



BSNL Employees Union

Central Head Quarters, New Delhi

Defeat the conspiracy to kill BSNL

It is already one year and eight months, since the Revival Package for BSNL was announced by the government. As per the Revival Package, 80,000 employees have already been retrenched under VRS. Except this, no major step has been taken by the government, for the revival of BSNL. In fact, still the employees continue to suffer, because of non-payment of salary on the due date, non-payment of medical bills and other problems. The financial condition of BSNL is worsening day by day. This is mainly because, BSNL has not been able to launch its 4G service till today.

It is crystal clear that, the Modi government is taking every possible step, to stop BSNL from launching its 4G service. Everyone knows that, the government has imposed a condition on BSNL, that the Company should procure its 4G equipments only from Indian vendors and not from foreign vendors. It is also a known fact that, no Indian company is having proven 4G technology, which can supply equipments to BSNL.

However, the important point is, when private companies like Airtel, Jio and Vodafone can procure equipments from foreign vendors like Nokia, Ericsson and Samsung, why BSNL should not be allowed to procure 4G equipments from them? This discrimination is nothing but a strategy to stop BSNL from launching its 4G service.

It is important to note that, the Empowered Technology Group, headed by Shri Vijay Raghavan, Principal Advisor to the Prime Minister, on Science and Technology, had recommended that BSNL should also be allowed to procure 4G equipments from foreign vendors. However, this recommendation was also rejected by the PMO.

BSNL is having 49,300 4G compatible BTSs. These BTSs can easily be converted into 4G BTSs and thereby BSNL can immediately start its 4G service, without procuring any new equipment. However, the government is not allowing BSNL to upgrade these 49,300 BTSs. Recently, the Management Committee of BSNL took the decision to upgrade 18,000 BTSs. When this decision went for the approval of the Board of Directors, the Government Directors in the Board have blocked it. This clearly shows that, the government does not want BSNL to compete with private companies, especially with Jio, by providing 4G service.

BSNL is not having money to pay salary, electricity bills, rent, etc. At the same time, an amount of Rs.39,000 crore remains outstanding, to be paid by the government to BSNL, on account of various claims like, Viability Gap Funding for Rural Telephony (Rs.13,789 crore), Leave Encashment paid by BSNL for absorbed employees (Rs.11,998 crore), Interest on Wimax Spectrum surrendered (Rs.5,850 crore) and so on. But the government does not bother to repay this amount to BSNL, which is in acute financial crisis.

BSNL is having a liability of Rs.30,000 crore. At the same time, it is having huge surplus lands in various parts of the country. By selling these surplus lands, BSNL can repay its loans and can become a debt-free company. In fact, monetisation of BSNL's lands is one of the assurances given by the Government in the Revival Package. However, till today, the government has not taken serious steps to help BSNL to sell its surplus lands.

BSNL employees have tooth and nail opposed the formation of BSNL's Subsidiary Tower Company. The main apprehension is that, the Subsidiary Tower Company may be utilised as a 'route', for handing over BSNL's mobile towers to the private. This apprehension is proved to be correct now. The government has taken decision to earn Rs.1,30,000 crore by way of selling the assets in Railways, BSNL and MTNL. Out of this, the government has planned to earn Rs.90,000 crore from the Railways and the remaining Rs.40,000 crore, by selling the mobile towers and optic fibre of BSNL and MTNL. To achieve this, the government may transfer BSNL's mobile towers to the BSNL Tower Company and thereafter will bring a private company

as the strategic partner in the tower company. Hence, the monetisation of BSNL's towers and optic fibre should be stopped at any cost. Otherwise, it will be the end for BSNL.

The attacks being made on BSNL are nothing but a part of the attacks being made on the Public Sector of this country. For the past many years, we have been opposing disinvestment in the Public Sector Undertakings. However, what the Modi government is doing now is the outright sale of the Public Sector companies. "The Revised Public Sector Policy", announced in the budget 2021-22 has laid down a detailed road-map for the privatisation of the Indian public sector.

A classic example of the government's privatisation policy is its decision to sell the BPCL (Bharat Petroleum Chemical Ltd.). BPCL earns thousands of crores of rupees as profit every year. Still, the government has taken decision to sell it out completely. Similarly, in the just concluded monsoon session of the Parliament, a bill has been passed, to privatise government's General Insurance Companies.

Privatisation of the Indian Railways is being speedily implemented. A strong rumour doing the rounds is that, the Indian Railways may soon become Adani Railways. The public sector banks ensured the rapid economic growth of this country. But now, the government says that, except 2 or 3, all other public sector banks will be privatised. Similarly, the LIC, which has contributed lakhs of crores of rupees, for the development of this country, is also being privatised. To begin with, the government is selling out 20% shares of the LIC.

All the 41 Ordnance Factories are also being privatised. As a first step, they are being converted into a corporation. In the same manner, Coal fields of the country, electricity generation are also being privatised. In short, the entire Public Sector Companies in India have been put up for sale by the Modi government. It is only as a part of its privatisation of the entire public sector, that the government is killing BSNL also.

Simultaneously, the government has launched a cruel attack on the trade unions. All the Labour Laws of the country have been thrown out and four new Labour Codes have been introduced in their place. The very purpose of bringing this Labour Codes is to deny the trade union rights and to deny the right to agitate. All these four Labour Codes are anti-labour and pro-employer. The 10 Central Trade Unions are continuously fighting against these Labour Codes. BSNLEU has also joined this struggle.

Even today, BSNL is continuing as a 100% Public Sector Company. This is only because of the glorious and united struggles organised in the past, by the unions and associations of BSNL. These struggles should continue, to safeguard BSNL and also to ensure its financial revival. The 10 Central Trade Unions of this country are relentlessly fighting against the privatisation of the public sector, by the Narendra Modi government. Hence, the BSNL employees should also join hands with the Central Trade Unions, to protect BSNL and to protect the entire public sector of this country.

The successful fight against the privatisation of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant is a very good example, of how the working class, with the support of the people, can successfully stop the privatisation of the Public Sector Undertakings. On 27-02-2021, the Union Cabinet decided to privatise the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. Immediately, the fight against privatisation of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant started. The issue of privatisation of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant is taken to the people and their support was mobilised in a big way, to stop this privatisation.

Due to the continuous efforts of the trade union movement, the support of the all sections of the people of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana state was mobilised against the privatisation of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. As a result, the political parties of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are totally opposing the privatisation of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. As a result of this, the privatisation of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant has been successfully put on hold.

The fight against the privatisation of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant has proved that, the privatisation of the Public Sector, by the government, can be successfully stalled, with the support of the people of this country. Hence, it is our important duty to massively mobilise the support of the people, to defeat the conspiracies to kill BSNL and also to save the Public Sector of this country.

Save BSNL !
Save the Public Sector !!
Workers Unity Zindabad!!