

[Contributed]

## MEDICINES MANY; NO PROPER DIAGNOSIS

### Minister's Anger

Hon'ble Minister for Communication, Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, is angry with performance of BSNL; quite justifiably. Com. P Gangadhara Rao, General Secretary of AIBSNLPWA was in Patna, the capital city of Bihar and the hometown of the Minister, on 21-7-2019 for the Circle Conference of the Association. On that day Com. Rao spoke to Com. P S Ramankutty for five minutes. Seven times, during the talk, the call was cut. Who will not get angry with such service? If this is the experience in the capital city what about the remote villages of Bihar?

Most of the people say BSNL or MTNL is bad. Many prescribe remedy without understanding the real cause for the ailment of BSNL/MTNL. Prescription before diagnosis is malpractice. Gandhiji told; "Correct diagnosis is three-fourth remedy". Many remedies are prescribed for BSNL on wrong diagnosis.

### Only BSNL in the field during Natural Calamities

In last week of July 2019, Minister Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad emphatically told Rajya Sabha that only BSNL was in the field when Odisha was badly affected by the Fani cyclone. It happened in Tamilnadu during 2018 Gaja cyclone, in Kerala during 2018 floods, in Coastal Andhra during Hud Hud cyclone in 2014. In Andhra, during the elections in 2014 in remote naxalite prone villages where signals were not available, number of DSPT (Digital Satellite Public Telephones) were installed by BSNL engineers. During the cyclone when all communication network was down these DSPTs only worked. Entire telecom infrastructure, built in 30 years, is totally destroyed in thirty minutes during natural calamities. BSNL rebuild it in three days. The company suffers heavy loss in the national interest. But, the government never compensated BSNL for that loss. In fact, every minute, every day, BSNL is incurring huge loss for giving land phone service. Government should have given budgetary support for that. It never happened. Anger is understood. Action will be appreciated.

### Service to the Nation: only BSNL's burden?

*BSNL is the only organization* which provides service in non profitable areas like Andaman-Nicobar islands, remote North eastern states or hamlets in Chhatisgarh, violence prone J & K or Naxal hit areas. No private company is present in those areas. Besides, BSNL is compelled to provide non profitable, non lucrative rural land line throughout the country, while the private companies get concessions. Even in urban areas, they have only symbolic presence. BSNL is not allowed to discontinue such highly manpower oriented non profitable business. There are many rural exchanges where only couple of land lines run yet BSNL cannot close such exchanges often because of VIP presence and in the name of Service to the Nation. Why private companies are not ready to go to rural India? Why there are not bound by Service to the Nation? Only the BSNL and its much abused staff have gone to the rural India, the Real India. The foreign trained brains have no guts to ask these questions nor they have the sense to see it. Let the Government ask BSNL to shut down land phone service and provide only mobile service and see how the central/state government offices run? What will happen to the telecommunication services in rural India?

### Bail-out to whom?

Now there is a talk of bailout scheme of Rs 74000 crore to save BSNL. Latest media report says that Rs 74000 Cr. is insufficient and Rs 95000 Cr. is required. It is also

pointed out by some industry analysts that BSNL may not turn around to be a profit earning PSU by 2024. They call it over optimism. All those 74000 crores package etc. are built on the imaginary sale of the land occupied by BSNL. High Level Committee headed by Cabinet Secretary could not endorse the proposal for monetization of land as the title deeds of land are not with BSNL. Total debts of BSNL amounts to Rs 13200 Cr. or so. Question is who gave Rs. 6 Lakhs crore loan waver to various corporate Houses but could not or did not allot even a single Rupee to BSNL? How SBI and other nationalized banks could give loans to the private telcos having negligible asset values? There is a sinister design to destroy *BSNL and ultimately sell it to JiO*.

### **Born Physically handicapped**

Till JiO's entry in Telecom field, Inter network usage charge was 14 Paise per minute. But just after JiO's entry, it is reduced to 6 paise per minute. Now everyone knows that largest network was owned by BSNL and a brand new entrant JiO had the least Network. Who harmed BSNL by reducing such network usage charge less than even half and gave huge advantage to JiO? During the regime of Pandit Sukhram, the DoT was not allowed to enter mobile phone service; only private Telecoms were permitted. Private companies captured the lucrative market and advanced a lot. Then BSNL was permitted, almost after a decade, to start the race and compete with them. BSNL, born as physically handicapped child due to defective diet administered to the pregnant mother, could not keep pace. Let us not forget that just after BSNL's late entry in mobile segment in 2003, BSNL made all incoming calls free. Till then, private companies had charged both outgoing and incoming calls and looted public. BSNL was first operator who made incoming call free.

### **Low Quality, Extra Cost**

BSNL was allotted 2.5 GHz airwaves against 2.3 GHz airwaves to private company. Any Telecom technical person knows that 2.5 Ghz is of far lower quality comparing to 2.3 GHz airwaves. Let Govt. explain why such low quality airwaves were allotted to BSNL and high quality airwaves to private companies. To purchase these low quality airwaves, BSNL paid much higher almost thrice than what private companies paid. For networking purpose, BSNL was compelled to purchase Wimax technology which was untested and only in few pockets in USA was started as experiment basis. Why BSNL was made gene pig ? 4G was allotted to all private companies but denied same to BSNL despite assurance in 2017 by Minister. BSNL is yet to get 4G. Why? How will they compete with private companies, equipped with 4G spectrum?

### **Attacks all-round**

How government can allow JiO to give free service for six months and there by another one year at predatory rate to break its own BSNL's financial backbone?

Who is responsible for its Tender cancellation in 2009 to expand its line capacity considered to be very crucial? Who feared private companies' equity share to come down if BSNL goes to such expansion process?

According to a report appeared in *Financial Express* on 5-8-2019, BSNL has lost an annual contract worth around Rs. 400 crore for maintaining the fibre laid under the government's ambitious BharatNet project to provide broadband connectivity to over 2.5 lakh gram panchayats, as its performance was not found to be up to mark.

BSNL has 33 training centres in different circles with all infrastructures. Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship under their EETP programme gave a contract

to BSNL for training 300 Engineering Students in each of the above training centres. Thus the programme was to train 9900 engineers for which BSNL received Rs 29.70 crore every year without any additional investment. After two years it is abandoned for reasons known to the authorities only.

Pages can be written on other reasons for the dismal performance of BSNL. Powers that be and the imported expert advisors want only to find fault with workforce. While there were three lakh employees the same BSNL earned profit of Rs 10000 crore per year. When the staff strength is reduced to 1.5 lakh, there should be more profit, if staff strength is the cause for the loss. But logic does not work in the area of cut-throat business.

Telecom, or communications for that matter, was a service some time back. Now it is an industry, a commercial activity with profit as the main motto.

### **Waiting for the Grand Burial**

Government policy is the root cause for the fall of BSNL. Mismanagement added the burden. Wrong medicines were prescribed to the patient consciously by the corrupt politicians hands in glove with corrupt bureaucrats. Prophets of Market Economy wait to hand it over to the greedy private company; or for its grand burial.