

Minutes of the Meeting of Consumer Grievance Redressal Forums held at GERC, on 18th January 2010 at 3.00 P.M.

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:

1. Dr. P.K. Mishra (Chairman, GERC),
2. Shri Pravinbhai Patel, Member (Technical), GERC
3. Shri Sanjay Nandan Agrawal, Secretary, GERC.

Ombudsman

1. Shri V.T. Rajpara, Electricity Ombudsman

Chairmen/ Members / representatives of Consumer Forums

1. Shri K.M. Bhuva, Chairman, PGVCL (Bhavnagar) forum.
2. Shri B. P. Jani, Independent Member, PGVCL (Bhavnagar) forum.
3. Shri J.A. Shaikh, Convener, PGVCL (Bhavnagar) forum.
4. Shri S.A. Pota, Chaiman, MGVCL forum.
5. Prof. Dr. R.C.Desai, Independent Member, MGVCL forum.
6. Shri K. R. Shah, Member, MGVCL forum
7. Shri J.P. Bhrambhatt, Chairman, DGVCL Forum

8. Ms Varsha A Shaikh, Member, DGVCL Forum
9. Shri D.J. Patel, Convener, DGVCL Forum
10. Shri T.D.Davda, Add.Chief Engg., DGVCL
11. Shri R.N. Jadeja, Chairman, PGVCL(Rajkot) forum
12. Shri K.S. Malkan, Member, PGVCL(Rajkot) forum.
13. Shri K.D.Viradia, Convener, PGVCL(Rajkot) forum.
14. Shri M.G. Patel, Chairman, UGVCL Forum
15. Shri S.R. shah, Independent Member, UGVCL forum
16. Shri R.B.Kothari, Member, UGVCL forum
17. Shri C.L.Sharma, Convener, UGVCL forum
18. Prof. P.D.Munshi, Chairman, TPL, Surat forum.
19. Shri J.T.Bhanvadia, Independent member, TPL, Surat forum
20. Shri H.L. Lalwala, Member, TPL, Surat
21. Shri Shailesh R.Desai, Member, TPL, Surat forum
22. Mrs. P.H.Desai, Convener, TPL, Surat forum
23. Shri P.B. Patel, Chairman, TPL , Ahmedabad forum.
24. Shri R. B. Sinha, Independent Member, TPL , Ahmedabad forum.
25. Shri B.M.Bhatt, Member, TPL , Ahmedabad forum
26. Shri F. A. Garari, Convener, TPL ,Ahmedabd forum
27. Shri A.M. Kuriakose, Convener, PGVCL (Bhuj) Forum

Officers of the Commission:

1. Shri D. R. Parmar, Joint Director,
2. Shri S.R.Pande, Legal Advisor,
3. Smt. A.S.Dani, Dy. Director,
4. Shri G.H. Patel, Dy. Director
5. Shri S.T. Anada, Dy Director
6. Shri B.S. Jaiswal, Consultant (Legal)
7. Shri B.R. Joshi, Consultant (Tariff)
8. Smt Mala Y Shah, consultant (Legal)

Officer of Ombudsman

1. Shri B.J. Shah, Staff Officer, Ombudsman

At the outset, Dr P.K. Mishra, Chairman, welcomed the participants and invitees. He introduced Shri Pravinbhai Patel, Member (Tech), GERC and Shri Sanjay Nandan Agrawal, IAS, Secretary, GERC to the participants. Dr Mishra also introduced the newly appointed , Electricity Ombudsman Shri V.T. Rajpara and also mentioned that Shri Rajpara is the first independent Electricity Ombudsman appointed by the Commission. Dr Mishra further observed that it was the third meeting of CGRFs during his tenure. . He noted that though these meetings are not mandatory, they are held for achieving objectives like protecting consumer rights, promoting consumer awareness as well as for sharing ideas and monitoring the activities of CGRFs. It is preferable to convene such meetings at regular intervals.

Thereafter, the agenda items were taken up for discussion.

Item No. 1

Confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting.

Minutes of the last meeting had been circulated to all the Forums/Members vide Commission's letter No. GERC/ADMIN/01260 dated 18th August, 2009. Since there were no comments or suggestions on it, the same were taken as approved.

Item No. 2

Decisions given by CGRF to apply in all similar cases.

In the meeting of State Advisory Committee it was represented that orders issued by CGRFs, which are in favour of consumers can be treated as precedents and should be followed while dealing with similar issues by all field officers. This will reduce hardship to the consumers.

Chairman, GERC pointed out that in cases of policy nature or involving interpretation of Regulations/rules, CGRFs should convey their decisions to the Apex Co-ordination committee to decide the state-wide applicability and to take necessary steps in this regard. Members of all CGRFs agreed to take action.

