhi want as regards the power situation. Our feedback shows that there has been no tangible improvement in the situation and people are continuing to be harassed by high power tariffs and bills that have no relationship with real consumption."

Reacting to the suggestion that the roll back had alleviated people's problems, D.M. Narang of Rajendra Nagar RWA said, "The roll-back of the 10 percent hike is not an improvement because it was never implemented." Clarifying that the people were suffering before the hike was announced, he said, "The people are concerned with mounting electricity bills and meters they just don't trust, and that situation has remained the same".

Press Release

Power Minister fails to redress residents: Reghunathan plays spoiler.

- **Formation of Consultative Committee blocked by CMO to avoid people's participation in the process, say URJA representatives.**
- **Agrees to look into average payments by affected consumers.**

New Delhi, 21st Oct 2005: At a meeting called by the Power Minister with representatives of People's Action and members of RWAs, the Minister's initiative was thwarted by Power Secretary S. Regunathan who is also the Chief Secretary of the State, who point by point rejected every suggestion to include the people into the process and ease the hardship of consumers.

The meeting was called by the Minister to discuss the People's Action proposal for a Consultative Committee involving the Power Minister, DERC, DISCOM CEOs and representatives from RWAs and civil society on a rotational basis to address the issues exercising residents of Delhi since July.

"It is clear that the Power Secretary has a vested interest in avoiding public consultation in the process. It also became clear that the Power Secretary enjoys the complete backing of the CMO on this", says Anant Trivedi, founder member of URJA and President Ishwar Nagar RWA.

"It was shocking to see that while the Power Minister was amenable to the suggestions made by us and had almost acceded to the demand to suspend the meter testing drive pending agreement on the procedure, the Power Secretary's entry completely reversed the trend of the meeting," said S.P. Gupta, Gen. Secretary of Rajendra Nagar RWA.

However, the Minister agreed to consider the proposal for allowing consumers the option of paying on average basis if their bills showed inordinate increase based on the Bill Comparison Forms instituted by People's Action. People's Action had proposed this as a means to avoid large-scale consumer court cases, which the group said would have been the only option available to residents.

The group also discussed the waiving of Fixed Charges for consumers who are active users of electricity. "Fixed charges for consumers who do not consume electricity is an understandable charge. But why make users pay a fixed charge when they consume variable amounts of energy each month? The argument found favour with the Power Minister who suggested that a representation to the DERC will be forwarded by him on the issue, but once again the Power Secretary's views clashed with the premise.

"It was our duty to try and explore options through cooperation but as we had suspected, there is just too much to hide in the entire episode concerning the DVB privatisation deal and it is no surprise that the CMO cannot afford any genuine partnership in this case with the public – to that extent, Bhagidari has completely failed, " said Col. [Retd.] D.K. Shandilya.

The meeting was moderated by Col. [Retd.] D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary, People's Action while URJA was represented by founder members S.P Gupta of Rajendra Nagar RWA and Anant Trivedi of Ishwar Nagar RWA in South Delhi.

The one and half hour meeting also reviewed the role of the DERC and the issue of introducing competition in the sector by allowing open access.

People's Action has also asked for the immediate appointment of the DERC Chairman, which has remained headless for a long time. The group added the caveat that a retired judge be considered for the position and that the appointment be made with public consultation.

Press Release

Residents wary of politicisation of power issue: URJA asks Maken to stay away.

New Delhi, 19th Oct 2005: In view of the intervention of vested interests into the DVB privatisation issue, and the recent tirade on this account by members of the ruling party at the state level, RWAs have expressed fears that the issue might get politicised to the detriment of common residents.

“The recent agitation undertaken by residents has succeeded precisely because no political motive could be attributed to their protests. Political groups within the Congress party are liable to ruin that integrity by their intervention in an issue that should remain between a people and its Government,” said Col. D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary, People’s Action.

“While it is perfectly logical for an opposition party to get involved on such issues, it is the internecine feuds and the intrigue inside the ruling party that is causing huge confusion on the issue”, said Anant Trivedi, of Ishwar Nagar RWA. “In this context, the personal nature of issues Mr. Maken has with the CM should not be the basis for any public debate on the subject”, he added.

“We can even understand the involvement of local councillors and MLAs on this issue as representatives of the common will of the people, but the strident statements by MP Ajay Maken on this issue are hugely suspect particularly since he was in fact responsible for the privatisation deal in the first place”, said Promod Chawla, Convenor, United Residents Joint Action [URJA] the all-Delhi RWA collective.

At a recent seminar Mr. Maken made a presentation, which made strong comments about the state government, the DERC and BSES but the claims were rebutted by representatives of BSES with facts in the presence of a member of the DERC, denting the whole argument. Maken went on to add to the confusion by then arguing against introducing competition in the sector. Maken was later grilled by members on his role and views, given that he was a signatory to the privatisation deal , prompting him to admit that “ I seem to be on the wrong side of everybody ”.

The Executive meeting of URJA had on Sunday expressed disappointment at the personal agendas that were adding fuel to the fire on the issue and shifting the focus from the real issues to subsidiary political motives. “In view of the serious hijacking of this issue by politicians with vested interests, we are registering our common protest against the recent statements of Mr. Maken that are openly tinged with personal bias”, said D.M. Narang of Rajendra Nagar RWA and a founder member of URJA.

“Mr. Maken’s record on reform is abysmal as can be gauged from the auto-meters issue where he openly sided with auto unions to the detriment of Delhi’s residents. His statement that privatisation of power in Delhi was not undertaken for any reform in the power sector but to pass on the responsibility of power theft to private players also reveals a seriously queer approach to problem solving,” said Promod Chawla.

URJA Executive meets to discuss power issues: campaign against DVB privatisation to continue beyond Diwali. *Public demonstrations will start from first week of November.*

New Delhi, Saturday 15th Oct 2005: **Founder members of URJA, the all-Delhi RWA collective met on Saturday at the IIC at the first Executive Meeting of the United Residents Joint Action [URJA] to discuss future course of actions in the campaign on power. Members unanimously decided to speed up the campaign against power privatisation and take the protests against the questionable terms of its agreements to its logical end. Consequently, the Satya-Agraha campaign will continue beyond Diwali and public demonstrations will begin from first week of November.**

The Executive meeting decided on extending the reach of the campaign to various parts for Delhi through a coordinated effort by creating Lok Sabha Constituency-wise groups that would work downwards to create pressure on MPs, MLAs and area Councillors on this issue. Committees for South Delhi, East Delhi, New Delhi, Karol Bagh, and Outer Delhi constituencies have already been created. Chandni Chowk and Sadar committees will be formed within the coming week.

People's Action's representatives at the meeting informed the URJA executive of an invitation to the group by the Power Minister for the 21st October to discuss the issue of forming a Consultative Committee on the power issue with public representatives on board. The meeting is expected to take up various related issues regarding meter testing procedures and DERC functioning apart from ancillary issues of privatisation terms and monopolies.

In view of the DERC notice inviting suggestions and objections to the Supply Code and Performance Standards, URJA has constituted a five member sub-committee to study the document and propose amendments. D.M Narang of Rajendra Nagar, Mr. Anant Trivedi of Ishwar Nagar and Mr. J.C. Vaid of Sheikh Sarai have been made members of this Committee in addition to two experts on the issue.

Members of URJA have also proposed to file applications regarding the numerous queries on the power tariff and privatisation issue under the RTI Act to put the Government on the mat on the issues. " A list of 28 questions sent earlier to the Power Ministry is yet unanswered by the Government and these will now be sent as request for information under the RTI Act, said Anant Trivedi, President Ishwar Nagar RWA.

The meet also unanimously decided to appoint Promod Chawla as Convenor of URJA to oversee the initial formation of the body.

Col. [Retd.] D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary of People's Action will continue to coordinate the URJA secretariat at Bhikaji Cama Place.

Press Release

Kotla Mubarakpur Associations continue Satya-Agraha on DVB privatisation: Gen. Secretary on day's fast to press for transparency on the deal.

New Delhi, 13th Oct 2005: Kotla Mubarakpur residents welfare association today carried forward the campaign to get to the truth about the DVB Privatisation deal that has been seriously criticized by three independent audits. The Resident's Association was supported in this by the Sukhdev Nagar Market Association by their President V.P. Sharma who joined the Satya-Agraha.

The Satya-Agraha campaign launched by People's Action on Mahatma Gandhi's birthday on October 2nd to press for this demand has been continuing with a relay fast being undertaken by various office bearers of the RWAs that have now combined under a single banner of URJA, or the United Residents Joint Action group.

Om Prakash Sahdev, General Secretary of the Kotla Mubarakpur RWA started at 9 a.m. with a dharna opposite the Arya Samaj Road at the Defence colony-Kotla crossing and continued without water or food till 4 p.m. when members of URJA and People's Action joined the protest meet. Brig. Dhawan of Defence Colony was also present on the occasion.

Experts within the group believe the deal to be abnormally in favour of private players at the expense of the exchequer as well as residents who have had to pay increased tariff over the last three years since privatisation. The deal is also challenged by residents on the grounds that it has allowed a state monopoly to be replaced by three private monopolies ensuring that consumers have no choice in the matter.

People's Action has demanded that the Government order a roll back of the tariff to the pre-privatisation levels when it became clear that the increased tariffs were only a means to subsidise theft of power in the state at the expense of honest bill-payers to the benefit of dishonest consumers, most of whom are supposed to be vote-banks of local politicians.

The Satya-Agraha campaign [literally translated it means a "Request for Truth"] is being undertaken in relay by a number of RWAs of Delhi. Members of GKRA and Rajendra Nagar RWA have already undertaken a day's fasting as part of the campaign and the process will continue as a public opinion building operation in a run up to a collective event towards the end of the month.

Press Release

People's Action proposes Bill Comparison Forms as basis for meter testing; advises DERC to abandon drive, modify method.

New Delhi, 11th Oct. 2005: People's Action has today written to the DERC and the Ministry of Power, NCT of Delhi to abandon the current meter testing drive for being ineffectual in gaining the confidence of the people. People's Action has suggested to the DERC and the Ministry to instead concentrate on investigating cases that have been recorded through a validated format such as the Bill Comparison Forms that are being filed by residents through RWAs.

"This format is worthy of following simply because these Forms are being filed by people whose bills show inordinate differences in billing between comparable periods over a year. This is a more scientific and logical methodology apart from being more credible and practical in essence," said Col D.K Shandilya. "People's Action has already received close to a hundred such forms. Should the DERC make this a stipulation, a lot of productive work can go into assuaging the concerns of the people", he added.

According to this format, residents are able to file their meter readings and bills amounts for corresponding periods before after the new electronic meter was installed and validates on paper the need for an enquiry.

"Instead of carrying out meter tests in places where people have only a suspicion of a fast meter, it makes more sense to only check those that provide evidence of abnormal consumption patterns. People will respect this methodology more rather than a forced campaign by the Delhi Government or DERC to prove that all meters are running well", said Promod Chawla.

People's Action has also pointed out that this process will save a huge amount of money since it will be a targeted operation based on genuine complaints and not an ad-hoc, impromptu operation whose motives are not trusted by most RWAs and residents at large.

Press Release

‘Request for Truth’ on DVB privatisation continues : P&T Colony RWA members go on fast.

New Delhi, 10th Oct 2005: The Satya-Agraha campaign launched by People’s Action on Mahatma Gandhi’s birthday on October 2nd, has travelled to the Atul Grove Road situated P&T Colony where General Secretary Mr. L. Balasubramani undertook a day’s fasting as part of the relay process of the campaign.

Balasubramani was supported by other members of United Residents Joint Action [URJA] the all-Delhi RWA collective which is running the campaign on the ground in various parts of the city as a concerted effort to force the Delhi Government to come clean on the privatisation deal that has since been castigated by the CAG, the standing Committee of Parliament of Energy and most recently by the Public Accounts Committee set up by the State government.

Balasubramani broke his fast at 4 p.m. with a protest meeting within the locality which was attended by URJA members and members of People’s Action apart from RWA members of the P&T Colony.

Experts within the group believe the deal to be abnormally in favour of private players at the expense of the exchequer as well as residents who have had to pay increased tariff over the last three years since privatisation. The deal is also challenged by residents on the grounds that it has allowed a state monopoly to be replaced by three private monopolies ensuring that consumers have no choice in the matter.

People’s Action has demanded that the Government order a roll back of the tariff to the pre-privatisation levels when it became clear that the increased tariffs were only a means to subsidise theft of power in the state at the expense of honest bill-payers to the benefit of dishonest consumers, most of whom are supposed to be vote-banks of local politicians.

