



Editorial

THE TRAVAILS OF BSNL PENSIONERS

According to multiple surveys across the country, for most Indian senior citizens, the biggest concerns are Healthcare costs, Lack of financial support and Isolation. A vast majority of around 70% of senior citizens who worked earlier in unorganised sectors are not covered by any pension scheme. We, the BSNL Pensioners should feel lucky and satisfied that we fall under the 30%, luckier to draw pension from the Government of India and therefore are self-reliant unlike the majority of others who are to depend on others for their daily needs.

The survey also finds that 49% of the senior citizens in India are living alone. With the concept of Joint Family gone forever and most of our children living abroad or away from our living place, this applies to the BSNL pensioners too. Anyway, most of us have got accustomed to this and there is nothing to complain about.

What keeps us worrying is the Healthcare costs skyrocketing and BSNL which is supposed to take care of the medical expenses of its retired employees, is making all planned moves to offload its responsibility towards its past employees. It started by delaying the medical reimbursement claims with vouchers and also the medical allowance without vouchers, of retired employees since the year 2018-19. BSNL says funds amounting to Rs.68 crores against medical pendency of retirees were released during 2021-22,

but the truth remains that claims are pending since 2018-19. It is not known if BSNL has the details of all claims pending in Circles/Units and actual amount paid during the years 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21, which includes claims without voucher and claims for indoor treatment. For its own convenience it talks of data as per ERP. Nobody knows if all claims have been entered in ERP and if not, how many are pending to be entered and why.

Long back we had requested that the Circles/SSAs be instructed to upload status of the medical claim bills submitted by the retired employees in the Retired BSNL Employees Information Section of the respective Circle/SSA website giving the name of the retired employee, last designation, date of receipt of the claim bill in office, disposal of the claim etc or a separate online information system be introduced, with the status updated at least once in a week. In the absence of such system, we may never know if our claims have been duly recorded and action taken on that.

In spite of our repeated and sustained efforts to get the pending medical claims cleared, taking up the issue with all concerned including the Prime Minister of India, BSNL remains unmoved, even discriminating between its serving employees and retired employees by making payments of medical claims only to the former regularly. BSNL points to funds crunch when it comes to the

reimbursement of medical claims of its retired employees, but a recent BSNL order for sanction of Rupees Two lakhs medical advance to the serving employees who are hospitalised due to COVID-19 shows that funds crunch can no more be an excuse. As retired employees are not eligible for medical advance, they were left out even without making any mention about priority reimbursement for hospitalisation due to COVID-19 in respect of the retired BSNL employees, though the Corona virus did not spare them in any way. BSNL seems to have no concern towards its retired employees, when other PSUs facing similar financial difficulties continue to provide better medical care to its retired employees. BSNL has also refused to review its orders drastically reducing the annual ceiling limit of reimbursement of outdoor medical expenses.

BSNL fails to understand that older people suffer from both degenerative and non-communicable diseases due to the ageing of the body's immune system, like diabetes, hypertension, visual impairment, difficulty in walking, hearing, osteoporosis, arthritis, Alzheimer's and dementia. It refuses to take note of the recent Supreme Court judgement which went on to add that it is a settled legal position that the employee during his lifetime in service or after his retirement is "entitled to get the benefit of the medical facilities and no fetters can be placed on his rights".

The option allowed since 2016 for switching over to CGHS is a small relief to those who reside in CGHS areas. BSNL too encourages the pensioners to switch over to CGHS by reimbursing the one-time life subscription payable to CGHS. Those residing in non-CGHS areas too can switch

to CGHS and avail Rs.500 per month Fixed Medical Allowance for outdoor treatment and get indoor treatment in the nearby CGHS areas. While there are concerns about non-empanelment of major network hospitals in many CGHS areas, opening of new Wellness Centres under CGHS is a heartening news. There is also an unconfirmed information that Zonal Wellness Centres are planned in non-CGHS areas.

