

KEY NOTE ADDRESS OF CIRCLE SECRETARY SNEA KERALA IN THE OPEN SESSION OF XXVITH CIRCLE CONFERENCE AT KOZHICKODE ON 28TH AND 29TH OF JUNE 2024.

Respected President, Respected Chief Guest Hon. Chief General Manager Telecom of BSNL Kerala Circle Sri. B. Sunil Kumar, Most Dynamic General Secretary of SNEA Com. M.S. Adasul, Guests of Honor Sri. Sathesh R, Sr. General Manager (HR & Admn), Kerala Circle, Smt. Saniya Abdul Latheef, Sr. General Manager of Kozhikkode and Malappuram BAs, Circle Secretaries of BSNLEU, SEWA, AIBSNLEA, AIGETOA, NFTE, Senior Leaders of SNEA CHQ, Circle Office Bearers, CWC Members, District Secretaries, CEC Members, Branch Secretaries, Delegates of this Circle Conference, and distinguished Members of SNEA gathered here, and all other friends and colleagues,

It is a very prestigious occasion for me to address this most elegant gathering of BSNL Kerala Circle at the open session of the XXVIth Circle Conference. With the permission of all of you, I am presenting the keynote address of the Circle Secretary of SNEA Kerala.

As all of us know, BSNL has started going steadily after a turbulent time since 2018. Each one of us has been contributing our best despite all the hardships we have faced. I took over the baton of Circle Secretary of SNEA Kerala Circle, which is one of the most challenging tasks, from Com. Santhosh Kumar at the end of 2019. By 2020, many of the well-experienced officers were forced to opt for VRS due to various reasons.

We all know that BSNL was formed from DoT on 1st October 2000 with 4.5 lakh employees in various cadres. There were many assurances given by the Government of India to its employees at the time of BSNL's formation. Timely promotions, assurances of salary, perks, and pensions are some of the key points in those assurances. Looking back, we can see that many of these assurances are still just assurances, and we have been struggling to materialize them.

Regarding salary, we are now drawing the salary fixed in 2007, whereas many of the PSUs in India have implemented the 3rd PRC with effect from 01.01.2017. It may be noted that the Government and Management linked profitability and revenue with the implementation of the 3rd PRC. At the same time, a group of employees working in BSNL is drawing salary, perks, and allowances as per the latest PRC.

We all know that revenue can be increased only by generating more new business aligned with the technology changes adopted and implemented by other TSPs. While our competitors implement the most modern 4G equipment and networks, very dynamic FTTH equipment, services, and plans, it is a fact that we are not offering these services with superior and foolproof equipment.

Having Indian-made equipment to serve this nation is a very good idea, especially when national security is the utmost concern. But when all the other companies, which hold more than 90% of the market share, are offering world-class services with already proven new technology equipment, we may again approach the Government of India to review whether the current approach for the implementation of 4G equipment should allow BSNL to procure already proven world-class equipment at the earliest or permit BSNL to roam on other operators' networks until BSNL's ATMANIRBHAR 4G is implemented in its true spirit.

The absence of timely technology changes is the main cause of revenue reduction and customer disconnection for BSNL. These issues are purely political, ministerial, and managerial decisions. The employees of BSNL are forced to shoulder all the responsibilities alone for all these flaws, despite having no role in the decision-making in BSNL policies. The 3rd PRC implementation with effect from 01.01.2017, the standard pay scale of E2-E3 from JTO/JAO and SDE/AO onwards with effect from 01.01.2007, the provision of the basic pay of 22820 to the E1A recruited DR JTO/JAOs up to 2010 from their date of appointments, and the settlement of the pay anomalies of DR TTAs who were

recruited around 2007 with a pre-revised NE scale of pay that had a 50% DA merger resulting in a huge financial loss in the post-pay revision in 2007, are some of the major unresolved issues kept pending by BSNL Management and DoT in the name of revenue and profit. At the same time, the Government or Management was not at all hesitant to implement the 7th CPC in BSNL, which is beneficial to the higher managerial officers who play key roles in the decision-making of BSNL. This is not to block any benefits to any group of employees/officers but to remind the Government and BSNL Management to take balanced decisions for all its employees, whether they are absorbed or unabsorbed.

