

Delhi Chalo...! Let Us make it Historic.

The National Executive Committee Meeting of NCCPA (National Co-ordination Committee of Pensioners Associations) held at Nagpur on 19th August, 2017 has taken a significant decision to organize MASS DHARNA on 25th October, 2017 in New Delhi. In the meeting, all the affiliated organizations were in full agreement for a sustained strong agitation of the pensioners to make the central government act positively on the genuine demands of the pensioners.

The 10 point Charter of Demands put forward for the Mass Dharna covers the important issues of the pensioners pending settlement. The central government has rejected Option 1, which to a certain extent ensures parity in pension, on flimsy grounds. And of course Option I was the only positive recommendation made by the 7th Pay Commission in respect of the pensioners. The government has done it very cunningly in collusion with the bureaucracy by replacing it with Option 3, recommended by the V Pay Commission.

As far as BSNL pensioners are concerned, their most important issue, Pension Revision on IDA pattern with 15% fitment from 01-01-2017, figures prominently in the Charter of Demands. The 3rd PRC has recommended 15% fitment for the executives in PSUs which will be extended to the non-executives also based on the bilateral agreement between the concerned management and recognized unions. But the 3rd PRC has stipulated certain affordability conditions for wage revision according to which BSNL cannot implement the pay revision. Even though all the Unions/ Associations and BSNL management demanded exemption of affordability condition for BSNL considering the peculiar status of BSNL; extending telecom services to rural India incurring huge loss, implementing the government projects like Digital India through NOFN, being in revival path with operational profit for the last two years even facing the cut throat competition; it was not agreed to when the PRC report was approved by the government. However provision is there in the PRC report to the effect that in respect PSUs in the ambit of affordability conditions, the respective administrative ministry in consultation with the DPE can implement wage revision.

Now, the BSNL management committee has approved the wage revision with 15% fitment but freezing the allowances as on 31-12-2016. It has got to be approved by the BSNL Board and thereafter submitted to DoT for final approval of the government. However there is serious doubt that the government may not concede it. As in the past, pressure in the form of strong and united struggle of the employees and pensioners is very much needed for achieving pay revision and pension revision. BSNL Employees Union had taken the initiative for a joint struggle and conducted a phased program of agitation culminating in a one day strike on 27-07-2017. Unfortunately, certain unions, both executive and non-executive, kept away from the strike which has given a wrong message. Efforts are still on for a united struggle and some progress is there in the meeting of all unions and associations held on 26-09-2017 and a final decision is expected to be taken in the meeting slated on 04.10.2017.

On the earlier two occasions, pension revisions of the absorbed BSNL retirees were made based on the pay revisions w.e.f. 2000 and 2007 as per Rule 37 A. This time also, AIBDPA prefer to have pension revision accordingly. BSNL retirees are also entitled to get the benefits of Option 3, as they are covered under CCS Pension Rules, 1972 for which pay revision is a must. Even otherwise, BSNL retirees should get the pension revision with 15% fitment approved by the government, as the affordability conditions are not applicable to the government which is paying pension and pensionary benefits to BSNL retirees from its consolidated fund, since the annulment of 60:40 conditions.

The other demands raised for the Mass Dharna are equally important, including Rs.2000 Medical allowance, Restoration of commutation after 10 years, Minimum pension Rs.12,000, Additional Pension from the age of 70 years and most importantly scrapping of contributory pension scheme and restoring the defined statutory pension.

The Mass Dharna going to held at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi from 11 AM to 3 PM on 25-10-2017 is definitely going to be a mile stone in the history of the struggle of pensioners' movement in the country. No doubt, it will also supplement the struggle being organized in BSNL for pay revision and pension revision.

So, Comrades, let us march forward on the path of struggle and victory shall be ours.