The Satya-Agraha campaign [literally translated it means a “Request for Truth”] is been undertaken in relay by a number of RWAs of Delhi. Members of GKRA and Rajendra Nagar RWA have already undertaken a day’s fasting as part of the campaign and the process will continue as a public opinion building operation in a run up to a collective event towards the end of the month.

Press Release

People's Action petitions DERC for average payments of bills until meter testing is over. Consonance with Central Electricity Act cited as support.

New Delhi, 29th Sept 2005: In view of the meter testing drive announced by the DERC from October 1st for a three-month period, People's Action has today written to the DERC to allow consumers burdened with new meters and inflated bills to pay according to the averages of their bills before meters were replaced.

Citing the CEA 2003 section 56 (1) b, that allows for such a caveat in the case of disputes, the letter has argued that such a directive will not only provide relief to suffering consumers but also send a positive signal of the Commission's proactive approach on the issue.

“ We believe that a large number of consumers who are facing the brunt of unjustifiably inflated bills will find immediate relief by this one act of the Commission. It stands to reason that while the commission is enquiring into the veracity of the meters itself, any billing from such meters should also be under scrutiny and therefore possibly stand waived should the verdict be against such electronic meters. In such a scenario, consumers are within their right to be protected by the regulatory body, in this case the DERC,” said Col. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary of People's Action.

People's Action has argued that the amounts that are reflecting in people's bills would go as advance payments to DISCOMS should the verdict of the meter test drive go in favour of the residents and it was reasonable to offer them the benefit of doubt.

Members of URJA [United Residents Joint Action], the all-Delhi RWA collective have been clamouring for a reasonable approach from the government on this issue but apart from some quick-fix testing undertaken by the power ministry using methodologies that are considered an 'eyewash' by most RWAs, there has been no confidence-gaining measures taken by the authorities thus far. This letter has projected the need for the same.

Press Release

URJA Zonal Meetings reject government meter testing: bill comparison forms will prove the point, say RWAs

New Delhi, 22nd Sept 2005: The URJA [United Residents Joint Action] zonal meeting held at Satsang Bhawan, Rajendra Nagar has decided to ignore the attempts by the Delhi government to carry out meter tests as a cosmetic make over of its tilted policy of appeasement of DISCOMS and refused to participate in them . “What is the purpose of carrying out such exercises when the DERC has already notified a drive from October 1st”, asked S.P. Roy of Dwarka RWA.

The URJA zonal meet was a combined meet of the North and West zone. The meeting was called to deliberate on the zonal committee formation of URJA, apart from discussions on the issue of meters and bills.

Instead, the zonal meeting has emphasised that the methodology of listing out bill amounts prior and after the new meter installation is a telling document of the fiction being offered by Government spin doctors.

“A plain look shows that meters are not running 5 or 10% faster, they are running 50% to 100% faster. This is not possible merely due to small gadgets, indicator lights and remote control devices”, said R.C. Kamboj of Rohini RWA.

People’s Action has distributed **Bill Comparison Forms** to all RWAs in Delhi where residents can file their meter readings and bill amounts in a comparative format to show that bills have jumped by over 100 % at places. RWAs are copying these and distributing them within their colonies for further action.

S.S. Talwar of Naraina Vihar RWA has planned a public exhibition of the anomalies using these forms on Saturday in the presence of the SDM at the Naraina Police Station.

The Zonal meet discussed a consumer court ruling which allows consumers to fix a parallel meter of any ISI make to calculate how fast the electronic meters are running. The meetings also decried the concept of fixed charges as an aberration and challengeable in law. Preparations to take the matter to court are being discussed in conjunction with other aggrieved parties such as industry associations of Delhi.

“No meter testing drive can succeed unless that is consensus on the procedure of testing. We are waiting for the Delhi Government to realise this important aspect,” said Promod Chawla.

Speaking on the issue, Sanjay Kaul, President, People’s Action said, “ It is for us to prove to the government that meters are running fast by illogical proportions. It is for the Government to find a solution to the problem. The people cannot wait for ever – they have bills to pay and they want to know whether these meters are justified or not”.

Press Release

People's Action objects to caveat by DISCOMS to hijack roll-back: **5% rebate is not reward or punishment; it is the right of a citizen.**

New Delhi, 21st Sept 2005: People's Action Gen. Secretary Col. {Retd.} D.K. Shandilya has today written to the Chairman DERC castigating severely the attempt by DISCOMS to apply a caveat to their portion of roll-back by suggesting that they would hold it back from customers who paid their bills after the pay date.

"The statements made purportedly by CEOs of DISCOMS regarding this issue is contraindicative of an executive order in as much that it attempts to quash in effect the relief provided to the customer by the Government in its authority. It may be clear that in making such statements the DISCOMS are overstepping their brief and clearly interfering in the relationship between citizen and state", said Col. Shandilya in his letter.

Promod Chawla, member of the Campaign Committee that fought for the roll back said, "It is unthinkable that a rollback effected by the Government will be now subverted by private parties that insist on superseding an executive order with a personal caveat. Procedures, penalties and surcharges relating to late payment are well established within the CEA and cannot be overtaken by a new set of rules at the whim of a private player".

Terming the episode "an attempt to hijack the roll-back", Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action said that this proposition deserved to be summarily rejected by the DERC.

Col. Shandilya, has asked the DERC Chairman to issue a clarification on the issue and assured him fullest opposition to the caveat should it be approved by the Commission.

Press Release

Theft of power in MP constituencies: DISCOMS submit records.

Outer Delhi tops power theft, with East Delhi a close second.

New Delhi, 18th September 2005: In response to enquiry made by People's Action regarding figures relating to actual theft of power in each Lok Sabha constituency of Delhi, DISCOMS have issued a list of the areas under Lok Sabha MPs with respective percentages of theft.

The figures are revealing in themselves and show the correlation between rural, unauthorised and industrial areas and theft of power clearly enough to put the blame for theft in the court of the political parties themselves. Outer Delhi is the bad land of power theft, with East Delhi a close second.

“In effect the figures clearly indicate that MPs need to answer to the people of Delhi on why we should have to pay more just to subsidise their vote banks”, said Col. D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary, People's Action.

Col. Shandilya had written to Mr. J.P. Chalasani of BSES and Mr. Anil Sardana of NDPL on the 8th September to furnish the details of power theft in the areas under their command which are part of MP's constituencies with a view to establish responsibility of elected representatives towards this issue.

In a glaring indictment of the myth that it is the middle class and higher-end colonies that indulged in the most theft, the figures show an abnormal bias towards the JJ clusters and unauthorized colonies as far as theft is concerned, with percentages touching 40% dominantly in maximum areas of Outer Delhi and some in East Delhi.

In this context, BSES areas tend to indicate higher theft than NDPL areas. Overall, it is Outer Delhi and East Delhi that lead in power theft with the other five constituencies also marking their presence. Expectedly, NDMC areas show the least impact of theft.

“Reading the statistics is in itself a telling statement of the manner in which power theft is being sought to be subsidized at the cost of the honest bill payer. The 40 percent loss by theft results in a direct increase in tariff for all the others who do not steal power,” said Promod Chawla.

Responding to the figures submitted by the DISCOMS, Sanjay Kaul, President People’s Action said, “It is clear that the ARR filed by DISCOMS factors-in the loss by theft before arriving at a tariff structure. Therefore the 50% theft has been included in the tariff we are paying today. This is patently unfair and legally untenable. It will be challenged and does not stand a chance.”

“We will be writing to the Government regarding this issue and demanding a roll-back to 2001-02 levels of tariff”, he added.

Reactions from URJA members:

“We agree that power theft causes power companies to lose money. But it is not my job to recover the amounts lost – and neither can the Government fix tariffs so that the amounts are recovered from the people who don’t steal power”

- *Arvind Mehta, Rajendra Nagar Double Storey RWA.*

“This entire episode brings into focus the role of political parties and political patronage. The government has technically been running a protection racket to sustain its vote-banks. This is unacceptable,”

- *S.S. Talwar, Naraina Vihar*

“Let MP’s explain the theft. Let them be indicted for it. Let MP’s pay for the power theft deficit from their MPLADS fund. Why should I pay for people who are protected by the political establishment for their personal benefit”.

- *V.N. Bali, Ram Vihar*

“No company can charge a consumer twice over to pay for the defaulters. This amounts to penalizing an honest bill payer for the crime of a power thief”.

- *B.N. Bhat, Palam Colony*

“There is an urgent need to assess how the tariff fixation was attempted. It is clear that the fundamental principle in tariff fixation over the last five years has been how to recover money from the honest customer twice over, to pay for the theft”.

- *A..Trivedi, Ishwar Nagar RWA*

Press Release

Delhi RWAs reject meter testing drive; will offer no cooperation to teams sent by Government.

New Delhi, September 15th 2005: RWAs spread across Delhi have summarily rejected the meter checking drive employed by the Government as an eye-wash and a conspiratorial mechanism to check meters at the behest of the manner suggested by DISCOMS.

Col. D.K. Shandilya, Gen Secretary, People's Action who is also managing the all-Delhi collective **United Residents Joint Action [URJA]** secretariat said, "We have conducted a random check across different RWAs in Delhi and we do not have a single one that says they will cooperate with this drive." Col. Shandilya has surveyed RWAs from Vikas Marg, Prasad Nagar, Greater Kailash, Rajendra Nagar, Kailash Colony, Ashok Vihar, Defence Colony, Naraina Vihar, Kotla Mubarakpur, Preet Vihar, Hari Nagar and Krishna Nagar among others.

RWAs are up in arms at the non-serious attitude of the government on the issue of inflated bills and dubious meters and the superficial attempts to assuage the residents ire. "What is the point of checking meters on a random basis when specific examples exist – just check all meters where there are complaints," says **Mrs Kiran Chadha, President, Kailash Colony RWA.**

T.K. Varghese, a resident of Sector 9 in Rohini and a qualified engineer has sent a 12-point questionnaire for the DERC and said, "Statistical sampling of dubious meters is meaningless".

"We are saying that there is a serious problem with billing and people cannot be made to pay amounts two to four times their old bills. This government is effectively saying, we don't believe you, we will first check whether you are speaking the truth or not. This government is working like the DISCOM", said **A.M. Prabhakar, Gen. Secretary of Malviya Nagar Sahyog RWA.**

Over the last few months, residents have been repeatedly complaining about incredible amounts reflecting on their bills and some colonies with a large lower middle class population have actually asked residents to stop paying bills. "The government is unnecessarily testing the patience of the people. The Government must come up with a reasonable solution to the problem or residents will have no option but to come out on the streets again", warned **Pramod Chawla** of erstwhile CAPTH.

"In our area, every house with a new meter wants a check. How do I tell them that I will not forward their names for the check?", asks **S.P. Gupta of Old Rajendra Nagar RWA.** "This drive is a sham, and it will prove nothing and solve nothing," he added.

Press Release

Government fails to notify 10% rollback; DISCOMS bills includes hike. RWAs don't support the meter testing drive: too little too late, they say.

New Delhi, 13th September 2005: Residents from various colonies in Delhi are calling in to the United Residents Joint Action [URJA] secretariat to complain that they are still receiving bills with the 10% hike included. Many of those who deducted 10% on the last bills are also being billed the 10% as arrears.

Rajesh Dokwal of Mayur Vihar has written by email to say that a RWA official was told by their local BSES office that bills will continue to be generated inclusive of the 10% hike unless orders to the contrary were transmitted to them.

Castigating the lackadaisical attitude of the Delhi Government, Promod Chawla of the CAPTH said, "It seems that this administration has learnt nothing from the entire episode of last month. I am shocked at the situation within the government - a simple decision confirming the roll back and clear cut instructions to DISCOMS cannot be so difficult".

Col. D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary of People's Action has expressed surprise at the statements of a DISCOM that is reported to have suggested that they would deduct 5% for late payment. "Obviously the DISCOM is overstepping and arrogating to itself a role not assigned to it by law", he said.

D.M. Narang of New Rajendra Nagar RWA expressed dismay at the drive ordered by the Government for meter testing. "It is too late in the day to try and determine the issue in this format and we do not support this methodology. Testing two meters when hundreds need a check is no good", he said.

Anil Kapoor of Greater Kailash Residents Association said, "We have instructed residents to follow the methodology instituted by URJA of filing records of meter readings six months before and after installation of electronic meters. This will settle the issue once and for all and we will continue to follow this format to make our point".