A few weeks back, BSNL has constituted a committee for recommending 'a suitable health insurance policy for BSNL employees after holding negotiation with any health insurance company.' Earlier in February 2019 a committee had been formed under the Chairmanship of CS/CGM Legal, BSNL CO to review the existing medical policy so as to make it sustainable irrespective of the financial condition of the organisation. We had suggested introduction of Group Medical Insurance for retirees also in respect of indoor treatment, with the premium borne by BSNL. The fate of the committee is not known. The present committee should work to find a health insurance policy, suitable to both serving and retired employees, in case it plans to abandon the BSNL MRS. Since BSNL is ready to reimburse the huge one-time life subscription for switching to CGHS, it should not be difficult for it to pay the premium on behalf of the pensioners.

AIBSNLREA will continue its efforts to rid BSNL pensioners of the undue and enormous burden of medical expenditure which they cannot manage with their monthly pension and diminishing interest from their meagre bank deposits alone. Let us hope that wisdom prevails over the BSNL Management, with the realisation that all have to retire sooner or later. ❖

IDA due w.e.f. 01.07.2021

According to calculations based on All India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers, IDA is to increase w.e.f. 1.7.2021 by 3.1% for CPSEs where last pay revision was implemented w.e.f. 1.1.2007 and by 5.4% where last pay revision was implemented w.e.f. 1.1.1997.

DPE had issued orders on 19.11.2020 that “additional instalments of IDA falling due from 01.10.2020, 01.01.2021 and 01.04.2021 will not be paid.” The order also said that “As and when the decision to release the future instalment of Dearness Allowance due from 01.07.2021 is taken by the Government, the rates of Dearness Allowance due from 01.10.2020, 01.01.2021 and 01.04.2021 will be restored prospectively and will be subsumed in the cumulative revised rate effective from 01.07.2021. No arrears for the period from 01.10.2020 till 30.06.2021 shall be paid.”

Change in IDA rates as per calculations is +5.5 from 1.10.2020, +6.1 from 1.1.2021, -1.0 from 1.4.2021 and +3.1 from 1.7.2021. We were drawing 159.9% when the IDA was frozen and now, we are to draw 173.6% w.e.f. 01.07.2021, an increase of 13.7%.

As per outcome of National Council of Joint Consultative Machinery of Central Government employees, the Cabinet Secretary has stated that Department of Expenditure would process the matter for getting the Cabinet Approval for restoring the frozen DA / DR from 1/7/2021. Hopefully, the DPE will issue orders for restoration of the IDA prospectively, after the Cabinet approves the restoration.



Important Developments of the Month

- Department of Health & Family Welfare has issued orders vide its F.No. Z15025/49/2019/DIR/CGHS dated 10th June 2021, for creation of 64 posts for 16 New Allopathic CGHS Wellness Centres at Ghaziabad (2), Narela (1), Panchkula (1), Nasik (1), Aurangabad (1), Mysuru (1), Coimbatore (1) and Chandrapur (1) and regularisation of CGHS units temporarily functioning at Gwalior (1), Kannur (1), Kozhikode (1), Sonipat (1), Wadi (10 in Nagpur and Ichhapur (1) in Kolkata. Director CGHS shall issue instructions for opening of the new allopathic wellness centres and for encadrement of the newly created posts.
- Central Board of Direct Taxes has issued a Press Release on 25th June 2021, further extending timelines of certain compliances. The Certificate of Tax Deducted at Source in Form No.16, can now be furnished on or before 31st July 2021. Previously it was required to be furnished before 15th July 2021. The Government has also announced tax exemption for expenditure on Covid treatment and the ex-gratia received on death of family member due to Covid, from employer or from other person, curing FY 2019-20 and subsequent years. The exemption shall be limited to Rs.10 lakh in aggregate for the amount received from any other persons.

