

People's Action + URJA Survey results : 84% RWAs say they have a 'good' candidate in mind for the coming MCD elections.

- *Councillors fare poorly – 65% say they are corrupt. MLAs fare better. Discoms get panned. Mall lobby theory gains ground. Only 10% rate Delhi Government's performance in the last year as above average.*

New Delhi, 25th Dec. 2006 : People's Action in association with United Residents Joint Action [URJA] the largest confederation of independent RWAs in Delhi, are conducting a survey of RWAs' opinions on various issues related to governance in Delhi. The survey is being conducted among the 500 RWAs that are part of the URJA network on a voluntary basis. The RWAs are spread across the 134 wards of the city. The first results from 30 wards, although along expected lines, indicate the extent of people's disappointment with their elected representatives and the government in relation to absolute performance as well as in the context of the sealings, electricity and other related issues.

Asked if they had a person in mind who was honest, educated, dependable and sincere who could be a good candidate for the coming councilor elections, 84% replied in the affirmative. "While we see this as a sign of a growing disenchantment of residents with the local Councillor, we also see this as a sign of their willingness to engage at this level if a good candidate is available. We are taking a cue from this to organise ourselves for the next level," said Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action.

On the question of whether their councillors were considered honest or corrupt within their localities, over 67% termed them corrupt. On the question of the performance of the Councillors over the past five years, 41% said poor or very poor, 41% said average and 17% were satisfied enough to rate it as excellent. MLAs secured better marks on performance with only 39% rating them as poor or very poor.

Interestingly some respondent RWAs skipped the Honest or Corrupt question for fear of retribution, it would seem, although the results were always going to be kept confidential. "Many RWAs asked us why they had to answer such an uncomfortable question," said Atul Goyal, URJA Coordinator of West Delhi. "However, we put two and two together when people who skipped the question on whether their councillors were considered honest or corrupt also gave them poor or very poor when they were asked to rate their overall performance in the last five years", added Goyal.

On the performance of the Delhi Government in the last one year in the context of power, water, security and civic amenities, 46% of the RWAs voted it to be average, another 43% rated it poor or very poor while 10% found it to be excellent.

DISCOMS came in for blanket disapproval with 89% of RWAs agreeing to the statement that DISCOMS are taking unfair advantage of consumers and making huge profits. Curiously

74% of the RWAs who responded to the survey supported the Traders' contention that the Mall lobby was behind the recent sealings and demolitions. 81% also agreed to the fact that the Government failed to create enough commercial space for their needs in Delhi.

“The survey will continue for the next few weeks and involve more RWAs and Market Associations through phone surveys as well as email,” said Varinder Arora of the group.

Press Release

People's Action proposes voluntary demolitions: Trader Associations and RWAs agree; want assurance of equally strict punishment to MCD officials as a pre-condition.

New Delhi, 23rd, Dec 2006: Trader Associations of New Delhi along with RWAs have today agreed to consider voluntary demolitions as a possible solution to the problem of illegal constructions but won't start negotiations with their groups until assured that the MCD officials are also punished punitively.

Speaking at a press meet organised by People's Action, Atul Bhargava, President New Delhi Traders Association [NDTA] along with Praveen Khandelwal, National Gen. Secretary of the Confederation of All India Traders [CAIT] and Promod Chawla, Convenor of United Residents Joint Action [URJA], the all-Delhi RWA collective, made a combined statement offering to convince their groups to accept voluntary demolitions.

“However, if I convince a member to voluntarily demolish a third floor today, and six months down the line, his neighbour gets away with the same due to collusion with MCD officials, we will have no face left to show”, said Praveen Khandelwal. “The Government has to provide us credible proof that guilty officials will be given exemplary punishment, otherwise nobody will accept our proposal.”

Promod Chawla of URJA said, “Residents whose properties have been marked for demolitions can be convinced to opt for voluntary demolitions but not until there is enough faith in the government's ability to ensure visible punishment for MCD officials”.

Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action has presented a draft which outlines the fundamental reasons for illegal constructions and suggested that the MCD's ability to seal and demolish has incongruously given rise to corruption. It has been proposed by the group that the MCD's powers should be clipped and a separate body created to seal and demolish that could be put under the direct command of the Lt. Governor.

“The MCD de-fanged will be the MCD reformed,” he said. “It is the power to punish that makes the MCD official important enough to bribe. Take away that power, and you take away the Tiger's teeth. You do that and the Tiger will perform as he is supposed to”, he said.

Kaul also argued that the rate at which the MCD was organising demolitions will require over a year to finish the 18000 demolitions listed. “But if 18000 owners of such illegal constructions can be convinced to voluntarily demolish their structures, the job can be finished within 10 days”, he said. “Depending of course on whether the MCD is really serious about finishing the job,” he added.

Atul Bhargava and Manoj Agarwal of the NDTA also supported the principle of ensuring exemplary punishment to MCD officials as the starting point for future corrections. “In spite of our offer, we can assure you that nobody in Delhi believes that the buildings being sealed or broken will not be operational within a short span of time. Unless this confidence is provided to people, the demolitions will be seen as just another drive,” they warned.

The meeting was also attended by various RWAs members from around Delhi.

Civil society groups get together for the city: New Delhi People's Alliance [NDPA] forged. A citizenry's response to irresponsible policies, say group members.

- *NGOs, RWAs, Market Associations, Trade Unions, advocacy groups, activists to collaborate towards a better city, people-friendly policies and good governance.*

Press Release

New Delhi, 21st December 2006: In a far reaching development, various Delhi based civil society groups have forged an alliance that will work as a pressure group to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all sections of society in the city while directing the energies of the state towards creating a better city.

“Pursuant to the resolutions passed at the All- Delhi RWA Convention of July 14th this year, we were mandated to create a larger body of civil society groups on the lines of URJA, the all-Delhi RWAs network of over 500 RWAs across the city. Members felt that the success of federating RWAs should be extended to various groups all over the city so that we can work in a coordinated fashion for the city and its residents,” said Sanjay Kaul, President, People’s Action who was entrusted with the responsibility of creating such a group.

“NDPA is a collective response of a responsible section of the citizenry that is working in one way or the other to improve some aspect of life in the city. It makes sense to not only network with these groups but to mesh with each other in achieving common objectives”, said Bejon Misra of VOICE, a consumer rights group and one of the earliest signatories.

“The important point is that while Delhi is under the shadow of the contentious issue of sealings, we have been able to bring together opposing ends of the spectrum – consequently while RWAs are members of NDPA, so are trader organisations; while rights activists are visible on the panel, so are city planners who demand a better planned city,” said Bibhu Mahapatra of ADR, an eminent group working on electoral reforms.

“This city is not the preserve of any one section of society and is home to people of many different strata. Whether rich or poor, advantaged or disadvantaged, each has a right to a decent quality of life. We are seeing this association as an amalgamation of our common aspirations to see justice and equity for all reflected in the policies of the elected governments,” said Madhu Kishwar of Manushi, a prominent group women’s rights group in Delhi and one that has worked hard for hawkers’ rights.

“It is laudatory that this alliance has come through at such a key moment in the life of our city when a large portion of its population is caught in the sealings. It is particularly heartening that we can now evaluate our strategies collectively with due appreciation of each others’ needs and aspirations,” said Kulbhushan Ahuja of Karol Bagh Traders Federation

Signatories to NDPA include Centre for Civil Society, Association for Democratic Reforms, New Delhi Trader Association, URJA, United Students, Institutes of Professional Education of Delhi, IIT Kharagpur Alumni Association [Delhi Chapter], Ridge Bachao Andolan, Movement for Restoration for Good Governance, Delhi Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Centre for Media Studies,

Nyayabhoomi, Janadesh, apart from People's Action and other well known activist groups.

NDPA is currently being coordinated by Alpana Kishore, an associate member of People's Action, who said that the process of signing up more such groups is continuing. "We are expanding this group literally on a daily basis and visualise this to be the largest civil society grouping of its kind in India, but with a focus on establishing good governance principles in the Capital – hence the name, New Delhi People's Alliance," she said.

Press Release

RWAs demand termination of DISCOM contracts: conditions created by private companies intolerable: Government acting as their proxy, say residents.

New Delhi, 8th December: Members of over 20 RWAs collected together in busy Connaught Place today to protest the latest in a series of implausible, anti-people policies of the government at the centre and the state level in connivance with private DISCOMS.

“This is yet another assault on the right of citizens to a decent life in a city – now an honest man will suffer power cuts simply because his house is in an area which is surrounded by villages where illegal factories run or where wires are tapped,” said Raj Kishore Dimri of Mayur Vihar Phase III RWA. Mayur Vihar is listed as one of the areas where losses are over 50% and on the hit list of the Government and DISCOMS.

“Everybody knows that there can be no theft without the connivance of the political representative and the DISCOM employees. Why punish an honest man ?,” asked Maya Gada of Karol Bagh RWA decrying the reign of terror spread by DISCOMS in Delhi.

Highly agitated by the new recommendations, residents raised slogans against the Delhi Government, the DISCOMS and the CM. Brandishing placards that had a picture of the CM with the designation, “CEO, BSES” on it, RWA members spoke agitatedly about the suspected involvement of the CM’s office in the deals signed with private power companies. “ There is complete consensus on the failure of the private power companies and all we want now is that their agreements are scrapped and their contracts terminated”, said R.L Dua of Rajendra Nagar RWA on behalf of all gathered.

Residents have complained time and again that the CM and the Minister of Power have advocated the side of the DISCOMS. “The truth is that the DISCOMS are running a racket that involves the rampant use of musclemen to intimidate consumers, and extorting thousands by way of unjustified charges on a daily basis. Where is the record of the meters they have collected after replacement? What have they done with these working meters? Is it reflected in the balance sheet? ”, said Colonel Malhotra of Prasad Nagar.

Sanjay Kaul, President of People’s Action said, “The CM must not come across as the CEO of BSES”.

Reacting to the statements of the DERC recently that Rs. 1000 crores had been saved due to reduction in losses, K.K. Datta of Raja Park asked, “ If the recovery is confirmed, profits have gone up. Why haven’t the tariffs come down then? ”

“The CM’s plea to get the DISCOMS off the power purchase hook has not gone unnoticed by us. There is more to this relationship than meets the eye. We are going to insist on an investigation into the entire DVB privatisation deal”, said Atul Goyal, URJA Coordinator for West Delhi.

Press Release

Gurgaon RWAs reject power hike: we already pay the highest rates for power, say residents. Power cuts should stop, no question of any tariff increase, say group members.

Gurgaon, 6th December, 2006: Gurgaon residents have reacted with surprise at the attempt to raise power tariff in the city in the middle of severe power cuts and incessant faults in distribution for the last many months.

“How can we be expected to pay more for less; pay higher for poorer quality of supply,” said Shashi Sharma, Convenor of People’s Action in Gurgaon.

Sudhir Kapoor, Secretary General of DLF RWA, the largest area under development in Gurgaon expressed similar sentiments. “We already pay the highest rates for power in the country. And even though members of our colonies may be able to pay the extra charge, in the context of the incessant power cuts in our areas, the DHVBN has no moral right to even expect an increase of one naya paisa”.

Col. Ratan Singh, Chief Patron and Chairman of JAFRA, a federation of RWAs of Gurgaon has taken the view that any increase at this time will only create a sharp reaction among residents. Maj. Gen. Satbir Singh, also of JAFRA, has threatened public protests to reject this increase. ‘It is not the question of this many paisa or that. When a city cannot provide uninterrupted supply of electricity, how can it increase tariff. This is a monopoly arm twisting residents”.

Residents of Gurgaon have been facing interminable power cuts for the last four months without explanation. “That the situation in June was better in November is not explainable by any accounts,” said Kishore Asthana of Sushant Lok D-Block RWA. Gurgaon civil society groups have petitioned time and again for a Gurgaon centric Planning Board while according the city a Special Status so that lacuna in infrastructure could be addressed in a focussed manner.

People’s Action had also argued for allowing a competitor in the electricity generation and distribution sector so that the quality of generation and supply improves.

Sanjay Kaul, President, People’s Action said, “The only solution to the sector’s problems is open access where consumers have the option of buying their power from a, b or c supplier. Without that, as we have seen in Delhi, there will only be corruption of systems and compromising of consumer rights. To expect people to pay more against poor supply will be self-defeating and unsustainable”.

Press Release

RWAs up in arms at Power Secretary's statements; further attempt to penalise the honest consumer, say group members. Protest plans being finalised.

New Delhi, 6th December, 2006: In what is seen by residents as yet another attempt to punish the honest, RWAs have today reacted with outrage at the stated intention of the DISCOMS to cut power in areas that have higher theft indices.

“That an honest man in an area where the local DISCOM has not been able to carry out its required mandate will pay for the inefficiency of the DISCOM is atrocious and unacceptable. It is downright insulting to the majority of Delhi residents, and simply a product of a devious mind,” said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action. “What is shocking is that this suggestion has got enough support from the CM's office to be even considered in the public domain,” he added.

RWAs by and large, and specifically those mentioned in media reports as targets, are livid. “Who has assigned Mr R.V. Shahi the right to dispense tribal justice ?”, asked Rajiv Jain of Vasant Kunj RWA, one of the colonies reportedly expected to be subjected to such cuts. “Is it not enough that the Delhi Power Secretary has made no bones about the fact that the current tariff plan already encapsulates a theft charge that is recovered from honest consumers to pay for dishonest ones,” he asked.

Sanjay Kaul said, “This suggestion is hare-brained and cannot withstand the scrutiny of any basic law of natural justice. If Mr. Shahi has indeed made these comments, I am afraid the power sector is not in safe hands”.

Delhi's largest RWA collective, United Residents Joint Action [URJA] has called an urgent meeting of its zonal representatives today to discuss plans for opposing this proposal. “The DISCOMS won lucrative contracts on the basis that they would reduce power losses. That they have not been able to do is a telling indication of their inefficiency and failure to match up to agreement. That should be reason to terminate their contracts, not inflict punishment on honest consumers, said Rajesh Dokwal, URJA coordinator for East Delhi.

“We will consider every action possible to thwart this proposal if it comes even close to being practised. The corrupt regime of DISCOMS supported by the Delhi Government cannot be allowed to bully people in this manner,” said Atul Goyal, URJA West Delhi coordinator.

Press Release

People's Action demands a Public Interest Audit of MCD: it's time to nail the "Most Corrupt Department" for its role in creating the sealing and demolitions mess, say RWAs

New Delhi, 9th Nov.: People's Action has today demanded a public interest audit of the working of the MCD and its role in creating the current sealings and demolitions situation which has not only pitted resident against resident, but also rendered thousands out of jobs.

"Now that the matter of principle is settled and the SC's orders are being implemented, we need to pay all our attention to the prime suspect in the entire episode – the MCD. We are therefore demanding a scientific study of how the MCD through its employees created a situation where 45000 odd structures were *prima facie* found to be in breach of established laws. We are asking for a Public Interest Audit of the MCD for the last five years at the very least," said Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action, an advocacy group that represents over 500 RWAs of Delhi through the URJA network.

RWAs have all along maintained that without equal or commensurate punishment for MCD employee, the entire sealings issue would turn into a farce and that is what is being felt by most people. "Had we not been distracted by the constant back and forth between the government and the courts, we would have petitioned for the most stringent punishment for MCD employees wherever violations have occurred," said Atul Goyal, member Karol Bagh RWA and coordinator of URJA for West Delhi.

RWA Federations of South Delhi have also demanded that if no action was taken against corresponding MCD officials in whose domain violations were detected, the entire exercise would fail. "People will never take the verdict as fair if those who facilitated such violations while being in power to stop them are not penalised," said Wing Commander J.S. Chadda of the East of Kailash Federation of RWAs.

Commenting on how the audit will be carried out, Sanjay Kaul said, "Public interest auditing, like public interest litigation is a powerful tool for social action. Like a listed company is answerable to its shareholders, a public utility is accountable to the community. We pay for the MCD to run. The employees of the MCD are our employees. But this audit is not merely about number crunching, but addresses issues of transparency, systemic efficiency, corruption, legality and probity in the context of a community."

Confirming that he was in talks with leading audit firms to explore their involvement in the plan, Kaul said, "We know that large audit companies have international mandate for corporate social responsibility and this audit must rank as the single most important act of corporate social responsibility as it affects the quality of lives of a crore plus citizens. I am confident that we can inspire leading firms to take up this task."

Speaking on the specifics of the need for such an audit, he said, “We want to know if the MCD spent our money properly. We want to know if they misused our money. Above all, we want to know how many building plans were passed, how many were within legal limits, how many were allowed to be built in contravention of by-laws, which areas were these, who was the JE and the other officers in these areas. We want their names and we want them prosecuted,” adding that trader organisations would do better to turn their ire against this real culprit instead of downing shutters and hurting their own businesses.

Press Release

Constitutional amendment another red herring: Only way out is to constitute an Expert Committee, says group.

New Delhi, 6th Nov.: People's Action has warned Trader associations that the talk of a constitutional amendment will also yield nothing for aggrieved shopkeepers and that the talk is suspect in view of the SC's directions today.

“To expect any action of the sort demanded by traders on the lines of a constitutional amendment after today's directions by the court would seem to us to not only be the proverbial clutching at straws but also a disguised attempt to distract from the gravity of the moment,” said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action an advocacy group that represents RWAs of Delhi under the umbrella network of URJA as well as a Delhi University and student's body called United Students.

“The statements of the CJI need to be viewed in perspective and the eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation that is being precipitated so frequently between the judiciary and the executive gives us to believe that the suggestions of a constitutional amendment are not only misplaced, they are also mistimed,” added Kaul.

“Our collaboration with various RWA groups and trader associations in the context of today's directions of the SC only confirms our stated position on the sealings and demolitions issue: without an Expert Committee to recommend a professional solution to the issue of planning in Delhi, nothing is ever going to work,” said Ashok Prabhakar, Gen. Secretary of the Malviya Nagar Federation of RWAs.

RWAs from other parts of the city echoed similar feelings. “We urge our trader brothers to suspend the line of anarchic activism and take up our offer to work together towards a lasting, practical and profitable solution for all,” said Tapan Sur of the CR Park RWA.

RWAs networked with URJA as well as NGOs and activists of Delhi had earlier petitioned the CJI to constitute an empowered committee that would have on panel international experts, professional planners, stakeholders who would present a practical, time bound plan for the reorganisation of the city.

“Today, more than ever before, our suggestion for trader groups and RWAs to work together for the common objective of a better city is finding support,” said Sanjay Kaul. “We are going to once again make a strong pitch for a common initiative to realigning our city's planning with the aspirations of its population,” he added.

Press Release

RWAs welcome SC verdict: attempt to thwart the sanctity of law by Delhi Government, Centre resented. Bankruptcy of ideas, politics of profit, say group members.

New Delhi, 6th Nov.: RWAs across Delhi reacted with relief at the upholding of the verdict against sealing not necessarily because they agree with the proposal of uprooting traders but because it protects the sanctity of law. “Our city has gone through two crises in this one issue: whereas the issue of sealings and demolitions has torn us asunder as residents of the same city, the recent events involving city-wide disturbances had pitted the judiciary against the combined might of political groups, the state and the centre”, said Sanjay Kaul, President, People’s Action, an advocacy group that represents RWAs of Delhi.

