

BSNL employees to stage dharna for non-payment of salaries, delay in rolling out 4G services

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The delay in rolling out 4G services was affecting BSNL's prospects, and employees were not getting salary in time despite BSNL earning thousands of crores in just a month, the employees union said



The BSNL Employees Union has announced that it will organise a countrywide dharna on June 26 demanding payment of salaries to them and implementation of revival package for the company.

The Union also levelled the following accusations against the Modi government on Thursday:

- There is an extreme delay in the launch of BSNL's 4G service apparently under pressure from "vested interests"
- Eight months had passed since the Modi government announced a revival package for the BSNL but it has not been implemented yet
- Even after 79,000 employees have retired under VRS, the remaining 70,000 employees are not getting monthly salary on time. Salary for the month of May was not deposited till June 25
- In the month of May alone BSNL earned Rs.1,400 crores
- The BSNL management has blatantly violated the instructions issued by the Labour and Finance Ministries regarding payment of wages

- Even in the time of COVID-19, employees are not getting cashless treatments, as has been assured in the BSNL's Medical Reimbursement Scheme (BSNLMRS)
- Due to the non-payment of the wages for last one year, 12 contract workers have committed suicide

Blaming the BJP-led NDA government for causing extreme delay under pressure from “vested interests” in rolling out 4G services, the Union of the state-owned telecommunications company asked the Central government to implement the Rs. 69,000 crore revival package soon.

Saying that “revival of the BSNL is unimaginable without launching of 4G services”, the Union lamented, “BSNL is already lagging behind private operators by 4 years in rolling out its 4G service. The revival of BSNL is unimaginable without it's rolling out of the 4G service. In such a situation, it is a matter of serious concern that all-out efforts are being made by vested interests to scuttle BSNL's 4G rollout”.

P Abhimanyu, general secretary of BSNL Employees Union said the tender floated by BSNL to procure 4G equipments has been put on hold by the government.

“The decision taken by the government in this regard is based on the complaint given by the Telecom Equipments and Services Promotion Council (TEPC). The objection of the TEPC is that BSNL is violating the “Make in India” policy by allowing foreign companies to take part in the tendering process. When all the private operators are procuring world-class 4G equipments from international vendors, why BSNL alone should be compelled to procure equipment from domestic vendors?” Abhimanyu said.

Not only was the delay in rolling out of 4G services affecting BSNL's prospects, the Union complained that employees are not getting monthly salary in time, despite BSNL earning thousands of crores in just one month.

“Even after 79,000 employees have retired under VRS, the remaining 70,000 employees are not getting monthly salary on time. In the month of May, 2020, BSNL earned Rs.1,400 crores. The expenditure on payment salary is only Rs.350 crore per month. Still, the payment of salary for the month of May has not been made,” said the Union.

Blaming BSNL's management for adopting “a negative attitude”, Abhimanyu alleged that in time of COVID-19 pandemic, employees were not getting cashless treatments.

“At a time when the employees are facing threat from the COVID-19, they are not getting cashless treatments, as has been assured in the BSNL’s Medical Reimbursement Scheme (BSNLMRS). On the other hand, the management is curtailing even the existing medical facilities,” said the Union.

Due to non-payment of the wages for the last one year, 12 contract workers have already committed suicide. “BSNL management has blatantly violated the instructions issued by the Labour and Finance Ministries regarding payment of wages of the contract workers during the lockdown period,” alleged Abhimanyu. Urging the Modi government to implement the revival package, hasten the rolling out of the 4G services and deposit the monthly salary on time, the Union said it was organising a countrywide dharna on June 26.

“In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, BSNLEU has decided that only 10 employees should participate in the programme in big cities and only 5 employees should participate in all other places. The Union has also emphasised that social distancing should be maintained and that masks should be worn by the participants,” it said in a statement.
