

## **Keynote address by the General Secretary, Sanchar Nigam Executives Association in the open session held on 13.02.2017:**

Respected Com A A Khan, CHQ president, Respected Sri Anupam Shrivastava, CMD/BSNL and Chief Guest of the open session, Respected Sri R. K. Mishra, Director/Institute of Public Enterprises, Com G L Jogi, Chairman/SNEA, Com V K Tomar, All India President/National Confederation of Officers Associations (NCOA), Respected Shri L Anathram, CGMT/Telangana Circle, veteran leader Com S L Reddy, Com K S N Raju/ Advisor, NCOA, other senior officers, my colleague CHQ Office bearers, Circles Secretaries, CWC members, friends from print and electronic media and my dear comrades.

Standing before this esteemed audience, I, occupying this prestigious podium as General Secretary of SNEA, which secured majority mandate of the Executives in the recently first ever momentous referendum of Executives in CPSUs, with huge confidence, strength and optimism venture to place before this august gathering very significant and critical insights into what needs to be done to accelerate the ongoing growth momentum of the company and more importantly on how compelling and inescapable it is to imminently address in a comprehensive and time bound manner basic HR issues of the Executives. What has to be recognized and honestly acknowledged at the very outset is that growth momentum story cannot pull on for a long time and go far if resolution of very basic HR issues continues to get inordinately delayed.

What gives me that extra strength, confidence and conviction to emphasise this significant fact is the support we inherit and which has been amply exhibited when we emerged as front runners in the recently concluded membership verification process without any opportunistic alliances. Holding firmly and steadfastly on to our realistic agenda and completely unmindful of the end results of the verification process, we have had the courage and conviction to go undaunted and alone, without compromising our identity and our short and long term agenda, to find out where we exactly stand vis-a-vis our perception and stand on HR issues and also on the issues very closely relating to the growth of the Company. We gratefully acknowledge unwavering faith and trust that the Executives have reposed in this great Association with a long tradition of struggles and gutsful intervention on all issues concerning the cadres at different intervals and the larger and critical issues relating to continued growth and viability of the company.

It will not be surely out of context to mention that this membership verification would not have been possible but for a very tough and uncompromising intervention of Smt Sujata T Ray, Director(HR) and also GM(SR) who were quite proactive and instrumental in ensuring that the process is culminated smoothly despite insurmountable issues, both legal and otherwise, being raised to stall and defeat the process.

The role of our beloved CMD to ensure that the process reaches its logical conclusion as per the commitments he gave us in May, 2016 when the MV was notified has been truly commendable and exemplary. Our suggestion to file caveat against any possible move to stop the membership verification was readily accepted by him. DIR(HR) and GM(SR) acted swiftly by filing caveats by the next working day in all the CATs and HCs. Subsequently we had seen flood of court cases in various HCs at Kolkata, Allahabad, Chennai, Nagpur, Cuttack and Cuttack(CAT) by different Associations demanding stay on membership verification on flimsy grounds. On the timely action of BSNL management especially GM(SR) with the guidance of DIR(HR) and CMD, no interim directions passed staying the verification and finally membership verification conducted on 07.12.2016. We really have no words to express our profound sense of gratitude to our beloved CMD, DIR (HR) and GM(SR) in completing the process of MV smoothly and expeditiously, defeating all the efforts made by vested interests to derail the process on flimsy and untenable grounds. **We are very confident that the fundamental objective of reducing multiplicity of Associations through MV will be fully upheld by the Management and that the view of the Majority Association alone shall prevail while formulating and finalizing HR policies of Executives and also policies relating to growth and continued viability and stability of the Company. Any kind of dilution on the part of the management in this regard will only erode the credibility of the management and will result in utter chaos, greatly detrimental to the growth of the Company.**

Majority mandate obtained has entrusted incredibly huge responsibility on us to steer the company into the growth trajectory once again. As a trade union we are very unique in placing the interests of the Company above everything and we mean it. **While we undoubtedly remain committed in this regard, resolution of pending and crucial HR issues will generate environment that will help us accomplish our dream as quickly as possible.**