In the meantime, People's Action has started collecting information establishing the volume of theft in each Lok Sabha Constituency in Delhi with a view to build pressure on the Government to arrest the trend politically, since almost all stake holders have complained of political patronage to theft down the line.

"Why should the middle class pay higher tariffs for electricity when theft is guaranteed by politicians," asked Pawan Jain, Convenor, People's Action East Delhi.

People's Action seeks details of power theft in Lok Sabha constituencies in Delhi; seeks to make elected representatives answerable for theft in their areas.

New Delhi, 12th September 2005: Col. D.K. (Retd.) Gen. Secretary of People's Action has written to DISCOM Chiefs Mr. J.P. Chalasani of BSES and Mr. Anil Sardana of NDPL seeking details of percentage of power theft in each of the seven Lok Sabha constituencies of Delhi.

The group has asked DISCOMS to furnish the details of such theft in the areas under their command which are part of MP's constituencies with a view to establish responsibility of elected representatives towards this issue.

"It is useless to ask the police to stop theft when there is no political will to actually rein in theft," said, Col. Shandilya. "This information will allow us to have a clearer picture of what each MP needs to do to stop theft in his constituency so that people of Delhi can get an immediate rebate in the astronomical rates that they are having to pay currently", he added.

Pawan Jain, People's Action Convenor for East Delhi said, "People in East Delhi have repeatedly suggested that there is widespread theft in areas in East Delhi. The Government has to prove how serious it is when it says it will stop theft. Let us start with the MP's responsibility towards the electorate – should he not be responsible for the theft that occurs in his area, particularly when it results in higher tariffs for those that do not steal," he asked.

Rajiv Kakria, Member of Greater Kailash RWA said "Let the MP be penalised for the theft in his constituency by making him pay for it through his MPLADS fund. At least this way, the theft is paid for and tariffs can come down for those who do not steal power".

Press Release

Rajendra Nagar protest meet against meters proposes paying on average terms until the meter issue is resolved: Power Minister is sought to be put in the dock

New Delhi, 11th Sept. 2005: The protest meet against meters and inflated billing at the Rajendra Nagar Vivekanand Park drew one of the biggest response so far in the campaign, with over 250 residents clamouring to discuss the issue that is exercising all – unreliable meters and exaggerated billing. Resident after resident wanted to bring attention to their personal case where they had received clearly inflated bills for periods that just do not match with preceding years, particularly before the meters were replaced.

S.P. Gupta, General Secretary of Rajendra Nagar RWA was explicit in stating that since the Government had accepted that the meters were suspect and the DERC had ordered a verification drive, residents should only pay on an average basis until it is proved beyond doubt that the meters were running fine. This line of action was accepted by all by a show of hands at the gathering.

Promod Chawla erstwhile convenor of CAPTH pointed out the anomaly of a Government that first admits to meter terrorism, then allows them a comfortable subsidy so that their bottom lines are not threatened. "It may also be noted that the Government is yet to respond on the proposal sent by us on the 1st of Septemebr regarding a Committee to look into the issue", he added, suggesting a lack of seriousness on the part of the Minister to solve the problem of meters.

People's Action has since constituted the United Residents Joint Action [URJA] an all-Delhi RWA collective which will start by distributing a format to all residents that captures meter readings six months prior and six months after the new electronic meters were installed. " This will be a scientific method of collecting evidence of what people have been saying all along – that these meters are showing readings far in excess of normal, leading to incredible increases in billing", said Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action.

" In the mean time, there are a number of questions for the Power ministry to answer: Who authorized the large scale replacement of meters in Delhi? Does the Central Electricity Act 2003 mandate the replacement of all meters by electronic meters only? What happened to the meters collected by the DISCOMS so far? How have they been accounted for? What have the DISCOMS claimed as cost of the new electronic meters they have fitted?", he added.

Promod Chawla added, "It is forseeable that the Power Minister should have to put in his papers in view of the unprecedented bungling by the Government on the power issue".

Press Release

United Residents Joint Action [URJA] constituted: comprehensive representation to all RWAs through Council, Committee and Senate, and a vote for all RWAs are key highlights.

New Delhi, 9th September 2005: Col. D.K. (Retd.) Shandilya, General Secretary, People's Action today gave finishing touches to the organisational structure of the URJA body. The proposal offers all RWAs an equal position in the body with a three tiered organisational structure that is based largely on the division of constituencies in the city-state. "This is an attempt to reconnect residents with their elected representatives and re-establish the equations of accountability of elected representatives towards the electorate be it at the level of the councillor, the MLA or the MP", he said.

Col. Shandilya had been authorised at the RWA Convention of 3rd September called by People's Action to evolve a comprehensive structure for this all-Delhi body of RWAs to ensure that all RWAs come on a single platform on issues of common interest and strengthen the movement that began with the power tariff hike campaign.

Explaining the structure, Col. Shandilya said, "URJA will operate on a democratic and transparent basis with due representation from all areas of Delhi through committees that will select one member from each zone to send to a state Senate. Each registered RWA will have one vote on the council.

For ease of operation, it has been decided to distribute Delhi into 7 zones, mostly on the lines of constituencies so that a relevance to political representatives can be maintained. All RWAs that fall in these zones will be grouped into representative councils. Councils will choose a Committee. And the Committee will select a Senate representative. For example, in East Delhi Zone, all RWAs in the area will be members of the URJA Council. The Council will elect a Working Committee of say 10 members, who will then elect a Senate representative among themselves.

In this fashion, there will be seven Senate members directly sent from RWAs all over Delhi. Three nominees of People's Action will be part of the 10 member Senate to oversee secretariat, communications and operations. The 10-member committee will select a Chairman to oversee the Senate. This will be the Governing Council.

"This will be the largest civil society group in Delhi and is designed as a parallel entity that will put pressure on the elected representatives at every level to respond to the needs of the residents. This structure is a highly evolved mechanism to afford each RWA its share in direct expression of people power without creating hegemonies or cartels that have a personal axe to grind," said Promod Chawla , erstwhile Convenor of CAPTH.

In view of the developments since, it has been decided to dissolve the CAPTH and merge its future actions in to this larger pool of RWAs. It is expected that URJA will create working groups from within this pool to take on issues as they come up.

Registration for this new body has now started over and above the founder members who proposed the creation of this body.

Press Release

People's Action seeks details of percentage of power theft in Lok Sabha constituencies in Delhi: writes to DISCOMS to furnish information

New Delhi, 8th September 2005: People's Action has today written to the DISCOM heads seeking details of percentage of power theft in each of the seven Lok Sabha constituencies of Delhi.

Col. D.K. (Retd.) Gen. Secretary of People's Action has asked Mr. J.P. Chalasani of BSES and Mr. Anil Sardana of NDPL to furnish the details of such theft in the areas under their command which are part of MP's constituencies with a view to establish responsibility of elected representatives towards this issue.

"It is useless to ask the police to stop theft when there is no political will to actually rein in theft," he said.

"This information will allow us to have a clearer picture of what each MP is doing to stop theft in his constituency so that the theft burden is reduced and people of Delhi can get an immediate rebate in the astronomical rates that they are having to pay currently.", he added.

Pawan Jain, People's Action Convenor for East Delhi said, "People in East Delhi have repeatedly suggested that there is widespread theft in areas in East Delhi. The Government has to prove how serious it is when it says it will stop theft. Let us start with the MP's responsibility towards the electorate – should he not be responsible for the theft that occurs in his area, particularly when it results in higher tariffs for those that do not steal," he asked.

Rajiv Kakria, Member of Greater Kailash RWA said "Let the MP be penalised for the theft in his constituency by making him pay for it through his MPLADS fund. At least this way, the theft is paid for and tariffs can come down for those who do not steal power".

Press Release

Delhi RWAs confederate under one banner! URJA will be the largest independent civil society body in NCR.

New Delhi, 3rd September 2005: **RWA representatives at the Delhi RWA Convention held today by People's Action consensually decided to operate under a single banner to strengthen the movement started recently due to the power tariff hike.**

While speaker after speaker congratulated the group for having shown results in such a short while due to a diligent effort, they warned against divisions in the solidarity of the campaign in future. Many wanted this structure to continue to solve other problems, but the fact that CAPTH was set up only for a specific issue decided the gathering to extend this structure to a higher level.

“The proposal for a comprehensive umbrella body has been repeatedly brought up by RWA members during this campaign and today this gathering has given it formal shape,” said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action. “This will be a body of all RWAs with a decentralised and democratic style of working, representation from all zones and eventually a Senate that has one member each from each zone”, he said.

All RWAs are automatic members of this new forum that has been christened **United Residents Joint Action** or **URJA**. However, those present voted unanimously to join as Founder Members of the proposed organisation. Col. [Retd.] D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary People's Action has been authorised to draw up formal papers and organisation structure for the new body.

“It is interesting that URJA also denotes energy, an issue we are all working on, but it also denotes the power of a people's focussed energies when they all work for one objective,” said Promod Chawla, Convenor of erstwhile CAPTH, which will now operate under this new organisation on a much larger scale.

Roshan Seth led the thrust with a moving picture of what can be achieved by people when they agree to unite. Shiv Khara thundered through his talk inspiring everyone to stand up and be counted as an equal citizen and a proud member of society by collaborating with the people who work selflessly.

Rajesh Dokwal of Mayur Vihar proposed the name URJA which was instantly liked by all members of the audience and was seconded by Mr. S.R. Sangar of the IP Extension Federation. The resolution was passed unanimously.

RWA members from Faridabad and Gurgaon requested to be members of this body making it the largest independent civil society organisation in the NCR.

The Convention had earlier rejected the meter checking teams proposed by the Government as a non-serious attempt and ratified the proposal sent to the power minister by Mr. Sanjay Kaul regarding the setting up of a high-powered committee to sort out the meter and billing issue with public consultation.

Press Release

RWA Convention called on Saturday 3rd September 2005: meet to consolidate gains made in the campaign against power tariff hike. Reconstituting the CAPTH, meter and related issues on agenda.

New Delhi: People's Action has called a RWA Convention on Saturday the 3rd September at 3 p.m. at the IIC Auditorium to reorganise the movement for the next phase.

The All Delhi RWA Conference of 14th July had passed resolutions to impact the rollback, the issue of meters and billing and of the terms of privatisation.

“Having achieved that rollback, the movement will require to be tweaked according to the new priorities,” said Promod Chawla, Convenor of the CAPTH. “CAPTH will also have to be re-christened or reorganised since the nomenclature ‘campaign against power tariff hike’ is now redundant,” he added.

Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action said, “The Convention is a step towards consolidation of the success achieved in the recent campaign and to ensure that a more cohesive campaign is released to attain the second and third objectives of the movement”.

RWAs from all over Delhi and other civil society organisations are being invited to the Convention where a new direction to the people's movement will be sought and defined.

Roshan Seth and Shiv Khara will also address the Convention.

Press Release

The Govt. can overrule DERC to roll back the hike: DER Act puts the onus of public interest on the State.

New Delhi, 29th August 2005: Contrary to the assertions made by the Government,, the DER Act 2000 clearly stipulates that the Government will have final authority over DERC in matters relating to public interest. Speaking on the issue, Convenor CAPTH, Promod Chawla said “ The Government is pussyfooting on the issue for no rhyme or reason and this issue could have been settled long back.”

Sanjay Kaul, President, People’s Action said “ The government is authorised to repeal the 10% hike. The Act is clear that on matter of policy that affects public interest, the State will have the right to overrule DERC. It is difficult to understand what the difficulty is now in withdrawing the 10% hike.”

The relevant portions of the act are reproduced below.

Point No. (1), (2) and (3) of Section 12 of the DER Act 2000, Part IV under the head General Powers of the Government:

[1] In the discharge of its functions, the Commission shall be guided by such directions in matters of policy involving public interest as the Government may issue from time to time.

[2] If any question arises as to whether any such direction relates to a matter of policy involving public interest, the decision of the Government thereon shall be final.

[3] The Government shall be entitled to issue policy directions concerning any subsidy to be allowed for supply of electricity or any other infrastructure services to any class or classes of persons.

Press Release

CBI Former Director Joginder Singh joins the Committee for CAPTH. Says evidence calls for enquiry.

New Delhi, 29th August 2005: Joginder Singh, IPS (Retd.) Former Director, CBI, India has today been appointed on the committee for the Campaign Against Power Tariff Hike as a member. He was one of the people who attended the Campaign protest meet at Dwarka on Saturday and immediately lent his support to the Campaign.