Coming down heavily on the centre and the state government for their pusillanimous response to the three day strikes, RWAs said that the coordinated plan between the two to pressurise the Courts was so obvious, it was bound to fail to appeal to the SC.

“The GoM has to explain what its role has been thus far except telling us that the might of the Indian state was not good enough to execute the orders of the apex court of India”, said Rakesh Dokwal, URJA coordinator for East Delhi.

RWAs were particularly peeved at the manner in which political party cadres extended the strikes and inconvenienced lakhs of Delhi residents under the garb of a trader’s strike.

“We continue to maintain that traders are members of RWAs in most colonies and as such their difficulties are an issue of concern for us as well. However, the way around it is to create conditions for them to be relocated with dignity and profit before they are subjected to painful dislocations, not that the CM, the MoUD and the entire administrative machinery joins the chorus to defeat the SC order in one way or the other”, said Kaul.

Wing Commander Chadda, Gen. Secretary of the East of Kailash Federation of RWAs said, “This has been going on for the last 11 months and if the Government of Delhi and the Centre have no idea of how to solve this issue they should simply resign. The events of the last one year are a blot on the collective quality of governance in Delhi and the centre stands to explain why it fell in with the machinations of the state government whose intentions were always suspect faced as it was with the MCD elections in February.”

“It is particularly sad that a Government headed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and a GoM headed by the Home Minister acquitted themselves so poorly on an issue of constitutional propriety. It will be remembered that the Govt. of India and the Govt of Delhi colluded to dismantle a court’s direction simply for political profit and exhibited the greatest bankruptcy of ideas to resolve a problem seen in recent times”, said V.N. Bali, of Ram Vihar RWA.

Press Release

RWAs condemn violence during bandh – it was political, pre-planned in detail, say residents. Designed to pressurize the Monitoring committee and SC, claim group members.

- Only a combined planning proposal that meets everyone's approval will work, proposes group.

New Delhi, 2nd November: **Resident Welfare Associations (RWA's) in the capital have expressed deep concern at the manner in which the three day traders' bandh was handled by the Delhi Government and the Police.**

“That the entire city of Delhi was held to ransom during the three day *bandh*, which affected school going children, and adults who had to bear with interminable traffic jams speaks volumes about the intentions, and the capacity of the administration and the government of Delhi,” said Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action. “This sort of response is designed to let the protest slip into the hands of anarchists, so that vested political objectives can be achieved,” he added.

Most RWAs across the city reported deep disappointment in the way the CM has handled the situation. Many suspected that there was a tacit understanding between trader groups and political groups, in many cases, led by local councillors who are concerned about their electoral prospects in the coming elections for MCD.

RWA's have condemned the violence roundly. " A few thousand traders in league with political parties cannot hold the city to ransom. The worst thing is that it looks like the Sheila Dikshit government and the opposition is supporting such an agitation" said Ashok Prabhakar of Malviya Nagar RWA Federation. Some RWA's including Ram Vihar, Mayur Vihar II, Dilshad Garden, Vishwas Nagar and Priya Enclave have already written a strong letter to Supreme court monitoring committee against succumbing to traders demand.

Mr Rajesh Dokwal, Convenor, URJA East Delhi said "The threats of about 45,000 traders -- facing resumption of sealing on Supreme Court orders -- has worked on the Central and Delhi Government and led to a situation where the Governments are prepared to condone gross illegalities committed by some organised traders by taking on the court itself. ”

"School children were forced to stay home due to fear of violence. There have been road blockades all over the Capital which had disrupted normal life and prevented citizens from attending to their work. With the Delhi police also being given clear instruction not to confront traders, road blockades and disruption of normal services" said N.N. Mishra .

Mr V. N. Bali, RWA President from Ram Vihar in East Delhi said the Government was bending over backwards to please the agitating traders. “We have shot off a strongly

worded letter to the Supreme Court-appointed Monitoring Committee arguing that the ability to strike and come out on the streets should not determine the facts of the case”, he said. The letter also criticised the Delhi Chief Minister for attempting to bring a resolution that, according to the members of the RWA, attempts to defeat the orders of the Supreme Court.

Press Release

MCD Commissioner refuses to meet RWAs on Dengue death figures: he was willing to discuss dogs issue in Defence Colony, say group members

New Delhi, 23rd Oct.: Strange as it may seem, the MCD Commissioner today refused to meet a delegation of RWAs on behalf of URJA, the largest RWA collective in Delhi, in spite of the members waiting for almost half a day. Curiously, the Commissioner found time to take up a matter concerning dogs in Defence Colony without much problems, said Atul Goyal Coordinator West Delhi URJA, who led the URJA delegation to the Commissioner.

RWA members led by Atul Goyal had gone to see the MCD Commissioner with regard to contradictory reports of dengue death and infection figures that have been written about by almost all newspapers all through last week. Following an expose by an investigation by a TV channel, RWAs were alarmed at what they found to be seriously depressed figures of death and infections being reported by the Municipal Health Officer.

RWAs that were surveyed all through the outbreak have confirmed that not even 50% of Delhi was fogged even after the outbreak of the virus. “ It is not only appalling that the MCD Commissioner does not want to discuss the issue, but it is downright suspicious why the MHO continued to issue figures that were openly contradicted by the media on a daily basis. Was there a conspiracy of silence? Did the Government avoid declaring an epidemic to protect its electoral chances on the coming MCD elections? By doing so, is the Government guilty of endangering the lives of residents? There are serious questions and must be addressed by the government and the MCD,” said Goyal.

“The citizens have a right to know the truth,” said S.P. Gupta of Rajendra Nagar RWA who was part of the delegation. “We have left a copy of the memorandum for the Commissioner, who tried to pass us on to the MHO,” Gupta added.

Sanjay Kaul, President of People’s Action lamented that the callousness of the MCD in preparing and controlling the dengue outbreak can be traced back to the attitude of the Commissioner. “If this is how the Commissioner of MCD reacts to a discussion on dengue deaths, are we surprised that the entire department is merely afflicted of the same symptoms of abject apathy, inefficiency and insensitivity for human life.”

People’s Action legal affiliate Jan Sehyog Manch has already brought the issue to the notice of the High Court in a petition that will be heard by the Court on November 3rd.

Press Release

MCD put residents' life at risk: fudged figures, suppressed information, avoided declaring epidemic to protect itself : citizen's group files case in HC.

New Delhi, 18th October: The revelations made by a TV channel and then followed up by almost every mainline print media suggesting vast under-reporting by the Municipal Health Department of deaths by dengue and affected cases has prompted a local citizen group to file a case of causing death by negligence, voluntarily suppressing public information, creating a false sense of control of the outbreak and a tacit refusal to accept figures of real deaths to avoid declaring an epidemic.

“The vigorous public relations campaign undertaken by the Municipal Health Officer to distract residents by continuously harping on the duties of residents was a clear indication to us that all was not well with the situation”, said Sanjay Kaul, President, People’s Action. “That a body entrusted with maintaining a sanitised environment for citizens has not only failed once again, but tried to cover up its failure by manipulating data is a serious matter”, he added.

Residents have argued that by manipulating data and trying to present an image of reasonable control for the benefit of electoral consideration, the authorities had endangered the lives of citizens who would have otherwise looked after themselves better had a declaration of a serious outbreak and an epidemic been made. “If the state cannot protect us, it can at least give us the right to protect ourselves – a right we can access only if we have correct information. In this case by withholding accurate information, by depressing death and infection figures, by creating the impression that all was under control the Government of Delhi has put our lives at risk”, said Anant Trivedi, Ishwar Nagar RWA President.

“It is to the credit of various investigative reporters that the truth is finally out and the Municipal Health Officer is clearly in the dock for not only not discharging his duties but also for providing dubious information to the public”, he added.

The petition filed by Jan Sehyog Manch while outlining the duties of the MCD made a case for apathetic performance by the Corporation in discharging its mandate towards protecting the lives of citizens from deadly diseases like dengue. Advocate Laliet Kumar, speaking on behalf of the petitioner said that the case was due for hearing on November 3rd along with a slew of other related petitions all seeking answers from the MCD for its lapses during and before the outbreak of Dengue in Delhi.

Press Release

Citizen's collective asks for an Empowered Committee to look into the sealings issue : RWAs, NGOs, Traders, IIM and IIT Assoc., professionals, activists, planners, IPED, PGI sign representation to SC.

New Delhi, 17th Oct.: People's Action consultations with members of various affected groups, stakeholders, resident welfare associations, planners and activists over the last few months has today resulted in a consensus among all groups for the dire need for a solution outside the scope of governmental reaction to judicial interventions.

“What we need today is a complete overhaul of the situation caused by decades of governmental neglect, corruption in MCD and DDA, and the complete breakdown of governance in the city of Delhi,” said Y.P.S. Suri, President of the IIT Alumni Association.

IIM Alumni Association represented by Sunil Kala also echoed the same sentiments. “ We cannot look at ad hoc solutions for the rest of our lives. We need a creative, sustainable solution to the issue of urban planning”. Alpana Kishore, who has worked extensively on the Delhi metro issue said in a statement corroborated by senior architect and planner, Kuldip Singh, “ Every aspect of planning has been literally ignored in the entire episode of the last one year. We need a return to the basics”.

“Our extensive consultations with affected parties, planners and professionals has yielded a point of complete agreement,” said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action. “All groups are seeking the creation of an Empowered Committee under the direction of the Supreme Court which would have stakeholders, planning experts and professionals as members to study the issue, provide sustainable solutions and give effect to plans over a stipulated time under the guidance of the Court”, he said.

Praveen Khandelwal, Secretary General CAIT, supporting the demand said, “The trading community is tired of the inept handling of the issue by the government of the day. We are no longer willing to look at sops but at a sensible, time bound and fair and humane solution to the problem.”

Amit Mehra, member of the Photographer's Guild of India [PGI] also supported the move. “ There are lakhs of residents in Delhi who are neither traders nor owners of properties but who pursue their profession from rented outlets. Any move that destabilises them without giving them options is going to rebound. Our support for this proposal is a reflection of our interest in seeking a fair and balanced solution to the problem under the guidance and monitoring of the Courts.”

Rajesh Goyal of the Institutions of Professional Education in Delhi [IPED] welcomed the proposal pointing out that “close to 5 lakh students currently undergoing professional instruction in Delhi will have to simply stop their studies midway unless a more practical approach is taken to resolve the issue.”

Members of URJA, the largest RWA collective in Delhi has already been working to evolve a consensus on this issue among residents. Atul Goyal, Coordinator URJA West said, “ This outcome is the best that has come out of the situation”.

Members of the citizen’s collective have signed a representation for the CJI today.

Press Release

Govt./MCD has not carried out basic thermal fogging in 70% of the city: aerosol spraying completely absent.

- **WHO guidelines not being met, says group.**

New Delhi, 6th October: For a Government that is spending lakhs on advertisements informing residents of the dreaded disease, after half a dozen people died of dengue in Delhi, it has come as a shocking revelation that the government has not been able to even organise thermal fogging – a WHO standardised action during dengue epidemics - in the majority of the city.

In a survey of RWAs across the city carried out by United Residents Joint Action [URJA], RWAs from New Rajendra Nagar, Kotla Mubarakpur, Mayur Vihar, Ishwar Nagar, Priya Enclave, Rohini, Dwarka, Karol Bagh, Govindpuri have flatly reported ‘No’ to the question ‘Has MCD carried out fogging in your area?’

Only RWAs from CR Park, Vasant Kunj and Raja Park said their areas had been fogged last week. [WHO guidelines suggest fogging every 3-4 days to effect reasonable success in eliminating this strain of mosquitoes.]

Sandeep Sharma of Priya Enclave who has filed a complaint with the local MCD office asking for fogging to be carried out said, “The Delhi Government and MCD as well as the health department in Delhi are simply relying on disseminating precautionary measures without taking any action themselves.”

Anant Trivedi, President Ishwar Nagar RWA said, “It is not for the MCD to become a communication agency but a worker agency. It must do what it is supposed to do”.

Sanjay Kaul, President People’s Action said, “WHO guidelines stipulate close to 14 actions mandated in the time of such an epidemic. We are dismayed to note that the Delhi Government has not been able to ensure even the first – a basic thermal fogging in all areas of Delhi at the stipulated frequency, forget aerosol space spraying and the other preventive and control measures mandated at such times”.

Kaul was also harsh on the Govt. trying to pass the buck on to RWAs and residents saying that educated residents should not have to bear the lecturing of inefficient and corrupt departments of the Government. “We know what we have to do and are doing it. Questions is, is the Government’s agencies doing what they should have been?” he said.

People's Action proposes joint petition of RWAs and Trader bodies: groups must make a collective appeal to the SC.

New Delhi, 22nd Sept.: Leading advocacy group People's Action, including its RWA ancillary the United Residents Joint Action [URJA], today made a pitch for a joint petition along with trader bodies to the SC to consider a slew of steps that the group believes honours the Hon'ble Court's intent, while providing a solution to retailers, traders and affected communities who are hanging between confusion and chaos due to the inept and insincere handling of the Govt. of Delhi, and the MoUD.

Aimed at calming the prevailing atmosphere of insecurity in the city, the proposal calls for a three-step process of recovery and rehabilitation for affected people that also stands for the rule of law.

“We do not see any clash of interests. The solution lies between two truths – the court is right and so are the affected communities. There is a practical way out, and it is a concrete proposal to satisfy both parties. We do not see any problem except the lack of will of the Government or the selfish intent of a few groups who want to play spoilers”, said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action, while presenting the proposal.

We have complete confidence in the Supreme Court with the appeal that a stringent order, howsoever correct, is forcing the Government of Delhi and its administrative organ the MCD and the MoUD into a fit of knee jerk reactions that are at the very outset clearly aimed at thwarting the judiciary.

While we have consistently pressed for a practical solution to the issue of traders' plight, any abnormal tilt in dispensing justice will not be acceptable to the larger body of residents in the city. It is correct that this issue affects 5 lakh traders, but it is equally correct that it also affects over 50 lakh residents of the city.

Our three step proposal is for RWAs and Trader/affected groups to make a joint representation to the SC on the following points.

- To direct the Govt. of Delhi and the MoUD to coordinate the migration of such businesses as may be located in areas deemed residential to 'prepared' sites
- That this may be done in a phased manner to allow smooth transfer
- That such affected migrant businesses may be allowed relief by:
 1. Offering affected retailers space in existing government shopping areas at subsidised rates and providing for a range of such options to satisfy the big, medium and small retailer and providing financial support to re-establish businesses in such areas;

2. Creating and earmarking new commercial areas and time bound construction of such complexes and offering it on first option to affected businesses at preferential rates;
3. Reserving space in all developing Malls on special rates for those retailers who would be willing to pay for these spaces.

We believe that no right thinking citizen of Delhi will possibly have any objection to these proposals – they satisfy the Courts indications and support the theory that rampant commercialisation must be stopped. This should be agreeable to all RWAs of Delhi. The proposals also indicate that traders or retailers or such institutions that operate in residential or quasi-residential areas do so for various reasons, prime being the poor opportunities of developed space for such communities and which point to a direct failure of governance and planning. The proposal satisfies us that affected communities will come out of this crisis better than before, provided the terms are met by the Government in letter and spirit. Above all, they are completely deliverable and practical, and in fact allow a regeneration of the city of Delhi which has so far suffered so much due to lack of sensible planning.

We also believe that the Govt. needs to **incentivise** the movement of such businesses – as a subsidy for the turmoil - after all, these businesses have been paying taxes on commercial terms and the government was very willing in their receipts.

We decry the attempts of the State Government and the MoUD to belie the Court's directions but we also expect the Honb'le court to consider that its intent is to stop illegality, not force people into unemployment and chaos. To that extent, we expect the Court to respond positively to a collective citizen's representation asking for a rational settlement to the issue.

On the other hand, we also expect the MoUD to immediately back up this plan with every possible legal and legislative support to make these three steps a possibility. We also expect the Delhi Government to exhibit its intentions to seek a solution to this impasse and immediately endorse this proposal.

Similarly, we expect that the leadership of traders or such communities that are affected will rise to the occasion realising that this crisis can yield a positive regeneration of our city which in turn will give rise to better opportunities in future to all communities alike.

“I believe that in this proposal lies the seed of a balanced and rational solution of the problem and the hope of a better city for all its residents”, concluded Kaul.

Press Release

Violence and firing could have been avoided: Trader groups must take control, exhibit vision and leadership, says group.

- People's Action calls meeting of concerned parties on Friday.

New Delhi, 22nd Sept.: Delhi RWAs collective under United Residents Joint Action [URJA] have today expressed shock at the scenes of violence recorded at Seelampur resulting for the situation arising out of sealings in the area. Resident bodies have also severely criticized the administration for allowing the situation to get out of control and taking abnormal measures.

“The firing was unjustified and seems only a knee-jerk response to the senior officers being beaten up by the mob. While it must be put down, the actions of the mob on the police officers does not automatically warrant extreme action of the sort that was exhibited at the site,” said Rajesh Dokwal, URJA Coordinator for East Delhi.

Calling for restraint and reason to prevail, members of the group have cautioned both, trader groups as well as the State Government that taking extreme positions will only exacerbate the situation leading to more such incidents. “There needs to be a reasonable approach on behalf of the traders, the government and the courts,” said R.L. Dua of Rajendra Nagar RWA.

“We need to see some effective leadership from the side of traders. It is not enough to only complain and protest. There must also be a proactive attempt to find solutions,” said Wing Commander Chadha of the East of Kailash RWA Federation.

“That violence is the result of a *bandh* carries no credit with itself. Trader groups must take control of the situation and allow only positive protests,” added Atul Goyal, URJA Coordinator for West Delhi.

Refuting the perception that this was a RWA versus Traders issue, Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action said, “There is no tussle between residents of colonies and residents who may be traders by profession. This issue was precipitated by politically aligned groups who have created the problem, but essentially most RWAs are for an amicable solution to the problems. After all, traders are also members of RWAs somewhere in the city”.

To push for a more middle of the road solution and to take the process of consultations further, People's Action has called a meeting of concerned citizens involving RWAs, affected groups and other members to propose a mechanism to offer a realistic solution.

The meeting will be held at the Chelmsford Club, Board Room, at 2.30p.m. The meeting will end with a Press Briefing at 4.00 p.m.

Press Release

People's Action Gurgaon takes Shahrukh Khan to task for endorsing DLF: superstars status carries more responsibility than you seem to exhibit, say group members in a sharp letter to the film actor.

Gurgaon, Sept.19th. : The Gurgaon unit of People's Action has today written a strongly worded open letter to film star Shahrukh Khan upbraiding him for endorsing products and companies without caring to check their antecedents.