For the last about two of years we are having a vibrant Management and Board of Directors under the versatile and towering stewardship of present CMD. During these two years we are witnessing spectacular and incredible reversal of galloping losses since year 2007. Almost an impossible feat has been accomplished by closing in the losses to the extent of 70% and accelerating the growth through sustained and series of stimulating business initiatives. Sir, it would not be at all an exaggeration to place on record that you are leaving an indelible mark as far as leadership of this company is concerned. GSM Phase VII tender has almost been completed giving better coverage and improving the quality of service significantly. MPLS expansion is completed by adding 232 new PE/Edge routers, giving Enterprises business a big push and generating business opportunity of more than 1,000 Crores. Laying of 40,000 KM OFC Cable and installation of associated OTN equipments are underway. NGN Phase I and II are in the final stage. Now GSM Phase VIII tender is getting finalised with more emphasis on 4G business. **It may be the fastest tender ever materialised in the history of BSNL and DoT.** New NGN tender for 5 Million voice and PCO ports and 2 Million Broadband ports to replace all the existing switches with NGN Technology is almost in the final stage. New NGN switches are compatible for FTTH also. 40,000 Wi-Fi Hotspots as an alternative to 4G is another significant business initiative. The recently introduced new BB and 3G plans to counter Reliance Jio have even surprised our competitors. Third Phase of OTN expansion is under process.

Simultaneously, the BSNL Management has been taking a series of marketing initiatives. Night Free call from landline, Free mobile roaming, Free calls on Sundays, Free call diversion etc considerably improved our customer base and market share. BSNL recently launched '**Mobicash Mobile Wallet**' in association with the largest Public Sector Bank, State Bank of India. This mobile wallet which works with smart as well as normal feature phones has been a great boon to the masses. "**Mobicash wallet**" with the largest bank, State Bank of India, is a major and significant step towards cashless payments, increasing our presence and visibility among the public. BSNL partnered with Tata Communications, to deliver a high quality mobile experience and to provide its customers access to 44 million Wi-Fi hotspots globally at fixed prices starting Rs 999. **The alliance will give subscribers seamless access to 44 million Wi-Fi hotspots in more than 100 countries including international flights and rail systems.** The Wi-Fi will allow BSNL subscribers to the largest Wi-Fi network outside India. BSNL is the first among the Indian mobile operators to have taken this big step forward towards enabling mobile subscribers to access Wi-Fi internationally. BSNL announced launching of **Limited Fixed Mobile Telephony (FMT)**, an App that virtually turns mobiles into cordless phone working in sync with landlines within home premises. This service turns mobile handset into a cordless device within home premises, enabling customers to avail the attractive landline tariffs of BSNL like free calls on Sundays and night time calling. On the mobile TV offering, BSNL mobile users can download Ditto TV App from the play store, install it on mobile, register and then start using the service, which is available on subscription basis at Rs 20 per month and is also bundled with Data Special Tariff Voucher for recharge of Rs 223. Ditto TV is a mobile TV service wherein subscribers can view live TV for over 80 channels including HD channels. Fully capitalizing on these potential business initiatives and converting them into long term and sustainable business mechanisms of the Company largely depends on how deeply we get involved in execution of these initiatives.

**The employees, the Forum of BSNL Unions and Associations also responded very positively with "Customer Delight Year" and "Service With A Smile" (SWAS) programme, focussing specially on Quality of Service. To give a final push to our revenue generation in the last quarter of the most important financial year 2016-17, just before the 3<sup>rd</sup> PRC, all Unions and Associations have decided to work an extra hour from 10.02.2017 to 31.03.2017 for sales, marketing, improving the quality of service etc. Participation of the employees working in offices and indoor duties, at least one day in a month in sales and marketing activities like melas etc is one of the objectives. Another one is visiting the customer premises for outstanding due collection.**

**Because of the concerted efforts of employees and their unwavering involvement in revival process, BSNL, which registered an operational loss of Rs 691 crores during 2013-14, earned an operational profit of Rs 672 Crores in 2014-15 and Rs 3854 Crores during 2015-16.** The quality of service improved significantly, according to TRAI. BSNL is providing the highest number of mobile connections during the last few months, in comparison with other operators. The position of BSNL in terms of market share has significantly improved from 6<sup>th</sup> position two years before to 4<sup>th</sup> position as of now. And the most remarkable and astounding part of all this is that it was accomplished without any support from the Govt.