Welcoming Mr. Singh on the panel, Promod Chawla, Convenor CAPTH said. “Joginder Singh’s addition to the team lends us a sharper focus as we go along to dissect the privatisation deal. It is now abundantly clear that there has been stunning short cuts in the drawing up of the agreements with private parties”.

Joginder Singh said “Prima facie there seems to be enough evidence to seek an enquiry into the privatisation model employed in the case of DVB. There are many references in the public domain that point to this”.

Col. D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary, People’s Action welcomed Mr. Singh and suggested that a competent panel of experts is being developed by the group to evaluate the various aspects of the privatisation issue.

Press Release

Rohini residents follow their own course : societies join the campaign

New Delhi, 26th August 2005: Rohini residents have strated paying 10% less since the last week directly to the NDPL offices. Apparently, the payments have long been cleared. Speaking for the residents Dr. M.K. Mohanty President of the North West Federation of RWAs said that various sectors have already been paying the deducted payments to NDPL since last week.

Interestingly, local charitable and other societies are also joined the movement. Members of Bharat Vikas Parishad of Sector 15 Rohini have also deducted 10% and made payments to NDPL. Kamal Arora , Secretary of the society said that “all residents of sector 15 oppose the increase in energy charges” and are protesting in the same fashion.

On Sunday, Rohini has organised a large demonstration meeting against the power tariff hike where noted speaker Shiv Khera has been invited. Khera will be accompanied by members of the CAPTAH and People’s Action to the meeting.

Press Release

Standing committee report echoes RWA Conference resolutions: No moral grounds for the hike to continue, says CAPTAH.

New Delhi, 26th August 2005: Noting that the standing committee report tabled yesterday in Parliament by Shri Gurudas Kamat is a mirror image of the concerns highlighted by the All-Delhi RWA Conference, organised by People's Action on July 14th, CAPTAH has today asked for the immediate withdrawal of the hike announced by the Government as morally untenable.

Commenting on the contents of the report, Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action said that "This report is a vindication of our stand so far. The Delhi government must gracefully pull back the hike and accede to the demands not only of the people but also to the standing committee. This would be in the interest of good governance and institutional propriety".

Earlier this week, People's Action through its constituted body CAPTAH had issued instructions to all RWAs to deny the Government the opportunity of breaking this people's movement by observing protests in different parts of the city. Consequently more and more RWAs are advising residents to pay only after deduction of 10% from their bills.

The statements issued by two supreme court lawyers on the issue of disconnections are also helping RWAs counter disinformation campaigns by private power companies and a few disgruntled federation heads. In fact, people are now beginning to ask questions as to the motives behind their statements.

Promod Chawla Convenor, CAPTAH has said that the Campaign is gaining ground and there is no option for the government but to see the writing on the wall. "It should be clear to everyone by now that this city will not accept the power tariff hike under any circumstances. But more than that, our campaign to have the terms of the agreement examined will now start in right earnest as well".

Press Release

Pritish Nandy joins People's Action: promises full support to the campaign in Delhi.

New Delhi, 25th August 2005: Poet, journalist, communications and entertainment Czar Pritish Nandy has today joined People's Action as a Honorary Member. In an email to the organisation he has said, "you have my total backing".

Pritish Nandy was one of the first people in Mumbai to raise the issue of civic governance during the recent flooding of Mumbai and in an article had proposed the boycotting of all taxes by citizens until the government fixed the problems.

The coincidental start of the civil disobedience movement in Delhi with his comments in Mumbai has turned full circle with Nandy adding to the growing list of concerned citizens who have joined People's Action in support of its campaign against the power tariff hike and the questionable privatisation deal of the DVB. Nandy was preceded by thespian Roshan Seth and renowned inspirational speaker Shiv Khera who have gravitated towards the group's philosophy of focussed action on issues of governance.

Speaking on the development, Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action said "Pritish is known to be a man who says what he thinks. And we want to collectively be a group that does what it says. His contribution to our movement will be immense not just for the attention he brings to issues but the integrity he brings along with him. We welcome him as look forward to working with him towards a better quality of life for all citizens of India".

Press Release

Govt. Pensioner's RWA does one better: advises BSES to not include the 10% hike or they will pay nothing!

New Delhi, 23rd August 2005: The Government Pensioner's Resident Welfare Association has suggested to the BSES that it would be in the interest of their cash flow situation to not include the 10% hiked rates and continue at the old rates if they wanted any payments at all.

Speaking on this issue, Dr. S.N.H. Zaidi, President GPRWA said, " We have requested the BSES to honour the civil response and not add the 10% hike at all in the bills to avoid any cash flow problems for their own company. We do not wish to create problems for anyone, we are a decent people who have retired from service and are looking for a decent quality of life", he said.

Dr. Zaidi said that the pensioners are not going to pay until there is an energy audit and the issues concerning the transmission losses and the agreement with power companies is resolved. Interestingly, the area has received no bills since then.

In a related development, Promod Chawla Convenor of the CAPTH said that the launch of power coupons by the NDPL is a cruel trick being played on the people who are reeling under power cuts on the one hand and unpayable rates on the other. "Clearly, the Government is no longer seeming sensitive to the genuine complaints of the people", he said.

Press Release

Naraina Vihar Associations join the campaign: 9 association heads deliberate and resolve to deduct 10% in future bills.

New Delhi, 23rd August: At a meeting organised yesterday to discuss the power tariff hike and other issues, Association heads of 9 RWAs of Naraina Vihar extended full cooperation to the People's Action campaign and passed a resolution to the effect. Consequently, all residents of the areas under these RWAs will now deduct 10% from their next bills which are due and make payments accordingly.

Speaker after speaker at the meeting castigated the Government and NDPL for grave lacuna in the system and methodology of electricity distribution and tariff setting. Naresh Ummat, General Secretary of the G-Block questioned the wisdom of guaranteeing a private party a 16% return on equity when the official rates are way below in the face of no serious methodology to evaluate their performance.

Promod Chawla, Convenor of the Committee for the Campaign Against Power Tariff Hike [CAPTH] marked out the success of the campaign due to the efforts to RWAs across the city from Shahdara to Rohini and Rajindra Nagar to Govindpuri and exhorted residents to claim their right to protest.

R. L. Dua and Arvind Mehta of Rajendra Nagar RWAs also explained the method of depositing the 10% less payments and **exhibited receipts received from the BSES office for such payments. Both also dismissed any threats of disconnection as the companies are required to give a notice before any such action can be taken.**

“Besides,” said R.L. Dua, President of Old Rajendra Nagar RWA, “I welcome them to start with my house, if they can”.

Mr. S.S. Talwar, Convenor of the area concluded the meeting by speaking on behalf of the area RWAs and promised to carry the campaign further in their colonies.

Press Release

Prasad Nagar RWA joins the fray: Deposition of bills after deduction of 10% starts. 150 deposited already.

New Delhi, 23rd August 2005: Prasad Nagar, a residential colony adjacent to Rajendra Place has today become yet another RWA to start filing cheques with the BSES office in their area after deductions of 10%.

Prasad Nagar RWA President, L.N. Tangri said, “150 such cheques have already been deposited and the rest are being deposited today. Almost all our residents have agreed to the deduction of 10% as a protest against the Delhi Government’s stand on the issue”

Mr. J. K. Bhagat, Executive Member of the Prasad Nagar RWA said that there was all-round approval for the campaign to deduct 10% from bills and that Prasad Nagar Phase-I is also going to follow in the same fashion. “The people of our colony are sick and tired of the duplicity of the Government on the issue where they seem to be protecting the interests of the private players more than the consumers”

Press Release

RWA President's Conclave puts Government on Notice; wants roll-back by 6th September. Committee of Experts for negotiating issues mooted.

New Delhi, 22nd August: The RWA President's Conclave organised by People's Action on Sunday 21st August passed a resolution seeking the roll back of the 10% hike by the 6th September, after which RWAs will step up the protest by refusing to pay power bills in toto.

The proposal for putting the Government on notice was moved by Mr. S.R Sangar, President of the Federation of IP Extension-Part II RWAs and was passed by the gathering of 70 RWAs including Federation heads representing close to 400 RWAs all over Delhi.

Mr. N.C. Joshi of East of Kailash Federation of RWAs proposed that a notice was followed by direct action. This proposal was supported by a majority of the gathering. In view of the persistent pressure of RWAs seeking redress for mounting electricity bills and the lack of a proper response by the Government, the meeting concluded on stepping up the protest to a complete boycott of payment of bills if the roll back was not effected by then.

A period of 15 days was allowed for the government to comply with the demand to roll back the hike as a compromise between RWA heads who wanted 7 days and some who wanted a month.. The resolution will be put up for ratification by the entire body of RWAs working with the group on this issue.

The meeting was chaired by Promod Chawla, Convenor, Committee for the Campaign Against Power Tariff Hike [CAPTH]. Chawla has procured DERC documents that proved that the Government of Delhi was the final authority on the issues concerning 'public interest' and as such could easily withdraw the tariff hike or absorb it to the benefit of the people. These were read out to the audience. It was also agreed to create a panel of experts to negotiate with the government on the issues brought up by the CAPTH.

The meeting was also attended by noted film personality Roshan Seth who made an impassioned plea for staying true to the civil disobedience movement and taking it further saying it was the first time that the middle classes have moved along such lines in free India for an issue such as this.

Seth was also responsible for reminding the gathering that any negotiations with the government on the other issues of meters and privatisation would have to be only after the hike was withdrawn, as that was the resolution passed at the last meeting.

Convenors of the Rohini Joint Action Committee made a case for appointing People's Action Representatives all over Delhi to better coordinate future planning. Sanjay Kaul, President of People's Action has promised to put the proposal to a members committee for planning out such an exercise.

A.K. Tripathi of Dwarka and V.S. Saini of Janakpuri made a request for public protest meetings in their respective zones in the coming weeks.

Press Release

Sheikh Sarai Phase I follows suit: RWA deposits first tranche of bills after deducting 10% less. Challenges Discoms to disconnect electricity.

New Delhi, 20th August: Sheikh Sarai Phase I MIG Flats today became the third RWA in line to deposit payments for bills received with the hike after deducting 10% from the amount. This is the third RWA in as many days to start depositing bills after deductions.

Rakesh Bhardwaj, President of the RWA said “Our residents have only just begun to receive bills reflecting the hike and today we have deposited 75 cheques at the Adchini office of BSES. This process will now continue on a daily basis.”

Sheikh Sarai Phase I residents have been facing acute power problems for a long period and have resisted the hike saying that it is not only unjustified, it is a travesty of justice to make them pay for the theft of others.

Office bearers including members Shri Ramesh Agarwal and Shri Prakash Khanna deposited the cheques at 3.45 p.m. today at the Adchini office of BSES and appreciated the cooperation extended to them by the officials there.

Responding to the threats held out by the discoms suggesting disconnection in case of short payment, Shri Rakesh Bhardwaj challenged them and reminded that there would be no basis for doing so since an unpaid bill is also afforded at least two cycles before disconnection. “Besides,” he added, “just let them try, and see what happens.”

Press Release

Campaign to educate elected representatives on the power issue starts:

Documents explaining the fundamental deviations in privatisation, tariff fixation and meters issue prepared for Councillors and MLAs.

New Delhi, 10th August: People's Action has today forwarded documented facts and figures to educate elected representatives on the power issue to help them see the extent of misappropriation of objectives, resources and targets. "A 20 minute power point presentation explaining the issue in simple language has been developed to take MLAs and Councillors through the entire privatisation exercise and illustrate how it turned out to be a wolf in sheep's clothing," said Promod Chawla, Convenor of the committee for the campaign against the power tariff hike.

The docket also contains an open letter sent to the Power Minister Haroon Rashid by the Committee on the 28 questions asked of him recently by the Group.

The presentation, which has been forwarded in text format in Hindi, shows how privatisation has been designed to make the middle class pay at the expense of losses that are accumulated for different reasons and due to different parties and how it does not address the issue of competition and has instead created private monopolies for chosen parties. The documentation ends with a view that suggests that "privatisation was designed to make you pay for the guy who doesn't"

Ravinder Singh, a member of the Committee said that 133 councillors and close to 70 MLAs will receive these dockets of informative texts in this week. "We have ensured that every councillor and MLA of the area knows why the residents of their areas are so against the hike, the meters and the privatisation process as it stands today, and why they have chosen to refuse to pay the 10% hike".

The presentation that has been developed by Anant Trivedi and Kamal Sharma, has also been sent to Chief Minister Shiela Dikshit as a member of the legislative Assembly apart from all cabinet members and MLAs of the state.