- DoP&PW vide its O.M.No.1(4)/2021-P&PW(H)-7223 dated 22-06-2021, has requested all Pension Distributing Banks to issue pension slip to pensioners after credit of pension on their registered mobile numbers through SMS and email, Whatsapp etc. The pension slip should provide complete details of monthly pension paid along with breakup of the amount credited and tax deductions etc if any.
- Controller General of Accounts, Department of Expenditure vide his order No. TA-3-602/2/2019-TA-III/cs-550/447 dated 08.06.2021 has referred to his earlier order dated 04.12.2020 intimating that the office of the CGA is in the process of discontinuation of physical PPO and 100% implementation of e-PPO and has requested all CCAs to ensure that 100% issue of e-PPO and to intimate any technical issue by 15th of June 2021.



Issues taken up

28.06.2021: WRONG PAY-FIXATION CASES OF THE TTAs SINCE PROMOTED AS JTOs IN 2008 WHO OPTED FOR FIXATION OF THEIR PAY IN THE REVISED IDA PAY SCALES FROM THE DATE OF THEIR NEXT PROMOTION - AIBSNLREA AGAIN WRITES TO SR.GENERAL MANAGER (ESTT) BSNL CO, POINTING OUT DISTORTED REPORTING BY CALCUTTA TELEPHONES:

AIBSNLREA has again written to the Sr.General Manager (Estt), BSNL CO, pointing out the deficiencies in the reply submitted by Calcutta Telephones to DGM (Estt) and also suggesting that there is no room for Establishment Branch of Corporate Office to be misled by the distorted reporting by Calcutta Telephones referring only to the 'CAT Ernakulam Judgement in OA 180/00823/2019 dated 08.01.2021 endorsed by CO, BSNL, ND vide Order No.BSNLCO-A/16(21)/5/2021-ESTAB dated 3.02.2021' and then remaining silent on the subsequent developments after wrong fixation and recovery. [View the letter](#)



GOVERNMENT / BSNL ORDERS & LETTERS

25.06.2021: CBDT ISSUES A PRESS RELEASE GRANTING FURTHER EXTENSION IN TIMELINES OF CERTAIN COMPLIANCES AND ANNOUNCES TAX EXEMPTION FOR EXPENDITURE ON COVID TREATMENT AND EX-GRATIA RECEIVED ON DEATH DUE TO COVID:

Central Board of Direct Taxes has issued a Press Release further extending timelines of certain compliances. The Certificate of Tax Deducted at Source in Form No.16, can now be furnished on or before 31st July 2021. Previously it was required to be furnished before 15th July 2021. The Government has also announced tax exemption for expenditure on Covid treatment and the ex-gratia received on death of family member due to Covid, from employer or from other person, curing FY 2019-20 and subsequent years. The exemption shall be limited to Rs.10 lakh in aggregate for the amount received from any other persons. [View the CBDT Press Release](#)

23.06.2021: DOP&PW REQUESTS PENSION DISTRIBUTING BANKS TO ISSUE PENSION SLIPS ON MONTHLY BASIS:

DoP&PW vide its O.M.No.1(4)/2021-P&PW(H)-7223 dated 22-06-2021, has requested all Pension Distributing Banks to issue pension slip to pensioners after credit of pension on their registered mobile numbers through SMS and email, Whatsapp etc. The pension slip should provide complete details of monthly pension paid along with breakup of the amount credited and tax deductions etc if any. [View the DoP&PW OM](#)

21.06.2021: CGCA ISSUES INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING SUBMISSION OF LIFE CERTIFICATE/DIGITAL LIFE CERTIFICATE BY DOT PENSIONERS AT ANY CCA OFFICE:

Office of the Controller General of Communication Accounts, DoT, vide its letter No.13-23/2020-21/BA&IT/236-267 dated 21.06.2021, has issued instructions to all CCAs regarding difficulties faced by DoT pensioners in submitting their Physical Life Certificate when they reside in a circle other than the circle which issued the PPO and submission of Digital Life Certificate by any pensioner unknowingly to a CCA office other than the concerned CCA. According to the letter, the pensioners receiving pension via SAMPANN/FMS can submit their physical life certificate in any nearby CCA office. The recipient CCA should scan the LC and send the soft copy to the concerned CCA via an official email ID. For Digital Life Certificate via Jeeva Pramaan submitted incorrectly by the pensioner, the recipient CCA shall identify and share the details with the concerned CCA in his official email ID immediately. [View the CGCA letter](#)

