

BSNL/MTNL : Retrenchment under the garb of VRS

As a part of privatizing the state-run BSNL and MTNL, the successive governments pushed them into losses by several means. The present BJP government for more than a year forcing and cajoling the employees to chose either voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) or prepare for compulsory retirement. Finally they announced the VR Scheme.

Within a week of announcing the VRS 75,000 employees of BSNL and 14,378 employees of MTNL had submitted their consent letters. On 31st January, 78,300 employees of BSNL and 14,378 employees of MTNL retired. It may be the biggest retirement in India.

At the time of VRS announce-ment, BSNL had around 1,53,200 employees. Anybody over the age of 50 could opt for VRS. The government promised a compensation of 125 per cent of 40 months alary, which was estimated as Rs 70,000 crore payments to employees. The amount of ex-gratia for the retiring employees could be equal to 35 days salary for each completed year of service and 25 days salary for every year of remaining service. An amount of Rs.17,169 crore was promised to allot for ex-gratia.

The highest number of employees that opted VRS were in Maharashtra – 8544 out of 10,185 employees. The other states where highest percentage of employees took VRS are : Rajasthan (82.8), Telangana (82.2), Gujarat (81.6) and Uttaranchal (81.3).

This led to hugwe shortage of staff. Many BSNL exchanges left with no staff. Even the linemen and non-clerical technical staff are being transferred to distant places. Many circle level telecom officers are being transferred at all India level. All this may give the impression of bad planning. But it is deliberate. It adversely affects the BSNL services so that a strong case may be made for its sell out.

Now the retired employees are waiting for their VRS payments. The Finance Minister has made meager allotment of Rs.528 crore in the current year for the ettlement of VRS. The settlements worth Rs.37,268 crore on account of VRS has been budgeted for the next year. At least around Rs 30,000 crore remained to be settled in future. What can we call it? Retrenchment by backdoor!