Press Release

28 questions for the Power Minister: *Committee for Campaign Against Power Tariff Hike asks for clarity on crucial issues in a letter forwarded to Power Minister Haroon Yusuf by People's Action today.*

New Delhi, 8th August 2005: The Committee for Campaign against the Power Tariff Hike has today asked a set of 28 questions from the Power Minister covering all aspects of the power issue such as the tariff hike, privatisation, meters and the valuation of DVB at the time of the unbundling. Stating that “these questions are crucial to a transparent understanding of the flaws of the privatisation process,” Promod Chawla, Convenor of the Committee asked for a response from the Minister to uncomfortable aspects of privatisation such as the under valuation of the DVB and the adverse notes of the CAG.

On the issue of the valuation of the DVB the Committee has asked ‘*How much under valuation has CAG identified?*’ ‘*Who were the constituent members of the committee who approved DVB asset valuation and what was the reasoning offered by them?*’ Then again, it has asked, ‘*The Discoms have been given a moratorium of government loans. Why has the government not insisted that the benefits be passed on to consumers?*’

On the other aspect of privatisation, the Committee has asked, ‘*The Electricity Act allows a reasonable return and states that this should not be in excess of 5% above the RBI rate, on the capital base defined as original cost less depreciation. Why were the Discoms given a 16% assured return on equity? What is the justification given for this manipulation?*’

On the issue of electronic meters, the Committee has asked the Minister, ‘*What criteria was used to determine the choice of electronic meters over the traditional electromechanical meters? Who was responsible for this selection? Please provide details of the evaluation process and the criteria.* Also, it has asked, ‘*How many meters have been tested, prior to installation, which authority has conducted the tests and which authority has signed off the results?*’

Anant Trivedi, member of the Committee who has compiled the set of questions based on a series of interviews with technocrats, experts and consumers has suggested that another set of about two dozen questions are under preparation. “ There is no end to the number of questions that are cropping up due to the non transparent manner in which this entire process was completed”, he said, asking for an immediate enquiry into the deal by a credible authority under the central government. “I can tell you that there is a can of worms waiting to be discovered prima facie”, he added.

Press Release

People's Action constitutes Traffic Committee for Gurgaon. Plan for uncllogging Sikandarpur to be presented to HUDA Administrator on Monday.

Gurgaon, 6th August 2005: People's Action has set up a two-member committee comprising Ravi Nayyar of Garden Estate and Kishore Asthana of Sushant Lok to work on issues of traffic management in the city. The interim committee will seek help from other interested members and traffic consultants to develop an actionable plan in a phased manner starting with the Sikandarpur chowk that has become a choked viaduct into the city from the Mehrauli side.

Nayyar and Asthana have developed a set of recommendations based on common usage patterns which if implemented seriously are guaranteed to open up the access at Sikandarpur and lead to a finely regulated movement of traffic. Critical points on the proposal relate to a setoff on both sides for parallel parking of vehicles, three lanes defined for traffic movement, removing the partition on the culvert, levelling both sides of the road and providing a fine carpet quality road for this stretch. Issues like time limits for goods vehicles and a zero tolerance parking and stopping regime are expected to clear out the zig zag traffic of present.

Ravi Nayyar said, "Just the act of parallel parking will remove 40% of the problem: it is logical that when vehicles are parked diagonally they will stick out ten, fifteen or twenty feet in to the road depending on the vehicle. But if they park parallelly, whatever the length of the vehicle it will never occupy more than its width." Arguing for a Parallel Parking [PP] regime all over the city, he said that this is what is followed all over the world.

Maj. Gen. Satbir Singh who is coordinating this effort with the HUDA Administrator and the DSP Traffic maintained that even after all these recommendations are met, a serious effort by the HUDA administration and the Traffic Police is necessary to maintain the format. The duo will also present a diagrammatic explanation of the recommendations to the HUDA Administrator on Monday the 8th August at 10 a.m. when the appointment is fixed.

Kishore Asthana said that the market associations will support the plan as it opens up a huge potential for shoppers who currently avoid the area just for the congestion. "Our estimate is that the Sikandarpur shops lose almost 40% potential business just because of the traffic chaos. It is high time they are provided a system that allows their businesses to flourish and allows them to serve customers who have to go to other markets much farther away", he said.

Press Release

Campaign against power tariff hike will involve youth, students says Roshan Seth; Shiv Khera promises a public rally on 28th August.

New Delhi, 5th August 2005: The campaign against the power tariff hike was today extended support by two public figures at a Press Conference in the city. Introducing the speakers, Col. D.K. Shandilya welcomed the admission of both Roshan Seth and Shiv Khera to People's Action and said that the movement is attracting people of the calibre of Mr. Khera and Mr. Seth due to its intrinsic values and the concept of fairness in public dealing. "We hope the government is alive to the desire of the people and changes its anti-middle class stance quickly", he said.

Promod Chawla, Convenor of the Committee for Campaign Against Power Tariff Hike held out a stringent reminder for the Delhi government on its tactics to try and resist the growing outrage over the power issue among residents with the statement, "we are aware of a subtle campaign run from the CMO to indulge in what we call 'cordial intimidation' of RWA Chiefs who are quoted in the media, through a barrage of phone calls that are made from people within the CMO, within the coterie around or even the extended family of the powers to be. We also decry a related attempt to similarly mark journalists who file stories unpalatable to the CM's office," he said reading from a prepared note.

"We are fortunate that our media houses have foundations more solid than the CMO thinks, and grateful for Editors who are ferocious in their independence and do not stand for such tactics", he added warning that the next call received by members or supporters of the movement will be publicly revealed.

Thespian Roshan Seth minced no words in castigating the systemic rot in the city when he pointed out to the utter chaos of planning in Delhi. Terming this hike as body lashings to the taxpayer, he rejected the power tariff hike saying it was a "monstrous effort to fleece the law abiding man in a city with no qualms and morality any more". Confirming that he would not pay the 10% hike come what may, he exhorted people to resist this 'shameless extortion' Everything is touched with the brush of corruption, whether it is unauthorised buildings, public works or autos – but the only people this Government can see fit to wring money out of is the middle class", he said.

Seth revealed plans to take the campaign against the power tariff hike to the youth through a series of meetings scheduled in the university campuses over the next two weeks. Ajay Jain, Convenor People's Action and publisher of The Campus Paper said, "This is just the medium to involve the youth in a crusade that projects good governance as a legitimate objective for public activism".

Shiv Khera opened his remarks with the exhortion to all citizens with his famous phrase: "He who rises not against injustice, is guilty of it". Shiv Khera cautioned people from become slaves of their own servants reminding that the government was elected to serve not to rule. "This is not a feudal principality where any decision is irrevocable", he said asking the Government to heed the voice of the people and roll back the hike immediately. Khera urged citizens to rally around

this idea as a purifying idea of fighting for ‘the right and the reasonable’ and declared a massive rally for the 28th August which he would address in support of the campaign.

Sanjay Kaul, President People’s Action said that the campaign is receiving such tremendous support because it is a campaign for a just cause and for good governance. “ Our movement will move along a principle and it will not dither nor stray from the path chosen by all of us. We will not step back until the hike is withdrawn; we will not rest until the sham privatisation is revoked and a consistent climate of competition is built into the scheme”, he said. He made a formal suggestion that both private companies should be allowed to extend services in each others’ territories and a third player should be introduced for long term benefits to consumers. “You will see that the power tariffs will fall by 25% within months, service will improve and your complaints will be attended to like lightening”.

Kaul said that laws are subservient to the people and if a rule interferes with out sense of justice, it must be remoulded to reflect the will of the people. “A legislation is the slave of the people’s will not its master and it can be altered in minutes,” he said, asking the Delhi government to revise the terms of the agreement with private parties and introduce the clause for open competition within private companies in territories.

M.K. Mohanty of the Delhi Citizen’s Front, a member organisation, has informed that August 6th was being celebrated as a Black Day in all quarters of the city with protest demonstrations in Rohini and other areas of the city. He also reiterated that all resident welfare associations have agreed to support the deduction of 10% from bills received from next month as a mark of protest against the unjustified hike.

The meeting was also attended by other key members of the Committee for Campaign Against Power Tariff Hike.

Press Release

Shiv Khera joins People's Action: will campaign against the tariff hike.

New Delhi, 1st August: Noted author of the bestseller “ You Can Win” and world renowned motivator and management guru, Shiv Khera has today joined People's Action as a member in the campaign against the power tariff hike terming it undeserving for a government that has not been able to control theft of electricity to seek recovery of revenue from the sweat of the middle class.

“Transmission & Distribution losses ought to be labelled Theft & Dacoity losses and the Government has to come clean on why the people of Delhi should have to pay for such losses”, he said. “Which democratic country penalises the honest citizen and rewards the corrupt”, he asked.

Shiv Khera has thrown his weight behind the campaign because he says he believes “these people are fighting for the right and the respect of the ordinary middle class citizen of Delhi – they must be supported by every right-thinking person of the country”.

Promod Chawla, Convenor of the Campaign Against Power Tariff Hike [CAPTH] has welcomed the addition of Shiv Khera as a Campaigner and said “the campaign is going from strength to strength and people all over Delhi are wholeheartedly supporting the idea of paying 10% less”.

Col. D.K. Shandilya, General Secretary, People's Action said “The movement for the withdrawal of the power tariff hike will only get stronger with the support of Mr. Khera. We are happy to welcome another comrade in arms”.

Shiv Khera along with other prominent members of the group will hold a Press Conference on Thursday, 4th August to lay out their plans for the campaign.

Press Release

Committee for CAPTHike rejects attempts by CM to assign blame to private discoms - “the boot is on the other foot,” says Roshan Seth. Compensation demand for those whose meters were forcibly changed. Members will educate councillors and MLAs on the extent of the power mess; Committee lays out process for paying 10% less; Zonal protest meetings will continue; Resolution must be accepted in toto or the civil disobedience will continue; CM will be responsible for any law and order situation, says Convenor.

New Delhi, 27th July 2005: The Committee for Campaign Against Power Tariff Hike [CAPTHike] has today castigated the CM's attempts to brush off responsibility for the power mess to private discoms saying that this government is a half stakeholder in the private company and it looks like four fingers are pointing at itself.

Proposing that since the CM has admitted that terror tactics were employed by its agencies, RWAs and individuals have a right to file FIR's against the government and its agencies and that compensation is due to them. “The act of forcibly changing meters either through intimidation or through sleight or during the absence of the male member of the house are all criminal acts with a defined set of procedural actions in law,” said Promod Chawla, Convenor of the Committee for CAPTHike. “Such residents must be provided compensation for the harassment, invasion of privacy, unauthorized entry and access, misrepresentation and cheating,” he added.

Roshan Seth, noted theater and film personality who has publicly declared that he will not pay the 10% hike said that this government has lost touch with reality and is forcing the agenda of a few people down the throats of common middle class people with a vengeance but passing the buck to private parties. “I have never seen a government so deaf, so blind, and in fact so dumb”, he said laconically.

Anant Trivedi and Kamal Sharma, who have developed a 20-minute presentation on the reason and consequences of the privatization debacle of the Delhi government were vocal in their assessment that there is an understanding between this government and certain private players that whatever the public opinion, the interests of the private companies will be protected. “Look at the terms of the privatization, and you will find all evidence of such a tacit agreement within it”, they said.

Ravinder Singh of Citizens Action Forum has organized for the contents of the presentation to be mailed to all councilors and MLAs in Delhi to educate them about the Government's bungling on the issue. “We will also consider sending it to various party functionaries so that they may be aware of the public loot of money that has been the result of this privatisation”, he said.

M.K.Mohanty of the North West Federation of RWAs has confirmed that residents of the entire North West belt have agreed to withhold 10% of their bills from next month as a symbolic gesture against the power tariff hike. “We are not interested in how this government solves this mess and we are not interested in who is to blame. We want the hike withdrawn, in line with the resolutions passed at the all Delhi Conference on 14th July”, he said.

Ajay Jain, Convenor, New Delhi People's Action shared a paper explaining the process of withholding the 10% of bill amount in a Q&A format being sent to all RWAs in Delhi. “This paper

answers all questions residents may have on the issue and explains in detail how to go about it", he said.

Confirming that the agitation was going full steam ahead, Promod Chawla, Convenor of the Committee said that protest meetings in different parts of Delhi will continue until the resolution delineated at the All-Delhi RWA was accepted and warned of public anger on the issue getting out of control. " We will hold the government fully responsible for any law and order situation that may develop as a consequence of its mulish resistance to the writing on the wall," he said.