We know that BSNL is purely a business organization that runs purely on its revenue. Even though the Government is now providing some packages after realizing that the issue of BSNL is mainly due to the delay in the implementation of new technologies, the company needs more vibrant employees in the field to provide vibrant service and new ways of marketing. We all know that for providing a very healthy and apt marketing atmosphere and to convince the customers with our new offers and services, communication skills are very important. When BSNL is moving ahead with an outsourcing type of service delivery and assurances, the company needs its employees mainly in marketing to increase the turnover by approaching more new customers. For this, the company needs more employees in marketing who have good communication skills in local languages, who know the geography and the marketing potential of the area very well. For this, it will always be good to keep officers who are well-versed with the linguistic, cultural, and geographical awareness and fluencies. But the present transfer policy of BSNL is not at all helping the company in the right spirit. India is a country with 28 states and 8 Union Territories. Here we have 13 main languages and several hundred other languages. Hence it is very well understood from these statistics that to overcome the linguistic issues, which are a main obstacle in marketing, we should keep local residents at their locality as far as possible. Transfers of officers should only be based on real requirements wherever manpower shortages are present. It is seen that BSNL is referring other Private companies only for reducing the employees by keeping Employee Ratio at par with them but not the new technology service implementation or marketing strategies adopted.

This forced migration of officers from one state to another is becoming a real headache, not only for the affected officers but also for the growth of the company. When Kerala is identified as the most potential telecom business state in the country and the circle of BSNL with the most staff shortages, transferring more local people away from Kerala is really hitting us hard. I submit a humble request to the Hon. Chief Guest, the CGMT of BSNL Kerala, to involve himself more vigorously in this matter and stop these unscientific transfers in BSNL. We are also trying to convince the nodal ministry about the negative impact of these transfers from the Association platforms.

Our prolonged efforts about the High Range Transfers of Idukki could be addressed at BSNLCO level and we got the orders to include High Ranges of Idukki as Soft Tenure station with reduction of three years in circle stay if any officer is working in Idukki for 3 years.

About Lakshadweep, one of the Union Territories of India, is also a part of the BSNL Kerala Circle and a declared Hard Tenure Station. It is not like the hard tenure station in the mainland. When Andaman and Nicobar Islands are treated as a separate circle, Lakshadweep should also be treated as a different circle. Like Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep is located 300 to 400 km away from mainland in the Arabian Sea, with the islands spread from almost the south to the north of Kerala. Traveling from one island to another itself can take hours and is often dependent on climatic conditions. Still, we have no concrete assurance from BSNLCO that posting in Lakshadweep is eligible for a circle break. Either BSNLCO should take over the posting to Lakshadweep on a demand basis from outside Kerala on a long-stay, or a circle break should be allowed to all employees who have worked in Lakshadweep for more than two years.

“It is not the mountains ahead to climb that wear you out; it is the pebble in your shoe,” said the famous boxer Muhammad Ali. We can see a lot of such pebbles in BSNL that are demotivating and

wearing down employees. I have already explained some of these issues in my address, such as the delay in the implementation of salary revisions, standard pay scales, and the settling of pay anomalies for different cadres. Another key element is HR policies. It is a reality that people have been waiting for their next promotion from JTO to SDE since 2015, three years after their JTO regular posting. There are officers waiting for the next promotion for the last six years in the JAO cadre, SDEs/AOs waiting for their AGM/CAO promotions, and senior officers waiting for their next promotion to DGM Regular, who are almost at the far end of their careers. There are officers whose basic pay has been stagnated for the last few years. Officers promoted to SDE in 2008 are still waiting for their next promotion due to reversion to the JTO cadre with retrospective effect in 2016. When all these issues are heating up the emotions of the employees, which is really affecting the company's growth, the introduction of outside lateral induction above the cadre of JTO/JAO is disheartening. The recent notification of SET RR, which has the same qualification as JTO RR but to Sr. SDE scale, could have been avoided. When IIT-screened, GATE-exam-qualified talents are already inside BSNL, recruiting some officers with the same qualifications to the above grade is really demotivating for those employees. BSNL Management should recognize that employees are the real asset and should motivate them by offering financial and career growth opportunities. Otherwise, the growth of the organization may be hindered.