'We are appalled that you find it fit to repeatedly endorse products or companies that have something controversial about them. Why you like to fish in troubled waters is for you to explain but we are more concerned that your actions are more and more becoming suspect in the eyes of consumers of almost every category,' read parts of the acerbic letter to the Bollywood superstar that came after commercials featuring him endorsing DLF were aired on national television.

"The DLF company has reduced Gurgaon to a caricature of a millennium city by compromising every possible rule of city planning. They have sold crores of rupees worth property to gullible residents who are now realising that nothing of what they imagined is available to them. Forget the people who have bought their flats recently, even those who bought property from them in their earliest offerings in Gurgaon in Qutab Enclave will not endorse the company's products, promises or processes. The only support that will perhaps come to them will be from Resident Associations floated by DLF in their own localities," said Maj. Gen. Satbir Singh, core group member of People's Action Gurgaon.

"That Mr. Khan should not find time to make enquiries of this kind are perhaps even excusable keeping in mind his distance from Gurgaon, but surely he could not have missed that even SEBI has lately refused permission to this company for its much touted IPO for having provide overvaluations of its assets," said Shashi Sharma, Convenor of People's Action in Gurgaon.

"Clearly, Mr Khan should have understood that the company was attempting to ride out of its public image difficulty by using his credibility, or whatever was left of it after his earlier selfish act of continuing to endorse unhealthy cola drinking habits among children", he added.

Residents of DLF in Gurgaon have been left in the lurch without playgrounds for their children, without parks for the elders, without water in many areas and without electricity in huge areas under control of DLF. Crime in colonies is at an all time high. Cases have been filed against them by various citizen groups in Gurgaon for their malpractices and for their poor maintenance records. Even today, complaints pile up each day against the systemic corruption that DLF has ushered in to the real estate business in Haryana.

"DLF has compromised thousands of apartment owners by refusing to accommodate their sale deeds under the Haryana Apartment Act saving crores for their company. And

they are one of the biggest hurdles to the entire DLF areas not being handed over to the municipality after years of being due only because if that happens DLF would have to pay hundreds of crores to the state as property tax,” said Col. B.K. Dhawan of Silver Oaks Apartments who has been fighting the company for years now.

Col. Ratan Singh, a senior resident of Gurgaon associated with the group said, “Mr. Shahrukh Khan has now the benefit of this knowledge. We expect him to immediately withdraw from endorsing a company that has the unique distinction of taking away thousands of acres from farmers under political patronage and not delivering anything to them in return apart from the control price for such acquisitions.”

“DLF is testimony to what Gurgaon could have been but is not. DLF is a classic case of private–public partnership where every loophole in every law is used to make life impossible for residents who have paid crores for flats only to find a diesel generator spewing fumes into their living rooms from their Malls,” said Rati Parker a suffering resident.

“If Mr Khan does not find it fit to withdraw, he runs the risk of being labelled anti-people apart from being already close to being called anti-children for his blatant refusal to stop endorsing products that harm people - just because he is making money from it,” said Shashi Sharma.

“We are unsure if the next item on his list of endorsements will be drugs or mafia managed businesses, looking at his track record,” said Maj. Gen. Satbir Singh in disgust.

The group has asked Mr Khan to seriously consider withdrawing from the deal to endorse DLF even if it forfeits money for him. “Money should not be the only criterion for existence for a man as rich as you. Maybe it is time for you to start giving back to the communities that pay for your tickets,” said the letter.

Press Release

Bhagidari in tatters: CMs attempt to create influencer group demolished the scheme. RWAs see through the design, plan to resign.

New Delhi, 13th Sept.: The sorry state of affairs in Delhi for the last two years have finally put paid to the grand designs of the CM's Bhagidari movement, which is at best now a personal promotion machine under the garb of citizen-government partnership. "Crony RWAs have demolished the movement and tarnished the image of genuine RWAs," says K.K. Datta of Raja Park RWA.

The biggest let down has been the famous image of the CM stepping out on the lawns of the PM house after petitioning for the point of view of the trader's lobby. "That picture has become the ultimate sign of the CM's volta face on the issue of Bhagidari. That day the CM completely compromised the RWAs", says Sandeep Dutta Gupta of the CR Park RWA.

"RWAs are meant to be watchdog agencies that stem out of a larger civil society awakening. To try and play favourites, to create feudal groups and dispense favours is almost to try and control these crucial institutions," said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action, which networks with over 500 RWAs all over Delhi through its ancillary group URJA.

"In 2005 when we succeeded in forcing the government to withdraw the power tariff hike, it was the result of breaking free from the debilitating effects of Bhagidari which kept RWAs in a permanent state of paralysis for over three years since the corrupt privatisation of DVB," adds Pankaj Gupta, group Coordinator of People's Action.

Coming close on the heels of the admission by a well known Page 3 advertising personality that it was his idea, RWAs have already seen thorough it as a major PR plan which involved lakhs of rupees of the exchequer.

"The idea behind Bhagidari was always suspect. As peoples' problems have multiplied, the truth behind its impotency has been revealed. Bhagidari was only a deceptive methodology of passing the buck back to citizens", said Wing Commander Chadha of East of Kailash RWA.

"The recent imbroglio on the sealings issue has torn the Bhagidari scheme to shreds," said V.N. Bali of Ram Vihar in East Delhi. Earlier a Bhagidari votary, he is today a disillusioned man who claims that it did nothing for the people except create a hunting ground for favour seekers and yes men. "I am getting out of it for good", he added.

"Today RWAs are left alone to face the music as hordes of political mafia are taking control of the city's planning," said R.L. Dua of Rajendra Nagar RWA in West Delhi.

"RWAs have been reduced to mere puppets in the hands of councillors and MLAs and for which I blame only the CM of the state. After all, if she could use RWAs for benefit, why can't others?," asks Ashok Prabhakar of Malviya Nagar federation which has now another RWA whose patron is a sitting MLA and a Councillor of the MCD.

Press Release

RWAs asked to withdraw representations to Tejinder Khanna Committee. RWAs are being used for political ends, say group members.

- MCD standing committee recommendations, a dangerous trend.
- Govt. must first free government land from encroachment before anything else.

New Delhi, 12th Sept.: The emergent meeting of key RWAs that met here today to discuss the situation arising out of the actions of the MoUD on the one hand, the MCD on the other and the role played by the Delhi Government in the entire episode has instructed all RWAs who made representations to the Tejinder Khanna Committee asking for a role for RWAs in assessment and consultation regarding commercialisation, to withdraw their representations immediately.

“It has been our considered opinion that RWAs that have petitioned for a greater role in such actions by the MCD etc. have overstepped their mandate. It was a mistake and a serious error of judgement even if well intentioned. We have therefore concluded that the RWAs that had made representations for such a caveat must immediately withdraw their petitions and save the situation from turning seriously ugly”, said Sanjay Kaul, President People’s Action.

“The actions of a few RWAs who were too focussed on their own situation in colonies have today opened a Pandora’s box of conflicting demands from citizen groups. It is very well to seek relief for yourself and push the others into the fire, but this sort of approach is not conducive to responsible citizenship,” said Ashok Sethi of the GKRA.

D.M. Narang, who was targeted by a mob on the suspicion that he had inspired a spate of sealings in his colony by virtue of being in the RWA said, “We have no interest in replicating the role of the Government whether local or central. This is a problem they have to solve, not us. We demand the right to live peacefully in a decent environment”.

RWAs have been asked to make written withdrawals to the MoUD so that it may be established that earlier representations for their involvement in MCD decisions be held null and void. “We have unfortunately fallen prey to the designs of wily politicians who have used us against each other. Today RWAs are fighting RWAs, residents are fighting each other instead of penalising this government that was sleeping for so long”, said R.C. Kamboj of the Rohini Federation of RWAs.

V.N. Bali of Ram Nagar in East Delhi has also challenged the MCD Standing Committee recommendation on declaring areas for mixed land use. “If our colony has been provided a commercial complex for its own needs, why is the MCD declaring more areas commercial”, he asked. RWAs feel that the MCD recommendations are an open invitation to residential colonies to convert to commercial merely by opening up more commercial establishments. “This is not planning. This is a scam,” said Pankaj Gupta, Group Coordinator for People’s Action.

The RWA members undertook to pressurise the Government to first free government land under illegal occupation or encroachment before attempting other things. “How can the state issue directions for cleaning everything else except its own backyard”, asked Ashok Prabhakar of Malviya Nagar Federation.

Press Release

DUSU poll results: Caste, muscle, money are old themes and have no relevance: United Students performance in DUSU polls confirms group estimation. US candidate's campaign most cost effective of all.

New Delhi, 11th Sept.: The United Students candidature for DUSU polls has thrown up confirming evidence of the group's thinking on the myths regarding student politics that caste, muscle and money are the recipe for success in the polls.

"It was our belief that the thinking that these factors are the operative concepts for electoral success is fundamentally flawed and a tired excuse of regimented thinkers," said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action, the advocacy group that supports United Students. "We have demonstrated in calculable terms that issues, sincerity of purpose and credibility are essential ingredients for success", he added.

United Students ran a potent campaign that maximised on minimum number of campaigners and focussed on real issues of concern. "The manifesto released by United Students stands testimony to the fact that the group is talking the language of the students," said Aaditya Dar, the US candidate who polled 4300 votes and came from nowhere to occupy third position for the presidential post.

Statistically speaking, the 13100 odd votes of the NSUI candidate and 8400 of the ABVP pales in comparison to the 4300 votes of the US candidate, looking at the lineage of the parties in contrast: the other two are 30, 40 year old organisations – the US is a nine month old body, that stepped into the race literally just nine days before the polls.

"On merely the point of economy and return on investment, the US campaign beats NSUI and ABVP and certainly the INSO hands down," said Sanjay Kaul. "Look at the amounts spent by the other candidates to garner their votes and make a simple calculation: for every vote got by the US candidate, we spent a pittance compared to the lakhs the other parties spent. Clearly, the myth that we do not understand student politics is busted. If anything, we do what they do at a fraction of the cost. Above all, we have proved that we do not need the crutches of caste, or free liquor, or muscle power to secure votes," he added.

"Of course, there remains the target of winning as against making a good showing in the polls and we are well aware of that. But we just want to make the point that there is a market for our kind of politics out there and we will stick to our style of campaigning for the future", said Aaditya Dar.

Press Release

Complaints pile up by the dozens at Bijli Adalat: Success to be replicated in all four zones of Delhi: RWAs to organise Bijli Adalats in their areas.

New Delhi, 11th Sept.: The Bijli Adalat organised by People's Action in association with URJA, the all-Delhi RWA body, had members jostling to put their complaints forward to advocates at the Jantar Mantar.

The venue was packed with over 140 RWA representatives and complainants who had come to submit their grievances to the panel which comprised Justice Abdul Sattar Qureshi, former judge of the Gujarat High Court and a member of the Minorities Commission. Flanking him and supporting him were eminent actor Roshan Seth and later Dr. S.C. Vats, Chairman of the petitions Committee of the Delhi Government and the author of the PAC Report which emphatically pointed to grave irregularities in the DVB transaction during privatisation.

A battery of advocates were lined up to process the complaints that were being filed by harried consumers. Advocates Laliet Kumar, P.S. Sharda and Ashok Sethi represented the complaints of the residents to Justice Qureshi. Desks were lined up according to nature of complaints such as billing, meters, service, maintenance and other common problems faced by consumers. A special RTI desk where experts provided instructions to members about filing RTI applications concerning various aspects of the privatisation deal were explained.

Chairman of the Petitions Committee of the Delhi Government Dr. S.C. Vats also explained procedures related to filing of petitions on various aspects of problems being faced by residents of Delhi on the power issue with the promise that his department would do everything possible to redress people's grievances.

Justice A.S. Qureshi provided insight and advice on various problems presented to him by the advocates at the venue. He was well aware of the problems being faced by residents due to the misbehaviour of private DISCOMS as well as the harassment that was being meted out to them in the absence of any mechanism to control the private companies. He expressed anguish at the manner in which people were being treated as was evident from the number of complainants present at the venue.

Advocate P.S. Sharda, who has since collected the cases to file them according to subject for further processing said, "We have received close to 200 complaints, many of them being represented by RWA heads in bulk from their areas. Of these the maximum numbers pertain to billing issues, fast running meters, forcible meter changes, harassment at the time of changing meters and poor service. A sizeable number is related to issues of tariff setting, power theft, high fixed charges, misrepresentation of facts etc."

Members present at the Bijli Adalat decided to take the event to different zones of Delhi so that more people could air their grievances. Consequently, it was agreed that five more Adalats will be organised in East, West North and South Delhi. Separate Adalats for Dwarka and Rohini were also mooted.

Commenting on the success of the Bijli Adalat, Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action said, "The response to the Bijli Adalat proves two points: one, that the problems faced by Delhiites on the power front are growing each day, and two, that public anger is rising on this issue."

**DISCOMS replacing meters against sanctioned procedure:
consumers being threatened with disconnection.**

- Bijli Adalat to throw light on the issue.
- Supreme Court issues notice to NDPL, BSES and Govt. of NCT of Delhi on meters issue

New Delhi, 8th Sept.: Reports from various residents across the city have come in confirming that DISCOMS are resorting to threats, harassment and deception to make residents convert to electronic meters in spite of a clear directive from the HC on the procedure to be followed for such replacements.

“It has come to our notice that a number of consumers have been coerced into replacing their meters under threat of disconnection without complying with the directions of the High Court order regarding replacement of meters. The court had ordered that before replacement of meters by an electronic meter, due diligence of the internal wiring of the consumers home would be carried out by the DISCOM and only after it has been confirmed that there is no leakage of current would the meter be replaced and that too after giving a week’s notice. It is becoming clear to us that this caveat has not be followed almost without exception and that is tantamount to contempt of court,” said Sanjay Kaul, President People’s Action.

The relevant para of the judgement is reproduced below:

"107. The writ petition accordingly stands disposed of answering the four questions framed as aforesaid. Relief is declined to the petitioner. However, directions are issued to the respondent No. 1 to notify all consumers in whose premises electronic meters have been installed to check their wiring and ensure that no two connections have a common neutral. For future, before replacing the existing electro-mechanical meter with an electronic meter, wiring of the consumer would be checked and if it is noted that there is inter-mixing of the neutral wire, a weeks notice before replacing the meter be given to the consumer to have the deficiency removed."

“The **Bijli Adalat** scheduled for tomorrow, Saturday the 9th September will be utilised to issue directions to all residents and RWAs on how to resist meter replacements until such time the proper procedure is followed. We will also investigate cases to see whether we can proceed against DISCOMS on the lines of contempt,” added Kaul.

Meanwhile in a new development, the Supreme Court today issued notices to BSES, NDPL and the Govt. of NCT of Delhi on the issue of meter replacements asking the respondents to file counter affidavits in the next tow weeks. The petition was a continuation of the Suresh Jindal case and was represented by senior Advocate Sanjay Parikh and Laliet Kumar.

Judges S.B. Sinha and Dalveer Bhandari will pontificate on the question of quality of meters and whether DISCOMS have the legal right to replace them with EM’s. Counsel for the petitioner argued also that transmission losses were being passed on to consumers.

Press Release

Justice A.S. Qureshi to preside over Bijli Adalat: Former CBI Director Joginder Singh, Roshan Seth, Dr. SC Vats, Anjali Bhardwaj, MLAs, to be part of proceedings.

New Delhi, 7th Sept.: The Bijli Adalat organised by People's Action in association with URJA, the All-Delhi RWA Collective, will have **Justice Abdul Sattar Qureshi**, former Judge of the Gujarat High Court and Member of the Minority Commission as presiding guest.

The Bijli Adalat is being organised on Saturday 9th Sept. from 2.30 onwards at the Jantar Mantar.

Hon'ble Justice Qureshi will be supported by former CBI Director **Joginder Singh** and eminent actor **Roshan Seth** who will evaluate the complaints against DISCOMS and the Government on issues related to power distribution, service standards, privatisation, meter replacements etc.

To assist the Hon'ble judge, a battery of advocates has been enlisted among who are activist lawyer **Laliet Kumar** who fought the case against meter replacement by DISCOMS on behalf of Suresh Jindal, and **P.S. Sharda** who has been working with RWAs since the last five months on the issue.

Consumer Court amicus curiae **S.K. Sharma** has also been invited to attend the proceedings and offer views on cases relates to consumer rights on this issue. **Ashutosh Sharma** will be assisting him at the venue.

Well known RTI activist **Anjali Bhardwaj** will hold forth on applications that can be filed against DERC, Power Ministry and the Government of Delhi on various issues regarding transparency in dealings between the government and DISCOMS. She will also argue for DISCOMS being brought under the purview of the RTI act.

Dr. S.C. Vats, MLA and Chairman of the Petitions Committee of the Delhi Government will receive petitions against DISCOMS and other parties at the event. To facilitate petitions, as per rules, MLAs **Shoiab Iqbal**, **Vijay Jolly** and **Ram Vir Biduri** have been invited to the event.

The **Bijli Adalat** will also see a number of distressed consumers and RWAs group heads attending to mark their protest against the suspect dealings between government, bureaucracy and DISCOMS in the signing of the DVB privatisation agreements.

Technocrats and engineers who can shed light on technical aspects of the meters as well as the issues related to inflated billing have also been invited to the event.

Press Release

RWAs to organise People's Bijli Adalat on Saturday 9th Sept.: People's court to collect consumer complaints from all over Delhi.

- Residents invited to bring disputes and grievances to Jantar Mantar.
- Advocates, technocrats, lawyers, consumer counsels, RTI experts and MLAs, to attend to complaints.

New Delhi, 4th Sept.: People's Action in association with United Residents' Joint Action, [URJA] the all-Delhi RWA collective are organising a People's Bijli Adalat on September 9th at the Jantar Mantar to collect large scale evidence against DISCOMS and the Government of Delhi, the Power Ministry and even the DERC which has so far acted like a rubber stamp of private power companies.

“The Bijli Adalat is an attempt to collate the growing evidence of misappropriation in the power privatisation deal and the attendant problems which will become the matter for public interest litigants as well as an exhibition of the extent of corruption and malpractices in the contract and operation of the DISCOMS,” said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action. **“It will be a carnival of complaints,”** he added.

The Bijli Adalat will be designed to allow classification of complaints in sectoral terms. “We will create different stalls for each kind of complaint such as overbilling, harassment, meter replacements, fast moving meters, billing errors, poor power supply, bad condition of transformers, poor lighting of colonies, power cuts and behaviour of service contractors. Accordingly, there will be advocates to facilitate classification of cases and then a scrutiny will be carried out and the cases used for compiling a case book on the issue,” said Pankaj Gupta, Group Coordinator, People's Action. **“These will also be provided as support to those who have filed consumer court cases or PILs in the Courts,”** he added.

People's Action has also asked Consumer Court lawyers and RTI specialists to be on spot to advise consumers on taking their complaints forward. **Chairman of the Petitions Committee of the Delhi Government, Dr. S.C. Vats has also been invited to receive petitions, which will be forwarded through attending MLAs. Shoiab Iqbal, MLA will also attend along with invited MLAs such as Vijay Jolly and Ram Vir Bidhuri.**

“We intend to file this compendium with the President and Prime Minister to bring attention to the widespread disenchantment with the power privatisation in Delhi and to ask for a CBI enquiry into the now infamous DVB deal”, said Kaul.