Press Release

Committee for campaign against power tariff hike rejects BSES involvement in the issue: 'CM is diverting attention'

New Delhi, 23rd July 2005: **Members of People's Action have received calls from BSES officials to arrange high level meetings with their senior brass since the statements directed at them by the CM, but Committee members have maintained that there is nothing to discuss with distcoms in an issue that has only to do with poor decisions, and suspect choices of the Delhi Government.**

"We maintain that this is an issue between the government and the people and we do not accept the attempt by the CM to deflect criticism of her performance on this issue to scapegoats", said Promod Chawla, Convenor of the Committee for campaign against power tariff hike, a consortium of NGOs, RWA federations, independent RWAs, consumer activists and power experts.

Roshan Seth has maintained the same with calls he has received from Mr. Yash Mehra of BSES. So did Col. D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary, People's Action.

Ajay Jain, Convenor of People's Action New Delhi has said that the issue of power tariff hike is the fundamental point of difference with the government and that is all that we need to address. **"It is patently ridiculous for the CM to point fingers at companies where the government is a fifty percent shareholder",** he said.

Responding to the issue of meters, Ravinder Singh technical expert on the Committee pointed out that establishment of a good meter or a poor one is a time consuming process and that there has to be complete stop immediately to any changes in old meters until such time the quality of new ones can be established.

Anant Trivedi of NNFI has said "The CM might think it appropriate to order a probe into the assets and accounts of the companies now that it has come to her notice that discrepancies are showing up between promises and delivery of services."

Reminding the Government of the facts of the case, Col. Shivraj of Munirka Vihar has said that the three point-agenda agreed at the RWA conference last week was unequivocal in the demand for the withdrawal of the hike; the stopping of all meter changes, and finally a revision of the terms of privatization entered into by the government of Delhi with private parties.

Press Release

Roshan Seth joins People's Action. Will fight the tariff hike that has 'debilitated Delhiites'.

New Delhi, 19th July 2005: In a development that signifies the growing discontent with the Delhi Government's handling of the power issue, actor Roshan Seth has today confirmed that he will be joining advocacy group people's Action in Delhi. Roshan has been an observer of the group's actions in the past and has said, "people's action is the only answer" suggesting that aggregated activism is the only way to beat back an oppressive regime.

Speaking on his membership in People's Action, Col. D.K. Shandilya, General Secretary of People's Action said, " we welcome Roshan Seth not as a renowned actor which he is, but as a citizen of this city and a person who is both an aggrieved consumer of this Government's policies and as a man who is willing to fight for a principle. We welcome that he is going to join us in the fight against the power tariff hike and we look forward to his support in all our other endeavours"

Roshan Seth is a resident of Geetanjali Enclave and laments that he has only seen the city get worse, never better. " Everything we see is a mess. The water is undrinkable in my area. The transport mess is unbelievable. My power situation is pathetic and this government wants me to pay more for this gross inefficiency. I won't," he said, "I just won't."

Seth has become party to the decision to pay 10% less of the next bill he is served by the power company and has exhorted all Delhi residents to do the same.

Roshan Seth can be contacted on 011- 55287788 after 7.30 p.m. today.

Press Release

Centralised Secretariat for Campaign against Power Tariff Hike established. *Coordination cell will offer Hotline for residents who have problems with billing and record evidence for legal proceedings.*

New Delhi, 19th July 2005: People's Action has today also announced the setting up of a centralised secretariat for the Campaign Against the Power Tariff Hike so that all actions can be coordinated and implemented in an efficient fashion. The group has nominated Col. D.K. Shandilya as the Coordinator for the campaign with office at Bhikaji Cama Place and a dedicated hot-line number 51455551 where RWAs and residents can call to interact and implement strategies or register their protest against over billing.

Promod Chawla, Convenor of the committee for campaign against Power Tariff Hike said, "The secretariat will be responsible for developing and implementing strategies to defeat this unjustified hike; it will be a source of information to those that want it and it will be a source of help to those that need it", he said.

Speaking on the occasion Ajay Jain, Spokesperson for the committee said that this facility is a serious attempt at integrating the large scale unrest in the city with regard to the electricity issue. "people are outraged at the way they are being fleeced by this government and they are very angry at being made to pay for somebody else's mismanagement and they want to vent their anger".

Anant Trivedi of NNFI and the driving force behind the legal opposition to the hike said, "this hotline number can be used by anybody to record his or her grievance regarding over billing or faulty meters and will become a repository of evidence against the misbehaviour of private companies should they resort to any such tactics"

Meanwhile, senior advocate Sanjay Parikh has been roped in by the group to prepare a case against the government for failing to honour its key commitments to the paying public at large by raising tariffs to unsustainable limits in just three years.

Ravinder Singh, a member of this committee said "We have documented facts to suggest that with the hike we will be paying tariffs at least a 100% more than what they pay in parts of the US"

Press Release

‘Pay No Hike’ meetings begin in relay fashion all over Delhi. *Councillors and legislators will be invited to attend..*

New Delhi, 18th July 2005: **People’s Action, in association with RWAs and citizen groups, is coordinating public meetings in different areas of Delhi in a relay fashion to press home the decision of paying 10% less on bills raised by power companies from next month. This campaign is expected to run through the next two weeks with various RWAs and citizen groups hosting the function in different parts of the city.**

An East Delhi RWA Federation has already had a meeting with its constituents on Friday declaring their intention to not pay the 10% hike. Mr. Sangar, Secretary General of the Federation of IP Extension GHS said “This is our way to protest this unjustified, unsustainable hike and we have all agreed to abide by the common decision to pay our bills only after deducting 10% off it”

Rajendra Nagar RWA demonstrated at a Dharna on Saturday morning denouncing the hike and have ratified the Resolution passed by the All-Delhi RWA Conference on the 14th. “We have started a signature campaign in support of the Resolutions to not pay the hiked portion of the bills in future”, said D.M. Narang, President, New Rajendra Nagar RWA. A signature campaign in support of the Pay No Hike campaign is also underway in the locality.

Future programmes include a meeting at Vasundhra Enclave in East Delhi on Wednesday and CR Park and Kalkajee on Saturday in addition to many others.

Explaining the idea behind the move, Promod Chawla, Convenor of the Campaign against Power Tariff Hike said that “this is a logical progression of the idea of civil disobedience that was consensually agreed at the All-Delhi RWA Conference on the 14th and we will take the decision to the people in a consistent and penetrative fashion”.

Ajay Jain, Convenor, People’s Action and spokesperson for the Committee for Campaign against Power Tariff Hike said that The Pay No Hike meetings will be held under the auspices of the local RWAs and that residents and RWAs in and around the area have been sounded out and local representatives and councillors have also been asked to be in attendance to support the people. “After all, as elected representatives of the people, they have to explain their position on the issue”, he added.

Press Release

All-Delhi RWA Conference rejects tariff hike: passes three resolutions: Residents will not pay 10% hike; demand stop to all meter replacements; and a full review of DVB privatization terms.

New Delhi: 14th July: Office bearers of RWAs, along with NGO representatives and consumer activists from all over Delhi attended the All-Delhi RWA Conference organized by People's Action and passed three resolutions that unanimously agreed to make payments of 10% less if the hike was not withdrawn. Resolutions demanding stopping all meter replacements by private companies and independent tests of meters and review of the terms of privatization by an independent committee of experts with public consultation were also passed with unanimous vote.

People's Action had organized Delhi's first independent RWA Conference with the emergent issue of the power tariff hike as the theme. This conference was the result of the discussions held with various affected bodies by the Committee for Campaign against Power Tariff Hike, a group put together to provide coordination to all future actions of the citizens of Delhi to protest and revoke the hike.

Opening the conference Col. D.K. Shandilya, General Secretary, People's Action made a case for a complete review of the electricity mess that has put the middle class under pressure. Noting that there was a pattern to this behaviour, he said that the present government looks upon the middle class as a soft target for revenue collections without disturbing its existing vote banks of jhuggis and encroachers.

Col. Shandilya confirmed that People's Action has continued to receive 99% negative vote for the power tariff hike since it floated a referendum on the internet to gauge the opinion of Delhi residents on the issue. Residents can continue to vote Yes or No on the email: yesornohike@hotmail.com

Promod Chawla, Convenor of the Committee for Campaign against the power tariff hike held out an agenda that suggested drastic means to resist an out of control administration that is road rolling public opinion aside with a hurry that leads one to believe that there is some hanky panky in the dealings and decisions. He singled out the issue as one that has united every citizen of Delhi against the Government's blind moves on the tariff front. "This government is using our money to pay private parties in an agreement where there was no transparency, no public consultation and no bidding in the real sense", he said.

Anil Sood of Chetna presented his thoughts of the promise of privatization and how it has turned on the very people it was supposed to relieve. Pankaj Agarwal of the Joint Front reviewed the steps that were supposed to be taken to ease the burden on the common man but spoke of how the original premise had been abandoned for unexplainable reasons.

Ravinder Singh, a member of the Committee looking into the issue of meters said that the problem is being complicated by the refusal of private companies to allow independent testing of meters and following of typical norms required for such testing. “Everybody who has had a meter changed will tell you that there is a vast difference between what they billed earlier and what they bill now – was everybody cheating,” he asked.

M.K. Mohanty of the South West District Federation pointed out that the great expectations of Bhagidari have turned to dust thanks to an attempt to use it as a means to keep RWAs in check instead of fostering genuine exchange of views

Anant Trivedi of the NNFI has challenged the very basis of the privatization route charging the government with lack of transparency on the issue and sell-off terms that protected private parties at the expense of the citizens. He demanded an immediate review of the terms of the agreement with private parties with retrospective effect by an independent commission. “This agreement has the seeds of a serious scam and we have a right to know who designed it, and who ratified it without our consultation”, he said.

Sanjay Kaul, President of People’s Action steered the resolutions through an open discussion on the issue and qualified the success of the conference through the passing of the resolutions by the gathering. Kaul stressed on the need to consolidate public opinion on this issue and proposed a multi-pronged strategy to combat the arrogant moves of the government. “If this government does not recall the hike we have two options; to submit to this dishonour and go back crawling to pay what they want us to pay to private companies, or we refuse to do so. There is no third option”, he said.

Ajay Jain, Convenor of People’s Action New Delhi closed the meeting with a signature collection campaign signifying RWAs agreement to passing the 3-point resolution.

Press Release

First independent All-Delhi RWA Conference fixed for 14th July at IIC.
NGOs, consumer groups and prominent citizens will also join to decide course of action on resistance to power tariff hike.

New Delhi: 12th July 2005: People's Action has organized Delhi's first independent RWA Conference with the emergent issue of the power tariff hike as the theme. This conference is the result of the discussions held with various affected bodies by the Committee for Campaign against Power Tariff Hike, a group put together to provide coordination to all future actions of the citizens of Delhi to protest and revoke the hike.

Convenor of the Committee for the Campaign Against Power Tariff Hike, Pramod Chawla has singled out the issue as one that has united every citizen of Delhi against the Government's blind moves on the tariff front. "This government is using our money to pay private parties in an agreement where there was no transparency, no public consultation and no bidding in the real sense", he said.

People's Action has continued to receive negative vote for the power tariff hike since it floated a referendum on the internet to gauge the opinion of Delhi residents on the issue. "We are still getting an overwhelming No vote for the hike which is a quantum jump from the time we had surveyed RWAs *before* the Delhi government announced the hike", said Ajay Jain, Convenor New Delhi People's Action and spokesperson for the Committee for the Campaign against Power Tariff Hike. Residents can continue to vote Yes or No on the email: yesornohike@hotmail.com

Ravinder Singh, a member of the Committee looking into the issue of meters said that the problem is being complicated by the refusal of private companies to allow independent testing of meters and following of typical norms required for such testing. "Everybody who has had a meter changed will tell you that there is a vast difference between what they billed earlier and what they bill now – was everybody cheating," he asked.

Condemning the explanations floated by vested interests that the increase in billing amounts was due to more availability of power, Pankaj Agarwal of the Joint Front RWA said that this canard is designed to create confusion among consumers and evade the very real problem of faulty meters.

M.K. Mohanty of North West District Federation said that there has been inordinate increase in tariffs and this third increase will only confirm the worst fears of senior citizens whose living index has been continually downgraded due to all round inflation in the face of fixed pensions and losing interest rates.

Anant Trivedi of the NNFI has challenged the very basis of the privatization route charging the government with lack of transparency on the issue and sell-off terms that protected private parties at the expense of the citizens. He demanded an immediate review of the terms of the agreement with private parties with retrospective effect by an independent commission. "This agreement has the seeds of a serious scam and we have a right to know who designed it, and who ratified it without our consultation", he said.

