

Lesco, Mepco explain loadshedding strategies

ISLAMABAD: Lahore Electric Supply Company (Lesco) and Multan Electric Power Company (Mepco) said on Friday that they are carrying out load-shedding on only high loss-making feeders as per government's policy in areas of their respective jurisdictions.

The Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of both the companies also claimed that there is no unscheduled load shedding in their Discos. They also denied charges of overbilling.

Both CEOs were responding to different questions raised during public hearing held by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra). Chairman, Nepra, Tauseef. H. Farooqi, Vice Chairman, Saif Ullah Chattha, Member, Sindh, Rafique Ahmad Shaikh, Member Balochistan, Rehmat Ullah Baloch and Member KP, Engineer Bahadar Shah raised different questions on the performance of both Discos.

Chief Executive Office Lesco, Mujahid Chattha, said the words "load-shedding" and "overbilling" are being misinterpreted. He contended that those consumers who are sent deduction bills, claim it was overbilling. Likewise, when supply is switched off for some time to rectify local fault or if some damage is done due to hailstorm, people portray it as load-shedding.

"I personally hold 'E-kutcheries' every week for a few hours. I have received only 1300 complaints of overbilling while the number of Lesco's consumers is 50 million," he continued.

On a question regarding less draw vis-a-vis allocation, Chattha said that he has to draw electricity as per company's demand and not the allocated quota. General Manager, National Power Control Centre (NPCC), was found to be in agreement with the CEO Lesco, saying a small amount of quota is allocated over and above the demand of a Disco, to utilize in case of high demand.

During the course of hearing, one of the participants asked why Discos are collecting PTV fee from consumers and if Nepra thinks that power companies should do this, Chairman Nepra, Tauseef, H Farooqi, said that this is not the right approach and the regulator has raised the issue of tax collection at the proper government forum.

"We think this is not a right approach but this is a government decision. We think power companies should just do their own work," he continued.

CEO Lesco stated that the company established 10 new 132 KV grid stations to stabilize the system, in addition to installation of 16 new transformers. Lesco has also added 100 kilometer transmission line and up-gradation of/re-conducting of 50 kilometers of 132 KV transmission lines. Lesco is the only Disco where 56 KV system does not exist anywhere. There is no 11 KV feeder in Lesco where load shedding is done.

“There is no constraint at Lesco’s system and I am digesting the required demand of the Disco’s consumers. My demand has touched 4400 MW and we have almost drawn this quantity,” he added. Lesco has also established more than 200 feeders in two years.

According to the CEO, load shedding is being done on 31 feeders which fall in category IV (28 feeders) and V (3 feeders), which inflict losses of up to 40 percent and 60 percent respectively. He said, 55 feeders where losses are less than 10 percent are exempted from load-shedding. Industrial-dominated feeders are 61 while 515 feeders are allocated to industry. Lesco has reduced losses from 13.5 per cent to 12.4 per cent.

Nepra’s Chairman and Members appreciated the performance of Lesco. Members Sindh, Rafique Ahmad Shaikh sought guidance from CEO Lesco to improve performance of Sindh-based Discos.

Chief Executive Officer, Mepco, Engineer Tarhir Mahmood, informed the Authority that there is no forced load-shedding in the company’s jurisdiction but those points like Yousafwala grid (32 grid stations) where transformers are over-loaded and 220 grid station at Bahawalpur are facing constraints. Forced load-shedding is being done on these two points on the instructions of NTDC. Another issue exists in Vehari, which is also related to NTDC.

He added: “We cannot do anything on this issue if we are not supplied from NTDC how can we supply to the consumers?”

In reply to a question, he said, Multan is also load-shedding-free city but in areas where transformer is damaged load-shedding is done. However, the claims of CEO Mepco were challenged by some of the participants.

Commenting on a meeting presided over by Minister for Foreign Affairs, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, wherein dissatisfaction was conveyed on Mepco’s performance, the CEO said that the complaints of elected representatives were largely related to transfers and postings.