RWAs who met under the auspices of URJA Zonal committee meetings last week have also endorsed the Bijli Adalat as a potent idea to establish the extent of problems faced by residents and power consumers in Delhi. Atul Goyal, West Delhi coordinator URJA has also found tremendous support for the idea. “I already have RWAs calling to ask how many people they can bring,” he said, **clarifying that the event is open to all consumers who have had a bad experience with DISCOMS.** RWAs from other areas have also started collecting complaints cases to bring to the Bijli Adalat.

Press Release

Decision to hold Commonwealth games should be reviewed: for a city that can't provide water, electricity and security to citizens, spending thousands of crores on an 11 day event is a crime, says group.

New Delhi, 30th Aug: Members of advocacy group People's Action and its Resident Welfare Association network body URJA [United Resident's Joint Action], Delhi's largest RWA grouping, have been debating the holding of the Commonwealth Games in Delhi as a contradiction in terms for a city that cannot provide basic necessities to its own citizens.

Pankaj Gupta, Group coordinator of people's Action said, "Any reasonable person will agree that we are embarking on an extravaganza that will cost millions on the one hand and yield nothing for us on the other."

Reacting to suggestion that holding the games would bring a lot of improvements to the city, Gupta said, "If we can plan to improve our city only against the backdrop of such events, it speaks very poorly of our governance. Besides let us look at the Asian games experience. Did it solve our housing issues: did it solve the problem of encroachments; did it solve the security issue and that the death of innocent senior citizens have reduced; has it solved our water, power problems. All we have is a village that got bought up by crony bureaucrats; a stadium whose bulbs come on only when rock stars visit and an edifice that was finally converted into the secretariat."

Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action said, "For a city that cannot even provide continuous electric supply to its traffic lights, to think of embarking on such lavish programmes is simply ridiculous. Let this not be an emotional decision. There have to be many more reasons for holding such events. We simply do not qualify for such pomp at this moment. We have a city to fix", he added.

The group also indicated that it is critical of Industry federations trying to whip up media frenzy on this issue for the simple reason that while the group's motives are to awaken a citizenry to the pitfalls of poor planning in a city, theirs is to secure benefit from the juicy contracts that will flow from the event. "We would rather they satisfy their craving for profit from building this city, which we can assure them, is a far more profitable and patriotic purpose", said Kaul.

"This proposal not only rubs us the wrong way at a time when we don't have sufficient water and power for ourselves, but also adds insult to injury considering the awful situation since power privatisation", said Rajesh Dokwal, URJA East Delhi Convenor.

Press Release

Six simultaneous Zonal meets of RWAs to discuss power issues on September 2nd: high tariff, theft, power supply, DISCOMS performance, commonwealth games and corruption on agenda.

New Delhi, 26th Aug: RWAs in North, East, West and South Delhi will meet under the aegis of URJA, the all-Delhi RWA collective, to hold simultaneous meetings in six zones of the city on issues relating to the power situation and related issues. Rohini and Dwarka zones will also hold meetings for the same issue on Saturday 2nd September.

“Simultaneous meetings in six URJA zones have been organised to emphasise the serious proportions that the power situation is taking”, said Pankaj Gupta, Group Coordinator of People’s Action. “The meetings will be coordinated by Atul Goyal for West Delhi, Ashok Sethi for South Delhi, Rajesh Dokwal for East Delhi and Lt. Col. Shyam [Retd.] Agnihotri for North Delhi. R.C Kamboj will likewise coordinate for Rohini, while Dwarka will be coordinated by D.C. Upadhyaya.”

“The meetings will be held around a common agenda that is being circulated to all Zonal coordinators and will include the issue of high tariffs, power theft, failing power supply, constant hindrances in getting redressal from DISCOM malpractices, DERC inaction, meter changes, inflated billing, poor service and the important question of whether the city is in any position to hold the commonwealth games when there is such a shortage of essential utilities”, he added.

Sanjay Kaul, President, People’s Action has also called for discussions on implementing the resolutions of the July 14th Convention of RWAs that concurred to ask for a CBI enquiry into the entire issue of DVB privatisation with reference to specific advantages that have been provided to private parties. “It is now clear beyond doubt that there is a confirmed suspicion of corruption in the DVB deal. Residents of Delhi must not suffer at the cost of beneficiary private parties or bureaucrats who may have been involved in the deal and we have a right to know the truth”, he said.

RWAs will also formalise a plan for future action to force the issue with the Government of Delhi on power privatisation and other issues of concern to residents.

RWAs are also expected to take up the issue of bringing DISCOMS within the ambit of RTI, a policy that is being resisted by DISCOMS and the CMO.

Press Release

DUSU elections to be a referendum on quota issue: People's Action backs United Students candidates.

New Delhi, 24th Aug.: People's Action has today extended support to candidates of the United Students group that has worked on issues related to reservations, Justice for Jessica Lal and Priyadarshini Mattoo, security for girl students in DU and the campaign for enrolling freshers for Voter ID cards.

“United Students is a group of good students who have taken initiative on crucial issues, and have worked collectively on campaigns that are based on a sense of justice and good governance. We support this group for the quality of individuals they represent and intend to promote them as future leaders”, said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action in advance of a press meet organised by United Students to introduce their candidates to the media at the Delhi University campus on 25th August.

“It is our wish to see a new leadership emerge from the Delhi University and it is our hope that the present quality of electioneering based on the traditions set by mainline political parties is brought to an end progressively. I am emboldened to suggest that with the candidature of United Students members for the posts of DUSU President, Secretary and Jt. Secretary, we are witnessing the beginning of a new chapter in student politics and leadership.

It is clear to us that the DUSU Elections 2006 will be a referendum on the issue of extending quotas to OBCs on the basis of caste. I urge all right thinking people, students of DU, and all those groups who have been against the short term policy of extending caste-based reservations to OBCs to come together to deliver a thumping victory to these candidates. They have carried out principled campaigns, exemplified ethics and fair play and they deserve to win.

I also welcome all groups, political or apolitical to come forward and show their solidarity with a clean break from the politics of the past and towards a new quality of leadership for the future”, he added.

Press Release

BSES inefficiency shows up in a blaze: East Delhi colony residents face the brunt of poor infrastructure, worsening service as cable explodes, burns car.

- *Company has not made investments in infrastructure, claim experts.*

New Delhi, 5th Aug: For residents of Priya Enclave, BSES is a four letter word. BSES maintained cables connecting a cluster of houses in this East Delhi colony started heating up and broke into flames at about midnight last night. In a matter of minutes there was a big bang and the cable exploded and fell on an Alto car belonging to a colony resident with the result that the car caught fire and was burnt out.

“Our desperate calls to BSES to first disconnect electricity to the pole went unanswered. Then when we rushed to the Saini Enclave complaint centre, we found the place locked. Even after calling the helpline, we did not have any response until 2.30 am in the morning. All this time people waited, alarmed at the sight and fearing for other related explosions,” said Sandeep Sharma, Secretary, Priya Enclave RWA.

Ironically, Priya Enclave is walking distance from the Karkardooma headquarters of BSES Yamuna Ltd, the private company responsible for upkeep and maintenance of the power utilities in the area.

Residents were further harassed when BSES personnel disconnected the entire areas supply. When they argued that other sectors of the colony should be allowed power supply, the BSES employees reportedly just left the scene. After irate residents started calling senior BSES officers, the lights were reconnected only at 5.30 in the morning, according to residents in the area.

“Even after all this, when I contacted the BSES officers they said they would come at their normal morning office time of 10 am to asses the situation. Even till 11 a.m., nobody from the company had even bothered to come here”, said Sharma.

“Death and devastation has been averted only due to the grace of God. Left to BSES we would have been burnt alive and untold damage could have happened here,” said an angry J.P. Narang, RWA President for the colony. “This is the happy result of privatisation,” he added.

Rajesh Dokwal, East Delhi Coordinator of URJA has said that members of URJA would write to DERC and file an appeal for recovering damages from BSES Yamuna for this entire mishap.” Our contention that BSES has not fulfilled its obligations in terms of investing in improvements in infrastructure is proved correct yet again. It is time the DERC simply dismissed this company and appointed a Government administrator in this area.”

Experts following the DVB privatisation have repeatedly pointed out that private companies are the recipients of large scale subsidies under the privatisation terms which were to be invested in bolstering infrastructure, but have since only fiddled with superficial changes and indulged in accounting jugglery to show fund utilisation.

Rakesh Bhardwaj, Gen. Secretary, Sheikh Sarai RWA has taken pictures of the manner in which BSES electricity boxes and other machinery is maintained. “ I have proved to them that their systems are in a mess,” he says.

The Priya Enclave RWA has since filed a police complaint claiming negligence against BSES Yamuna.

CISF use against consumers needs to be monitored: residents and senior citizens at risk of harassment, says RWAs.

New Delhi, 5th Aug: While welcoming the late decision of the state government at curbing power theft for which they made honest consumers pay for the last four years, RWAs have sounded a cautionary note. “Unfortunately our experience with DISCOMS tells us that residents are at risk of being illtreated by the CISF at the behest of private company contractors”, said URJA East Delhi coordinator, Rajesh Dokwal.

N.N. Mishra of Mayur Vihar RWA has had first hand experience. “If the BSES could induce the local police to come and openly threaten disconnection of consumers who were protesting power theft and manhandle the RWA office bearers, what can we believe about the CISF? The only thing that is certain is that the harassment of honest consumers has only been certified by the Chief Minister”, he said.

RWAs are also suspicious of the move. “We know for certain that for every case of power pilferage there is a direct involvement of the DISCOM employee. It is as simple as that. It is impossible for any consumer to have the know-how of opening the meter, replacing wires or circuitry to effect meter tampering. It is their internal corruption that has created this monster. But it goes without saying that this will become another tool in the hands of corrupt employees to extort money from unsuspecting consumers, said Atul Goyal, Karol Bagh RWA member and coordinator of URJA in West Delhi.

“There have been umpteen cases where DISCOM employees have forged theft cases on innocent consumers. The recent judgement by the Consumer Court is evidence of this modus operandi. We can expect more of the same,” said Ashok Prabhakar of Malviya Nagar RWA Federation.

Sanjay Kaul, President, People’s Action said, “There is reasonable concern among residents on this issue and we cannot accept unbridled use of CISF without an accompanying monitor. The spate of charges against DISCOMS misusing such force against residents of Delhi in an arbitrary manner cannot be ruled out. Therefore, we are petitioning the DERC to ensure a standard of compliance before such use is either permitted or used”.

Kaul also said that there is pressure on the DISCOMS to exhibit evidence of stopping theft and this might cause an overzealousness that would be detrimental in the interest of truth. “Their PR machinery is poised to grab every incident as a major recovery – we believe there is reasonable risk to honest consumers in this entire operation”.

Press Release

DISCOMS have much to hide on power privatisation: why resist RTI otherwise, ask RWAs. Government guilty of building a fortress around the DVB deal, say lawyers.

New Delhi, 4th Aug: RWAs attending RTI sermons from the Government of Delhi are bemused that the most crucial issue of power privatisation is kept out of the ambit of RTI while lakhs are spent on RTI camps by the Delhi Government.

“If the Chief Minister is really so concerned about empowerment of consumers, why is there silence on the fact that DISCOMS are fighting tooth and nail to be kept out of the ambit of RTI,” asked Atul Goyal, of the Karol Bagh RWA and URJA coordinator for West Delhi.

DISCOMS have gone to court to resist being included under RTI and have reportedly secured a stay on the issue. Residents and resident’s bodies had seen the RTI as a weapon to force DISCOMS to scrutiny on various issues including filing of ARR, loss reduction targets, investments in infrastructure and the entire range of the conditions of agreement with the Delhi Government.

Residents were convinced that they would have unearthed crucial information to indict private companies which many believe have taken unrestrained advantage of beneficial clauses included in the agreement at the behest of vested parties. The inert attitude of the Delhi Government has angered many. “Why has the government not supported transparency in this issue. It is impossible to believe that a 49% stakeholder cannot impose its position on its partner, particularly when the matter is of public interest,” said Rajesh Dokwal, URJA coordinator for East Delhi.

P.S. Sharda, advocate and a group member said that there has been a concerted attempt on behalf of the government of Delhi to shield the DVB privatisation deal from public scrutiny. “This is a clear manifestation of the same syndrome,” he said.

Old Rajendra Nagar RWA is particularly peeved at this because they had successfully unearthed incriminating information on the quality of roads earlier using RTI. “By seeking to keep itself outside the ambit of RTI, a clear signal has been sent that all is not above board in the privatisation deal and that there is much to hide,” said S.P. Gupta, Gen. Secretary of the RWA.

RWAs are also miffed with the DERC on the issue on transparency and information facilitation. “If inspite of having a Regulator to look after our interests, we have to apply for RTI one every occasion, what purpose is being served by the DERC. In fact, the DERC has on many occasions asked us to file with the RTI. What does that mean – are they themselves unaware or are they saying we will not divulge unless forced to so,”

asked Anant Trivedi, President Ishwar Nagar RWA who was advised to do so in a personal meeting with the Commission some time back.

Press Release

Meter terrorism is back: RWAs resist arm twisting by DISCOMS on meter replacements: residents up in arms over modus operandi to force residents to switch.

New Delhi, 4th Aug: RWAs from different parts of the city are reporting a dangerous trend being employed by DISCOMS of inducing meter replacements against the wishes of consumers through dubious means.

According to residents, the new methodology aimed at harassing residents is to first issue inflated bills to consumers, and when consumers complain the DISCOM team arrives to declare the meter faulty. Next they recommend a meter change, which invariably is an electronic meter which many consumers believe are pre-fixed to record higher consumption. Any attempt to resist this is countered with an out of context part of a High Court judgement on an issue which is yet to be resolved.

Ms. Tapashri of Ashok Vihar has already faced this situation but alarmingly, this is more or less being followed in the same sequence almost everywhere else. Of course, in places where there is a burn-out of meter or a genuine replacement necessity, the problem is worse – consumers have no choice but to replace these meters of the DISCOMS choice. Although the Electricity Act clearly gives the option to consumers to choose their meters, in the absence of any regulations on this issue has left consumers high and dry and at the mercy of extortionist DISCOMS.

Ashok Prabhakar, Gen. Secretary of Malviya Nagar Federation of RWAs is aghast at the prospect of being humiliated into replacing a meter.” This is unacceptable in any commercial dealing that consumers are at the mercy of shark-like mechanisms of service providers. We will not allow such replacements in our area”, he said.

Laliet Kumar, advocate and a resident of Rohini who has worked on the case says, “ It is mandated in the CEA that consumers should have the options to replace meters of their choice. It is also clearly said that the regulations for approving such meters must be laid down by the regulator. In the absence of any such due diligence, any replacement of meters by DISCOMS is technically illegal”.

People’s Action had in late July written to the DERC asking for clarifications on four points related to the meters being replaced but the DERC has not responded. “ We are more and more convinced that this is looking like a conspiracy of silence. The DERC’s unresponsiveness is a source of untold misery and harassment for the people of delhi. They need help and succour, or else DISCOMS will continue this ‘meter terrorism’ like before, said Sanjay Kaul, President, People’s Action.

People’s Action is taking a delegation of RWAs to the DERC on this issue.

Press Release

People's Action announces support to candidates for election to DUSU: Vandalism, violence and wastage must stop. We are looking for new leadership in student politics, says group.

New Delhi, 1st August: Prominent advocacy group People's Action has today announced that it will offer qualified support to any candidate that represents fresh thinking and a new approach to student politics and will "support, promote and sustain his or her candidature through the election".

People's Action is doing this in a bid to replace the old style of elections, electioneering and electoral practices with a brand new vision of what true future leaders should be like. Coming down heavily on political parties, that support groups that indulge in vandalism, violence and wastage, Col [retd.] D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary, People's Action said "Goondaism, money, liquor and bribery cannot be the basis for selection of future leaders of the country. This kind of preparation for politics must change."

Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action said "We have seen that the current quality of student leadership is only a poor reflection of the current quality of political leadership in the country. We believe the University of Delhi is not a place to mint leaders in the image of existing politics, but to create a new political language and image for such leadership as we believe to be ideal."

"We are willing to look at new candidates, or student groups either individually or collectively provided they conform to an agreed set of views. Within that, we are open to any formations that may be possible to inject a new sense of political activism in the student community," he added.

A DUSU Election Coordination Cell has been created for this purpose for candidates/groups to approach the group or meet for further consultations. The cell is being managed by Dinesh Dhiman of the group. The group has also asked that the recommendations of the J.M. Lyngdoh Committee must be implemented forthwith

"Posters inviting students desirous of standing for election or student groups looking for a better platform have already been distributed among the campus and there is a lot of excitement on this count. Whatever may be the outcome, one thing is clear: we have to put a stop to the existing quality of elections in DUSU and lift the standard of candidature and electioneering," said Pankaj Gupta, group coordinator, People's Action.

People's Action already supports the United Students group, which led the way in organising the first protests against reservations in April this year out side JN Stadium. United Students was also instrumental in organising the recent rally in support of Priyadarshini Mattoo, a DU Law College student who was brutally murdered almost ten years ago.

DERC questioned on allowing meter replacements: have all preconditions been met by DISCOMS, asks group.

New Delhi, 28th July: People's Action has written to the DERC asking for clarifications on meter replacements that have been resumed by DISCOMS under the shelter of an adverse ruling by the HC on a petition filed by a consumer last September..

The group has asked specifically if the DERC is satisfied that all preconditions employed in that judgement as well as the ones that came into force after the framing of regulations by the CEA have been met by the DISCOMS. However, there has been no response yet from the Commission even though the group had requested for a speedy reaction owing to hundreds of consumers making frantic enquiries on the issue.

The letter to DERC seeks pointed responses to four issues of concern to residents. The main text of the letter is reproduced below as it was addressed to Chairman, DERC.:

1. The HC order makes a reference to the installation of audit meters at appropriate levels to check losses: Has the DERC approved that the DISCOMS have complied.
2. The HC order has asked that consumers are notified of leakages and losses in three ways: at the time of installation; through the bill; and by inspections. Is the DERC satisfied that DISCOMS have followed this procedure in every case brought to their notice or where initiative is required to be taken by DISCOMS.
3. The HC order suggests that DISCOMS will continue to operate on ad-hoc basis on existing parameters regarding meter replacements until the regulations are framed by CEA. Pursuant to the fact that the CEA has framed regulations, have the ad-hoc terms of replacement ceased and what evidence has been provided your office that this is indeed the case.
4. Finally, reading the above point with Regulation 6.2 (c) along with 6.2 (b) of the CEA, can you confirm that the DERC has indeed issued regulations approving the meters being installed by DISCOMS including the ones on offer for consumers to replace at their will, in accordance with the regulations so stated in these clauses. If yes, can you please indicate dates on which such meter/specifications were issued approvals by the DERC, the name and makes of such meters and a copy of the approval letter.

