

## **Minutes of the Meeting of Consumer Grievance Redressal Forums**

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**CGRFs meeting held at GERC, on 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2008 at 14.30 hours.**

The following members / representatives of Consumer Grievance Redressal Forums of various Distribution Licensees and members / staff of the Commission were present in the meeting:

### **Commission and Secretary:**

Dr. P.K. Mishra (Chairman, GERC), Shri K.P.Gupta, (Member (F) GERC), Dr. Man Mohan(Member (T) GERC), Shri P. S. Shah (Secretary, GERC)/Electricity Ombudsman

### **Members / representatives of Consumer Forums**

1. Shri B. P. Jani, Independent Member, PGVCL (Bhavnagar) forum.
2. Shri H.C. Mehta, Chairman, PGVCL (Bhavnagar) forum.
3. Shri U.I. Oza., Convener, PGVCL (Bhavnagar) forum.
4. Prof. Dr. R.C.Desai, Independent Member, MGVCL forum.
5. Shri S.A. Pota, Chairman, MGVCL forum.
6. Shri K. R. Shah, Member, MGVCL forum
7. Shri P.L.Mistry , Convener, MGVCL forum
8. Shri A. M.Desai, Independent Member, DGVCL forum.
9. Shri S.R.Desai., Chairman, DGVCL forum.
10. Shri M.B.Parikh, Member, DGVCL forum.
11. Shri B.N.Mehta, Convener, DGVCL forum.
12. Shri M.K.Trivedi, Independent Member, PGVCL(Rajkot ) forum
13. Shri A.M.Dhebar, Chairman, PGVCL(Rajkot ) forum
14. Shri K.S. Malkan, Member, PGVCL(Rajkot ) forum.

15. Srhi P.R.Chaudhari , Chairman, UGVCL forum
16. Shri M.G. Patel, Member, UGVCL Forum
17. Shri J.N.Pancholi, Member, UGVCL forum
18. Shri C.L. Sharma, Convener, UGVCL forum
19. Shri C.M.Joshi, Chairman, PGVCL (Bhuj) forum.
20. Shri N.B.Shah, Convener, PGVCL (Bhuj) forum.
21. Shri H.L. Lalwani, Independent member, TPL, Surat Forum
22. Shri, P.D.Munshi, Chairman, TPL, Surat Forum.
23. Shri Shailesh R.Desai, Member, TPL, Surat Forum
24. Shri D.V.Shukla, Member, TPL , Ahmedabad Forum.
25. Shri B.M.Bhatt, Member, TPL , Ahmedabad Forum.
26. Shri F. A. Garari, Convener, TPL ,Ahmedabd Forum

**Staff of the Commission:**

Shri D. R. Parmar, Shri M.N. Khaliyani, Smt. A.S.Dani, Shri D.R. Parmar, Smt. Dharti Mehta.

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1. A meeting of all the Consumer Grievance Redressal Forums was convened on 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2008 to review their functioning and to share the experiences of the forums in resolving the difficulties of consumers.
2. The meeting was chaired by Dr. P.K.Mishra, Chairman, GERC.

3. Shri P. S. Shah, Ombudsman and Secretary, GERC, extended a warm welcome to the participants.
4. At the outset, Chairman, GERC mentioned that the Electricity Act, 2003 in the very preamble mandates protection of consumers' interest. Redressal of consumer grievances is now gaining focus at higher national forums. At the national level, the Forum of Regulators (FOR) has observed that the CGRFs are not working effectively at desired level. In the last meeting of the State Advisory Committee also, the members had expressed that in many cases, consumer complaints are not getting redressed within the time limit.

It is therefore, necessary that the forums should, at least, submit their quarterly reports within fifteen days of the end of a quarter and the Commission will convene review meetings shortly thereafter.

He also pointed out that on a reference from the Ministry of Power regarding the "Functioning of Consumer Grievance Redressal Mechanism", ASCI has made an elaborate study on working of forums and Ombudsman in fifteen states including Gujarat. The FOR also has constituted a working group on "Protection of consumer interest". The working group has studied issues such as : whether the Forum should be independent of the Licensee or not; interpretation of rule 7 of Electricity Rules, 2005 in terms of who are to be considered as officers of licensee etc.

He also clarified that the Electricity Rules, 2005 provides for Licensee to establish forum which shall consist of officers of the licensee. However, this need

not mean only fulltime officers of licensee, they can be outside personnel paid by the licensee to work on a full-time basis for the forum.

For this purpose a list of such eligible persons/officers could be maintained by the licensee for immediate appointments by rotation in respect of the nominees on the forums.

After introduction address, agenda items were taken up.

#### 1. Agenda item 1: Record of Proceedings of the Last Meeting

As there were no suggestions on the record of proceedings of the last meeting; the minutes were approved.

#### 2. Agenda item 2: Follow up of Action Points

The actions taken on last meeting's suggestion to take up the issues regarding policy matters to Apex Co-ordination Committee and arrive at uniform solutions for all Discoms was noted. It was pointed out that an issue affecting Captive Power Plants paying 3 times penalty for excess contract demand was resolved after the decision of the Apex Co-ordination Committee. It was also suggested that issues like audit paras raised by Audit team are also settled differently in each Discom, which requires uniform approach and hence should be taken up before the Apex Co-ordination Committee.

#### 3. Agenda Item no. 3: Progress of quarterly reporting of CGRFs

All Forums were directed to submit their performance reports within 15 days of the end of the quarter and it was also decided to hold meetings at the end of each quarter to analyse the functioning of forums.

