

ALL UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS OF BSNL (AUAB)
ASSAM TELECOM CIRCLE, GUWAHATI, ASSAM

No : AUAB/Assam/2023-24

Dated: The 28th of May, 2023 at Guwahati

To,

Sh. Ashwini Vaishnav Ji
Hon'ble Minister of communications
Government of India, New Delhi.

Sub : Submission of Vital HR & Technical Service related Issues affecting the executives and non-executives of Assam and NE Region for your kind intervention - reg

Respected Sir,

We heartily welcome you on your visit to Guwahati City, the gateway to the North East. We take this opportunity to thank the Govt. of India , through your good self , for the second revival package which has generated a ray of hope for all the employees and brought BSNL out of the precarious condition it was in just a few years ago. We are also very hopeful that under your able direction, BSNL will be successful in faster roll out of the indigenous 4G/5G technology across the length and breadth of India to fulfill the government's vision of Make In India or Atma Nirbhar Bharat.

That Sir, we also like to take this opportunity to convey our apprehension that no amount of initiatives take for revival may succeed if the manpower who is to implement those initiatives are being subjected to HR policies which are not in sync with the vision and mission of the Govt as well as the organization itself. Even after , 20 years of it's formation , in spite of being a leading PSU in size, BSNL is yet to implement HR policies which are at par with top PSUs of the nation.

We hereby would like to you apprise the following critical HR issues being faced by the BSNL executives all over India in general and of Assam & NE region in particular :

Region Specific HR Issues:

1.1. Inter Circle & Intra Circle Longest Stay Transfer Policy is very harmful for hard tenure Circles :

The recent inter circle and intra circle transfers of longest stay executives being implemented by BSNL is going to affect the maintenance of services across the NE Region and anticipated to adversely affect the revenues of BSNL in the long term.

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That Sir, Assam Circle, being a Tenure Circle, is constantly faced with the scarcity of human resource across all the cadres in totality, starting from JTO/JAO to AGM/CAO. Even JTOs/JEs who have been designated as cadres under control of respective circles desire to go back to their home states after completion of mandatory 5 years of services which has to be addressed from time to time. To address this perennial issue of shortage of executives in the Assam & NE Region, the Govt. of India has implemented the tenure transfer policy where officers from other parts of the country come here to serve for 2 years and go back to their home circles after completion of tenure.

Such regular change of officers at such short intervals is one of the reasons that Assam Circle is lagging behind many other circles in the telecom sector. The executives who belong to this region have lent a continuity to the services in the face of such frequent change of officers and this is the sole reason that there has been no total breakdown in telecom services of BSNL.

That Sir, the entire NE Region in general and Assam Circle in particular has been accorded top priority by the Govt. of India in case of various development works. Many Govt. Projects are already being implemented here and many are in pipeline. Most of these projects require continuity of the manpower so as not to affect the telecom services. We therefore require a permanent and local pool of executives, who are well versed with the topography of the region, to respond to such challenges as and when required. This necessity of local executives has been earnestly felt in the ongoing 4G Saturation Project where issues like land acquisition, etc have become very very challenging due to dearth of local executives.

But the current policy of mass scale transfer being followed by BSNL Corporate Office on being applied to even those executives who belong to the hard tenure regions is likely to create rippling effects on maintenance of services soon enough.

Considering these peculiar problems being faced by hard tenure circles it is requested to direct to BSNL Management to not implement the longest stay inter circle or intra Circle Transfer policy to hard tenure circles.

1.2.Regarding extension of all benefits to executives from hard tenure circles seeking transfer to other circles at par with executives from other circles and issuing of Clear Guidelines regarding period of stay:

We are constrained to bring to your kind knowledge that the officers from NE region when goes on transfer under inter circle transfer to any other circle (including other hard tenure circles) are debarred from getting double HRA as like officers of other circles. This measure of different yard sticks being used is highly irrational and discriminatory in nature. We request your benign self to kindly issue suitable instructions to BSNL Management so that this indifferent policy is done away with.

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We would also like to apprise your good self that there is no clarity on the inter circle transfers issued with regards to number of years that a transferee has to stay out of his circle. Earlier after serving two years out of circle an officer was entitled to apply for return to his parent circle, but that said provision is not reflected. The executives of hard tenure circles seeking transfer to normal/hard tenure circles are in a fix due to no clear guidelines on this issue. We request your kind intervention in the matter and issue necessary instructions to suitably include it in the policy.