“We are aware that DISCOMS have not performed by the book on many occasions and residents are justified in resisting the meter change until convinced that their interests are protected. In fact, there is still a big question mark on the approval of the meters based on the regulations framed by the CEA,” said Pankaj Gupta, group coordinator People's Action.

Category II colonies to be hit by Mixed Land Use recommendations of Tejindra Khanna Committee : RWAs that had petitioned for a downgrade to save property taxes will suffer.

- *Ministry is passing the buck of poor planning, pitting residents against residents, say URJA members*

New Delhi, 24 July : Major category II and III (C,D) colonies of Delhi are likely to be affected adversely due to implementation of Tejindra Khanna Committee report recommendations. Tejindra Khanna Committee recommendations under the mixed land use allows commercial activity in type 'C' downwards colonies. Before implementation of Unit area method for house tax some RWA's had sought to downgrade the categories of these colonies to 'C' and 'D' to escape higher house tax.

“ Now we will try to get the colonies upgraded to type I and oppose any commercial activity in these colonies as it will become major security threat to the residents, “ said Mr V.N.Bali, Secretary, Ram Vihar Residents Welfare Association, who had opposed the move at that time. “Moreover most of these colonies have regular authorised shopping centres with many shops still lying vacant” Mr Bali added. “Where is the need for mixed land use in such areas?”, he asked.

Members of Delhi's largest RWA body, United Residents Joint Action [URJA] have reacted with caution to the aspect of RWA (Resident Welfare Associations) consultations for allowing commercial activity in their colonies in the Tejindra Khanna Committee recommendations as a step that is “over ambitious, not thought through and a short cut methodology” and expressed doubts that the purpose will be served.

Member RWAs have other issues as well. “How can any RWA decide whether commercialisation should be allowed in Residential areas. This itself is self-contradictory as there can be no welfare of residents if there is commercialisation in residential areas”, said Brig. K.S.Chadha, President, Hargobind Enclave.

“Our experience is that the moment this sort of a caveat is brought into force, there will be extreme polarisation of views and opposite groups will emerge, leading to not only splits and dissensions but the propping up of many new RWAs based on vested interests,” said Atul Goyal, co-ordinator, West Delhi URJA

RWAs feel that contrary to the demand for empowerment of RWAs, this sort of power will create serious tensions in residential areas between opposite groups, which would become easy prey to political parties who want to extend their influence. “This recommendation holds the potential for the politicisation of RWAs,” said Sandeep Datta Gupta of Chittaranjan Park RWA

People's Action had argued that the proposal was an ad-hoc, “ face saving proposal and the residents of Delhi seem to have been caught between the ego-wars of various players

in the UD Ministry and the judiciary while the real culprit, the Delhi Government, is getting away scot free”.

Press Release

People's Action involves Sikandarpur traders to ease traffic logjam: traders agree to cooperate with proposed plans.

Gurgaon, 22nd July: In a first of its kind effort, People's Action led by Shashi Sharma took the initiative to involve the traders along the Sikandarpur area in a proposed plan for the improvement of the entry area into Gurgaon which has become a traffic roadblock for residents of Gurgaon for long.

Tired of administrative lethargy, People's Action had prepared a simulated Plan under the supervision of Kishore Asthana and Ravi Nayyar and presented it for implementation to the DC and the HUDA chief some time back. However, since no action was taken, People's Action authorised Col. Ratan Singh to warn the administration that unless urgent action was taken on the proposals, the group would begin a direct action campaign to force the administration's hands on the issue.

When the administration used the common excuse of not getting cooperation from traders along the Sikandarpur market, People's Action organised a meeting with a group of representatives of the market and tried to draw up a consensus on the issue of shared responsibilities.

“ Every trader we met said the same thing every resident has been saying: the traffic makes it impossible for customers to shop! ”, said Shashi Sharma, Convenor People's Action Gurgaon, of his first interaction with the traders group. “ Consequently, we have arranged a larger meeting and the consensus is the same. The Sikandarpur mess is a result of administrative lethargy and nothing else,” he added.

Col. Ratan Singh has meanwhile been assured by the HUDA administrator that full cooperation will be provided to the proposal submitted by the group.

“ The first thing we have asked for as per the plan submitted is the removal of the culvert divider that has been there for very long without any reason. Second, the removal of the hoarding pillar that is dividing the road on the culvert. Third, demarcation of lanes along the stretch of the market; fourth, space for parallel parking on both sides of the road. Fifth, a zebra crossing and a 45-second traffic light to allow people to cross over in orderly fashion,” said Ravi Nayyar who along with Kishore Asthana has drawn up the plan.

Sushil Goel, Proprietor of Bath Selections, one of the traders along Sikandarpur market stretch said, “We are the worst sufferers due to this traffic mess. Neither can a customer park, nor cross nor buy in peace for fear of his vehicle being towed away. Vikas Gupta of Jagdamba Traders also echoed similar views but termed the roundabout fountain as the main culprit. The meeting with traders was attended by Vinod jain, Rajesh Mittal, Pawan Garg, Ujjawal Goel, Anil Sharma, Amit Gupta and others from the area.

In addition, group members have also asked for allowing security guards employed by the market to be stationed there to ensure that all rules are followed and the banning of any carts etc in the area. The dividers after the fountain roundabout are also being asked to be extended so people cannot take illegal U –turns as is the case now.

Finally, the group has asked for the complete removal of the fountain from the area and a better mechanism to regulate traffic.

Press Release

Tejindra Committee recommendations on RWA consultations can create adverse reaction: RWAs will split, get politicised, say members.

- *Ministry is passing the buck of poor planning, setting residents against residents.*

New Delhi, 21st July: Members of Delhi's largest RWA body, United Residents Joint Action [URJA] have today reacted with caution to the aspect of RWA consultations in the Tejindra Committee recommendations as a step that is "over ambitious, not thought through and a short cut methodology" and expressed doubts that the purpose will be served.

"Our experience is that the moment this sort of a caveat is brought into force, there will be extreme polarisation of views and opposite groups will emerge, leading to not only splits and dissensions but the propping up of many new RWAs based on vested interests," said Pankaj Gupta, Group Coordinator of People's Action.

RWAs feel that contrary to the demand for empowerment of RWAs, this sort of power will create serious tensions in residential areas between opposite groups, which would become easy prey to political parties who want to extend their influence. "This recommendation holds the potential for the qualified politicisation of RWAs," said Rajesh Dokwal, URJA East Delhi coordinator.

"Many colonies in South Delhi already have more than one RWA competing for influence in the area. This step will only compound the problem," said Ashok Prabhakar, Malviya Nagar RWA Secretary.

Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action said, " This is once again a face saving proposal and the residents of Delhi seem to have been caught between the ego-wars of various players in the Ministry and the judiciary while the real culprit, the Delhi Government, is getting away scot free".

SC observations echo RWA views: URJA had cautioned the MoUD of the dangers of the precedent.

- Delhi CM indulging in doublespeak, say RWAs.

New Delhi, 17th July: Members of Delhi's largest RWA body, United Residents Joint Action [URJA] have today reacted with satisfaction at the observations of the SC on what they have constantly said was an attempt to defeat the directions of the apex court.

In a statement issued as far back as 12th April, URJA has cautioned the MOUD saying, "The Ministry's unusual softening on the stand after first trying to dent the SC order vide the Notification has been seen by the RWAs as a dangerous signal. RWAs across Delhi believe that overt appeasement of the trader lobby at the expense of the original order of the Courts will result in a seriously bad precedent."

URJA members have expressed disappointment at the manner in which the Chief Minister of Delhi has handled the issue. "The CM has exposed the double standards of the government of the state. On the one hand we have her talking about empowerment of RWAs and on the other the CM has petitioned for our defeat in this case", said Ashok Prabhakar of Malviya Nagar RWA referring to the manner in which the CM made representations to the PM to introduce the bill in the last session.

RWA members from all around Delhi have expressed deep concern at the manner in which laws are being twisted around to suit lobbies at the expense of the general good and sense of justice.

"We abhor this trend, and we denounce it," said Mrs. K. Khanna of Jungpura Extension RWA.

Press Release

Gurgaon SSP meets residents at doorstep, promises ‘action on the ground’

More meetings scheduled in the coming weeks

Gurgaon, July 10, 2006: “Law and order in Gurgaon is our first priority, development second,” said Gurgaon SSP, Hanif Qureshi spelling out the Haryana Government’s plans on security for the Millennium City.

Qureshi announced this to residents and RWA representatives at two different meetings organized at Sector 23 and Sushant Lok D-Block recently coordinated by People’s Action.

“People’s Action is coordinating a series of meetings of the SSP with the residents so that the senior-most police officer can get the real picture about security from the residents directly,” said Col Ratan Singh accompanying the SSP at both meetings on behalf of People’s Action. “In addition, residents should also utilize this opportunity to demand action on specific issues rather than just engage in discussions,” added Ratan Singh.

The first in the series of meetings was held on July 7 at the Sector 23 community center for the residents of Palam Vihar and sectors 23 and 23-A, which fall under Palam Vihar police chowki.

A number of issues were raised by the resident bodies: from poor traffic management to increasing cases of chain snatching and theft; from demand for servant verification to the demand for increased police patrolling; from a police thana in the area to checking menace by college students.

The residents also requested the SSP to coordinate with HUDA to make certain policy changes such as asking plot holders to build boundary walls and allowing residents to install gates at strategic points under the neighborhood watch scheme.

Overloaded and polluting autorickshaws in this part of the city received severe criticism from the RWA representatives. The SSP directed the incharge of the Palam Vihar police chowki to impound all unregistered and overloaded autorickshaws.

Difficulty in getting servant verification done from residents was another issue that the residents demanded the police to help in. They suggested to the SSP to make this legally binding on all residents, to which the SSP has agreed. The SSP has offered one constable per RWA to go door-to-door to complete servant verification procedures.

Regarding delay in filing FIRs, Qureshi directed the Palam Vihar Chowki to stamp and receive all applications made by the complainant in writing before the formal FIR is issued from the thana within 48 hours.

At the second meeting held on the next day, Sushant Lok and DLF residents had a range of demands too, many of them similar to what the residents at the earlier meeting had proposed and many specific to the area, some of which included diverting heavy vehicles coming from Faridabad and passing through the lanes of DLFs and Sushant Lok, increasing police patrolling in

the area, removing encroachments, stopping vehicle theft, ordering call-centers to park vehicles inside, and managing traffic on Sikanderpur road.

Agreeing to most of the demands made by the residents, and issuing on-the-spot orders for implementation, the SSP revealed a number of radical changes done in the police's functioning: "The district police have submitted a police modernization plan to the state government for approval, which will soon be in place. One of the requests is to restructure the police on the pattern of the Delhi police."

Gurgaon Police now have four independent Crime Detection Units (CDUs), one under each police station. Each CDU is staffed by 1 sub-inspector, 3 assistant-sub inspectors, and 20 constables, specifically responsible for investigating cases of house theft, vehicle theft, robbery, burglary, and chain snatching.

Some police chowkis are being upgraded to thanas – there will now be seven police stations in Gurgaon, and Palam Vihar will be one. Each police station will now have a modern reception room, staffed by trained police personnel where complainants can be comfortably seated and heard. Important telephone numbers of the police have been displayed at the entrance of every police chowki, including email and SMS contact.

There are now 5 lines on dialing 100, of which one line is dedicated to women and a second line to senior citizens. New software has been installed to improve interface between the police and the citizens. The number of traffic police has been increased from 60 to 130. The number of PCRs on 24-hr patrol duty has been increased from 6 to 18.

Among the many residents who attended the meeting in the sector 23 community centre was Maxwell Pereira, ex-commissioner, Delhi Police, who gave his suggestions to the Gurgaon SSP.

A review meeting will be held after one month from now to check the progress on the action points.

The following RWA officials attended the meetings:

Meeting 1 (July 7, Sector 23 Community Center)

Palam Vihar: Prem Sabhlok (President), Lajpat Gupta (Vice President), Mr Sharma (Gen Secretary)

Sector 23: Maj General Satbir Singh (President)

Sector 23-A: Malkhan Singh Yadav (President)

Meeting 2 (July 8, D-173, Sushant Lok 1 D Block)

DLF City: Sudhir Kapoor

Sushant Lok 1 D Block: Arun Lamba, Raji Nair, Nirja Asthana

Mahalaxmi Apartments: Vivek Gandhi

PWO Housing Colony: M.K. Gupta

Agrim Society: N.M. Goel

Ansal Properties

Dinesh Tyagi, Sr. FM, SEML

R.K. Yadav – Security In-charge, SEML

People's Action Gurgaon

Shashi Sharma, Convener

Col. Ratan Singh

Maj Gen Satbir Singh
Bhawani Shankar Tripathy
Kishore Asthana

Press Release

RWAs demand tariff reduction to reflect improvement in power reforms: If the DISCOMS are doing well, why are we paying more, ask residents.

- *Residents not willing to pay for theft any longer.*
- *RWA Convention of 14th July will respond to power and other issues of governance.*

New Delhi, 6th July: The conclusions of the Zonal group meetings of RWAs under the banner of URJA have consensually decided to press for a reduction of power tariff for the immediate term. The meetings have been held informally for the last one week and today representative members placed their opinions collectively for the Press.

“Our meetings with the DERC have been aimed at explaining to the Commission the concerns of the Residents with regard to inflated power tariff fixation that has been done to subsidise power theft for the last four years since privatisation”, said Promod Chawla, Convenor URJA. “This anomaly can only be rectified if the power companies are made to pay back honest consumers through a special ‘rewards’ package that starts with a generous reduction in tariff immediately,” he added.

“Delhi residents are expecting the DERC to reduce tariffs in view of the facts above. In addition, the overachievement of targets claimed by DISCOMS should mean more profits, which should translate into reduction of tariff,” said Pankaj Gupta, group coordinator People’s Action.

“We are glad that the DERC has been sympathetic to our concerns and we are looking forward to the new tariff proposals where residents are very hopeful for a sizeable reduction,” said P. S Sharda of East Delhi and a member of the meetings with the DERC.

“We have noticed that there has been all round approval of the power sector reforms in the capital. We are told that the CM is particularly convinced of the success of this scheme. DISCOMS and the TRANSCO too have been singing its praises. If we are to accept that, we have to see the benefits passing on to consumers, not just private parties,” said Sanjay Kaul, President People’s Action at the meeting.

The zonal group meeting was supported by Arvind Mehta and S.P. Gupta of Rajendra Nagar; Atul Goyal from Karol Bagh; N.N. Mishra and V.N. Bali of East Delhi; Ashok Sethi and Sandeep Dutta Gupta of South Delhi; S.S. Talwar of Naraina Vihar for West Delhi ; R.C. Kamboj from Rohini and Dr. Upadhyaya from Dwarka apart from various core group members of URJA and People’s Action.

RWAs of Delhi along with other civil society organisations will converge on the 14th July for the **All-Delhi RWA Convention** called by People’s Action to respond to the proposals of the Delhi Government on the power tariff and other issues. Prominent

personalities and political party members have also been invited to this Convention that is being billed as a 'Mahapanchayat of the Civil Society in Delhi.'

Press Release

People's Action calls for All-Delhi RWA Meet on 14th July:
Full-Day Convention to react to decision of Government on power tariff and other issues. *Biggest independent civil society gathering will invite other NGOs, associations and political party heads on discussions on Governance.*

New Delhi, 5th July: People's Action has today confirmed that a composite meeting of Delhi RWAs, associations, activists, NGOs and activists will be held on 14th July at the IIC Auditorium. The full-day Convention is also being called to celebrate one full year of People's Action's intervention in Delhi.

"It was on the 14th of July last year that we called the very first All-Delhi RWA Convention on the issue of the power tariff hike and that is where the campaign of consolidating civil society groups in Delhi began. On 14th of July this month, we will take this work further and try and build a larger platform of citizens," said Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action.

The agenda for the Convention will be divided into sessions and working group meetings where specific issues and decisions on those issues will be taken at a collective level. "We have also invited, apart from People's Action's prominent members like Roshan Seth, former CBI Director Joginder Singh, other association and NGO heads and political party heads of the BJP and the Congress, and even CPI," said Pankaj Gupta, Group Coordinator.

The Convention will also serve to take a collective decision on the issue of tariffs, which is a matter of serious concern among residents of Delhi. RWAs are demanding a reduction in tariff in view of the overachievement claimed by DISCOMS and the good marks that the reforms are being given by the Government. "Surely, if everything is fine, consumers should get the benefit first," said Sanjay Kaul reminding that the campaign to pay 50% less was in fact an illustration that residents have been paying double of what they should have over the last four years.

"If the Government wants us to believe that the Privatisation of DVB was a good move, then it must immediately start talking about reduction of tariffs," he concluded.

Terming the All-Delhi Convention of RWAs as a **Mahapanchayat of the Civil Society**, Kaul said that this would lay the foundations for a stronger citizen's movement that will be a model for the entire country to follow.

Press Release

RWAs of Rajendra Nagar, Karol Bagh, Kailash Colony write to DISCOMS, DERC: will pay only 50% of bills from next cycle.

- **Power cuts unabated:** city residents reel under black outs. If we can have power cuts, why not tariff cuts, ask RWAs.

New Delhi, 4th July: RWAs from West, North and North West Delhi today sounded the bugle in the fight against extortion of money from honest consumers by increasing tariffs over the last four years to subsidise theft.

“How can any right minded person agree to such a proposition. It is even more shocking that the Delhi Government has qualified this as official policy to make honest consumers pay for the theft of electricity by others while the DERC has given a long rope to the DISCOMS to stop theft at their own sweet pace,” said Arvind Mehta of Rajendra Nagar Double Storey RWA.

Ms. Shobhana Menon of Karol Bagh WEA RWA has also sent a letter indicating that residents reject the policy of charging honest bill payers for the theft of others and will start deducting 50% from the next bill cycle.

Kailash Colony RWA Secretary Ms. Kiran Chadha has also expressed the same thoughts in a letter to the DISCOM in their circle. “ We cannot accept this draconian policy, she said, signalling that residents would join the campaign and pay only 50% of their next bills as a mark of their protest.

Incensed by the unending spate of power cuts faced in almost all parts of the city, RWAs have also demanded a tariff reduction to make up for the harassment they have had to undergo for the past weeks. “ If this is the idea of privatisation, we don’t need it,” said Atul Goyal of Karol Bagh.

Residents from all over Delhi have reported unabated power cuts today as well and sought the DERC’s intervention in providing compensation against the losses suffered by residents due to power cuts. This is a deficiency of service and we deserve compensation, said v>n. Bali of ram Vihar in East Delhi which has seen power cuts of five hours today.

“ We have been provided no alternatives: there is a single distributor and I cannot change my service provider. What are his obligations to wards supply to me. How can the DERC be so concerned about tariff increases to suit their pocket but have no interest in protecting consumers, asked Atul Goyal of Karol Bagh.

Press Release

People's Action asks DERC to slash tariffs:

If reforms are working so well, why aren't consumers getting any relief ?

DERC is not asking tough questions, says group.