Item No. 3

Seminar on "Issues and Challenges in the Protection of Consumers' Interest in Power Sector.

Chairman, GERC informed the Members that with a view to facilitating a concerted approach towards protection of consumers' interest in the power

sector, GERC organized a seminar on "Issues and Challenges in Protection of Consumers' Interest in Power Sector" on 23rd November, 2009. The seminar was graced by Hon'ble Justice Shri Mohit S Shah, Acting Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court and Special Invitee Hon'ble Justice Shri M Karpaga Vinayagam, Chairperson, Appellate Tribunal for Electricity, New Delhi. Officials of Discoms, Members of State Advisory Committee, Independent members of all CGRFs and other stakeholders participated. Chief Guest and Special Invitee gave their valuable comments on the subject. The seminar has helped all stakeholders to move towards the fulfillment of objective of the Protection of Interest of Consumers as envisaged in the Electricity Act, 2003.

One member of CGRFs suggested that henceforth all members of CGRF should be invited for such seminars. It was informed that a similar seminar is proposed to be held at Rajkot sometimes in February 2010.

Item No. 4

Appointment of Ombudsman

Chairman had already introduced Shri V.T. Rajpara, newly appointed Electricity Ombudsman and stated that he has resumed his office w.e.f. 6.1.2010.

Item No. 5

Presentation by PGVCL (Rajkot) and MGVL CGRFs on steps taken on consumer awareness.

Member, PGVCL Forum gave a detailed presentation on their activities covering from overview to nurturing consumer relations stating that they have about 36,17,421 consumers and 12,200 employees. They have set up forums at

Rajkot, Bhavnagar and Bhuj with one Independent Member each. Regular grievance redressal meetings are being held on 10th of every month at sub-divisional levels and on 20th of every month at circle level. The meeting is open to all consumers. They have Anytime Payment System, including 14 Any Time Payment Kiosks at Rajkot, Junagadh, Bhavnagar and Jamnagar. They regularly hold energy conservation awareness programmes. They also hold safety awareness rally, in addition to industrial consumer meeting.

MGVCL Forum gave a detailed presentation on steps taken for consumer awareness and stated that they have consumer care centre at all of their field offices, Energy Bill Collection Mobile Vans and Sampark programmes to meet consumers at their door step. MGVCL has Consumer Charter (Nagrik Adhikar Patra), Safety Manual etc. and they organize continuous training for the employees resulting in efficient and positive impact in performance parameters of the company like cash collection, and grievances of the consumers redressed.

Item No. 6

Action taken report of the last meeting.

6.1 During the last meeting, Secretary, GERC had requested all CGRFs to send their consumer charters to the Commission. In response to the same, the Commission has received consumer charters from PGVCL, DGVCL and UGVCL. Mr F.A. Gerari, Convener, TPL Ahmedabad forum submitted booklets printed by TPL on Regulations of GERC. These booklets are not exactly in the form of consumer charter. The Chairman desired that consumer charter should be printed and circulated on a single page.

6.2 In the last meeting, it was also decided that orders of CGRF which disallow consumers' applications/grievances should include the line "**this order can be challenged before Electricity Ombudsman**". CGRF of PGVCL, Rajkot and Bhavnagar have acted accordingly. All CGRFs are expected to follow the above guidelines.

Item No. 7

Review of Performance

Performance details were presented. Some interesting cases were discussed. For example, in Bhavnagar, a large number of complaints are pending. In Rajkot, complaints mostly of billing are still pending. It was stated that PGVCL has a large area. Member (T) suggested that grievance data base should be organized - typewise and timewise, and customer satisfaction survey be conducted and follow up mechanism be undertaken.

Item No. 8

Any other item with permission of the Chair.

Some of the members requested that remuneration in the form of charge allowance be provided regularly to the officers of the utilities who work in CGRFs. It was felt that this issue should be left to the utilities to decide.

One interesting case was reported which pertains to a matter of over 40 years, where no documents are also available in support. In such cases, suggestions were invited for arriving at the decision. It was decided that though 40 years may seem to be a very old matter, CGRF being a quasi judicial forum,

such cases should be decided on merits with interest of justice in mind, but expeditiously. .

Ombudsman suggested that Lok Adalats are effective means for disposal of large number of cases and should be resorted to wherever practical. All the Forum members agreed to the suggestion.

It was decided that CGRF, DGVCL, Surat and CGRF, TPL, Ahmedabad will make a presentation on their work relating to consumer awareness and CGRF activities in the next meeting.

The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the chair.