

The first meeting of the State Advisory Committee held on 4th September 2007 was inaugurated by the Governor of Meghalaya, Sri. B.L. Joshi. The record of discussion is as follows and the list of members who attended is at Annexure-A.

**Record of discussions at the 1st meeting of the State Advisory Committee,
Shillong**

1. The Advisory Committee was inaugurated by the Governor, Shri. B.L. Joshi. While Mr. Joshi could not physically be present, his speech, read out at the function, drew the attention of the Committee to the role of the Regulatory Commission and the support and assistance that the Advisory Committee could provide. Raising the concerns of different interest groups and providing the necessary insights into how policy and tariff related issues could be tackled were primary areas in which the Commission could benefit from the Advisory Committee's views.
2. The Chairman of the Commission, Mr. Vinay Kohli briefed the members on the statutory backing for the Commission, its autonomous structure and the statutory basis for the State Advisory Committee. He spoke at length about the purpose of reforms in the electricity sector and the role that the Act, the Commission and the Advisory Committee were expected to play. The country being substantially deficit in power the Act was expected to provide a framework in which accelerated investment could be encouraged. The Commission, an autonomous body has been empowered to create a favourable non-discriminatory environment for all players in the Power sector. The Advisory Committee has the responsibility of providing state-specific advice on how this can best be achieved. Beyond this the Chairman also felt that individual members of the Commission could also act as bridge between the citizens and the Commission so that the ample opportunities for engagement with the people, created by the Act, could be made more useful and outcome oriented.

In response to a specific query about the Advisory Committee's role in respect of tariff, Mr. Kohli emphasized that the details of the tariff proposal would shortly be advertised and members of the Advisory Committee will be expected to express their views on the proposals.
3. The Ombudsman, Mr. A.V. Rangad continued the briefing. His major area of concern was grievance settlement and consumer awareness and satisfaction. The importance of "service" has been duly recognized in the Electricity Act, 2003. Apart from the internal grievance settlement practices that utilities already provide, Mr. Rangad drew the attention of members to the statutory requirement of setting up Grievance Forums. He also referred to the procedure for seeking relief and the hierarchical grievance settlement structure.

Two novel features were also specifically referred to. The first related to the already notified standards of service and the second to the specific requirement already notified standards of service and the second to the specific requirement for utilities to annually publish the standards achieved every year in the month of January.

Responding to a specific complaint about deficiencies in service in Garo Hills, Mr. Rangad clarified that the complaints would have to first be brought up at the level of the utility (Me.S.E.B.) before the grievance Redressal Forum and the Ombudsman could be approached.

4. The legal consultant with the Commission, Mr. L. Jyrwa spoke at length about the history of legislation in the Power sector. Like all laws the 2003 Act emerged out of the felt need to provide non-discriminatory treatment for utilities in the Power sector. The controlling authority of the Electricity Boards contained in the Electricity (Supply) Act, 1948 has now been done away with. The Government's licensing and tariff determination powers have been transferred to the Commission and transparency and accountability have been not just recognized but have been integrated as essential ingredients in the regulatory structure. To a specific query about whether the Advisory Committee could suggest amendments to the Act, Mr. Jyrwa response was that since Electricity is a concurrent subject under the Constitution, it was possible, following established procedures, to enact State specific amendments.
5. On behalf of the members of the Advisory Committee, Mr. Ramesh Bawri expressed appreciation for the convening of the 1st meeting. He was confident that he spoke for all when he averred that the Advisory Committee would serve as a very useful and constructive sounding board. The views of the larger community need to be heard and a responsive Commission could benefit from remaining sensitive to the concerns of the people.

List of members attending the 1st meeting of the State Advisory Committee held on 4th September, 2007 at Pinewood Hotel, Shillong.

Sl. No.	NAME	ADDRESS
1.	Smti. J.E. Shullai	: Ex-Chairman, Meghalaya Public Service Commission, Golf-Link, Golf Club, Shillong.
2.	Shri. Darlington Dympep	: General Secretary, Meghalaya State Committee AITUC, Shillong.
3.	Prof. Eugene D. Thomas	: Department of Economics, NEHU Permanent Campus, Shillong-793022.
4.	Shri. J.B. Poon	: Chairman, The Institution of Engineers (India) Shillong Local Centre Barik Point, Shillong-793001.
5.	Shri. S.K. Lato	: Jaintia Hills District, Jowai.
6.	Shri. Ramesh Bawri	: President Confederation of Industries, Meghalaya, Adviser Meghalaya Chamber of Commerce, Dhankheti, Shillong.
7.	Shri. K.C. Momin	: Ex-MLA, West Garo Hills District, Tura.
8.	Lt. Col. Ballaney RN	: C/o HQ Chief Engineer Shillong Zone.
9.	Shri. F.K. Mawlot	: Ex-MLA, Nongpyndeng, Nongstoin, P.O. Nongstoin-793119. West Khasi Hills District.