Having said that, as a responsible Association, fully committed to safeguard the stability and ensure its continued growth and viability, we are seriously concerned about certain counterproductive and dangerous developments that threaten and have the potential of destabilizing this company. We urge upon BSNL Management to stand firmly with the employees in defeating the sinister designs of the Govt. to weaken and destabilize this strategic telecom company. **Hereunder, we are listing some salient issues that merit a very serious and imminent intervention of BSNL Management.**

**I. Proposal for Closure and Transfer of Assets of BSNL to States:** As per various reports, Niti Ayog has recommended closure and transfer of BSNL Assets to respective State Govts and PMO has sought status report from DoT in this regard. In July last year there was a media report that Niti Ayog has recommended strategic sale of BSNL. When the employees protested, it has been denied by Niti Ayog. In fact formidable presence of BSNL alone has imposed checks on private service providers and ensured competitive telecom market in the country. A sturdy BSNL has defeated cartelization of private operators and protected users from exploitation. Telecom tariffs are in check not because of TRAI but because of strong presence of BSNL. The entry of Reliance Jio and massive support that it is getting from the Govt. agencies like TRAI etc., particularly at the cost of BSNL, are raising justified apprehensions about the real motives of the Govt. MOC&IT and bureaucrats need to understand and recognize that this is apt time, when the Company is accelerating in terms of its growth and has entered crucial revival mode, for them to lend their support to further strengthen, not destabilize the company. SNEA will be ruthless and unsparing in coming down heavily and defeating such ulterior motives of the policy makers. Let there be no misgivings in this regard.

**II. Tower subsidiary formation:** Tower sharing is an excellent idea to monetise the infra without any expenditure. However the Govt.'s move for Tower Subsidiary formation is not in the right direction. This has to be seen and analyzed in the light of earlier proposals like formation of Zonal Corporations, Tower Subsidiary and Subsidiary for Land Assets monetization, BBNL etc. Formation of subsidiary tower company is nothing but a well calibrated move of the Govt. to disintegrate BSNL and thus allow unbridled access to vested interests like R Jio. It is undoubtedly moving closer towards disinvestment/strategic sale. The potential that we are having as of now will completely vanish the day Govt. decides to bring in strategic partner in Subsidiary Tower company. We take this opportunity in reiterating that we are prepared to oppose and defeat the move of the policy makers to disintegrate this company.

**III. Monetising the huge land asset:** Monetising the land asset is a major challenge. As a first step, mutation of land has to be completed. However the progress in this regard is very very poor except in a few Circles like Andhra Pradesh. The Circle and SSA Heads are not taking any initiative in this regards and, as a result, prime land and buildings are taken over by DoT for the purpose of CCAs, Term cell etc. Thus potential land assets are being virtually handed over to non stake holders of the company and this is paradoxical and betrays the legitimate rights of real stake holders.

**IV. Infra sharing:** PGCIL, Rail Tel etc. are making huge revenues out of infra sharing. We welcome infra sharing even though we opposed it earlier due to strategic reasons. BSNL is having large number of Towers, large number of buildings with huge vacant spaces at prime locations, huge transmission network, land at prime locations etc. The enormous business mileage that can be extracted out of this potential segment remains unfortunately untapped. BSNL has to make earnest and serious efforts to tap these unutilized potential resources.

**V. Centralised payment to vendors:** Monitoring the performance, checking the quality of equipment installation and its maintenance, quality of the equipments delivered, AMC etc are critical and very important parameters to be checked and certified before making payments. The proposed move to centralise the payment by NCNGN in NGN project is a retrograde one making the CGMs and SSA Heads powerless, compromising the quality of the work and giving a free hand to vendors. This may lead to corruption in future as the present defined and time tested mechanisms to check the quality of work and its completion as per AT standards and specification are getting compromised and the vendors may mount undue pressure on the management for releasing the payments. This decision of the Management needs to be revisited.

**VI. Broadband and FTTH connections through Franchisees/ cable TV operators:** Other ISPs are providing Broadband and FTTH connections through the Cable TV network in tie up with them on revenue sharing basis. As Cable TV services are already available in almost all the households, it is very easy to provide connections within no time and maintain them. Our large number of Broadband connections through wire line are getting closed due to migration to other

ISPs. Slight changes in some of the provisions in the EOI approved by BSNLCO will make the proposal more friendly and workable with Cable TV operators and CGMs may be given more power and flexibility to decide on the revenue sharing model depending upon the competition in the area.

**VII. Transmission media related issues:** Transmission media is very important for reliable telecom services. Nowadays, all services are through IP media, hence reliable media with sufficient bandwidth is required for 2G, 3G data, broadband, NGN voice calls, Leased circuits, Wi-Fi hotspots etc. For successful implementation of Phase VIII GSM tender and NGN switches, stable transmission media is required. Performance of transmission media of maintenance regions, especially WTR, NTR and ETR as well as of SSAs/Circle is very poor. The situation in ETR is worse. BSNL is taking bandwidth from PGCIL to maintain connectivity by paying crores of rupees. The main reasons are 1) old OF cables with heavy losses, ii) very old transmission equipments and no support from vendors, iii) no tenders or support for attending the fault, iv) acute shortage of materials for fault restoration like OF Cable and joining kits, v) Shortage of vehicles and vi) acute shortage of staff in route parties. There is immediate requirement for replacement of OF Cables and OTN/ PTN network implementation.