All India HR Issues :

2.1. E2, E3 Pay Scales to JTO/JAO and SDE/AO :

The revised pay scales of JTO/JAO and SDE/AO as per 2nd PRC are not yet implemented by BSNL. DOT has issued wrong presidential order in 2017 by degrading the scales of JTO/JAO and SDE/AOs and going against the recommendations of BSNL Borad and DPE guidelines on the matter and hence it was not implemented by BSNL. It is felt that if, if DOT takes a proactive stand on this matter, conditions are definitely favourable and conducive at this point of time for getting the fresh presidential order issued as E2 for JTO/JAO/Equivalent grades and E3 for SDE/AO/Equivalent grades. It will also work as conduit during the merger plan of MTNL with BSNL, where the scale of JAO/JTO equivalent is E2 else the legal and organization complication will arise.

That Sir, the youngest recruits of BSNL (JTOs/JAOs) are denied the standard pay scales of E2 citing financial crunch although these young executives are not responsible for losses caused due to policy decisions. The other way round we can say that BSNL has forced the junior most executives of BSNL to bear the burden of such losses by forcing only them to work on such meagre pay (by Industry standards). Hundreds of newly recruited JTOs/JAOs are leaving BSNL every year due to such poor and discriminatory HR policies.

2.2. Increase in quantum of SAB for BSNL Recruited employees:

The revenues of BSNL witnessed increase when compared to the last financial year. Hence, we appeal to review and increase the quantum of SAB immediately. The SAB is the only social security measure provided to BSNL recruited employees.

The Govt. of India had allowed the provision for payment of Super Annuation Benefit (SAB) of 30% of Basic plus DA for BSNL recruited employees in the 2nd PRC from 01.01.2007 itself. While, other leading PSUs of the country has already implemented the 30% SAB in totality from 01.01.2007 itself, but BSNL is yet providing only 22% SAB even after 16 years of notification citing fund constraints.

The Super Annuation Benefit is a social security provision and as per conditions stipulated in 2nd PRC notification if company doesn't have sufficient fund to implement all the benefits as recommended then first, basic and retirement benefits should be

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extended in totality then only perks & allowances can be given. But BSNL extended retiral benefits and even perks/allowances to other set of employees but did not cover the retiral benefits of BSNL Recruited Employees in totality which must have been done before extending perks and allowances if BSNL states non-affordability as the reason.

In fact, such is the precarious condition of BSNL recruits that if some unfortunate happening occurs to any BSNL Recruited employee, all that his/her dependents get as pension is Rs. 6 to 7 thousand per month.

We therefore request for your suitable directions to BSNL for implementation of full 30% Super Annuation Benefits to BSNL recruited employees so that social security as a basic need receives the due consideration from BSNL Management.

2.3. Implementation of 3rd PRC in BSNL by waiving off the affordability clause for BSNL:

BSNL as a national telecom carrier has been involved in fulfilling the social responsibilities towards the nation and its people by extending the services even in nonviable and non-profitable areas where no other private operator lends its service. BSNL and its employees have further dedicated themselves to the cause of the nation by involving themselves in the divine exercise of bridging the technology gap between rural and urban India and also of developing the Swadeshi 4G/5G homegrown technology of India. BSNL has also been extended the prestigious but extremely tough project of 4G saturation and the task of covering the uncovered villages. Employees have been wholeheartedly supporting these ambitious projects of the Government of India and will always stand firmly in support of these objectives.

However, we wish to submit that due to the non-availability of equal field for BSNL especially the non-availability of 4G services to sell, organisation has been facing losses due to factors which are not under control of the employees. Due to these losses, 3rd PRC in BSNL has not been implemented. However, now when, deployment of Homegrown swadeshi 4G technology has begun with BSNL placing the order for 200 sites and things appear to be positively poised towards achieving this much awaited breakthrough which will place India in the top league of nations providing 4G/5G technologies to other part of world, we humbly and most respectfully request your good self for implementation of 3rd PRC recommendations in BSNL which will act as catalyst of growth of BSNL by virtue of a renewed energy, renewed motivation and renewed vigour which in turn will increase the efficiency manyfold which ultimately will result into huge profits for BSNL.

We request for your kind intervention in getting 3rd PRC implemented in BSNL by waiving off the affordability clause as BSNL is engaged in a much larger and divine objective for our mother nation which is miles above the concept of profit and loss.

