

Co-ordination Committee of BSNLEU, AIBDPA and BSNLCCWF.

Mazdoor Kisan Rally at New Delhi on 05.04.2023 – Why?

BSNL employees are being denied Wage Revision. The government says that, BSNL employees are not entitled for Wage Revision, since the Company is running in loss. But the question is, who is responsible for BSNL's loss making? Undoubtedly, it is the government. The anti-BSNL and pro-private policies of the government have pushed BSNL into the financial crisis. The latest example is that, all the private companies are launching their 5G service. At the same time, BSNL has not even started its 4G service. BSNL's 4G service could have been launched at least 2 years back, by way of upgradation of its existing 49,300 4G compatible BTSs. But, the government did not give permission for this.

Thereafter, when BSNL floated tender to procure 4G equipments, that tender was forcibly cancelled by the government. Jio, Airtel and Vodafone Idea are procuring their 5G equipments from foreign companies. But, the government has denied permission to BSNL for purchasing its 4G equipments from foreign companies like Nokia, Ericsson, etc. Thus, the government is doing everything to weaken BSNL. But, it is putting the blame on the employees. How is this fair?

Due to non-availability of 4G service, lakhs of customers have started leaving BSNL every month. In 2022 alone, 77 lakh customers have left BSNL. As a result of this, the revival of BSNL has become a very big question mark. The whole idea of the government is to convert BSNL into a sick company and to hand it over to the corporates like Adani. It is in the similar way that, Air India was sold to TATA.

The government has denied Wage Revision to BSNL employees, saying that, BSNL is running into loss. Simultaneously, the government is denying Pension Revision to the retired employees also. Government says that, retired employees will get Pension Revision only when working employees get Wage Revision. Indirectly, the government is holding the pensioners also responsible for BSNL's loss making. Actually, Pension Revision is in no way connected with BSNL's loss / profit, as the entire liability is to be borne by the government. This is a very big injustice.

The Management retrenched 80,000 employees under VRS. Together with this, the Management mercilessly retrenched thousands of contract workers who had worked for 20 years. As a result, 7 contract workers had committed suicide. In the name of Restructuring, Management abolished thousands of JTO, JAO, Sr.TOA, JE, TT and ATT posts. As a result of this, the justified promotions of the Non-Executives are being denied.

We must understand that, all the problems being faced by BSNL, its employees, pensioners and contract workers are the direct result of the anti-BSNL, anti-Public Sector, anti-worker and pro-corporate policies being followed by the government.

The attack is not only on BSNL, but on the entire Public Sector of the country. Government has already started the process of privatising the country's most prestigious Public Sector Company, viz., the LIC, through disinvestment. The Public Sector Banks, are the back-bone of the Indian economy. But, the government has taken various steps to kill the Public Sector Banks and to hand over the banking industry completely to the big corporates.

Simultaneously, the government has taken various steps and has helped the big corporates to earn super profits. Some examples are given below:-

- ❖ Wealth Tax was being paid by the super-rich people and big corporates in India. In 2015, Modi government was kind enough to completely abolish this Wealth Tax.
- ❖ The government had been collecting 30% Corporate Tax from the big corporates. In 2019, government felt pity for the big corporates and reduced this Corporate Tax up to 15%.
- ❖ From 2014-15 onwards, the government has written off Rs.10.72 lakh crore bank loans taken mostly by the big corporates. (Writing off loans taken by the big corporates has greatly affected the financial health of the Public Sector Banks.)
- ❖ When price of crude oil fell drastically in the international market, government looted the people by increasing the tax on petroleum products. During last 3 years alone, the government has collected Rs.8.02 lakh crore from the people as tax on petrol, diesel, etc. Dr. Subramanian Swamy, BJP leader, famously commented "price of petrol is Rs.93 in Ram's India, whereas it is only Rs.51 in Ravan's Sri Lanka."
- ❖ After India getting freedom, the taxes on food items were abolished. During the last 75 years food items like rice, wheat, milk, curd, meat, fish, paneer and jaggery were never taxed. But, Modi government has imposed 5% GST on the above food items.
- ❖ The cruelest price hike is on cooking gas cylinders. The price of a 14.2 kg domestic gas cylinder has been increased by Rs.431.50 in one year (76% increase) and is being sold at Rs.1,103/- (Delhi).
- ❖ In the name of National Monetisation Pipeline, government is generously handing over the valuable national assets to the big corporates. This includes 26,700 KMs Highway (Rs.1.6 lakh crore), 400 railway stations, 150 trains (Rs.1.5 lakh crore), 42,300 circuit KMs of Power Transmission Lines

(Rs.0.67 lakh crore), 5,000 MW Hydro, Solar and Wind Power Generation Assets (Rs.0.32 lakh crore), 8,000 KMs of National Gas Pipelines (Rs.0.24 lakh crore), 4,000 KMs pipelines of IoC and HPCL (Rs.0.22 lakh crore), 21 Airports and 31 Ports (Rs.0.3 lakh crore), 160 Coal Mining Projects (Rs.0.3 lakh crore), 2 Sports Stadiums (Rs.0.11 lakh crore) and BSNL's 14,197 mobile towers.