Over 200 delegates are expected to attend the Conference from all parts of Delhi. The Conference is expected to determine a specific course of action to resist this hike. A 3-point resolution demanding roll-back of the hike; re-assessment of all replaced meters by an independent authority and a review of the terms of privatization of electricity are expected to be passed by absolute majority. The conference will be held at the IIC auditorium at 3 p.m. on 14th July.

Press Release

**Professionals, NGOs and RWAs form Committee for Campaign
Against the Power Tariff Hike.**

Group will challenge the government, “legally, financially and through all means possible”; and is “ready for the long haul.”

New Delhi, 8th July 2005: People’s Action has today announced the setting up of a committee of prominent people from among activists who have lobbied against the power tariff hike. This group will draw up a time lined plan for resisting the hike announced by the government yesterday and address the issues that are exercising Delhi’s middle classes for some time regarding power supply, faulty meters and inflated billing.

The group will have their first meeting tomorrow, Saturday the 9th July at a full day-conference and prepare a draft of a proposal to oppose the hike. ***“All measures that are necessary for opposing this irrational increase will be considered, including public demonstrations”*** said Promod Chawla, Convenor of the Committee.

The interim committee includes D.M. Narang of New Rajendra Nagar RWA, Ravinder Singh, and Engineer working on the issue of faulty meters, Pankaj Agarwal of the Joint Front RWA, Anant Trivedi of NNFI and Ajay Jain, of New Delhi People’s Action. More members are due for induction.

People’s Action has been receiving an overwhelming NO response to the referendum floated by the group two days back to gauge citizens’ response to the hike. ***“The email id: yesornohike@hotmail.com shows up 99% NO verdict for the hike. In such a situation, we have a clear mandate to fight this arbitrary and unjustified hike by the Government,”*** said Ajay Jain, spokesperson for the Committee.

Press Release

People's Action proposes Referendum on power tariff hike. Plans protest if people give a verdict of NO.

New Delhi, 5th July 2005: People's Action has asked all residents of Delhi to give a YES or NO verdict to the power tariff hike that is being proposed to be okayed by the Delhi Government in spite of severe opposition by RWAs and civil society groups.

Residents of Delhi need only send an email to yesornohike@hotmail.com to register their view. The poll responses will be tabulated and the verdict made public to display the level of opposition to a move that is being considered by most as a result of poorly negotiated terms by the government while handing over monopolies to private parties.

Pawan Jain, Convenor, East Delhi People's Action said that the issue of tariff hike is becoming more an internal understanding between Government and private companies than an issue between the Government and the citizens. "Clearly there are other reasons at work to justify this hike and none of them concerns the citizens", he added.

Col. D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary People's Action has questioned the entire process of privatization saying that the process was shrouded in mystery and the details of the awards and the terms must be made public. "What Delhi needs is competition, not privatization that allows comfortable monopolies to chosen parties," he said.

Speaking on the issue, Ajay Jain, Convenor New Delhi People's Action lambasted the Delhi government for its premeditated, unilateral increase in tariffs without considering the issues consistently raised by various consumer groups. "I am shocked at the level of arrogance of this government that it has the courage to ignore public opinion with such impunity", he said.

Serving a warning to the government, Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action said that "if the referendum proves what we know to be right, and people oppose the move to raise tariffs, we will openly support any groups, including political parties to ensure that residents of Delhi do not have to pay abnormally high rates for power when this government has not been able to provide continuous power, water or security to its citizens."

People's Action has indicted plans for a protest against the power tariff hike on the basis of recommendations made by various citizen groups, should the referendum return a verdict of NO.

Press Release

People's Action submits security recommendations to DC Gurgaon.

Non-compliance of norms by Police and Security Agencies main reasons for spurt in crime in Gurgaon, says Security Professionals Group. Working group report suggests 17 steps to improve situation.

Gurgaon, 4th July 2005: People's Action has submitted recommendations to DC Gurgaon and IG Police on July 2nd as per the decision taken in May at a meeting organized by the group and attended by the DC, the IG Police, the SSP, the association of security Agencies and the Security Professionals Group set up to look into the issue of security in Gurgaon. The report was prepared in consultation with APSA, through its President G.B. Singh. SSP Yogendra Nehra too is a designated signatory to this report although he was unavailable at the time of submission.

The recommendations of the SPG have clearly pointed out to the serious lack of designated numbers in the police force, the preparedness of the force; the complete absence of identifying migrant labour and a record of known offenders due to an archaic system of police station management. Making specific mention of the huge scope for improvement in the operations of the Police, the SPG has recommended the immediate upgradation and computerization of all Police stations, increase in the number of stations and police personnel and upgradation of police training and response systems. “ The problem is that our police establishment is unable to come to terms with the changing profile of Gurgaon and the same old lathi-danda mind-set prevails top down”, says Maj. General Satbir Singh of the SPG.

Holding the identification of migrant labour and non-residents as the single biggest reason for the spurt in crime, Shashi Sharma, Convenor, People's Action said that inspite of knowing full well that the cause is this, the administration has not yet moved an inch on this matter. At the meeting concluded last month, it was agreed that even if verification of such migrants was not possible, the registration must be made mandatory. “It is now clearly in the hands of the administration, how it wants to tackle the situation”, he concluded.

Col. Bharat Singh, a security professional and part of the SPG has also severely castigated security agencies that compromise every norm in the book for the purpose of bidding for contracts. Calling such agencies a bigger danger to Gurgaon than all the criminals put together, Col Bharat Singh said they give the impression of security without actually having the werewithal to provide it, creating a more dangerous situation. The SPG had recommended that any association of security agencies needs to self regulate with a view to weed out such fly-by-night agencies and the State administration, including the Police must maintain a list of approved agencies so that resident's interests are always protected.

The SPG has maintained that the onus of hiring such approved security agencies will lie on Builders and maintenance agencies in the future and

any lapses by such agencies must be shared by the maintaining agencies should the security agency not be from the approved list. Maj Gen. Satbir Singh has called upon the DC to immediately seek a standards list from all security agencies which may be collated to prepare a best practices norm against which security agencies may be evaluated.

The SPG has urged the administration to administer Security norms in advance of the bill due for approval in the parliament so that Gurgaon can establish a precedent in self-governance on the issue.

Press Release

Delhi RWAs united against power hike: billing and meters score lowest in survey.

Survey shows genuine disaffection with Delhi Government performance on electricity issue.

New Delhi 23rd June 2005: In a dip-stick survey commissioned by People's Action to gauge people's response to the power situation in the capital, over 80% per cent of the respondents chose to oppose the proposal to increase tariff and over 60% accused the private players and the government to have created more problems than solving them since privatization.

The survey was carried out over three days and required respondents to answer two questions with one sub-set question each. Office bearers of 45 RWAs were surveyed at random from across Delhi for a representative view on the issue. "The near unanimous response to the issue of billing discrepancies, the power situation and the question of a power hike has surprised us at the sheer angst among Delhiites for the Government's approach to this issue," says Ajay Jain of TCP Media Pvt. Ltd., the agency that carried out the survey on behalf of People's Action.

Releasing the results of the survey to the media, Sanjayah Kaul, President People's Action said, "This is a classic example of the predatory approach of the government towards the very people who pay their taxes and their bills – it is them that this Government wants to skin to the benefit of the power thieves in Delhi who must not be touched for fear of electoral reprisals".

Only 20% of those surveyed expressed satisfaction with the Government's performance, while the largest majority of 37% rated the Delhi government's performance on the power issue as Bad or Okay [35%] However, 82% of those surveyed returned a verdict of Opposed to the issue of a power hike.

Castigating the idea of privatization as a means of correcting the inequities in the power sector financials, Sanjayah Kaul said that "**Privatisation has only created comfortable monopolies for private players who are bent on juicing the middle classes and it is clear that they have tacit approval from the CM's office on this modus operandi.**" What Delhi needs in the power sector is competition, not privatization that is designed to suit the pockets of some chosen companies, he added.

People's Action has called upon all independent RWAs to exhibit their collective strength and to not agree to the hike in power tariff until the Government attends to the issue of uninterrupted power, factual billing, and the other critical issues. Kaul has reminded the people that it is their money that is being used by the Government to engage in the development of the city and it is they who should call the shots. "If the people of Delhi say they don't want to pay more for power, that is the way it will be," he said, exhorting all RWAs to form a collective that is strong enough

to both represent the middle class voice as well as take on the Government when it works against them.

About TCP Media Pvt. Ltd.: TCP media is a publishing and communications company with interests in publishing, wire services and internet communications. TCP media publishes The Campus Paper, a tabloid for the youth that is distributed to the student community all over Delhi and the NCR. Ajay Jain is CEO TCP Media Pvt. Ltd.

Press Release

People's Action launches community newspaper in Gurgaon.
20,000 copies will network residents of the city in their quest for model governance.

Gurgaon, 15th May, 2004: People's Action has today released its official newspaper called **The Constituency** for distribution to residents in Gurgaon. The newspaper will be in tabloid format and will contain reports of activities covered by the group in conjunction with RWAs in Gurgaon on a monthly basis. The first issue has a selection of reports ranging from an analysis of the GRP's impact in the area, news items about the residents intervention in the Panchayat Elections; articles on local issues in HUDA and press releases issued by People's Action from time to time.

Separate columns are being developed as a forum for RWAs to exchange views and debate and discuss issues of common concern. **The Constituency** is an extension of our fundamental premise that civic action is the best way to ensure good governance and this newspaper is our way of communicating and interacting with residents of Gurgaon", says Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action while launching the newspaper.

The Constituency will begin with a 4-page format and add pages as it goes along. The newspaper is being produced under contract by Vertex Medianet, a publishing house based in Delhi owned by Ajay Jain, a resident of Gurgaon and will be published every month. 20,000 copies of the newspaper are being distributed for the first issue.

The newspaper will be led by an Editorial Board which currently includes Sanjay Kaul, Ajay Jain, and Bhawani Shankar. "Since Gurgaon is home to many high-profile journalists, we hope to take them on board as we go along," says Ajay Jain.

The Constituency will be made available to residents complimentary with a request for support to the initiative by adding Rs 2 to their monthly paper bill.

Bhawani Shankar, who is coordinating news for the venture is upbeat on the launch. "**The Constituency** will become the voice of Gurgaonites – it will cover the issues and concerns of the residents which tend to get overlooked by mainstream media. It will exhibit a stubborn resolve to continue highlighting issues even when they are deemed to have gone out of 'fashion' by mainstream media", he said.

Press Release

People's Action asks EC to re-look at Electoral Rolls management; seeks regulation for Primaries style selection of candidates.

New Delhi, 9th May 2005: People's Action has petitioned the outgoing CEC for an overhaul of the system of electoral roll management suggesting far reaching improvements in an archaic system of updation and maintenance.

In a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner T.K. Krishna Murthy, Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action has specifically asked for a total revamp of the current practices of electoral roll maintenance and proposed key improvements in all sectors of this system. Among the more critical, he has asked for the provision of providing for the voter applicant's phone numbers in the Form-6, a feature that has been absent even though the Form-6 was designed long after Edison discovered the telephone instrument, he suggested.

In a scathing indictment of the lackadaisical attitude of the commission with regard to internal processes, Kaul said that we are so busy congratulating ourselves for being the biggest democracy in the world that we often forget that being the greatest is the ideal, not the biggest!

The EC has become so much of a holy cow that suggesting any improvements in its outdated functioning is almost considered unpardonable. And now with the EVM's it has become all the more difficult to suggest that there could be scope for any improvement, he said.

Kaul has proposed that the EC should immediately make the feature of organizing primaries style internal elections for selection of candidates mandatory for all parties, on the lines of the experiment that was successfully carried out in Gurgaon through the Gurgaon Residents Party.

People's Action has repeatedly petitioned the EC over the last few years on issues that could critically improve the democratization of the electoral process but has found the EC more inclined to discuss obscure concepts like a None-of-the-Above feature in EVM's when in fact that feature proves nothing that we do not already know.

Kaul has also found it curious that the Commission finds time to discuss ideas like Proportional Representation when the existing electoral process is so seriously biased against every person of integrity. "What the Commission has not been able to solve, it wants to brush over with NGO-assigned activism in other areas," he said. Pointing out that the existence of NGO's in Electoral Reformation is a direct indictment of the EC's shortcomings, Kaul has suggested the EC puts its own house in order before stepping into uncharted territory.

