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Press statement

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BSNL Employees Union (BSNLEU), the Main Recognised Union in BSNL, is organising countrywide dharna programme on 26.06.2020, demanding settlement of the following issues. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, BSNLEU has decided that only 10 employees should participate in the programme in big cities and only 5 employees should participate in all other places. The Union has also emphasised that social distancing should be maintained and that, masks should worn by the participants.

Extreme delay in rolling out BSNL's 4G service.

On 23-10-2019, the Central Government announced a Rs.69,000 crore Revival Package for BSNL and MTNL. Among other things, the Revival Package include allotment of 4G spectrum to BSNL, asset monetisation and extending of sovereign guarantee, to enable BSNL to raise funds from market, by issuing bonds.

However, even after the lapse of 8 months, except the implementation of VRS, no other assurance contained in the Revival Package has been implemented. The extreme delay witnessed in the launching of BSNL's 4G service, is a matter of serious concern for the employees. BSNL is already lagging behind the private operators by 4 years, in rolling out it's 4G service. The Revival of BSNL is unimaginable, without it's rolling out of the 4G service. In such a situation, it is a matter of serious concern that, all out efforts are being taken by vested interests, to scuttle BSNL's 4G roll out. The tender floated by BSNL, to procure 4G equipments, has been put on hold by the government, based on the complaint given by the Telecom Equipments and Services Promotion Council (TEPC).

The objection of the TEPC is that, BSNL is violating the "Make in India Policy". It has demanded that foreign companies should be barred from participating in BSNL's tending process, for the procurement of 4G equipments. When all the private operators are procuring world class 4G equipments from international vendors, why BSNL alone should be compelled to procure equipments from domestic vendors. The Indian vendors do not have proven 4G technology. Further, they do not have the experience of managing large networks. Hence, compelling BSNL to procure 4G equipments from the Indian vendors is nothing but denial of level playing ground to BSNL, vis-à-vis the private telecom service providers.

In BSNLEU's view, the TEPC is nothing but a tool, being used by vested interests, to stall BSNL from procuring 4G equipments. It is not difficult to understand, who will be benefited if BSNL's 4G roll out is delayed. There is every reason for the BSNL employees to believe that, a conspiracy has been hatched, to stop BSNL's 4G roll out. Further, It is most disturbing to note that, the vested interests, who are out to scuttle BSNL's 4G roll out, are having the blessings of the government. Otherwise, the flimsy complaint given by the TEPC, could not have resulted in the holding up of BSNL's 4G tender. Hence, BSNLEU demands that the government should immediately issue clearance to BSNL to procure 4G equipments, through the tender that it has already floated.

Non-implementation of the BSNL's Revival Package.

It is already 8 months, since the Revival Package of BSNL is announced by the Government of India. As per this package, 79,000 employees have already been retrenched under VRS. However, except VRS, no other measure, as assured in the Revival Package, has been implemented. The much publicised steps, such as launching of BSNL's 4G service, issuing of sovereign guarantee to BSNL for raising funds from market, monetisation of assets, etc., are yet to see the light of the day. Hence, it is demanded that, the government should take immediate steps to implement it's assurances given in BSNL's Revival Package.

Non-settlement of issues by the BSNL Management

The BSNL Management is adopting a totally negative attitude in the settlement of the issues of the employees. Even after 79,000 employees have retired under VRS, the left out 70,000 employees are not getting monthly salary on time. In the month of May, 2020, BSNL earned Rs.1,400 crores. The expenditure for payment salary is only Rs.350 crore per month. Still, the payment of salary for the month of May has not been made, till this statement goes to the press. The contract workers in BSNL have not been paid wages for the past one year, as result of which 12 contract workers have already committed suicide. The BSNL Management has blatantly violated the instructions issued by the Labour and Finance Ministries regarding payment of wages of the contract workers during the lock-down period. Further, large scale retrenchment of the contract workers is being done by the Management, which will seriously hamper the operation and maintenance of works at the field level.

Various competitive examinations, for the promotion of the Non-Executive employees, have not been held for the past many years. The society dues and the LIC premium, deducted from the salary of the employees, have not been remitted to the concerned Organisations for the past one year. This has created serious problems to the employees. At a time when the employees are facing threat from the COVID-19, they are not getting cashless treatments, as has been assured in the BSNL's Medical Reimbursement Scheme (BSNLMRS). On the other hand, the Management is curtailing even the existing medical facilities. BSNLEU is taking up many genuine grievances of the employees with the Management. However, none of the issues is being settled by the Management. It is very disturbing to note that the BSNL Management is not even willing to settle such of those issues of the employees, which do not have any financial implication.

Under the above mentioned circumstances, BSNLEU has been compelled to organise this dharna programme. BSNLEU will intensify the agitation, if the government and the Management do not come forward to settle the issues without further delay.



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