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2.4. Extending the promotional avenues for BSNL Employees:

As we all are aware that with implementation of VRS in BSNL, the staff size has been reduced to a large extent in BSNL which gave rise to the need for restructuring and cadre review in BSNL. A major chunk of employees opted for VRS and restructuring was done to define the strength at various level.

BSNL has recruited thousands of professionally qualified executives post corporatization. But, it's indeed an irony that despite spending around 12 to 22 years in the organisation, all that most of them have got in terms of career progression is a single promotion and few have not got even their first promotions.

There is ample scope of creation of extra posts as new Projects like providing services to uncovered villages, 4G saturation and BBNL merger are to be executed by BSNL and hence the extra posts must be created for manning these positions and vacancy should be treated as a common pool between different levels and promotions in all grades must be done by filling up all the consequential vacancies.

Hence, we request for your kind intervention in directing BSNL to ensure promotions in all grades including SDE to AGM, AO to CAO, AGM to DGM, JTO to SDE, JAO to AO and JE to JTO grades by clearing any legal hurdles by treating the vacancies as common pool and by increasing the number of posts in promotional grades in view of the new projects being taken by the organisation.

2.5. Revision in TA/DA and other allowances at par with current market conditions:

The TA/DA and transport allowances in BSNL especially for the working cadre like JTO/JAO/SDE/AO/AGM/CAO/ Equivalent level are still prevailing at the rates some 20 years before. While such allowances were revised for senior officers to a comfortable level in 2017, the rates of the executives at lower rung are yet to be revised. This results into a big loss of money from the own pocket of employee who is executing the out station and especially route maintenance jobs. Despite bringing the matter to this notice of management many a times, no consideration has been done till date. We request for a direction to BSNL management in this regard so that such performing employees are not put to loss.

2.6. Immediate implementation of DRF scheme:

In case of sudden demise of working employee, a lump sum death relief fund should be provided to the deceased family member for immediate financial support. We request for necessary directions to BSNL Management to implement Death Relief Fund (DRF) for all BSNL employees as many families are prone to face serious social security issues in the case of death of an employee.

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3. Technical Service related issues :

- 3.1. Request for clarification on mandate for utilization of fund sanctioned by MOF-SACE in "Opex Expenditure" along with "Capital Expenditure" for use of Bharat Net for providing connections in the Gram Panchayats and Associated Offices

Recently MOF-SACE (Ministry of Finance, Special Assistance for Capital Expenditure) , vide Lr. No. 44(1)/PF-S/(CAPEX)/8/V/2022-23-SACE/22, dated 09-01-2023 has sanctioned a fund of Rs. 79 Crore for the state of Assam for connecting Gram Panchayats (GPs) on IT Infrastructure to ensure high speed bandwidth to the rural areas of Assam. However, the letter mentions for utilization of the fund only on Capital Expenditure , but not on Opex Expenditure, which is posing a hurdle to BSNL for providing connections in the Gram Panchayats and Associated Offices through Bharat Net.

We therefore, request that necessary clarification may kindly be issued for rectifying this anomaly and directions also may be issued to the concerned authority in the state to allow BSNL to connect GPs on Bharat Net.

- 3.2. The Union Cabinet had already mandated the use of BSNL for wired line/leased lines for all Central Govt. Depts. and CPSUs. We thank you for having initiated such a game changer step which has helped BSNL in gaining substantial business as also the user departments for getting economic and quality services on fiber.

We request that a similar direction may also be issued for mandating the use of BSNL capacities by the State Govt in the projects as are funded through Central Assistance.


That Sir, we sincerely believe that you will take notice of the HR related lacunas in BSNL so that the employees are empowered to confidently put their 200% efforts for successful implementation of all the projects of Govt. of India and BSNL as an organization is able to live up to the nation's expectations from a leading player in Telecom Sector.


(Satyajyoti Nath)


CS (AIGETOA)


(Barun Baruah)

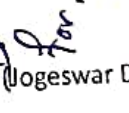
CS (SNEA)


(Subhrendu Bhattacharjee)

CS (AIBSNLEA)


(Bijoy Das)

CS (BSNLEU)


(Jogeswar Das)

CS (NFTE)

Copy for kind information and necessary action to :

1. The Chief General Manager of BSNL Assam Circle
2. The General Secretaries of AIGETOA/SNEA/AIBSNLEA/BSNLEU & NFTE.