

On Wage Revision and pension revision for BSNL Non-Executives and Executives

This Central Executive Committee meeting of BSNL Employees Union held at Thiruvananthapuram from 9th to 11th June 2017 appreciates the initiative taken by the Central Headquarters of the Union for trying to unite all the unions and Associations of Non-Executives and Executives in BSNL on the issue of wage revision. It welcomes the decision of the Unions and Associations of BSNL to go on one day dharna on 20.6.2017, hunger strike on 13.7.2017 and strike on 20.7.2017 on the following demands:

1. Settle wage revision to BSNL employees w.e.f. 01.01.2017
2. Settle pension revision to BSNL retirees w.e.f. 01.01.2017
3. Calculate pension contribution on actual basic pay
4. Implement 30% superannuation benefits to the Directly Recruited Employees of BSNL
5. Withdraw the Corporate Office letter dated 08.05.2017, banning all trade union activities in BSNL.

The NDA Government is resorting to large scale demolition of Public Sector Undertakings. It dismantled the Planning Commission that helped the growth of the PSUs and in its place established NITI Ayog, with a mandate to identify the PSUs that are to be disinvested or sold. NITI Ayog has already identified 74 PSUs—including 26 for downright closure and 10 for strategic sale(privatization). The Government has given 'in principle' approval to these recommendations of the NITI Ayog. It appointed Reliance Mutual Fund Managers to provide consultancy and execute the quick selling of the shares in 10 PSUs which are strategic to our national economy, including ONGC, GAIL, Oil India, Indian Oil, Coal India, BHEL, BEL etc. BEML, one of the 9 defense PSUs engaged in defense production, Salem, Durgapur and Bhadravati plants of SAIL, Bridge and Roof Company, a premier mini ratna company, Dredging Corporation of India etc are among those identified for privatization through strategic sale. The Defense Ministry has ordered to list BDL, MIDHANI in the stock market to facilitate disinvestment of at least 25%. It decided to close Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited (IDPL), RDPL and decided to privatize Hindustan Antibiotics Limited. NITI Ayog has made a blue print for sale of Air India and Government is going ahead with it. While the Government is inclined to discuss the problems of the private telecom operators that arose due to the gambling of the Reliance Jio, no consideration is being given for BSNL to enable it to come out of its losses.

The third Pay Revision Committee appointed by the Government for revising wages of the executives has recommended wage revision for profit making PSUs only. It recommended 15%, 10% and 5% fitment benefit depending on the profit of the Company. Thus wage revision is not recommended for loss making PSUs including BSNL. The Modi Government which is bent upon destroying PSUs cannot be expected to be kind enough to grant wage revision to the employees of the loss making BSNL, unless there is a severe united struggle of all non-executives and Executives. BSNL Employees Union has been relentlessly pursuing for such a united struggle and bringing pressure on the management and the Government. Noticing this agitated mood of the employees, the CMD BSNL has written letters to the DoT and DPE Secretaries recommending wage revision with 15% fitment. While this is a welcome

development, it is only a recommendation of the BSNL management and it has to be approved by the Government, which is bent upon destroying the Public Sector. For this, the BSNL non-executives and executives have to fight unitedly to compel the Government to grant wage revision. It is unfortunate that some Unions/associations are not realizing this and not coming forward for united struggle.

BSNL has been declared as a “priority” PSU by the 14th Finance Commission since it is carrying out several social responsibilities of the Government like providing telecom services in uneconomical, rural, far flung areas and also playing vital role in providing connectivity during emergencies, natural calamities etc. It is acting as a tariff balancer so that reliable and affordable telecom services are available to the people. Its total revenue has increased from Rs 27933 crore in 2011-12 to Rs 32818 crore in 2015-16. While it faced an operating loss (cash deficit) of Rs 691 crores in 2013-14, it achieved an operational profit of Rs 672 crore in 2014-15 and Rs 3856 crore in 2015-16. The BSNL employees were absorbed in BSNL from DoT with an assurance of better prospects. In case they have not opted for BSNL, they would have got the benefit of 7th CPC from 1.1.2016 along with pension revision.

It should also be noted that even as per the recommendations of the third PRC, the PSUs created to perform a specific function of the Government have to be exempted from “affordability” clause and be given wage revision. Since BSNL was formed to meet the agenda of the Government to meet the objectives specified in the New Telecom Policy 1999, it has to be exempted from the ‘affordability’ clause and be given wage revision. Moreover, BSNL has assured that it would meet the additional expenditure on account of pay revision from its internal resources.

When the Central Government pensioners getting pension under CCS (Pension) rules got pension revision, it cannot be denied to BSNL Pensioners getting pension under the same rules. But the pension revision of BSNL pensioners is linked to wage revision in BSNL and hence it cannot be denied. Besides, pay revision is essential to retain the 30000 newly recruited engineering graduates since it is difficult for BSNL to face the fierce competition without them. The recommendation of the 2nd PRC that 30% Superannuation benefits should be implemented to the Directly Recruited employees, has not yet been implemented in BSNL, which is a matter of great concern. Non-implementation of the 30% Superannuation benefits, is nothing but denial of the future social security for the entire Directly Recruited employees of BSNL.

This CEC meeting of BSNL Employees Union appeals all Unions/Associations to unite together for a serious and successful struggle for wage revision and pension revision, and join in the dharna, hunger strike and strike mentioned above. This meeting further directs the CHQ of the Union to approach all unions once again to join in the programme and to organize a massive campaign along with Unions/Associations coming forward for the programme, so that the struggle takes place in a powerful manner, for the settlement of the demands contained in the charter of demands. This meeting further authorises the CHQ to take further initiatives for achieving wage revision and pension revision.