**IX. Deployment of Accounts personnel in CSCs:** Even the sales and cash collection in the CSCs are done by the Engineering and Technical staff who are supposed to maintain the network and earn revenue. Creating shortages in the field units, Engineers are deployed in the cash counters and sales points for cash collection. At the same time the accounts personnel who are supposed to do these activities are idle in the CGM/GM offices. Large number of Accounts personnel can be easily redeployed to the CSCs, after the implementation of ERP and CDR. The technical staff can be effectively utilized in the field units to improve the services. Some IFAs are gone to the extent of protecting the accounts personnel by declaring that there are no guidelines from corporate office. Where is the guideline from Corporate office to deploy the Engineers and Engineering staff in the CSCs? Large number of JAOs with technical background as TTAs is recruited recently. **We earnestly request the BSNL management and CMD to urgently look into this important matter.**

**X. Deployment of more Executives into revenue earning field units from offices and indoor duties:** Nowadays, none of the Executive are interested to work in the field units, the revenue generating areas due to various reasons like no supporting staff, no tender for maintenance, shortage of store items, shortage of fund etc etc. The average age of the Executives working in the field units and the customer interface will be above 50 where as majority of the young Executives are deployed for indoor duties which are under AMC or in offices for clerical duties. The Executives in field units are retiring every month but there is no replacement. BSNLCO, Circle offices, SSA offices and Indoor units are filled with more than 100% of sanctioned posts where as in the field units it is less than 50%. BSNL recruited highly qualified Engineers are deployed for clerical works in the offices or for data entry purposes in the Indoors where the maintenance is done by the vendors under AMC. From this one can easily understand how our manpower is wasted in BSNL, especially our highly talented young JTOs and JAOs. If management is really sincere in revival of BSNL, there should be an urgent relook into the deployment of the talented and highly qualified Executives. The working atmosphere in the field units is to be improved. The talented and qualified Executives trapped in the field units, also should get an opportunity to work in the emerging high tech areas like Indoor, mobile, transmission, data centre, ITPC, NOC etc. in order to have a wider exposure in high tech areas also.

**Finally and significantly, Human Resources are the nerve centers and architects of growth of a commercial enterprise. In an employee centric PSU like BSNL, HR is the most critical component which can change the future of the company itself as we are witnessing today in BSNL. Non-resolution of following critical and long pending basic HR issues is adversely impacting the morale and is distracting the focus of the Executives in a very big way. Management needs to get very serious and committed to get the following issues resolved as quickly as possible within specified timelines. Even though this is not the appropriate forum to deliberate on such issues, I am constrained to bring few issues to the notice of our beloved CMD and BSNL management.**

**a) Implementation of Standard pay scales of E2 and E3 by replacing the intermediary pay scales of E1A and E2A as per 2<sup>nd</sup> PRC:** Sir, when the Executives in other CPSUs are discussing about the implementation of 3<sup>rd</sup> PRC, it is sad and painful to see Executives in BSNL

running from pillar to post to get standard pay scales of E2 and E3 for the basic cadres of JTO/JAO and SDE/AO w.e.f from 01.01.2007. JTO/JAOs recruited after 01.01.2007 are placed in three different stages, at Rs 22820, at Rs 19020 i.e. (E1 +5 increments) and at Rs 16,400 i.e. (E1 scale). There is a difference of more than Rs 10000 to 15000 in the salary of the JTO/JAOs recruited at different occasions. Decision of the Union Cabinet and DPE guidelines are very clear with regard to replacing non standard pay scales by standard pay scales and DoT cannot deny the standard pay scales by demoting the cadres from E1A to E1 and E2A to E2. BSNL management is running the company and not by the few sadistic officers in DoT. The larger game plan of these perverse bureaucrats is to create industrial unrest and turmoil in BSNL at this crucial juncture when the Company can hardly afford to have such turbulence. Already 10 years are over and it is just dangerous to continue to test our patience. There is no scope and reason for us to wait further on resolution of this issue. And there is no question of reducing the pay scales from E1A to E1 and E2A to E2. **It is high time for BSNL management to act assertively and decisively and prevail upon the Govt. to implement the revised BSNL proposal limiting to E2 and E3 pay scales. If that does not take place quickly, the only option left for us is to go for industrial action at a very short notice which we have been refraining from in the larger interests of the Company. It is completely impossible for us to contain the building frustration of our members because of non resolution of this issue.**

