

BSNLEU discusses the issues of contract workers with the CMD BSNL.

The wages of the contract workers has not been paid almost from January, 2019. BSNLEU, together with BSNLCCWF has already conducted many agitational programme on this issue. BSNLEU has raised this issue with the top Management on several occasions and written letters. As a result of the efforts taken by BSNLEU and BSNLCCWF, some nominal funds have been released to some circles, but not to all. Seven contract workers have already committed suicide due to the crisis caused by non-payment of wages. The issue has been raised in the Parliament also. In their meeting with Shri P.K.Purwar, CMD BSNL on 17.12.2019, this issue was seriously raised and discussed by Com.P.Abhimanyu, GS and Com.Swapan Chakraborty, Dy.GS. Once again, the acute financial crisis being faced by BSNL, was cited by the CMD BSNL, as the reason behind the non-payment of wages. ***However, the GS and Dy.GS pointed out that this is a humanitarian problem and should be addressed on a priority basis. They told the CMD BSNL that, the outstanding wage arrears of the workers could have been cleared in installments, if not in one go. They told the CMD BSNL that the families of the contract workers are in starvation and fervently appealed to him to immediately release funds, at least to clear a part of the wage arrears.*** The CMD BSNL assured to do the needful at the earliest.

In addition to the payment of wage arrears, the Union raised the issue of large scale retrenchment of contract workers. The CMD BSNL replied that it will not be possible for the Company to continue to engage one lakh contract workers. However, the Union stated that, it is not correct to say that BSNL is having one lakh contract workers. The Union pointed out the following.

- ❖ **The original strength of contract workers in BSNL could have been in the range of 80,000. Out of this, 30% to 40% workers were retrenched in most of the circles one year back.**
- ❖ **In addition to this, another round of retrenchment was done recently.**
- ❖ **Further, a good number of contract workers have already left the job on their own, especially in the Northern circles, due to the non-payment of wages.**
- ❖ **Hence, the present strength of contract workers will be only around 40,000.**

The Union urged upon the CMD BSNL that, the Management should think about gainfully utilising the left out contract workers, especially in the backdrop of around 80,000 regular employees having opted for VRS. It was also pointed out that, considering the age profile of the contract workers, they could be gainfully utilised in the marketing activities, which will bring a win-win situation both for the Company, as well as the contract workers. The CMD BSNL gave a patient hearing to the views of the Union and agreed to positively consider the same. The Union also assured to come back with the exact number of contract workers presently working in various circles, so that their gainful utilisation can be discussed in a more concrete manner. The CMD BSNL agreed for further discussion on the issue.