

# **ALL UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS OF BSNL (AUAB)**

Press Release

Dated: 14.07.2020

All the major trade unions and associations of BSNL are organising ***lunch-hour black-flag demonstrations*** throughout the country on 16.07.2020, under the banner of the All Unions and Associations of BSNL (AUAB). These demonstrations will be organised, by maintaining social distancing and by taking other precautions, like wearing of masks. The BSNL employees will also wear black-badges whole day on 16.07.2020.

This agitational programme is being organised to express the deep anguish and resentment of the employees against cancellation of BSNL's 4G tender, cancellation of BSNL's proposal for upgradation of its 49,300 BTSs to 4G, abnormal delay in issuing ***Add on Order*** for 4G equipments, inordinate delay in the implementation of BSNL's Revival Package and against the non-settlement of the burning problems of the employees.

It is nearly 9 months now, since the Revival Package of BSNL was announced by the Government, with much pomp and show. Still, BSNL employees are not getting payment of their salary on the due date. This is the condition, even after the retrenchment of 79,000 employees under VRS, which has cut down the wage bill of the Company by more than 50%. This state of affairs of BSNL, speaks volumes about the lethargy and indifference on the part of the Government of India and the BSNL Management, in taking expeditious steps for reviving BSNL.

Rolling out of BSNL's 4G service is the back-bone to the revival of this telecom PSU. However, the recent cancellation of the tender floated by BSNL, for procuring 4G equipments at a cost of Rs.9,300 crore, has brought the Company back to square one, on this matter. It is a total failure on the part of the Government and the Management that, even after 9 months, no significant step has been taken, to roll out BSNL's 4G service.

BSNL is already having 49,300 BTSs (Base Transceivers), which are 4G compatible. Through minor upgradation, all these BTSs can be converted into 4G BTSs with a small investment of about Rs.1,500 crores. In addition to this, BSNL could have added another 15,000 BTSs, by placing ***Add on Order*** to the existing Mobile tender. Thus, 64,300 4G BTSs could have been pressed into service by the BSNL Management, within 2 to 3 months of allotment of 4G spectrum in October, 2019. Thus, BSNL could have rolled out its Pan-India 4G service, with very good pan India coverage. However, the BSNL Management has miserably failed in this task. Being the sole owner of the Company, the Government of India also cannot shirk its responsibility on this matter.

Adding insult to injury, the tender floated by BSNL, to procure 4G equipments, has been cancelled by the government, based on a complaint from the "Telecom Equipments and Services Promotional Council" (TEPC). BSNL is already lagging 4 years behind the private operators, in the 4G segment. Under this circumstance, cancellation of BSNL's tender is going to inordinately delay the Company's 4G launching. The crux of the complaint of the TEPC is that, BSNL, in its 4G tender, has violated the norms prescribed in the "Make in India" Policy. The TEPC has also demanded that foreign vendors should be barred from participating in BSNL's tender. It is important to note that the Hon'ble Finance Minister has announced that tenders upto Rs.300 crore need not go global. Whereas, the value of BSNL's tender was Rs.9,300 crore.

The complaint of the TEPC is nothing but a ploy by the vested interests, who are out to destabilise BSNL, by disrupting its procurement of 4G equipments. The AUAB has every reason to believe that, a conspiracy has been hatched, to destabilise BSNL, by disrupting its rolling out of 4G service. When the private telecom operators are procuring world standard equipments from multinational companies, why BSNL alone should be compelled to procure 4G equipments from domestic vendors, whose 4G technology is not tested or proven so far. It is most unfortunate that the Government has obliged the disruptive forces, by cancelling BSNL's 4G tender.

Even after the lapse of 9 months, the implementation of the much publicised BSNL's Revival Package, including the rolling out of 4G service, is moving at snail's pace. Except the swift retrenchment of 79,000 BSNL employees under VRS, all other assurances given in BSNL's Revival Package have been put in cold storage. Only a few days back, the Finance Ministry has taken the much belated decision to extend sovereign guarantee to BSNL, for raising Rs.8,500 crore, by issuing long term bonds.

Monetisation of BSNL's assets is one of the measures, envisaged in the Revival Package. Certainly, BSNL is having vast tracks of surplus lands in the prime locations of various cities and towns. However, in the name of monetisation of BSNL's assets, these lands should not be handed over to the corporates, at throw away prices. ***These lands should be sold in a transparent manner and at the prevailing market rates.*** They should not be sold at book value or at circle rates. The AUAB will strictly monitor these dealings.

It is the right of the employees to get salary on the last working day of the month. However, this is not happening in BSNL for more than one year now. It is very unfortunate that, payment of salary to its employees has become the last priority of the BSNL Management. For instance, BSNL earned a revenue of Rs.1,400 crore in May,2020, whereas, only Rs.420 crore is required for the payment of salary. Still, the salary was not paid on the due date. Similarly, the salary for the month of June,2020 is not paid till date. Further, the BSNL Management is committing the crime of not paying wages to the contract workers for more than one year now, as a result of which 12 contract workers have committed suicide so far. Even at the time when the COVID-19 is spreading fast, the employees are not getting cashless-treatment from empaneled hospitals. It is the duty of the Management to ensure that the COVID-19 affected employees get good quality treatment. In view of the aforementioned situation, the AUAB has called for the following agitational programme to achieve its charter of demands.

#### **Agitational programme.**

- 1. Organising black-flag demonstration, by maintaining social distancing and wearing of masks during lunch hour on 16.07.2020.**
- 2. The employees will also wear black badges throughout the day on 16.07.2020.**
- 3. Submitting of memorandum to all the MPs, during the period from 13.07.2020 to 31.07.2020, urging upon them to intervene for the expeditious rolling out of BSNL's 4G service, as well as the early revival of telecom PSU.**
- 4. Organising Twitter Campaign on 05.08.2020, insisting settlement of the charter of demands.**

**Demands:**

1. BSNL should immediately be allowed to roll out it's 4G Services.
  - a) BSNL should take immediate actions to upgrade the 4G compatible BTSs.
  - b) Add on order for 4G equipments as per Phase VIII.4 tender should be issued immediately.
  - c) In the matter of procuring new equipments and upgradation, there should not be any discrimination, between BSNL and other private telecom service providers.
2. The Government should immediately implement the assurances contained in BSNL's Revival Package.
3. Urgent measures should be undertaken by the BSNL Management for improving the quality of service.
4. The Management should ensure that the salary payment of the employees is made on the last working of every month. Deductions made from employees' salary, on account of society dues, should immediately be remitted.
5. The Management should immediately take steps to ensure that the employees get cashless treatment from empanelled hospitals during Covid-19 pandemic. The Management should pay Rs.10 lakh to the family of the employees who die due to COVID-19, based on the instructions issued by the DoT in such cases.
6. Make payment of the wage arrears of the contract workers, which is remaining pending for more than one year, without any further delay.
7. Immediately clear the payment of pending electricity bills, rental, vehicle, temporary advance, housekeeping etc.



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Chairman, AUAB.



Com. P. Abhimanyu  
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