**b) Implementation of CPSU Hierarchy:** Today, all the promotions, say JTO to SDE, JAO to AO, SDE to DE, AO to CAO etc are blocked due to litigations. Existing RRs of DOT have become completely redundant. During last 5 years, JTO to SDE promotion could not take place. Hundreds of Executives are retiring every month without getting their legitimate promotion. The only viable alternative is the implementation of CPSU Hierarchy in BSNL, a uniform promotion policy for all the Executives in BSNL irrespective of streams, delinking the promotions from availability of posts and existing seniority. Fruitful discussions are going on with BSNL management but conclusive discussion is required at higher level to decide some policy matters, HR plan etc. There is an urgent need for the intervention of DIR(HR) and CMD to take the discussions to a logical conclusion on this important policy matter at the earliest. Sir, there is just no scope to delay the resolution of this important policy decision relating to long term career growth of Executives. This has to be accorded highest priority for very obvious reasons. Further to have equal promotional avenues to the higher positions, the number of DGM posts need to be increased to 2500 in order to end huge disparity that Engineering side has with respect to Finance wing as regards promotion to JAG.

**c) Finalization of Man power plan:** Last two years, BSNL Board not cleared any HR related issues citing man power plan. In the name of HR plan, Board members from DoT are arm twisting BSNL. Unfortunately BSNL management and Restructuring wing are not seriously pursuing this issue and have simply swallowed the Deloittee recommendations without any work study. Now DoT is imposing its own agenda on norms, recruitment which is purely the domain of BSNL. The arbitrary cut imposed by the consultant on number of posts is more or less accepted by the management putting a big question mark on the promotional avenues. Management has to take corrective and conclusive steps at least at this point of time when final round of discussion is going on with DoT for smooth implementation of CPSU Hierarchy.

**d) Superannuation benefit to BSNL directly recruited employees:** We record our sincere gratitude to BSNL management for approving the proposal with additional 3% contribution. **We remind our beloved CMD about his commitment of 6% in the last All India Conference held at Jaipur during September, 2015. We sincerely hope CMD will implement the assurance given to us.** Another aspect is the date of its implementation. Since there is a condition of minimum service of 15 years, the families will not get any benefit in case untimely death occurs before 15 years of service. Management should consider its implementation from 01.01.2007 itself to get the desired benefits to the employees. We had given some very good proposal to the management recently for the social security to the BSNL directly recruited employees and others like Term Insurance and formation of a Corpus fund, taking contributions from the employees. In both the cases, contributions are coming from the employees. It may be given due weightage.

**e)** Several other issues like first TBP, pay parity of Rs 22820 for the JTO/JAOs recruited after 01.01.2007, E1A and E2A scales for the Civil/Elect/Arch/TF/PA/PS wings w.e.f 01.10.2000 etc are also to be addressed on top most priority. All these issues are pending for long time in view of membership verification and need to be addressed as quickly as possible.

**f) Implementation of 3<sup>rd</sup> PRC is the major challenge before all of us. The** entire BSNL is looking towards DIR(HR) and CMD in this regard. Making BSNL profitable by 2017 to equip ourself for eligibility to receive all benefits of the ensuing 3<sup>rd</sup> PRC is the major challenge before us. Our promotions, perks, medical facilities, pension revision, everything is depending upon our performance and to what extent we are reducing our losses. **Let us all work together in close unison to accomplish this single goal.**

**Before concluding, we make an impassioned and fervent appeal to our beloved CMD to monitor personally and very closely the progress of resolution of critical issues like standard pay scales, CPSU cadre hierarchy, 30% superannuation, First TBP after four to five years, addressing the issue of pay disparity of post 2007 JTO/JAO etc.** Unless these issues are monitored very closely and personally by you sir, no tangible results are possible. As far as we are concerned, you rest assured that we will leave no stone unturned to ensure that we are out of the red zone as quickly as possible and thus placed in a position where we get the very best of the recommendations of 3<sup>rd</sup> PRC implemented. That is our cherished dream and we are confident of converting it into reality through our untiring and committed efforts to accelerate the growth and revenue generation in shortest possible span.

**K. Sebastin,  
General Secretary.**

**SNEA ZINDABAD**

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