

## ***General Strike on 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2022 – Make it a grand success.***

The Joint Platform of the Central Trade Unions and Sectoral Federations, has called on the Indian working-class to organise a General Strike on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2022, against the anti- working class, anti-people and pro-corporate policies of the government. The pro-corporate and anti-public sector policies of the government can be understood from the following:-

- 4G service was started in India in 2014. It is already 8 years, however still BSNL has not been able to start its 4G service. The Modi government is fully responsible for this. Initially, the government did not allot 4G spectrum to BSNL. It was only after continuous struggles of the unions and associations, the government decided to allot 4G spectrum to BSNL on 23-10-2019.
- However, the announcement of the government remains only on paper. On the contrary, the government has done everything to stop BSNL from launching its 4G service. The government did not allow the upgradation of BSNL's 49,300 towers into 4G towers. Had this been allowed, BSNL could have started its 4G service 2 years ago.
- When BSNL floated tender in May, 2020, to procure 4G equipments, the government ordered BSNL to cancel that tender.
- Airtel, Jio and Vodafone Idea, purchase their 100% equipments from foreign companies like Nokia, Ericsson and Samsung. However, government barred BSNL from purchasing equipments from these companies. Government ordered that, BSNL should purchase its 4G equipments only from Indian companies. The government knew pretty well that, no Indian company is having the 4G technology. Thus, the government shut down all the doors for BSNL, for the launching of its 4G service.
- For the past 8 years, government did not allow BSNL to start its 4G service. But, in this year's budget, government is allotting Rs.44,700 crore to BSNL for technology upgradation. This is nothing, but providing crutches to BSNL for limping.
- Supreme Court ordered that, the private telecom companies should pay Rs.1.69 lakh crore to the government as AGR dues (spectrum usage charge and license fee arrears). But, Modi government has magnanimously helped the private companies, by deferring this payment for 4 years.
- Today, the government has become the biggest shareholder in Vodafone Idea. The government has accepted 35.8% shares in Vodafone Idea, instead of the payment of Rs.16,000 crores, as interest to be made by that company. In this way, the government has saved Vodafone Idea from collapsing. This clearly shows that, helping the corporates and killing the public sector, is the policy of the government.
- In last year's budget (2021-22) itself, the government had announced that, it would earn Rs.40,000 crore by way of monetising BSNL's towers and optic fibre. Under the National Monetisation Pipeline, the government has decided to hand over 14,197 mobile towers of BSNL to the private. This is only the first round. Soon government will handover more towers, as well as the optic fibre to the private. This is another method of BSNL's privatisation.
- BSNL became a loss making Company, only because of the conspiracies hatched by the UPA and the NDA governments. However, the Modi government has denied Wage Revision to the BSNL employees, saying that BSNL is loss making and hence, the employees are not eligible for wage revision.
- BSNL's pensioners and other Central government's pensioners are covered by the same Pension Rules, viz., CCS Pension Rules-1972. However, government has given Pension Revision for the Central government pensioners. But, has denied pension revision to BSNL's pensioners, saying that BSNL is running in loss.
- The Modi government is destroying the entire public sector. Precious profit earning public sector companies like LIC, BPCL, etc., are being privatised. The Indian Railways is put on a fast-track privatisation. The government Defence Production Units are being privatised. Multinational companies will soon take over the entire defence production of our country. All these are happening when the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, is raising the slogan "Atmanirbhar Bharat".

- All the valuable assets of the nation are being handed over to the private, in the name of National Monetisation Pipeline. The government has decided to hand over, 26,700 kms Highway (worth Rs.1.6 lakh crore), 400 railway stations and 150 trains (worth Rs.1.5 lakh crore), 42,300 circuit kms of Power Transmission Lines (worth Rs.0.67 lakh crore), 5,000 MW Hydro, Solar and Wind Power Generation assets (worth Rs.0.32 lakh crore), 8,000 kms of National Gas Pipe lines (worth Rs.0.24 lakh crore), 4,000 kms Pipe lines of IOC and HPCL (worth Rs.0.22 lakh crore), 21 Airports and 31 Ports (worth Rs.0.3 lakh crore), 160 Coal Mining Projects (worth Rs.0.3 lakh crore) and 2 Sports Stadiums (worth Rs.0.11 lakh crore).
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power, promising to help the poor. During the COVID-19 pandemic period, 23 crore Indians have been pushed below the poverty line. But, the Prime Minister is not accepting the demand of the Central Trade Unions, to make the cash transfer of Rs.7,500/- per month, to the poor families (families which are not paying income tax).
- On the other hand, during the COVID-19 pandemic period, Gautam Adani has earned the highest wealth in the world- courtesy government's pro-corporate policies.
- The World Inequality Report 2022 says that, in 2021, the top 10% of the Indian population has got 57% of the national income.

It is very clear that, BSNL is being weakened, only due to the overall economic policies of the government. To save BSNL, the pro-private and anti-Public Sector policies of the government have to be defeated. BSNL employees alone cannot accomplish this task. The BSNL employees should join hands with the Indian working class, to save the Public Sector and thereby save BSNL. Hence, it is a must that, BSNL employees should join the General Strike to be held on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2022 and to make the strike successful in BSNL. The following is the charter of demands for this General Strike.

#### **Demands of Central Trade Unions**

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| 1) Scrapping the Labour Codes; Scrapping of EDSA.   | 8) Proper protection and insurance facilities for frontline workers serving the people in the midst of pandemic;  |
| 2) Accept 6-point charter of demands, post repeal of Farm Laws, of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha.             | 9) Increase in public investment in agriculture, education, health and other crucial public utilities by taxing the rich through wealth tax etc in order to revive and revamp the national economy; |
| 3) No to Privatisation in any form and scrap the NMP;   | 10) Substantial reduction in Central Excise duty on petroleum product and concrete remedial measure to arrest price rise.   |
| 4) Food and Income Support of Rs.7,500/- per month to non-income tax paying households;                   | 11) Regularisation of contract workers, scheme workers and equal pay for equal work for all.  |
| 5) Increased allocation for MNREGA and extension of Employment guarantee Scheme to urban areas;           | 12) Cancellation of NPS and restoration of old pension; substantial increase in minimum pension under Employees' Pension Scheme.  |
| 6) Universal social security for all informal sector workers;   |   |
| 7) Statutory Minimum wage and social security for Anganwadi, ASHA, Mid-day-meal and other Scheme workers; |   |

#### **Demands of BSNL Employees Union**

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| 1) Do not discriminate BSNL in procuring equipments - Immediately launch BSNL's 4G - Ensure timely 5G launching. | 3) Implement wage revision for BSNL employees.                                    |
| 2) Scrap National Monetisation Pipeline. Do not monetise BSNL's mobile towers and optic fibre.                   | 4) Implement Pension Revision to the retired employees.                           |
|  | 5) Re-engage the retrenched contract workers- Immediately pay their wage arrears. |

**BSNL Employees Union (CHQ)**

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