“We are hopeful that the Election Commission will now turn to issues that are critically enjoined with finer electoral practices and we look forward to a more intrinsic reform process so that more and more people join the political process and we can at least stay true to the dubious sobriquet of being biggest democracy in the world, if not the greatest”, he concluded.

Press Release

People's Action demands Regulatory Authority for development in Gurgaon.

Seeks active roles of citizens in the body through Public Consultation.

Gurgaon, 6th May 2005: People's Action has today issued a demand for the creation of a regulatory mechanism to govern the unprecedented developmental activity in and around Gurgaon with the caveat that residents must be consulted in all stages of planning for the future

Commenting on the grave situation that is faced by a city which has a serious mismatch of infrastructure with actual demands, Shashi Sharma, Convenor People's Action said, "Common wisdom dictates that the life span of any city and the quality of life its residents enjoy will be determined solely by how well integrated its development is. Going by those yardsticks the developers of Gurgaon have failed its residents."

Dr. Anurag Sharma, a resident of Gurgaon for over a decade and a member of the Working Group on Planning being formed by People's Action, added that this includes both the Government and private builders. Dr. Sharma emphasised the sorry spectacle of sewage flowing into and accumulating in vacant plots, diesel generators spewing black smoke at all near 'world class' commercial buildings (most of them without HSEB power load sanctions for their existing needs), inadequate water supply sources and ground water levels plunging by meters, roads that can't take the traffic load anymore although population density is just about 30-40% of what is projected. "The 'Millennium City' dream is turning into a nightmare", he said.

People's Action has brought attention to moves in the NCT Delhi which is involving expert groups for framing contemporaneous building bye-laws and regulations to control real estate development, developers and other service providers who are engaged in providing any type of real estate services.

Referring to this initiative, Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action said "The reported initiative regarding establishment of Norms relating to qualifications/competencies registration of all service providers with a regulatory body in Delhi is welcome news."

"These are all positive indicators but more than Delhi where most of development is more or less *post facto* now, Gurgaon with its potential development plans needs it more than Delhi and needs it more urgently than any other city in India", he said."

Reportedly, the plan for Delhi envisages the involvement of a rating agency so that it can also classify all service providers based on their competencies, track record, and other resources which will be used by the public for identifying best prospects.

Concerned that the recent plans to create a Gurgaon Development Authority may just herald the birth of a demon like the DDA, Shashi Sharma warned that any system that does not allocate for active people's participation and is not transparent, is bound to become a den of corruption. "The government has to first discuss the plan with us before giving us an agency that compounds matters," he concluded.

People's Action has initiated a Working Group on Planning for Gurgaon with a view to address the issues of development in Gurgaon. The group expects to be formalised in the next week and will immediately seek an urgent hearing with the Chief minister and the DTCP in Chandigarh.

People's Action calls meeting of Security Agencies, Developers and IG Police on Saturday 30th April to discuss security situation in the city.

Press Release

Gurgaon, 26th April 2005: People's Action has organized a meeting of Gurgaon based private security agencies along with senior officials of prominent colonizers and the Police department to discuss the serious lapses in security that are now showing up through an unrelenting spate of robberies, thefts and other crimes in the city.

In an agenda drawn up for the occasion, the meeting is expected to address issues relating to the security environment in

IG Police Ms. Deepa Mehta has confirmed her participation. DC Gurgaon and District Fire Officer are also being invited to evolve a composite security plan for Gurgaon.

Participants to the meeting will include members of security agencies in Gurgaon, security officials of prominent private developers, select RWAs, apart from the administration and the Police representatives.

Panelists will include the IG Police, the Chief of APSA, the security agencies association in Gurgaon, members of the Security Professionals Group led by Maj. Gen Satbir Singh, and People's Action coordinators.

The meeting will be held at the Gymkhana Club, Sector 29 at 10.a.m.

Earlier last week, People's Action had made a representation to the IG Police and proposed Police Command over Security Agencies to press for a Regulator role for Police.

At a meeting convened to discuss the serious security lapses in Gurgaon over the last few months, the Security Professionals Group (SPG) that was set-up by People's it was decided to press for Police command over all security agencies in the area irrespective of the colony, colonizer or the commercial relationship between the two. "Security is a state subject and no administration can possibly excuse itself from this responsibility irrespective of the conditions of any case", said Shashi Sharma, Convenor, People's Action.

It may be noted that according to norms, every 450 resident are supposed to get one Police Constable and for every 10 constables, one Head Costable. By the norms provided, Gurgaon with a population of 17 lacs should have had 3777 constables, 378 Head Constables, 76 ASI's and 38 SI's. In reality all of Gurgaon district has a *total* force of 1700 which includes about 200 temporary constables.

Pointing out the huge deficit in numbers and the quality of policing, Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action said, " If we are serious about making Gurgaon crime-free, we have to start with the most fundamental issue of ID cards - everything else is superficial ". It is expected that the DC's office will also intervene to allow for an integrated plan for improving security in Gurgaon.

Press Release

7th March 2005

At a meeting held on the 6th March at the Sector 23 Community Centre, which was attended by close to 30 members of the newly formed Gurgaon Residents Party, the party deliberated on the results of the assembly elections and matters related to the causes. Booth wise break up of voting patterns was analysed and a comprehensive note is being developed to illustrate the performance of the fledgling outfit in the recent elections. The accounts were tabled for audit. Since the interim President Shri Inder Nath has resigned, the meeting authorized the General Secretary Col. Ratan Singh to convene future meetings and make appropriate arrangements for the holding of elections for the Executive Committee of the GRP.

The meeting strongly objected to and condemned the reported comments of the interim President (who has since resigned from the post) on the basis that it does not become the business of a person conducting elections to express a personal preference for any candidate. This remark is seen as an affront to the entire process of selection of candidate, which has been received by the entire community including the national media as a transparent and fair process and celebrated as an example for other political parties to follow.

The view of the gathering by consensus was that the reported statements of the interim president were an insult to the decision of the members of the House who voted on the day, and whose decision is final and above reproach. *“No individual has the right to dictate to the House who should be their choice of candidate after a democratic process has been instituted and carried out,”* said Major General Satbir Singh a founder member of GRP.

The reported remarks of another candidate are also seen to be an affront to truth since that very candidate rose to seek consensus for the candidate who had secured the maximum votes, as was witnessed by the entire media present on the occasion.

At the behest of Executive Member Ajay Jain, it was decided to appoint Col. Ratan Singh also as the sole spokesperson for the GRP until a new formation is in place.

Press Release

Election results throw up surprising facts about GRP performance in Gurgaon assembly elections

Gurgaon, 1st March, 2005: An analysis of the election results in Gurgaon have thrown up interesting facts about the pioneering effort by the GRP to field a candidate on the twin objectives of clean politics and good governance. The facts speak for themselves and conclusively prove the original thesis presented by People's Action: that the educated middle class will come out to vote if a viable option exists.

The middle class participation in Gurgaon in this year's election was a five time increase at the minimum over the last assembly elections: in the year 2000 most of the new settlers did not vote at all. The 30% average voting from these target publics this year is a grand increase over the middleclass involvement in elections in the year 2000.

More emphatically, in the primary areas of its influence, the GRP has captured 45 to 49% of the total vote. In secondary areas of influence or where there was a mixed profile of middle class and the villages such as Chauma-Palam Vihar, or pockets of the HUDA sectors, the GRP cornered a 25% vote, ahead of the BJP and INLD.

Stunningly, in spite of such a pro-Congress wave, the GRP actually defeated the Congress in 17 booths in the constituency, and took second place in 10 others. It is notable that the BJP, a national party could not defeat the Congress in any booth in the constituency.

The vote share of the GRP in the elections is just over 4% - a remarkable achievement for a party that was one month old on election day.

The proof of concept established, People's Action will continue to support this and other efforts to create a platform for alternative politics wherever such ideas need incubation.

Key facts of the Assembly 2005 Elections in relation to the GRP:

1. The GRP candidate secured 5839 votes, and came fourth after the Congress, INLD, and BJP. The BJP polled 15879, the INLD 35465 and the Congress candidate 76319 votes.
2. The GRP has swept all the areas of its primary influence, viz; the new colonies that come under the DLF, Sushant Lok areas. It has secured 45% of the total votes cast in DLF and 49% of the votes cast in Sushant Lok beating the Congress and all other parties in these areas even in the face of such a pro-Congress wave.

3. It has come second in the entire Palam Vihar -Chauma belt with 25% of the total vote beating the BJP and INLD to third and fourth place.
4. Over all, the GRP candidate has led in 17 Booths of the 234 total booths in the constituency and was in second place in 10 booths. Notably, the BJP did not lead in any booth.
5. The overall vote tally puts over 4% of the total vote to GRP – not a small achievement for a party that was 30-days old on election day.
6. The overall low voter turnout has dented the GRP tally.
7. However, the nature of support in its primary support areas has proved the workability of the concept and its practicality in Indian political mainstream.
8. The GRP vote was a positive vote for the idea and not an anti-incumbency vote such as what the Congress landslide victory is attributed to.
9. This proves the inherent purity of the idea of clean politics and underlines our original thesis – that the educated middle class supports the GRP and will come out to vote if the option of clean politics is available.
10. The concept has a tremendous future and needs to be taken forward immediately.

Press Release

People's Action will support a new political outfit in Delhi.

New Delhi, 23rd February 2005: People's Action has today extended open support through all means possible to any group or groups that want to establish a new political outfit in Delhi. At an informal meeting with select RWAs in Delhi today, President People's Action, Sanjay Kaul said, "We have seen the potential of an organized group of RWAs in Gurgaon and we are willing to share this experience to set up another entity for Delhi for whosoever may wish to be part of this effort".

Elaborating on the basis for extending the same idea to Delhi, he said that "There should be fundamental reasons for setting up a political party and it requires a slow but steady process of consultation and cooperation with all stakeholders in such an undertaking and not only RWAs. We have seen that movements can get damaged if they are begun from a point of vested interest or for deriving political mileage. It is therefore critical that any formation is begun with the right set of parameters and the best interests of the people at large or it will end up like a clone of the existing political parties"

Kaul stressed that "this is the only way we can get the treatment we deserve as educated, middle classes who contribute to this city's coffers and due to whose money this city runs. Residents have realized that their interests are served only by somebody who understands their issues, belongs to their socio-economic set and speaks their language," he said.

People's Action has invited applications from people aspiring to stand for elections in the council elections slated for the next year end. "The only criteria is that they must be clean, educated and hard workers," said Kaul. People's Action has asked aspiring candidates to route their applications through RWAs in their areas.

People's Action had facilitated the creation of the Gurgaon Residents Party or GRP, to establish principles of clean politics and good governance and were able to field a candidate from among the residents for the assembly elections.

The response to the pioneering creation of a new political outfit has been path breaking and has created a platform for right-minded, clean, decent people to enter politics. "After all," he argued, " who does not want a party of clean individuals, that offers clean leadership and that focuses only on issues of governance."

In the meantime, people's Action has planned a series of meetings and conventions from March onwards for RWAs, and other organizations in Delhi.

Press Release

Shiv Khera extends support to Col. Ratan Singh. Urges voters to defeat corrupt politicians. Says Gurgaon has a chance to start a new trend.

Gurgaon, 27th January: Speaking at the invitation of People's Action in Gurgaon, Shiv Khera today held an audience of over 500 residents from all over Gurgaon spell bound with his oratory and motivational talk.

Introducing Shiv Khera to the audience, Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action said that Shiv Khera called them after reading about the formation of this residents party because he felt that this was the only way to cleanse public life of the corruption that we see today. "Since then, Shiv Khera has been in constant touch with us and today's programme is his dedication to the cause of clean politics and good governance," Kaul added.

Col. Ratan Singh, GRP candidate for the assembly elections in Gurgaon thanked Shiv for the grand gesture and promised to uphold the values of clean politics.

Shiv Khera spoke for almost one and a half hour and exhorted residents to realise that the time for change is here and now and that money power in politics had corrupted the nation and it must be brought to a halt. Aiming directly at political parties that directly support criminals and corrupt candidates, Shiv Khera said that these people were the nation's worst enemies and must be weeded out from the political system. He said that Gurgaon can start this new trend if it votes en masse for the GRP candidate Col. Ratan Singh.

Heaping praise at the resident's initiative, Shiv Khera demanded that it has become the duty of every Gurgaon resident who upholds truth and honesty in public life to come out and vote for Col. Ratan Singh on the day of voting.

Shiv Khera ended by asking each of the members of the audience to directly call up each number in their personal diaries and ask them to do the same in the fashion of multi-level-marketing or the MLM technique of marketing.
