

BSNL facing a huge crisis.

On one side, the Government is making tall claims regarding the Revival Packages offered to BSNL. According to these claims, government has given lakhs of crores of rupees to BSNL. 4G and 5G spectrum have also been allotted free of cost to BSNL. However, on the other side, BSNL is sinking fast. Jio and Airtel have rolled out their 5G networks almost throughout the country. At the same time, the launching of BSNL's 4G still remains a distant dream. As a result, BSNL has not been able to provide high speed data service to its customers. When Jio and Airtel are armed with the state-of-the-art 5G technology, BSNL is competing with the outdated 2G and 3G technologies. The net result is that BSNL is fast losing out in its competition with the private operators.

BSNL's customers have become fed-up with BSNL

and have started deserting BSNL. We were really shocked when news came that a total of 77 lakh customers left BSNL in the year 2022. However, this is nothing compared to the exodus taking place in

22 lakh customers left BSNL in August, 2023 and another 23 lakh customers left BSNL in September. This exodus may continue. Field level trial of TCS's 4G equipments is facing huge challenges. There is a big uncertainty about BSNL's 4G launching in the near future.

BSNL at present. 22 lakh customers left BSNL in August, 2023. We thought that this was a one time affair. However, again we are shocked to learn that, 23 lakh more customers have left BSNL in September, 2023, as per the latest report of the TRAI.

Undoubtedly, this is a massive setback for BSNL. This unprecedented surrendering of connections will certainly reflect in the revenue collections of the Company also. Hence, the Revival of BSNL is becoming more and more remote. When such massive surrendering is taking place, the BSNL Management is setting high targets for the performance of the employees. A picture is being sought to be painted that the employees, both Executives and the Non-Executives, are not performing up to the mark. The Hon'ble Minister of Communications, as well as the CMD BSNL have threatened the employees of dire consequences, if they do not improve their performance. Thus, all efforts are being made to hold the employees responsible for this sorry state of affairs of BSNL.

Both the Government, as well as the BSNL Management have to make a self-introspection and try to understand what exactly is pulling down BSNL. When the government announced the 1st Revival

Package on 23rd October, 2019, it was told that BSNL would be allotted with 4G spectrum. Immediately, the AUAB demanded the BSNL Management to upgrade all the 49,300 3G BTSs into 4G BTSs (all these BTSs are 4G compatible). Thus, without procuring any new equipments, BSNL could have launched its 4G service, within 4/5 months by upgrading its existing equipments.

However, the BSNL Board's resolution for the upgradation of its existing equipments, was not accepted by the Government. This is the 1st blow for BSNL. After the government rejected its proposal for upgradation of the equipments, the BSNL Board floated a tender in March, 2020, to procure 1,00,000 4G BTSs. Surprisingly, BSNL was told by the Government to scrap this tender also. BSNL

Management implicitly obeyed the government and scrapped the tender. This is the second, but fatal blow for BSNL.

The reason cited by the government, for directing BSNL to cancel its tender is that, being a Government of

India Company, BSNL should not procure its mobile equipments from foreign vendors. When Airtel, Jio and Vodafone are allowed to procure world class equipments from foreign vendors, why should BSNL be debarred by the government from procuring world class equipments from foreign vendors. Thus, in the name of "Make-in-India" and "Atmanirbar" policies, the government clipped BSNL's wings and handicapped it from effectively competing with Jio and Airtel.

As mandated by the Government for utilising "home-grown" technology, BSNL has placed orders for procuring its 4G mobile equipments from Tata Consultancy Service. It was told by the BSNL Management, as well as by the TCS that, the commissioning of BSNL's 4G network would be completed by October, 2024. It is being told for a long time that, the home-grown 4G technology of TCS is undergoing field level trials in Punjab circle. As per our information, a lot of problems are coming up in the field level trials of the equipments of TCS. It is a big question mark as to when these problems would be resolved and commissioning of the equipments of TCS would start. There is a big uncertainty. ■