- DERC avoids 12-day RWA meetings schedule proposed by URJA.

New Delhi, 4th July: How can it be that the reforms are on the target, but the target of reforms is still suffering with high power bills and poor electricity delivery: that was the tenor of the arguments proposed by members of People's Action and URJA in their back to back meetings last week with the DERC on the issue of 'theft' and service standards of DISCOMS since privatisation. Members of the group argued against any subsidies on the basis that the reduction in ATC losses should more than justify the reduction in tariff that have been increasing since the time of privatisation.

"If the statements of the Commission that one percentage point reduction of losses is equivalent to 80-90 Crores is accurate, then the overachievement claimed by DISCOMS should warrant a bounty for consumers. How come residents of Delhi still have not got the benefit of such sterling performance by the DISCOMS," asked Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action.

"Could the reason be that the DISCOMS have juggled their figures to neutralise all over achievement against increase in distribution costs," asks Pankaj Gupta, group Coordinator of People's Action. "We have references from a study by a Pune-based group that seems to suggest as much", he added.

"If that is proved to be correct, we are looking at another brazen attempt to befool the public at large. More importantly, it proves once again the laxity of the DERC in refusing to look at the plain and simple attempt at fixing figures by DISCOMS," said Promod Chawla, Convenor URJA.

URJA members had on Friday sent a 12-day schedule of meetings with three RWAs from different areas of Delhi per day for the DERC, which was politely refused by the Commission on the grounds that they had understood the concerns put forth by members of People's Action and URJA and it would serve no purpose in meeting others to discuss the same. "Clearly, the DERC is not comfortable with meeting the very people it seeks to serve or whose interests it is supposed to represent", said Anant Trivedi of Ishwar Nagar RWA.

Clarifying that the current tariffs were close to double of what they should be, Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action said, "The 50% less campaign is as much a campaign against power theft as it is against the practice of charging the honest for the dishonesty of others. It is also an indicator of the fact that the genuine tariff should be in the region

of half the current tariff,” urging DERC to provide relief to consumers in Delhi by slashing the power tariff by 50% immediately. Considering that honest consumers have paid for theft for the last four years, a 50% reduction in tariff is not only valid, but much needed to establish the faith of consumers in the power reforms process.

Press Release

Satyawati Colony RWA to join the 50% Less campaign: we cannot be made to pay for the theft in some other part of the city, says RWA.

New Delhi, 29th June: North Delhi based Satyawati Colony RWA has today joined the protest against exploiting honest consumers by jacking up tariff to neutralise the losses incurred due to theft of power.

Rejecting the policy of the Power Ministry to charge honest consumers for the dishonesty of others, the RWA in a letter to the DISCOM said, “DISCOMS have failed miserably to eliminate the theft of power even after being in operation for the last four years”.

Mr. Shyam Agnihotri, Gen. Secretary of the Jan Kalyan Nagrik Parishad Satyawati Colony, Ashok Vihar-III in his letter to the DISCOM said, “All our residents are law abiding citizens and they have no intention to not pay your bills but are determined not to subsidise the theft anymore. We appreciate that as per your declaration theft has been reduced to a considerable extent. But since we have had to pay for the theft nearly for 4 years, the 50% deduction is commensurate with our determination to recover previous over billing.”

“We are aware that NDPL has shown greater concern and care for customers and have been more diligent in their efforts to curb theft and this campaign must not be seen as against them. Our campaign is aimed at the Government of Delhi and its stated policy of making the honest man pay for the dishonest. This is unacceptable to every right thinking person and must be recalled immediately,” said Pankaj Gupta, of People’s Action.

Press Release

East Delhi RWAs meet DERC : demand censure of BYPL and withdrawal of license: matter will be taken up at DISCOMS meeting tomorrow, says DERC.

- Residents meet on Sunday resolves to continue 50% theft protest

New Delhi, 26th June: East Delhi RWAs led by Mayur Vihar Phase II members today had an unscheduled meeting with the Chairman and members DERC on the issue of the growing discontentment with the performance of the BSES Yamuna [BYPL] distribution company which has the license to distribute power in East Delhi.

N.N. Mishra, President of the Mayur Vihar RWA whose residents were manhandled by police under instructions from BYPL bosses led the charge that the DERC was losing control of the situation. P.S. Sharda, advocate and a resident of East Delhi who witnessed the incident pressed the DERC Chairman to accede to the representation of the residents to censure the BYPL bosses on their reported behaviour against residents who had paid their bills but were threatened with disconnection nevertheless.

Anant Trivedi, representing URJA in the meeting said that DERC must issue strictures against BYPL for their involvement in large scale theft in the East Delhi area “which could not take place without their direct or indirect involvement”. DERC members, short of agreeing to the statement, did accept that incidents of involvement of contractors of DISCOMS in power theft have come to light.

The DERC Chairperson Birjendra Singh assured the group that the BYPL issue will be taken up at a common meeting organised for tomorrow with DISCOMS to evaluate their poor service standards. The members of DERC assured the group that BYPL CEO will be questioned separately on the incident and a satisfactory response given to residents.

On Sunday, irate residents met in the Mayur Vihar Phase II Pocket F park to vent their anger on the issue. RWAs of other adjoining areas also participated in the meeting. Members of People’s Action and URJA who spoke on the occasion pressed on the point that there can be no theft without the active or passive involvement of the DISCOM and therefore it has become necessary to treat the DISCOM as a co-accused in every case of theft.

Residents agreed to continue their protest against paying for power theft through similar means as before and demanded action against BYPL. The meeting with DERC this morning was a result of the conclusions of the meeting yesterday.

Press Release

Seven hour power cuts in East Delhi : Supreme Court order comes to nothing - DISCOM distributes schedule of cuts for September!

New Delhi, 26th June: Residents in East Delhi colonies are unable to understand the reasons for continued power cuts ranging from four to seven hours everyday for the last week in various parts of the area without any notification from the local DISCOM. “ We don’t understand why BYPL is having such a problem when other areas of Delhi don’t seem to so worse-off, ” said, Varinder Arora of Kiran Vihar. Arora has been without electricity since morning today. “ This has been the situation since the last two weeks”, he complains.

RWAs of various colonies in East Delhi have expressed serious reservations about the manner in which power cuts were becoming the norm rather than the exception. “ It is not understood why there is a shortfall when in fact according to the Powergrid tables, Delhi is drawing less than allocated. Obviously the fault is in the distribution mechanism,” said Rajesh Dokwal, Zonal Coordinator for URJA in East Delhi, who has himself been on the phone to lodge a complaint at the erratic supply.

“The Supreme Court’s intervention in May this year asking the Delhi Government to explain the poor power situation in spite of four years of privatisation has not been able to galvanise the DISCOM,” says C. Shashidharan, resident of Mayur Vihar III, Pocket1.

To add insult to injury, the BYPL has distributed pamphlets predicting power cuts and listed an official schedule of power cuts that extends up to September. “Why do we need such a private company here? In fact what was the point of privatisation if we had to only pay more and get less,” he added.

BSES Yamuna Limited, the company licensed to distribute power in East Delhi is already under the scanner for various malpractices and residents groups are demanding a serious investigations into its corporate practices based on allegations that contractors of the company are directly involved in abetment of theft in the area.

Press Release

Prices of vegetables have risen 10 times in just 40 days! Delhi Government has lost control of the state administration, says People's Action. Minister of Food & Civil supplies was napping while prices spiralled.

New Delhi, 23rd June: People's Action has today written to the Minister of F&CV, Raj Kumar Chauhan asking him to explain a ten-times increase in vegetables and commodities prices in a span of just 40 days. The Department of Food & Civil Supplies had declared the wholesale rates of tomatoes at Azadpur Mandi at Rs 2.50-Rs 4 on the 9th of May. Today it is selling at Rs. 25-30 in wholesale markets across Delhi while retail prices are touching Rs. 45 per kilo. Other vegetables fare similarly.

“The entire administration is paralysed and Government control is almost defunct,” said Pankaj Gupta, group coordinator of People's Action. “They have no idea of what is going on and they have no explanations,” he added.

The fact that prices have taken such a massive upturn should have galvanised the administration and the Minister into reading the fine print on the issue. “Obviously, there is more to this than meets the eye,” said Gupta.

“The Delhi Government is now a slave of cartels, be it the trader cartel or the transporter cartel. Thanks to the support, or at the very least the active indifference of the Minister and his administration, everyone is having a field day, except the citizens of the state, who are paying through their nose,” said members of the group.

The letter to Chauhan also asks him to order an enquiry into why mutton prices did not deflate after the bird-flu scare abated while chicken prices rose to earlier levels.

Rejecting the Finance Minister statements about this being seasonal variations, Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action said, “The Minister's pristine spoken English should not cloud the facts. Where is the Tsunami, where is the bird flu of pulses, where are the floods and where indeed is the killing heat of the deserts for him to suggest season as the culprit. Why doesn't he bite the bullet and admit that it is his Government and the State administration that was taking a summer holiday.”

“It would be no exaggeration to say that Mr. Chauhan is a liability to the state and the citizen: he has made life impossible for everyone in Delhi and just for that maybe he should explain what he was doing in the last forty days while prices were spiralling out of control,” added Kaul.

Press Release

People's Action and URJA representatives meet DERC: seek dismissal of BYPL and appointment of a Government Administrator for East Delhi region.

- Don't even think about a price increase, says group.

New Delhi, 22nd June: Actor Roshan Seth on behalf of People's Action, Promod Chawla, Convenor and Sushil Anand of Malviya Nagar RWA on behalf of URJA went into an unscheduled meeting with the DERC Chairman and Members after yesterday's incidents regarding BYPL in Mayur Vihar and apprised the Members of the public anger building up against the practices and performance of BYPL in East Delhi.

RWA representatives from South Delhi including Col. Shivraj from Munirka were also present at the DERC office. RWAs urged the DERC Chairman Mr. Birjendra Singh to intervene in favour of consumers who were having to pay exorbitant power rates due to the connivance of BSES staff in organised theft in the area. Sushil Anand also warned the DERC members that residents will not tolerate another price hike if that was being contemplated. Chairman DERC promised to take residents' views into account on this issue.

Mayur Vihar RWA was asked to defer its *dharna* in front of the DERC office after the Chairman and members were sympathetic to the resident's views on the incidents of yesterday where abnormal police force was used on honest consumers of Mayur Vihar under the influence of BYPL. "Residents have demanded a censure of the BYPL by the DERC failing which URJA will take the issue on to the streets," said Ashok Prabhakar, Gen. Secretary of SAHYOG, the Malviya Nagar Federation of RWAs.

The Chairman and members came out to meet other members of the delegation and to promise action on the issue of theft.

Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action submitted that in view of the fact that theft in East Delhi was among the highest and that BYPL CEO had been named as a party to the theft, the DERC was within its rights to dismiss BYPL and appoint an Administrator until a better candidate company was enlisted, as in the case of Orissa.

URJA members also pointed out that BYPL has a dismal service record and was among the worst performer on various parameters and has not been able to improve itself even after several notices by the Government and the DERC.

Press Release

DERC must step out of the shadow of BSES: letter demands action against BYPL for abetment of theft and seeks compensation to consumers.

New Delhi 20th June: People's Action has today asked the DERC to take immediate action against the BYPL for its role in perpetuating, inducing, or abetting theft of power in East Delhi either directly or indirectly through agents, contractors or henchmen and deliver justice to lakhs of consumers who have been made to pay the huge burden of theft over the last four years.

In a letter to the DERC the group has reiterated its position regarding setting tariffs high enough to accommodate losses due to theft, and said:

May I, for the benefit of the Commission repeat our view :

1. We believe that the position that honest people must pay for the dishonest is untenable [ref: Power Secretary's document released Feb. 6th 2006]
2. We believe that theft cannot occur without direct or indirect involvement of the principal agency involved in distribution: a corollary of which is that the DISCOM is, in fact, a party to the theft.

Therefore, to suggest that an innocent, honest consumer of electricity must now pay for the partnership in crime of the DISCOM is unacceptable to us.

Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action has argued that it is inconceivable that theft can occur without the active involvement of BYPL employees. **“It can be conclusively proved that theft cannot take place without the active or passive collusion of DISCOM officials.** They own the lines, they own the poles, the transformers, even the meters in our houses. The people who fix these meters are their employees, the people who check these meters are their employees. They have powers to enter homes, raid premises and yet they are not able to control theft. Clearly, there is a vested interest in keeping things status quo. Is it that they recover vast monies in cash for allowing such theft ? ”, he asked.

The letter also warned the Commission that it was being seen as being soft on the DISCOMS and demanded that the DERC acts in favour of consumers as it was mandated to do or else it would stand to lose its credibility.

“It is commonly perceived that the BSES company exerts undue influence on the working of the DERC. It is now for the DERC to protect consumers from the mafiosi-style operations of BSES in East Delhi where it has started threatening consumers for choosing to protest against theft in their areas,” said Rajesh Dokwal, East Delhi representative of the URJA grouping of RWAs.

Press Release

Complaint lodged against BYPL Chief for abetment of power theft: six other charges listed against company officials with Anand Vihar Police Station.

New Delhi, 14th June: Agitating residents of East Delhi along with members of URJA and People's Action who met to protest the Government's decision on extending a power-theft holiday to senior bureaucrats by agreeing to a 50% cut on their power bills, turned their anger towards the DISCOM in East Delhi accusing it of being party to power theft in the area.

Angry residents representatives marched from the Karkardooma crossing to Anand Vihar Police Station where they registered their complaint with the SHO, Om Prakash Singh at 5.40 p.m. today. The complaint requests the registration of a FIR against the CEO and the COO of BYPL holding them responsible for large scale power theft in the area and attempt to profit at the expense of honest consumers of power.

The points mentioned in the case against the BYPL officers recounted seven instances beginning with abetment of theft, protection of such thieves and withholding their identity and facts; wilful delay in action against such identified and un-revealed persons; gainful fraud due to unrecorded income from sources that steal power; passing on liabilities to unsuspecting honest consumers for such shortfalls in accounting; issuing of threats to complaining consumers and wilful contempt of the Court.

“The case against the BYPL chiefs follows a simple logic: if the area under BYPL and all the apparatus for the transmission of power is in their control, BYPL has absolute and full knowledge where their power is being distributed, where it is lost. It is inconceivable, for example, that a soft drink distributor can come back to the manufacturer and say that he was unable to figure out where forty of his 100 crates went. In such a case, the distributor will make good the loss or face legal action. That is just the case we have”, said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action.

“ If the DERC operates on the basis of ARR's filed by DISCOMS, it is logical that any losses shown by it on account of theft is accommodated thereafter by the DERC through the power tariffs. In that event, it is really the DISCOMS that are causing huge tariff burden to bill paying, honest consumers due to their non-action on controlling power theft. It is between them and the Government to settle that issue. How can they expect the consumer to take that burden?,” said Promod Chawla, Convenor of URJA.

“BYPL has full knowledge of power theft in the area under its control since the last four years: it has refused to act against them for dubious reasons causing unbridled power tariff hikes and created enormous liabilities for the state and the citizens. It must pay us back,” added Rajesh Dokwal, East Delhi Coordinator of URJA.

Press Release

Have bureaucrats joined the 50% less campaign : decision throws up questions. Was Government under pressure from bureaucrats who refused to pay for power theft, asks group.

New Delhi, 8th June: People's Action group members have termed the recent decision of the Delhi Government to offer a 50% rebate on their electricity bills a victory, of a different sort.

“It is completely possible that bureaucrats, having realised that they too were being made to pay 50% extra to make up for power theft losses, put their foot down. Which right thinking person will not ? And it is completely possible that to control the situation from getting out of hand, the Government of Delhi quietly agreed to their demand and projected the relief as a ‘perk’, said Pankaj Gupta, Group coordinator.

People's Action has been running a campaign to press for the rationalisation of power tariff in Delhi which have been hiked artificially to accommodate the losses due to power theft that have varied from close to 60% at the time of DVB privatisation to about 40% now claimed. Power tariff in Delhi now represents an average inflationary component of 50% to account for the theft subsidy. In effect, that means that every person in Delhi who pays his bill, pays double, to make up those who do not pay their bills, or steal electricity.

“We welcome the admission of guilt on behalf of the Delhi government in extending this facility, albeit under a different pretext, to bureaucrats who would not stand for such a policy. But we also urge it to speedily extend the same facility on similar, or any other pretext to other Government servants and residents of Delhi,” said Gupta while maintaining that the campaign has found tremendous support from all sections of residents and that a large number of bureaucrats are among those who have been taking a keen interest in the group's recent campaign.

The group has however taken exception to the statements by the CM saying that it smacked of a direct insinuation that other government servants do not work hard enough to warrant a similar perk. “ Maybe the CM should not have tried to make it look as if only a section of the bureaucracy is competent enough to receive a perk”, said Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action.

Press Release

URJA condemns Delhi Government's largesse: public money being used to play favourites. How did DERC allow this caveat, asks group.

New Delhi, 8th June: RWAs all across Delhi are incensed at the decision of the Government to offer a 50% rebate to select categories of bureaucrats on the grounds of 'perks'.

"This decision is an interesting reflection of our current campaign to pay only 50% our bills. Either this is an indirect admission of the fact that even bureaucrats have joined our campaign, or this Government is keeping some people happy for dubious reasons", said Promod Chawla, URJA Convenor.

Reacting strongly to this development, Anant Trivedi, Convenor South Delhi URJA asked, " Who decided that this rebate is available to the Delhi Government to throw around as a job incentive? Was the DERC asked, and under what clause have they allowed this departure from norms ? "

Rakjesh Dokwal, URJA Coordinator for East Delhi said, " I have been inundated by calls from irate residents from the entire area expressing shock at this cavalier attitude of the government. For a city that is reeling under abnormal tariff rates, to mark out a few chosen favourites for a 50% discount smacks of favouritism and suspect motives."

URJA members have decided to organise protest meetings all over Delhi against this development and bring greater attention to the issue of artificially hiking tariffs to neutralise power theft losses to the benefit of DISCOMS.

"We believe that this Government is under great pressure to revise tariffs in view of the unwitting admission by the Power Secretary Delhi that rates have been jacked up so that honest bill payers make up for the losses incurred due those who do not pay. This move to appease a section of the bureaucracy may be an attempt to keep many more skeletons inside the closet", said Chawla.

At a meeting held this morning by the core managing group of URJA to discuss the development, People's Action President, Sanjay Kaul said, "This will only irritate consumers who are already protesting that they are being made to pay for somebody else's crime through increased tariffs. Let the Government either extend it to all residents or withdraw it."

Press Release

Roshan Seth takes on the DISCOMS, DERC: won't pay more than 50% of electricity bill to protest theft charges being recovered from honest consumers.

New Delhi 5th, June 2006: Turning up the heat on the Delhi Government and the DERC to reset power tariffs in favour of honest consumers, Roshan Seth eminent actor and member of People's Action has today publicly declared that he will not support the current practice of making honest consumers pay for the dishonesty of others.

At a press conference at New Delhi today, Roshan Seth said "It would be fair to say that several millions of people who pay electric bills in Delhi will not argue with the injustice of having to pay for those who steal electricity. I am one of them.

