

WRONG MOVE AT WRONG MOMENT

Two Associations of BSNL and another two in MTNL have suddenly revived an old issue which was examined on number of times by the Government of its own but found not practicable. The Government had engaged even reputed Institutions for hefty fees to have an in depth study on the proposal and submit the Report. But finally the Government took the decision to abandon the proposal. **Yes, we are talking about the proposal for merger of BSNL and MTNL.** We all know that today both the PSUs stand on different platforms. BSNL is still a profit making PSU and has the potential to make much more profit with change of mental set up in the Management and quick expansion and proper marketing of GSM and Broadband services – apart from collection of unpaid bills amounting to several thousand crores from the customers. It is now an A+ category PSU. It could allow merger of 50% of IDA with basic pay to its employees. Its employees are now expecting to get the benefit of better pay and allowances following its categorization in A+ category and consequent recommendations of higher pay scales by the Second Pay Revision Committee. The employees absorbed in BSNL are eligible to get Pension from the Government as per the Rules applicable to the C G Employees, – their Pension Payment Orders are issued by the Government and even payment is being made by the Government only. Finally, **it is not disinvested yet.** MTNL, on the other hand, is virtually a losing concern – though it can recover but not having greater scope to reach its past position. The market in MTNL controlled areas is gradually getting shrunken – thereby limiting its scope for further expansion. It is now an A category PSU – just below the present status of BSNL. Its paying capacity has dwindled. It could not pay even the 50% merger of IDA till this day to its employees – thus creating an uncertainty over the next pay revision. The responsibility for payment of Pension to its absorbed employees lies fully on the shoulder of MTNL. Further, **it is a disinvested Company with the danger of crossing the limit of 50% of stake to become a private company.**

One wonders whether the present move by some BSNL and MTNL associations is the right move at the present juncture. All know that proposed merger may need disinvestment of BSNL and Government is very keen on that. The move for disinvestment of 10% of stake in BSNL is not completely dead. There were some news that Unions/Associations had agreed to Government's proposal for disinvestment of BSNL which was strongly contested. In the past, the Unions opposed merger of BSNL and MTNL through the disinvestment route and asked for outright purchase of MTNL's stake in the market by BSNL. Because they knew that in order to merge these two PSUs, BSNL has to be disinvested first. But the Unions proposal was not found feasible.

It is really a matter of serious concern when the sword of disinvestment of BSNL's stake is still in the neck why then this move for merger of BSNL and MTNL is being revived? **Is it the result of any internal understanding with the Management?**

AIBSNLOA is not for the move at this moment and wants all to oppose the same. The move is ill-timed and with some ulterior motives which cannot be denied. Let us not be misguided and let us rise to the occasion to protect the interest of BSNL's employees in general and the Executives in particular.