

On the occasion of BSNLEU's Foundation Day. Glimpses from BSNL trade union movement.

The year 2007. Shri A. Raja, was the Union Minister of Communications. He issued direction for cancellation of the tender floated by BSNL, for the procurement of 45 million line mobile equipments. For the first time in the history of telecom trade union movement, the entire workers and officers of BSNL joined together and organised a one day strike on 11th July, 2007, opposing cancellation of the 45 million line tender. The strike was total and was a historic success. It is needless for us to state that, BSNLEU took the initiative and also led this historic strike. As a result of this strike, BSNL was allowed to purchase 22.5 million mobile line equipments from that tender.

The year 2009. Communications Minister, Shri A. Raja, informed the meeting of all unions and associations, of his decision to start IPO in BSNL. IPO means Initial Public Offer, which is nothing but disinvestment. The Minister told the leaders that, he would allot shares to all the BSNL employees and make each one of them a "lakhpati". But, all the unions and associations vehemently opposed the Minister's proposal. This compelled the Minister to drop the IPO proposal. On the next day, The Economic Times published news stating that, the IPO proposal in BSNL was dropped due to stiff opposition from unions and associations. BSNLEU played a prominent role in stopping this IPO.

The year 2010. The high power Committee, led by Sam Pitroda, submitted its recommendations on the revival of BSNL. The Committee recommended "Strategic Sale" of 30% shares of BSNL to a private party and also to induct that private party as the "Strategic Partner" of BSNL. This was nothing but partial privatisation of BSNL. BSNLEU mobilised all unions and associations against this and there was a 3 day strike in BSNL from 01.12.2010. Talks were held between the unions and associations and the Secretary, Telecom. Consequent to this, strike was withdrawn on the 3rd day. Proposal of the Sam Pitroda Committee for Strategic Sale of BSNL's 30% shares was dropped.

The year 2012. Agreement was reached between the unions and associations and the BSNL Management, regarding 78.2% IDA merger. BSNL Management sent the proposal for the approval of the DoT. However, for one full year, the DoT sat on the file without giving any approval. BSNLEU mobilised the unions and associations for an indefinite strike. Notice was issued for indefinite strike from 12.06.2013. Excellent mobilisations were made throughout the country. As a result, the DoT came down and issued order on 10.06.2013, for 78.2% IDA merger. Consequent to this, strike was withdrawn.

The Narasimha Rao government implemented the Neo-Liberal Policies in 1991. Privatisation of the government services and the public sector is one of the pillars of the Neo-Liberal Policies. In implementation of these Neo-Liberal Policies, in the year 2000, the Vajpayee government formed the BSNL. The whole idea was to immediately start disinvestment in BSNL and ultimately privatise it.

However, even after completion of nearly 25 years, BSNL continues to be a 100% public sector company. The unity and struggles of the Executives and Non-Executives of BSNL is the reason behind this. BSNLEU has played a pivotal role in unifying and leading all the unions and associations to protect the interests of BSNL and its employees. And that is the reason why BSNL employees have elected BSNLEU as the number one Recognised Union for 8 times continuously.