Many people have passed a resolution to oppose this perverse policy and, perhaps, to replace it with something more just. I have publicly supported them.

Many people have already paid 50% of their electric bill and had payments rejected by BSES. My payment has also been rejected. I must face the consequences because I have taken a stand against unfair coercion."

Seth is supported by a number of RWAs in Delhi who have begun large scale protests against the stated policy of increasing tariffs to adjust losses incurred due to theft by DERC under submissions made by private DISCOMS.

The entire issue came to public light after a status paper released by the power secretary in February claimed that this policy would be followed until theft stopped. Curiously, the report also agreed that this policy is unfair. [For copy of report, pl. contact undersigned]

RWAs of Mayur Vihar and Vishwas Nagar in East Delhi and Sheikh Sarai in South Delhi have already submitted payments of 50% less to DISCOMS which have resisted accepting them. Rajesh Dokwal, East Delhi coordinator of URJA said, " Consumers have a right to protest and the laws under the Electricity Act allow us to take recourse to interim payments until the dispute is settled. We congratulate Mr. Mishra, Mr. Rohatgi and Mr Bhardwaj and the residents they represent for the stand they have taken."

"These groups are building a case to put pressure on the Government to withdraw the policy of punishing innocent consumers for the crimes of others. This policy of making the honest pay for the dishonest of others is neither sustainable in law, nor concomitant with any sense of justice", said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action.

Press Release

People's Action seeks details of deaths in Delhi due to medico's stir: asks CM to clarify position on reservations, bring strikes to end.

New Delhi, 29th May: Turning up the heat on the state machinery, members of People's Action have today demanded a count of those that have directly or indirectly died due to lack of medical attention at hospitals all across Delhi.

In a letter to the Chief Minister of Delhi, the group has quoted press reports, which have so far confirmed seven deaths during the first week of the strike. "There was a total strike of medicos on the 25th May and we have had no information of the number of casualties reported so far. It is incumbent on the State Government to reveal number of people who have died due to the Government's mishandling of the Doctor's stir," said group members.

The letter also seeks an explanation from the Chief Minister for not engaging in negotiations with striking Doctors to find means to defuse the strike. "It is unconscionable that the CM has not found it fit to try and find a solution to this monstrous situation where the poor and the weak have to suffer such miserable treatment due to a stalemate in which they have no role", said Pankaj Gupta, Group coordinator for People's Action.

In the course of the letter demanding more proactive role from the CMO in bringing the strikes to an end, the group has also asked the CM to express her support to the anti-reservationists to provide a 'healing touch' to the student community. The letter also mentions that the CM herself is the product of a prominent college of Delhi and that it was expected of her to show solidarity with the suffering students of the city.

"As citizens of Delhi, it is our right to direct the CM to bring the situation immediately under control in the city and to ensure that the poor and the sick do not have to suffer due to two parties who disagree", said Col. [retd.]D.K. Shandilya, General Secretary of People's Action.

Press Release

URJA writes to DERC: Why is the DERC holding up tariff reduction when DISCOMS are willing?

New Delhi, Thursday, May 18th: The all-Delhi RWA body, URJA, has written to the Chairman DERC demanding an immediate rationalisation of tariff in accordance with the statements of NDPL and BSES where both private parties have claimed reduction in losses and over achievement in their respective areas.

In his letter, Anant Trivedi South Delhi Coordinator for URJA stated, “Mr. Chairman, it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to explain to our members what could be holding up a Regulator, set up to protect consumer interests, to provide immediate relief to consumers. We are unable to understand why the DERC would want to obstruct the process for providing a rationalization in tariff when private parties are more than willing to offer the same.”

On May 11th, NDPL was reported to have stated in a prominent national daily that it had been able to make substantial reduction in losses and was prepared to offer reduced rates to consumers in its zones. However, it had clarified that the decision to that effect would have to come from DERC.

The BSES had also, interestingly, in a letter to the Mayur Vihar RWA on the same day claimed overachievement of loss reductions and clearly put the onus of any revision of tariff on the DERC.

In view of the position taken by DISCOMS, it has now become curious that the DERC would be dragging its feet on an issue that has had the consumers fuming over the last two months.

Trivedi, in his letter has clearly indicated that in light of the recent statements of the DISCOMS, it would be held against the DERC that it was stalling the process of ordering a reduction in tariffs. “I can assure you that this situation is putting the role of the DERC under stress among our membership.” he said.

Press Release

Delhi Government's capitulation to traders is a blow to the RWA movement: final nail in the coffin of Bhagidari, say RWAs.

New Delhi, 12th May: The introduction and passing of the bill to stop the sealings and demolitions in Delhi by the MoUD at the behest of the Delhi government is seen by most residents as a sinister campaign to defeat the directions of the Supreme Court.

RWAs which had initiated the action against unbridled commercialisation in residential areas and those that had fought against illegal constructions are feeling let down by the very administration they thought would support them.

“The smiling face of the CM along with Delhi MP's after they came out of the meeting with PM to press for a stop to the sealings and demolitions, will remain etched in the minds of all Delhi RWAs as the ultimate stab in their back”, said Promod Chawla Convenor of URJA.

Rajesh Dokwal, East Delhi Coordinator for URJA said: “On behalf of RWAs of East Delhi who are bearing the brunt of commercialisation of their areas I have no hesitation in saying that the MP of this area has worked against every law abiding citizen of this city and this zone. RWAs of East Delhi are regretting the support they gave this government in the last elections”.

South Delhi RWAs are most upset with the decision of the Government. Sandeep Dutta Gupta of CR Park expressed his anguish over the actions of the Delhi government saying, “ The charade of Bhagidari is over. The truth of this scheme is now exposed for all to see. At no point during this crisis did the CM ever take the side of the RWAs”.

GK-I RWA and defence Colony RWAs are also astounded at the manner in which the CM batted for the traders.

An RWA federation of Rohini has now demanded a probe into the Bhagidari scheme to understand what the purpose of the entire exercise was if the interests of residents and RWA concerns are not to be accommodated.

Press Release

Another RWA deposits 50% of power bills: Civil disobedience movement spreads to Shahdara areas in East Delhi.

New Delhi, 11th May: Vishwas Nagar RWA today became the second RWA in less than a week to follow up on the resolution passed by the RWA a month back and deposited the first set of bills received from the local DISCOM after reducing it by 50%.

Mr. P.C Jain of the Vishwas Nagar RWA along with a dozen members of the area went to the DISCOM office at Karkardooma at 11.30 and sought deposition of the bills in bulk along with a protest note saying they would not be party to the subsidisation of theft through increased tariffs for honest bill payers.

The Vishwas Nagar RWA deposited 22 bills today since their cycle ends day after tomorrow. “ As we get the bills and their last date approaches we will continue to follow the same process,” said Mr. R.K. Agarwal, a RWA member who led the delegation.

The DISCOM initially refused to accede to the request but when they saw the growing numbers of residents coming into the premises they organised a telecon with the PR office. Mr. Rajesh Dokwal of URJA East Delhi suggested to them that since consumers are within their rights to pay under protest according to the rules of the CEA, BSES Yamuna should simply accept the 50% payments and if they could not do so, they should give it in writing.

Members of the RWA also demonstrated with placards for a short while when they were first refused an official refusal by BSES officials.

After the usual confusion at the office premises, the DISCOM officers finally arranged a meeting at the top floor with Mr. Saraf who looks after the network operations and secured a letter confirming that they were unable to receive the bills citing ‘rules’.

URJA members will now be able to challenge this in the courts after having completed the first formality in the case, informed Rajesh Dokwal.

Press Release

People's Action dismayed at PM's statements on private sector quota hints. Look who's talking, says group.

New Delhi: 20th April: People's Action has reacted with disappointment at the spectre of the country's Prime Minister making a pitch for social responsibility from the private sector when in fact he presides over the failure of his own administration to deliver anything remotely like that. The statement follows:

We are amazed at the temerity of the PM to be talking down to a group of people who have in fact delivered on their promises, created wealth and prosperity for lakhs of Indians and continue to employ gainfully all that this country is able to produce by way of graduates. What we would like to see is Dr. Singh following his own advice and trying to deliver on the fundamental and constitutional right of his countrymen, and citizens, to a decent basic education.

Should he do that, he would be spared the miscued addresses to industry captains asking them to do his homework.

The failure of the Government at the centre and at the State level is being translated into a mischievous campaign of obfuscation and deceit, seeking to hide and distract from the criminal negligence of the primary education apparatus, process and systems. In effect the PM is pleading with the private sector to cover up his failures on the education front.

Through his insinuations, Dr. Singh is in fact asking to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. The entire respect that has been gained by Indian industry for India in the face of almost every obstruction that governments over successive regimes could have created is now being sought to be compromised by asking industry to dumb down to accommodate his colleagues' electoral futures.

The *Eklavya* phenomenon, where you ask the best and the brightest to sacrifice their skills for some other considerations or seeking to average down everything that works well, is in fact an old knee-jerk reaction of politicians when faced with electoral challenges, short term or long term. We can only opine that there is impending crisis in the Congress government internally.

Clearly, the PM is under pressure to accommodate some castiest members of his team: or is it just that the famed secularism of the Congress cannot be applied to education. His colleague, Mr. Arjun Singh's diatribes against the Hinduvta engineering of textbooks is relived, only this time we are asking for the detoxification of caste from the education system.

Is this the same Dr. Singh that is considered the beacon of reforms and is this his idea of taking the reform process further. Frankly, will the real Dr. Manmohan Singh please stand up?

Press Release

**URJA submits Memorandum of dissent to Minister of UD:
Members picket Ministers office: will not accept any solution
unless RWAs views are accommodated.**

New Delhi, 12th April: Members of Delhi's largest RWA body, United Residents Joint Action [URJA] today picketed the office of the Minister of Urban Development, Jaipal Reddy to submit a Memorandum demanding consultations with RWAs as a prerequisite to any solution to the problem.

“It is clear to us that the government is amenable to the pressures of a volatile trader body. Without using the same tactics, we have asked for similar acknowledgement,” said Promod Chawla, Convenor of URJA.

The Ministry's unusual softening on the stand after first trying to dent the SC order vide the Notification has been seen by the RWAs as a dangerous signal. RWAs across Delhi believe that overt appeasement of the trader lobby at the expense of the original order of the Courts will result in a seriously bad precedent.

“We are particularly perturbed by statements of members of trade organisations who claim that they have petitioned the President for a status quo on allowing commercial activities in residential areas. This is not acceptable to RWAs and this was not what our stand of reconciliation with trade bodies was based on,” he said.

The memorandum submitted three points viz:

1. That in designated residential colonies, RWAs will have precedence notwithstanding any trade organizations or bodies that may try to wield influence based on violence or other such actions.
2. That no decision relating to allowing commercial activity in residential areas will be taken without the express consent, and/or involvement of our members.
3. That we, the members of URJA, must be party to any settlement/agreement/ interim or otherwise that is sought to be prayed for through your appeal to the Courts.

The Minister avoided meeting the representatives all afternoon while they picketed the office. Promod Chawla was accompanied by zonal representatives of URJA from all areas of Delhi at the time of making the submissions to the Minister's office.

Federation of Dilshad Garden RWAs join the protest : residents will only pay 50% of their electricity bills from next cycle of billing.

- Resolution passed unanimously : won't pay for theft of others, say RWA heads.

New Delhi, 2nd April 2006: The Federation of Dilshad Garden RWAs, a registered body of all RWAs in the area, headed by Mr. Karan Singh has passed a resolution supporting the URJA civil disobedience campaign against the practice of making honest consumers pay for the dishonesty of power thieves by raising tariffs to unreasonable limits.

At a meeting organised to discuss high power bills and frequent complaints of poor service by DISCOMS in the area, URJA Convenor Promod Chawla exhorted all member heads of RWAs to consider that the Government of Delhi and the DISCOMS have made it official policy of jacking up tariff rates to make up for the shortfall due to power theft. "Will you accept that you are now going to be required to pay for a power thief in your neighbourhood?" he asked.

S.N. Rohatgi, President of the Swasthya Vihar RWA, another prominent locality of East Delhi, which was one of the first RWA to support this campaign said that when they passed this resolution, their office bearers were immediately contacted by DISCOMS and they made it clear that no resident will pay the full bill and dared the power companies to touch a single house for disconnection." I am sure that residents of Dilshad Garden will also stand up for their own rights and refuse to become party to this shameless exploitation of honesty".

Dipak Dholakia, Gen. Secretary of B Block Dilshad Garden RWA used effective parables and stories to illustrate the importance of collaborating with this civil disobedience movement. "I express solidarity on behalf of all RWAs of Dilshad Garden to this movement and we will not stop until these tariffs are rationalised", he said.

Mr. Karan Singh, while steering the resolution expressed full support in all ways possible to people's Action and URJA on behalf of the Dilshad Garden RWAs and committed themselves to ensure that residents are informed of this gross violation of their rights. "We will not accept bills that ask us to pay for the theft of others", he concluded. Mr. Ram Chandra, Finance Secretary of the Federation also came down heavily on the Government and the Discoms on the issue.

Mr. Kanwal Singh Verma. Gen. Secretary of the Federation reiterated the support of the entire area to the campaign. The meeting was attended by about 30 RWA office bearers of the area.

Press Release

RWAs seek master plan for water: URJA calls for *Paani Adalat* : RWAs of South Delhi to meet on Sunday 12th to determine course of action.

New Delhi, 8th March 2006: Representatives of RWAs of South Delhi are planning a Meet on Water for Delhi to discuss the serious situation developing due to shortages of water in the city.

"Residents are fed up with the water situation and it is intolerable that we have to pay for water from tankers when we should have been provided piped water," said Deobani Banerjee of Govindpuri. "Residents have gone to their Councillor and their MLA, but no one is able to provide relief. If this is the situation now what how will we cope in summer", she asked.

"The government of Delhi has failed to address a basic need of its people. We hear promises of 24X7 water schemes, but in reality we find that there are no contingency plans in place to cope with non-availability. Just one water purification plant has resulted in this chaos and to which no solution is in sight," said Anant Trivedi of Ishwar Nagar RWA. "What we need is a Master Plan for water for the next 20 years or else we can bid this city goodbye," he warned.

South Delhi RWAs under the aegis of URJA have called a meeting for Sunday 12th at 11.30 a.m. at Chittaranjan Park* to press for a composite plan for water for the next two decades. Titled **Paani Adalat**, the meeting would list out the concerns of Residents against the impending water crisis and co-relate the needs of the people versus the poor response of the Government so far.

Water campaigners and experts along with URJA members from RWAs of South Delhi are expected to be present in strength to campaign for the right to water for residents.

***Venue:** Bipin Chandra Bal Memorial Hall, A-Block, CR Park, behind Mkt 3.

Press Release

People's Action welcomes CM's response: writes to suggest modifications in proposals. Round -Table meeting of stakeholders on 12th March to discuss further strategy.

Gurgaon, 6th March, 2006: People's Action has today written to the CM welcoming his responses on the issues of providing more attention to Gurgaon through a series of initiatives proposed by the Group such as according Gurgaon a Special Status and the formation of a Planning Board.

"We are glad to note the positive indications emanating from the CM's office on our proposals. The CM's statements about establishing the GDA are in sync but need to be fine-tuned. Our intention is to explain the importance and criticality of a Planning Board as a superior body to the GDA which would be an apex implementing agency," said Shashi Sharma, Convenor of People's Action in Gurgaon.

People's Action has expressed satisfaction with holding of the Master Plan in abeyance and the involvement of a private party in environmental impact assessment in the region as welcome steps that are reflective of Residents demands of a public consultative committee before the Master Plan is passed and the appointment of experts in the planning process.

"Here again, while we are glad that the CM has taken our suggested steps, we would like to enhance the private party involvement to the level of international experts and planners", said Sharma pressing for the need for a Planning Board.

The piped gas initiatives and establishment of a clean fuel regime are indicators that the voice of the residents is being heard. Col Rattan Singh, General Secretary of the Gurgaon Residents Party, a body floated by common consent by RWAs of Gurgaon last year to fight elections, has pointed out that this was one of the ten points of the GRP manifesto.

Commenting on the recent initiatives ordered by the CM, Sanjay Kaul, President of People's Action said "This is the direct result of the concerted campaign that we have run along with RWAs of Gurgaon", he said. " It is a clear instance of people power achieving its objectives without violence or disruption. However, residents have to continue to be vigilant and proactive for even better results in the future."

People's Action has convened a Round-Table Meeting of stakeholders on Sunday the 12th March at 11 a.m. at the Jukaso Inn in Gurgaon to take stock of the situation and design the second steps of the campaign. RWAs, political parties, Village sarpanches and Industry Representatives will meet to assess the situation and propose next steps in the strategy to improve the quality of life in Gurgaon.

Press Release

RWAs ask Minister to desist from diluting spirit of the order of the Supreme Court. Distinctions between commercialisation in colonies unwarranted, say URJA members.

New Delhi, 27th Feb. 2006: Representatives of RWAs have today cautioned against a clearly visible plan to dilute the Hon'ble Court's order by various players on the political circuit "using methods that are designed to bewilder, befuddle and beguile people with a series of committees, experts and confounding statements".

Suggesting that as of today no less than three separate committees have been announced for the same purpose first by the Minister of State for UD, then by the CM and now another one by the DPCC Chief, RWAs claim that each politician seems to have a favourite committee as of today.

"We are particularly concerned about the distinctions being read into the judgement by the new Minister of State for UD and statements that try and classify illegality into acceptable illegality and not acceptable illegality using a reference from the court order outside of its context giving a twist to the real intent of the usage. The Court has not made any reference to the issue of commercialisation of 50% and above or less – it has merely stated the MCD's contention on the issue in the order : "According to MCD, the major violation has been determined in respect of those roads where commercialisation of the buildings is more than 50%," [Page 62 of the order] said Promod Chawla, Convenor URJA. " The MCD's classification of commercialisation is by no means binding on anyone, last of all the Court", he added.

On the issue of forming committee after committee, Rajiv Kakria, South Delhi Coordinator of URJA said: "The High Court has already expressed its opinion on the Tejinder Khanna Committee saying clearly that it does not recognise it. In the context of such a position, why is the Government expending energy and tax payer's money on a redundant exercise, unless of course there is a different motivation."

RWAs members of URJA feel that it is understandably possible that the Supreme Court has ordered a schematic withdrawal of commercial establishments from residential areas but to suggest at this point of time that the order is only meant to affect the 'big showrooms' is to not only give an unlawful interpretation to the court's directions, but also potentially defeat the principal exercise of rooting out an unlawful activity from the city.

"The court order does not discriminate between 'small' or 'big' offenders – it is only that the specific directions are in regard to the larger showrooms built in residential areas. The Court has directed that: "*Beginning* must be made to stop misuser on main roads of width of 80 ft. or more." [Page 63 of the order] The Specific direction of the Court leaves no room for doubt that this order is only a precursor to other directions to come should the logical follow through of this order not take place," said Anant Trivedi, President of Ishwar Nagar RWA.