A compiled statement of reports received from all forums for quarters III and IV of 2007-08 and quarter I of 2008-09 was discussed and the conveners of CGRFs were instructed to submit the reports with consistency of data.

#### 4. Agenda item no.4: Appointment of Members of CGRF

As directed from time to time, it was reiterated that the members of CGRFs be appointed by designation (or from the list of outside persons) for consistent and uninterrupted working of forums.

#### 5. Agenda Item no.5: Addressing consumer complaints

It is necessary to have uniformity in working of Forums. It was pointed out that some forums just forward the complaint to Deputy Engineer/Executive Engineer/Chief Engineer concerned and the replies from these officers are considered as final. As the name suggests, the forum has to address consumers' grievances (against the licensee), for which the forum itself has to hear the cases and address the issues involved. The procedure should have transparency and create consumers' confidence in the Forum. It is important that every registered complaint should be disposed of with a speaking order. It was also suggested that a Convener of a forum or a well conversant person should always be available to assist the applicant.

#### 6. Agenda item no. 6: Implementation of Standards of Performance

The attention of CGRFs was drawn to the Commission's letter informing a crucial judgment of Hon'ble High Court regarding payment of compensation in case of nonobservance of Standard of Performance by Distribution Licensee. It was pointed out that there was a need for awareness, among the staff of the Distribution

Licensee, of the consequences of not observing the Standard of Performance and pointed out that Forum should play a vital role in implementation of the Standards of Performance (SOP) by the licensee.

#### 7.1 Agenda item no. 7.1: Uploading the Orders on Web-site

It was suggested that all CGRFs should upload their orders on consumer grievances on a separate web-page on the web-site of respective Discoms/licensees. This may, inter alia, contain updated information regarding cases before Forums. It should also display number of grievances settled in favour of Consumers and against consumers.

It was suggested that a gist of the order of CGRFS in each case should also be submitted to the Commission as done by Ombudsman.

#### 7.2 Agenda Item no.7.2: Other Items

Chairman, GERC pointed out that as suggested in the report of FOR working group on Consumer Interest and stipulated in GERC regulations, CGRFs should publish their email addresses for providing easy access to the public. This should also be printed on the backside of bills, pamphlets etc.

Member (T) suggested that such information can also be given to consumers on small leaflets attached to electricity bills for their awareness. It was decided that TPL, Surat and UGVCL will make presentations on their publicity campaign during the next meeting.

8. The members of CGRFs were requested to share their views, difficulties and experiences.

Shri A.M.Dhebar, Chairman, PGVCL (Rajkot) Forum stated that details of his forum is already available on the web-site of PGVCL .It has been published in papers also. The forum is working in a neutral manner and more than 50% of the decisions are in favour of the consumers.

Shri R.C.Desai, Independent Member, MGVCL Forum added that the stamps on the bills and scrolling advertisements on local channel can be comparatively cheap and effective methods of publicity. Decisions of forums on a web-page will be a welcome step because it will be useful to other forums also.

Shri P.R.Chaudhari, Chairman, UGVCL forum stated that UGVCL has made lot of efforts for publicity in the field of Consumer Protection and Safety. He mentioned that UGVCL holds frequent consumer meets where consumers are informed regarding to their rights, Standards of Performance, prevention of accidents, energy conservation etc. The contact numbers of the forum are available with consumer help centers of UGVCL. The Forum has not received any claim of compensation for non-observations of SOP. He also pointed out that very few consumers have preferred representation against UGVCL before the Ombudsman.

Shri S.R.Desai, Chairman, DGVCL Forum informed about constitution of Grievance redressal Committees at sub divisional/divisional level. In reply to the query raised by Member (F) regarding time limit for disposal by such Committees, Shri B.N.Mehta, Convener, DGVCL clarified that they have fixed a time limit of one month for the committee at each level for disposal of complaints and at divisional level the committee is holding meetings on each last Thursday of the month.

Shri Desai made a suggestion regarding appointment of 50% of the members of the forum as independent members. i.e. 2 independent members out of 4 members. This suggestion, being contrary to the regulation which provides the forum to be constituted of odd number of members, was not acceptable. However, it has to be recognized that members from licensees are in majority and it may cause problems in case of difference of opinion between them and the independent member. Shri B.P.Jani, Independent Member, PGVCL (Bhavnagar) mentioned that this possibility is borne out by his own experience.

Shri P.D.Munshi Chairman, Torrent Power Ltd Forum, Surat mentioned that TPL has conducted several workshops for consumer awareness. TPL has also distributed leaflets. He demonstrated such published materials. He also mentioned that despite these efforts, TPL surat forum receives very few complaints.

Shri B.M.Bhatt, Member, Torrent Power Ltd, Ahmedabad mentioned that TPL has very good internal redressal system, which reduces the number of complaints before the forum substantially. At zonal office, a meeting is scheduled on 10<sup>th</sup> of every month, which takes care of most of the consumer complaints. TPL has put big hoardings for publicity of forum at each zonal office.

Shri C.M.Joshi, Member, PGVCL (Bhuj) forum reported that they have received very few complaints since their establishment. Secretary, GERC and Ombudsman suggested that the complaints receiving mechanism should be made more reliable by registering the complaints in a separate and proper register. He quoted a case before Ombudsman where no cognizance of the complaint was taken by PGVCL (Bhuj) Forum.

9. Chairman, GERC observed that TPL and UGVCL should make a power point presentation on steps taken by them for publicity of the activities of their forum and consumer awareness in the next meeting.
10. A note on issues suggested by FOR and its working group is enclosed for benefit of CGRFs.
11. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the chair.

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