

ANOTHER MIND GAME OVER

BSNL employees heaved a sigh of relief on Friday, after they finally got their February salary credited to their accounts. There are happy exchanges in WhatsApp Groups, as if they got some Bonus after a long wait. Some have gone to the extent of thanking their Leaders for 'resolving' the salary issue, forgetting that these Leaders had done nothing on the matter.

BSNL Management and DoT are happy that they have succeeded in diverting the attention of BSNL employees from the all-important Pay Revision. The fear created among the employees may be even useful to them if and when VRS is offered. It is said that VRS is a part of the BSNL revival package to be considered by DoT in the near future. The leaders of the recognised unions/associations are also happy that this episode has diverted the anger of the employees, which was expressed in a huge scale never heard of before, against these leaders, following their failure to clinch the issue of Pay Revision.

BSNL was aware of the bulk payment it usually receives in March every year from Enterprises Business and believed that salary payment for March and April will not be a problem. LoC from DoT for obtaining loans for working capital was already on cards, as seen from OSD to MOSC 'Note' dated 19.2.2019. BSNL used its available resources to pay pending bills, pending remittances towards Provident Fund, Insurance etc, clearing the dues upto January 2019, while consciously withholding salary payment. Had the payment towards pending dues been further deferred for another fortnight, salary for February could have been paid on due date.

When a small Association like AIBSNLOA could meet the Additional Secretary, DoT and convey the frustration among the employees on non-payment of salary and the growing perception among employees that DoT is not doing anything to help BSNL, it is really unfortunate that the leaders of the recognised unions/associations were seen struggling to even meet the CMD BSNL.

This episode was covered by the entire media and leaders of various political parties raised the issue of non-payment of salary to BSNL employees, putting the issue in Public Domain. We should not forget that such news will have its negative effect on the present and prospective customers, who had a bad experience earlier with closure of a private operator last year. It is also true that the same media and the political parties had never even raised a finger in the past against non-implementation of assurance of Financial Viability of BSNL. They have their own reasons now to project about BSNL, with elections around, but it is not going to help us in any way, for the present.

As usual, print and electronic media started circulating their own assumptions in the name of 'NEWS', as if DoT has come to the rescue of BSNL by providing financial assistance. The fact is that, till now, the DoT has not extended any financial help and BSNL has been managing the situation from its own resource of daily collection.

In the melee, the issue of pay revision has been relegated to the back seat. Anyway, the issue has to wait till the new Government takes charge. **But there are lessons to be learnt and we will come up with our views on the issue shortly.**