"We urge the Minister of State UD, the Delhi CM and the DPCC Chief to immediately desist from creating a circus of politically motivated actions that will collectively, effectively dilute the orders of the Supreme Court using the confusion among residents and traders to worst effect", said Rajesh Dokwal East Delhi Coordinator of URJA.

Press Release

Campaign against subsidisation of theft costs through higher tariff starts: People's Action forwards Power Secretary's note to DPCC, Opposition and demands withdrawal of the policy.

New Delhi, 22nd Feb.: People's Action has today initiated the campaign against artificially inflated tariffs by writing to the DPCC President Ram Babu Sharma and the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Dr. Jagdish Mukhi along with a copy of the Status Paper circulated by the Power secretary which has explicitly revealed the modus operandi employed by DISCOMS to collect the losses on account of power theft from unsuspecting, innocent consumers.

People's Action has argued that the admissions of the department that such a method has been used for so long to extract losses out of the pockets of innocent consumers is legally untenable and in contradiction of any sense of justice.

“The fact that the Department has admitted to this as policy to the benefit of the power companies is a clear violation of the spirit and essence of the DERC's role and an explanation is sought from the Regulator as to why it has allowed two private firms to subsidise power theft in their respective areas by overcharging honest, paying customers” said, Col. D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary of People's Action.

At the recently held Delhi Residents Conference involving RWAs from all over Delhi, Residents passed a resolution denouncing the system of charging consumers higher tariffs to subsidise theft and refused to pay the 50% excess on this account in future. People's Action has since been entrusted by RWAs to carry out a campaign against this policy.

Spelling out the broad contours of the strategy to fight this injustice, Ajay Jain, Convenor New Delhi People's Action said, “We will follow a principled line of action, to first educate and then mobilise residents and other civil society groups to resist and force the recall of this draconian policy. Members of URJA will provide us ground support in this campaign while other activist groups will input their particular specialities towards this objective”.

People's Action will follow up on the letters sent to the DPCC Chief and the Leader of Opposition with a similar campaign targeting legislators in Delhi while at the same time starting a contact programme with the assistance of RWAs and Market Associations all over Delhi.

Press Release

Mobilisation against artificially inflated power tariffs begins from Friday: RWAs plan spate of public meetings.

New Delhi, 23rd Feb.: Following the resolutions passed at the delhi Residents Conference held under the aegis of people's Action and URJA, RWAs have today initiated work on mobilisation of public opinion in their localities against the draconian policy of charging honest consumers for the dishonesty of others.

“ We have been directed by the general body of RWAs in the city of Delhi to start a concerted campaign against this illogical and illegal extortion of a ‘theft surcharge’ and we intend to follow the direction”, said Promod Chawla, Convenor URJA, the all-Delhi RWA collective.

“The Residents of Delhi have refused to pay this abnormal overcharge on account of thet and we are initiating a mass contact programme to ensure that there is complete resistance to this ridiculous policy of the government and the department of power,” said S.P. Gupta of Rajendra Nagar RWA.

Raj Kishore Dimri of Mayur Vihar RWA has also severely castigated the Power Secretary saying, “The Power Ministry has given DISCOMS a license to loot and they are very happy doing so. WE demand all the amounts so collected over the last three years be returned to honest consumers.”

“It is unthinkable that senior Citizens and pensioners are being made to pay twice over their real consumption only to ensue that DISCOMS do not lose money, said.....

Press Release

People's Action launches Voter Registration campaign for students: Collegiates to be encouraged to register as new voters.

- **Campaign at DU starts tomorrow.**

New Delhi, 8th Feb.: People's Action has today initiated a campaign to induce youth, and particularly students, to register themselves as voters. The campaign which is being undertaken under the aegis of **United Students*** will begin from the Delhi University North Campus where the first camp is being held at the Faculty of Arts [next to Law faculty].

United Students has a core group of students from various colleges, both private and otherwise, who are being trained to lead the group.

“A number of first year students have turned 18 this year and we are making sure they are aware of their right to be a registered voter. Apart from that, we are also engaging other students of the University to enlist as voters so that they can have a say in governance in future”, said Ajay Jain, Convenor People's Action and Chief Coordinator of United Students.

Core Group members include Sidharth Gupta, [MA English Kirori Mal] Deepak Bora and Krishna Kaul [Ist Year History Hons. Hansraj], Rati Agnihotri [Eng. Hons IIIrd Year Miranda House], Prabash Dutta [Final year, Law], Neha Dixit [Eng. Hons IIIrd Year Miranda House], Pranab Garg [B.Tech. Bio-technology Ist Year, Amity], Mohit Rajora, [BBS, IIIrd year, College of Business Studies], Jasleen Kaur [Bachelors in Mass. Com., Tecnia Inst., IP University] Anurag Kotoky [BA Eng. IInd Year, Ramjas College]

The camp is open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Thursday 9th and Friday 10th March. Students will be provided with a copy of the Form-6 and guided through the process of submitting these forms with the EROs in their localities. People's Action will also assist students in follow up processes for receiving their voter-ID cards.

Press Release

MCD is selecting soft targets: HC observations are being misinterpreted to benefit politicians, says group.

- Name and punish the MCD officer in whose tenure and domain MG1 was allowed to be built.

New Delhi, 2nd Feb: People's Action has responded scathingly to the directional change in the stance of the MCD. The group claims that the observations of the HC on the 31st January are being twisted by MCD officials to offer relief to politicians by turning the spotlight of the demolition campaign elsewhere.

“The HC’s observations were clearly not meant to distract the earlier directions. There is none higher and mightier than Politicians in this city and we read the HC’s observations in only that context. Unless the politicians who have been named as having illegal constructions against their name are targeted first, the MCD has little right going about destroying the lives of ordinary businessmen and entrepreneurs”, said Col. [Retd.] D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary, People’s Action.

“How is it possible that the building owners get away, the MCD official gets away, The Councillor goes scot free and the smallest component in this entire episode is punished first?,” asked Ajay Jain, Convenor New Delhi People’s Action.

People’s Action has noticed the amazing respect the MCD has for politician’s illegalities: they are first served notices. They are provided time to respond. Then there will be a survey, and only then, apparently with the blessings of their political masters, can we expect any action against them. “Why not offer this courtesy to all ?,” asks Col. Shandilya.

“This farce has to stop. Politicians must be targeted first if these demolitions are to serve any purpose. The MCD officials who have allowed these constructions have to be nabbed next. Only then does the MCD have any right to target residents and businesses in Delhi,” said Sanjay Kaul, President of People’s Action.

The group has noted that the net result of this entire exercise is that politicians are still getting VIP treatment and it only reinforces the image that the powerful in Delhi can circumvent the law while people who have struggled all their lives to put this City on the international fashion scene are being thrown out of their shops like dirt.

“These are not high and mighty people - they are people who have struggled to start enterprises in a scenario when nobody knew what fashion in India was all about by paying through their nose for showrooms. It is the Government’s job to provide reasonable exhibition space to such entrepreneurs and because it didn’t, they had to move out to such areas and fend for themselves. Now when their business is stabilising, you ruin them. This Government has a lot to answer for,” he added.

Press Release

RWAs demand that Councillors & MLAs in whose areas illegal constructions and encroachments on public land exist should be barred from re-election.

New Delhi: 29th Jan 2006: A specially convened meeting of Urja's South Delhi chapter was held at CR Park and attended by members of the EPDP RWA, and representatives from Green Park, Defence Colony and Ishwar Nagar RWAs. It was decided that Urja will call upon all RWAs in Delhi to identify illegal constructions in their neighbourhood and provide the names of the Councillor and MLA for the area. They will list all buildings illegally put up on public land even if this is a Lal Dora area, all buildings where commercial activity is being carried out in a residential locality and particularly those which belong to any elected leader. These lists will be submitted to the Hon'ble Delhi Court to set the priority for demolitions. Furthermore the EC will be asked to ensure that all elected leaders who have directly or indirectly supported illegal constructions in their areas should be barred from seeking elected office again.

"The Councillors have connived with the wrong elements to allow illegal activity in their areas and many have themselves been part of this scam. How can these be allowed to hold office or seek re-election?" asked Anant Trivedi of Ishwar Nagar. "Law breakers cannot be allowed to be law makers any longer", he added

"MCD engineers should not be allowed the final word on properties to be demolished. These are the people who extorted large sums of money to look the other way when illegal construction was going up and now they are extorting money for non-inclusion of buildings on the demolition list. Why are these law breakers being asked to manage the demolition program. This is like putting a gun in the hands of a know criminal" said Promod Chawla the convenor of Urja. "All public servants who have broken the law should be immediately dismissed from service", he added.

The citizens of Delhi are determined to rescue this city from the evil of bad governance and set an example to be followed by others throughout India.

Press Release

People's Action demands state security for industrial and business units in Gurgaon: recent incidents post a dangerous sign for Gurgaon's image. BPO sector and international confidence at stake, says group.

Gurgaon, 19th Jan 2006: People's Action has today asked for special state security for business houses and industries in the city citing the recent incidents as damaging events for the image of Gurgaon as an investment destination.

“These incidents have the capacity to influence future growth of industry in Gurgaon and may drive away business to areas like Greater Noida,” said Sanjay Kaul, President of People's Action.” Particularly in the context of the growing BPO industry and the issues concerning women's safety these incidents have to be viewed with utmost seriousness”, he added.

Clearly, the recent decorations of the police with ISO certification has very little bearing on the ground situation. It would do the police better to focus on hard nosed improvements in the law and order applications, strengthening of security systems and enhancement of police force”, said Shashi Sharma, Convenor People's Action.

Col. Raj Singla of the Udyog Vihar Association pointed out to the impunity with which these dacoities are taking place. “It is almost as if they have confirmation of their escapade”, he said.

People's Action has earlier demanded an enhancement in the police force in addition to the increase in number of police stations and an upgradation of existing *Thanas* to computerised stations, almost none of which have yet been achieved.

Maj. Gen. Satbir Singh, Convenor of the Security Professionals Group, a sub-committee set up by People's Action last May to study the security situation in Gurgaon, said that the state should order additional State Industrial Security Force to ensure that such incidents are immediately stopped.

“RWAs members in Gurgaon are concerned that if operating units with a decent level of private security are not safe, how safe can the residents be”, asked Col. Ratan Singh, Gen. Secretary of Gurgaon Residents Party [GRP]

People's Action and the Udyog Vihar members are planning an emergent security meet early next week to bring attention to this issue.

Press Release

URJA welcomes High Court directions : Law Makers Cannot be Law Breakers, say members.

New Delhi, 19th Jan.: RWAs have welcomed the High Court observations as a much needed dose of common sense for the MCD which has institutionalised corruption of the worst kind in the city.

“The Delhi High Court's directions to the MCD bring great hope to law abiding citizens who have been clamouring for the rule of law to be justly applied to all. For much too long the elected leaders and bureaucrats have taken advantage of their positions to make a mockery of building bye-laws. If the respect for law of the land is to be restored, it is important that exemplary punishment be meted out to those elected as law makers and all public servants who have flouted the building bye-laws”, said Promod Chawla, Convenor URJA.

“RWA office bearers from areas like Kailash Colony to Naraina and from Swasthya Vihar in East Delhi to Ashok Vihar have expressed a sense of relief at the direction that the law has taken,” said Anant Trivedi, member URJA.

“Encroachment on public land is widespread. Safety norms are totally ignored in the constructions. Most locations are a fire trap and sanitation is non existent. A stop should also be put to blatant commercial activity inside residential colonies, where offices and showrooms have mushroomed in connivance with the officials”, he added.

Rules applying to Lal Dora areas are an anachronism which need to be addressed. Rather than bring more locations into the Lal Dora fold, the government should stop playing vote bank politics and abolish the whole concept of the Lal Dora which has far outlived its purpose.

The search for illegal buildings should extend to MCD and DDA colonies, and all such locations where bureaucrats have housed themselves.

Press Release

People's Action supports dissolution of MCD:

Create constituency-based municipal bodies on NDMC format, says group.

New Delhi, 19th Jan 2006: People's Action has today asked to dismantle, dissolve, or wind-up MCD and pave the way for a better administrative mechanism based on the lines of the NDMC, which operates in specific zones of the New Delhi area.

“Our suggestion is to extend the sphere of jurisdiction of such an body over the entire New Delhi Lok Sabha Constituency, and create similar bodies for the other LS constituencies in the city.”

“Consequently, we are asking for the creation of bodies like the SDMC [South Delhi Municipal Corporation], ODMC [Outer Delhi Municipal Corporation] and EDMC [East Delhi Municipal Constituency] and the like,” said Sanjay Kaul, President People's Action.

This would not only put the argument about better management of smaller entities [as repeated often by the CM] to rest, but also incorporate a critical element of accountability to the constituency and create clearly demarcated authorities without overlapping jurisdictions, group members opined.

Elected representatives would then be directly responsible for the conditions in the area and not refuse responsibility because the civic agency is governed by a separate act of parliament, as the CM was at pains to explain frequently over the last month, they added.

People's Action has proposed this model as the best-fit in the context of the nature of the political climate in the city, the weaknesses of our administrative systems and in view of the lessons learnt from the disastrous record of the MCD. “In fact, there is no better option at this juncture if we are serious about putting a semblance of order into this city”, said Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action..

High Court order - a life line for the city.

The group has welcomed the High Court's directions calling the pronouncements a life line for the city. “The repeated reference of the Hon'ble Judge to the dissolution of the MCD should be taken in all seriousness for within that lies the real cure for Delhi. The MCD has only spawned corruption to the extent unimaginable anywhere else in the world. It has to go,” said Col. D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary People's Action.

“What can you do with an organisation that is so corruption-ridden that you would have not a single clean employee left. **The MCD has outlived its utility. It is now only a factory for the production of corruption**”, added Kaul.

Press Release

MP's statements a political ruse, says People's Action.

The Govt. is exaggerating the figures to overwhelm the court. Let politicians lead by example - voluntary demolitions the need of the hour, says Group.

New Delhi, 16th Jan 2006: The statements made by the city MP regarding the extent of unauthorised construction as 80% has been panned by all RWAs as a spurious claim. Residents have asked that he make a distinction between the various sectors of the city. For instance, how can 80% of an unauthorised colony be illegal. It must all be illegal.

Conversely, to claim that 80% of planned Delhi is living in illegality is a direct insult to the law abiding citizens of the state who have in fact initiated this campaign to cleanse the city. "Mr Sibal is guilty of pronouncing almost all of us guilty," said Promod Chawla, Convenor of URJA, "although it has been citizen groups and RWAs who have been pressing for this cleansing."

Stating that politicians need only be concerned about setting an example, Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action, suggested that Mr. Sibal and his colleagues would do better to focus on getting their own house in order. "As for the rest of the 80% he claims are living in illegal constructions, we assure him that once politicians set the example of voluntary demolitions, all residents of Delhi will follow suit."

Members of People's Action are concerned that the recent statements emanating from the Government are an attempt at making this out to be a Herculean task in trying to jettison the court's orders.

Referring to the statements by Mr. Kapil Sibal, Kaul said, "We are dismayed that a progressive law maker and a Minister of a scientific temperament has started talking the language of local councillors. All this talk of GIS mapping is only a ruse. This is not the point under discussion. The issue is illegal encroachments, constructions, implementation of law and the creation of a decent city. Let us first get the Court orders implemented, and then we are free to discuss ever more high-tech ideas that the Minister might want to share with us", he added.

Col. {Retd.} D.K Shandilya, Gen. Secretary People's Action pointed out that " It is highly amusing to note that the Congress party head's promise of curtailing builder-official nexus conveniently forgets to mention the lynchpin in the troika of corruption – the politician."

Clearly, these are all attempts to prepare grounds for a soft option fuelled not doubt by the personal losses of party members if demolitions continue, members have said.

"The Congress party will be guilty of purposefully mutilating court orders if this continues", he added.

Press Release

Trifurcation of MCD is not feasible: People's Action warns of diversionary tactics of CM on the issue.

New Delhi, 15th Jan 2006: The recent statements of the CM suggesting the trifurcation of the MCD as a solution to a more competent and less corrupt structure has been severely criticized by People's Action as justification of the inefficiency of the corporation and preparations for seeking soft options before the court.

“There is no logic in the demand for the trifurcation. If indeed the MCD must be broken down into smaller parts, why not administrative divisions along districts, or zones or even constituencies which could actually allow for better control and greater accountability. This insistence on trifurcation is unexplainable as if the inherent corruption will disappear as soon as it is broken down into three parts”, said Sanjay Kaul, President, People's Action.

Adding that the endemic corruption in the MCD stems from the diseased political upbringing of councillors and political players, he said, “Until that changes, all expectations of change is at best a delusion”.

Making list of defaulters public is also a non-issue, says the group: The Group has also severely castigated the CM for repeatedly harping on the list of 18000 defaulters as a red herring aimed more at her political detractors within her party than any love for the truth.

People's Action members argued that if the Court has ordered action to be taken against the 18000 properties, we expect that it will be done. To suspect that it won't be so and insist on a public display is tantamount to suggesting that the court is not competent enough to see its directions upheld.

“This sort of political brinkmanship is only making the issue more complicated so much so that the Councillor's collective opposition to the demolitions is more a response to the CM's personal leadership than any genuine opposition to the Court Order.”

People's Action has expressed satisfaction that the Court's orders regarding political party members' properties are in correct priority, for as soon as citizens understand that the law is upheld equally for all, they will be encouraged to follow the proposition of voluntary demolitions, as suggested by the Group.

“The CM will do well to knit her team together to ensure that the Court's order are followed in letter and spirit and no excuses are sought in the implementation of the courts directions”, said Col. [Retd.] D.K.Shandilya, Gen. Secretary, People's Action.

Press Release

Suresh Jindal joins People's Action : original petitioner against DISTCOM will appeal HC judgement.

New Delhi, January 6th: Suresh Jindal, the petitioner who took BSES to court on the issue of meter replacements and inflated billings has today joined People's Action and confirmed his intention to appeal the HC judgement that 'did not address the real concern of the litigant'.

Suresh Jindal is well known as the Associate Producer of the Oscar winning film 'Gandhi' and has been a gritty adversary of the Government in the attempt to arm twist consumers to the advantage of DISTCOMS.

Welcoming Jindal to People's Action, Col {retd} D.K. Shandilya, Gen. Secretary of People's Action said, "We welcome Suresh Jindal as a comrade in this fight against an unfair government and we celebrate his fighting spirit in taking on a powerful lobby of private power companies that has the support of this Government".

Suresh Jindal, who initiated the suit against the DISTCOMS said "I have every intention to fight to the finish. I am a resident and a citizen of this city and I cannot accept that we are being made to pay for the lapses of private parties who seem to have no accountability towards their consumers. I know that by joining People's Action I am joining a solid group of highly motivated people and we intend to win".

Jindal's Lawyer, Laliet Kumar said that they would approach the HC for a double bench appeal of the judgement and pray for a stay on the current order to ensure that justice is not compromised in the duration that the appeal is under consideration.

