

## **TOTAL NEGLECT OF RETIREES BY BSNL MANAGEMENT**

**... P S Ramankutty**

In 2000, about 2.93 lakh staff members of DOT/DTS migrated to BSNL believing that the assurances given by Government would be honoured by the Management of the new PSE and by the Government. After two decades, most of the BSNL retirees, who gave their sweat and blood for improvement of telecommunication infrastructure in India and ensured a sustained impressive growth of telecom services since Independence, who worked and ensured profit of Rs 10000 Crore per year, are totally frustrated and feel being cheated by the present Management of the company.

In February 2003, the BSNL introduced a Medicare System for its employees and retirees. BSNLMRS was considered to be an ideal scheme for PSE staff and pensioners in India. But, in the matter of medical care, present Management adopts a most condemnable discriminatory attitude against the senior people who served the Nation and retired.

I am told that leaders of some organizations of serving staff have objected to paying the quarterly allowance or reimbursement of medical expenditure incurred by the pensioners, assured under the BSNLMRS. I do not have any documentary evidence to ascertain the above information. I do not think that leaders of any organization will stoop down to that level forgetting the elderly people in their families. Management and the serving staff should, however, understand that there is no provision or scope for discrimination in the BSNLMRS against the retirees.

### **Elderly people deserve more medical care:**

The elderly people have various physical, psychosocial, economic, and spiritual problems - dementia, poor vision, stroke cases, arthritis, hypertension, diabetes, auditory problems, depression, bowel disorder, kidney problems, cardiac problems, cancer etc. While the functionally and cognitively fit can access usual health-care facilities provided by the government, many people need active aging programme to keep them independent. Health ministry has created geriatric centers and geriatric clinics in most of the states; however, these centers cannot handle the burden of geriatric population to address their multi-morbidity and several other age-related problems. Government must support the PSEs, nongovernmental organizations and other agencies which provide day care, home care, and palliative care so that these services become affordable to all the elderly.

If BSNL cannot afford the expenditure for ensuring proper medical care to the erstwhile employees of Government worked in Department of Telecom and then migrated to BSNL, the Government should take over the responsibility.

There is a National Policy on older persons, announced by Government of India in January 1999, about two years before BSNL was born, to reaffirm wellness of older people. Again, National Policy on Senior Citizens was introduced from March 30, 2011. The BSNL Management should not be oblivious of these policies and programmes. BSNL retirees should not be denied the benefits of various policies under the garb of 'dismal fiscal performance' of BSNL Management. Retirees are in no way responsible for the mismanagement.

I know that one former CMD of BSNL had the audacity of telling that "pensioner is not my baby". He was the baby of his parents once. The parents cannot be his babies.' He did not join BSNL. He continued on deemed deputation and sat on the chair of CMD and then retired. Now he is enjoying all benefits of central government pensioner.

One became a **Graduate** because his father worked and paid the fees for that. One became an **Engineer** because his father worked and paid the fees for that. After becoming a Graduate or an Engineer one should not disown his own father. Future is in danger for anybody in BSNL.

If the BSNL cannot honour the assurances given to its ex-employees the government should take up the responsibility because we have worked for 20 years, 30 years or more in the Department of Telecom. CCS (MA) Rule should be made applicable to BSNL retirees also.

**Government should not depend upon the performance of BSNL Management which fails to pay salary to the remaining staff even after retrenching 79000 people under VRS. The landline telephone system survives solely on the work done by casual workers or contract workers now. The 'extra efficient BSNL Management' has decided to send out these contract workers also. That will mark end of telecommunication service of the people of rural India, the Bharat.**