Due to the above mentioned pro-corporate and anti-worker and anti-people policies of the government, the working masses are being increasingly pushed into poverty. At the same time, the big corporates are making super-rich profits, due to the concessions given to them by Modi government. One data says that, during the Covid Pandemic period, 23 crore Indians were pushed below the poverty line. Whereas, during this period, Adani's wealth increased by Rs.6,000 crore every week. It is because of the policies of the government, Mukesh Ambani went on to become the richest man in Asia. Gautam Adani over took him and went on to become the 2nd richest man in the world.

In short, we can say that due to Modi government's economic policies, the rich are becoming super-rich and the working masses are becoming paupers. As per the latest report of The Oxfam International, the richest 1% people of India now own 40% of the country's total wealth! At the same time, the bottom 50% of the population own just 3% of the wealth. The report further states that, the number of billionaires in India has increased from 102 in 2020 to 166 in 2022. In between March 2020 and November 2022, billionaires in India have seen their wealth increased by 121%, which works out to Rs.3,608 crore increase per day.

The Modi government is also preparing the ground for further cruel exploitation of the working class. The hard-won labour rights are being taken away. All the existing labour laws are abolished and 4 new Labour Codes have been put in place. Practically, the right of the workers to start trade union and the right to go on strike have come under attack under the Labour Codes. To stop the working class from organising united and powerful struggles against exploitations, they are being divided in the name of religion. The poison of communal hatred is being spread among the working masses. The freedom of expression has come under severe attack in the recent years. Draconian laws like Sedition Law are being used to arrest those who speak against the government.

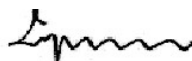
Nevertheless, we have seen the united struggle of the kisans. Braving the government's repressions and inclement weather, the kisans fought a year long united struggle. 700 kisans lost their lives. But, ultimately, the government had to withdraw the 3 pro-corporate Farm Acts passed by the Parliament. Thus, it is the need of the hour that, the workers, kisans and agricultural workers join together and fight against the anti-people and pro-corporate policies of the government. It is in tune with this spirit, a massive Mazdoor Kisan Rally is being organised at New Delhi on 05.04.2023, raising the following demands.

- 1) **Stop Privatisation of PSUs and Public Services; Scrap National Monetization Pipeline (NMP).**
- 2) **Scrapping of four Labour Codes and Electricity Amendment Bill 2022.**
- 3) **Ensure Minimum wages @Rs.26,000/- pm and Pension @Rs.10,000/- to all; No contractisation of work; Scrap Agnipath Scheme.**
- 4) **Arrest Price Rise, Withdraw GST on food items and essentials; Reduce the central excise duty on petrol/diesel/kerosene/cooking gas substantially.**
- 5) **Legally ensure MSP at C2+50% for all farm produce with guaranteed procurement.**
- 6) **One time loan waiver by the central government to all poor and middle peasants and agricultural workers; pension to all of them above 60 years.**
- 7) **Job security and guarantee for all; Expand MGNREGA and increase workdays to 200 with minimum wages of Rs.600/- per day; Pay all pending wages; enact a National Urban Employment Guarantee Act.**
- 8) **Universalise the Public Distribution System (PDS) and expand its scope to include 14 essential items.**
- 9) **Ensure food and income support to all families out of income tax net.**
- 10) **Stringent implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA); withdraw the amendments to Forest (Conservation) Act and Rules that allow the union government to permit clearance of a forest without even informing the residents.**
- 11) **Stop repression of the marginalised sections and ensure social justice.**
- 12) **Ensure universal and quality Health and Education for all; Scrap National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.**
- 13) **Ensure Housing to all.**
- 14) **Tax the Super Rich; Enhance Corporate Tax; Introduce Wealth Tax.**

We appeal to the BSNL employees, pensioners and contract workers to make the Mazdoor Kisan Rally, as well as the campaign programmes, a total success.



[P. Abhimanyu]
GS, BSNLEU



[K.G. Jayaraj]
GS, AIBDPA



[Animesh Mitra]
SG, BSNL CCWF