

## ***The New Year and the important tasks ahead.***

While welcoming the dawn of the New Year, 2023, it is necessary to have a critical review of the eventful 2022. In a nut shell, 2022 has been a mix of achievements and losses as well. We lost many comrades including our beloved leader and Patron, Com. P V Chandrasekharan and another great leader and Secretary General NCCPA, Com. K K N Kutty due to post Covid ailments during the fag end of 2022.

We have dealt on all the issues which came to our notice. Of course, 2022 may be the year, we had to organise numerous struggles, particularly, the historic Sanchar Bhawan March for the settlement of our genuine demands. The right path we continue since the inception of our mighty organisation in 2009, has brought in the desired results. The most burning issue of the BSNL pensioners, non- payment of medical allowance and medical bills was settled soon after the Sanchar Bhawan March. The BSNL management was compelled to grant necessary funds to clear all the pending medical claims up to 31-03-2022. It is more significant that future payments regularised at par with the employees. This was a great achievement which benefitted thousands of BSNL pensioners.

It is also a fact that something started moving at Department of Telecommunications on the most important issue of pension revision after the Sanchar Bhawan March. DoT convened a meeting of the pensioners organisations on 17-10-2022 to discuss the agenda of pension revision as per 3rd PRC. In the meeting it was stated by DoT that they have sent a proposal to DOP&PW to revise the pension as per 3rd PRC, delinking wage revision with zero percent fitment. It was further stated that the proposal for the post 2017 retirees with notional fixation of the pay in the revised pay scales with effect from 01-01-2017 was also sent. When all the organisations strongly rejected the proposal of zero percent fitment and effectively put forward the justification for 15% fitment, Member ( Services) who chaired the meeting had agreed to consider the demand in consultation with the Secretary (T) and MOC. However, this assurance was not reflected in the record of discussion issued by DoT, may be in the absence of clear stand of the government. So all the pensioners organisations have taken up the issue further with the government. Though the illogical and unrealistic demand of 7th CPC fitment was completely rejected by DoT and DOP&PW, one organisation is still reiterating this demand only to create unnecessary confusion and delay the settlement.

We could hold our 4th Triennial All India Conference at Mysuru in December, 2022 highly successfully. The AIC has decided for further agitational programme for urgent settlement of pension revision.

Issues related to the CGHS were taken up with the authorities and the government. But basic problems in this regard are pending unresolved. Several issues of BSNL MRS were dealt with the Corporate Office and most of these were settled. Important recommendations of the 110th Parliamentary Standing Committee have been rejected and ironically with the concurrence of the same Parliamentary Standing Committee. The mindset of the government has already been exposed when a bill to nullify the Supreme Court judgment to grant additional pension of 20% after 79 years was hurriedly got passed by the Parliament.

Despite clear orders issued by DOP&PW consequent on persuasions made at various levels and endorsed by DoT and BSNL, payment of retirement benefits of some of the VRS retirees of Maharashtra belonging to S T category is pending due to the arrogant stand of certain BSNL officers.

Without any justification, the VRS 2019 retirees were denied the benefits of BSNL MRS by certain officers. CHQ immediately took up the issue with CMD BSNL and was settled quickly. It was AIBDPA, having foreseen the possibility of huge delay in processing the pension cases of such a large number of VRS retirees, discussed the necessity of grant of provisional pension well in advance with Member( Finance) and got it. The controversial entry in their PPOs, the delay in payment of ex-gratia were also settled. Unfortunately, these have not reflected in enrolling enough VRS retirees to our fold. This lapse has to be urgently dealt with the perspective of widening the membership base.

It is a welcome development that some of the state governments like Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab etc have decided to revert back to the Old Pension Scheme. But Modi government has shown it's opposition by refusing to refund the amount paid by these state governments to NPS. In the case of revival of BSNL and wage revision of BSNL employees, the government is continuing the lethargic attitude. The nation is witnessing an unprecedented privatisation spree and handing over the national assets to the corporate. The basic and fundamental structure of the constitution is under threat.

So the tasks to be undertaken during the new year 2023 are of paramount importance. Let us streamline the organisation and be prepared to take up the challenges heroically, as before.

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