We also could address and settle the vital issue regarding CAF Penalty which was arbitrarily imposed on employees. It was good to see that the Management could hear our collective voice in the name of AUAB and considered our views and withdrew the decision of imposing penalty.

Another concern is the introduction of an American company for the growth of BSNL. It is quite ironic to see that in this era of Atmanirbhar Bharat, when our 4G equipment are strictly following Make in India guidelines, the company implementing the Make in India 4G project is moving forward with the induction of an American-based company for the survey and implementation of their ideas about market and revenue growth for BSNL. It is reported that about ₹130 crore is being invested in this project. Our prayers and struggles for the introduction of standard pay scales, the ₹22,820 pay scale, and the settlement of pay anomalies for DR TTAs do not require ₹130 crore, but BSNL has taken more than 15 years and is still waiting. At the same time, in the last decade, BSNL has implemented projects with KPMG, Deloitte, and BCG for almost the same purpose, spending significant investments, and yet it is going ahead with another group for the same purpose.

We have pointed out many threats from competitors and required actions to be taken by BSNLCO to overcome stiff market competition, especially in the Mobile, FTTH, and EB sectors. Most of our suggestions are not being heard in its true spirit. We have submitted proposals for improving the LCO business by gaining their trust, but these have not been fully heard. We have highlighted issues with the present outsourcing mechanisms, which are not being properly addressed. We have witnessed the mass disconnection of landlines from the date of inception of cluster outsourcing, resulting in BSNL losing nearly 60% of its landlines in just two years due to the flawed cluster outsourcing approach. The same is happening in transmission network maintenance outsourcing.

Our outsourcing partners are not concerned about penalties due to the penalty cap, which ensures 85% of the billed amount in almost all cases. Unscientific terms and conditions are a real headache for field employees. When their APAR and IMPS are based on the performance of outsourcing partners and LCOs, the lack of proper terms and conditions to control them becomes a bottleneck. Ultimately, our field officers are the most affected victims in this situation.

We could convince Management to increase the Mobile purchase amount from Rs.1500/- to Rs. 5000/- and so on. But again a balance approach is missing in this decision also. It may be seen that a JTO/SDE who are the key officers of our business expansion, who have to install and use all the apps and tools released by BSNLCO is getting only 5000/- and 6000/- where as higher officials are getting more than 25000/- and above. For assuring the quality output of JTO/SDEs, BSNL may give

permission for them to purchase Mobile phones not less than 15000/- and also to give permission to purchase Laptops for all executives.

It is our greatest concern and we would like the attention of concerned, towards the issue of unserviceability on 700 MHz spectrum on which our go live ready 4G BTSs which is 35 in numbers out of 504 BTS installed so far in Kerala Circle. Is it not painful for the company which is tottering in the telecom industry with outdated technologies and government policies?. If the vendor in turn the BSNL is not allowed to use the extra bandwidth of spectrum in 2100Mz for which all formalities completed under BSNL revival package and 4G saturation project, this association would constrained to think there is some conspiracy going on in higher echelons. They cannot escape from taking responsibility of the delay in implementation which is denial in fact, as far as the general public is concerned. We solicit the immediate intervention of the higher up to make the additional band width of 2100 MHz available for BSNL to air the already installed and ready to go live BTSs, instead of depending on the 700 MHz for which customer affordable handsets are yet to be introduced in the market. Government may also be requested to issue necessary orders to the manufactures to produce customer affordable handset which support 700 MHz spectrum.

Dear colleagues, these are some burning issues that need to be addressed. These points are reiterated not to blame anyone but to highlight the need for proper solutions through effective communication between employees, management, and the Government of India. By addressing these issues, we can turn these challenges into stepping stones for the success of BSNL and the growth of its employees.

Employees are the real asset of any organization, and BSNL's growth depends on motivated and well-supported employees. While solutions may not come overnight, unity and teamwork can achieve the impossible. Associations serve as a bridge between management and employees to facilitate effective communication.

I request all our chief guests, GS SNEA and all other Leaders of sister associations, Let us fight together, work as a team, and bring BSNL back to its glorious past.

With this, I conclude my key note address, thank you all for your patient listening.

Employees Unity Zindabad

SNEA Zindabad

BSNL Zindabad,

Jai Hind...

Com. Jithesh K. P.

Circle Secretary SNEA Kerala