19.06.2021: DOP&PW ISSUES FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS FOR EXPEDITIOUS SETTLEMENT OF FAMILY PENSION CASES BY BANKS:

DoP&PW vide its letter No.3(8)/2021-P&PW(H)-7246 dated 16th June 2021 has issued instructions to CPPCs of all Pension Disbursing Banks regarding expeditious settlement of family pension cases. In cases where the deceased pensioner and spouse were holding a joint account, Form 14 is not required and only Death Certificate of the deceased pensioner, copy of PPO, proof of age/date of birth of the applicant along with a simple application is enough. Form 14 is required only in cases where the spouse did not have a joint account with the deceased pensioner. The letter categorically states that the details of family members, other than the Applicant, are not relevant for commencement of family pension by the bank and the same should not be sought from the Applicant under any circumstances. [View the DoP&PW letter](#)

18.06.2021: ENGAGEMENT OF RETIRED EMPLOYEES OF BSNL/MTNL, WHO TOOK VOLUNTARY RETIREMENT UNDER VRS-2019, IN DOT AS CONSULTANTS - DOT SAYS THE MATTER IS UNDER EXAMINATION IN DOT HQ:

Department of Telecommunications in a O.M. vide its F.No.1-50(1)/2018-E&C-Part(1) dated 14.06.2021, while referring to Field/Attached offices of DoT seeking clarification as to whether former BSNL/MTNL employees who have taken voluntary retirement under BSNL/MTNL VRS - 2019 are eligible to be hired/engaged as consultants in the Government offices or not as per DoT OM No.1-50(1)/2018-Estt. dated 10.09.2020, has said that the matter is presently under examination in DoT HQs and guidelines in this respect would be issued as and when decision is taken and till then these applicants may not be considered for engagement as consultant. [View the DoT OM](#)

15.06.2021: DEPARTMENT OF EXPENDITURE MODIFIES TIME LIMIT FOR SUBMISSION OF CLAIMS FOR TRAVELLING ALLOWANCE ON RETIREMENT:

Department of Expenditure vide its O.M. No. 19030/1/2017-E.IV dated 15th June 2021 has conveyed its decision that the time limit for submission of claims for TA on retirement is modified from 60 days to 180 days, succeeding the date of completion of the journey. [View the DoE OM](#)

11.06.2021: DoH&FW HAS ISSUED ORDERS FOR CREATION OF 64 POSTS FOR 16 NEW ALLOPATHIC CGHS WELLNESS CENTRES:

Department of Health & Family Welfare has issued orders for creation of 64 posts for 16 New Allopathic CGHS Wellness Centres at Ghaziabad (2), Narela (1), Panchkula (1), Nasik (1), Aurangabad (1), Mysuru (1), Coimbatore (1) and Chandrapur (1) and regularisation of CGHS units temporarily functioning at Gwalior (1), Kannur (1), Kozhikode (1), Sonipat (1), Wadi (10 in Nagpur and Ichhapur (1) in Kolkata. Director CGHS shall issue instructions for opening of the new allopathic wellness centres and for encadrement of the newly created posts. [View the DoH&FM order](#)

09.06.2021: CGA, DOE PROPOSES TO DISCONTINUE WITH PHYSICAL PENSION PAYMENT ORDERS FOR SUPERANNUATION PENSION:

Controller General of Accounts, Department of Expenditure has referred to his earlier order dated 04.12.2020 intimating that the office of the CGA is in the process of discontinuation of physical PPO and 100% implementation of e-PPO and has requested all CCAs to ensure that 100% issue of e-PPO and to intimate any technical issue by 15th of June 2021. [View the CGA, DoE O.M.](#)

03.06.2021: DOP&PW REITERATES ITS EARLIER ORDERS FOR SANCTION OF PROVISIONAL FAMILY PENSION BY THE HEAD OF OFFICE IMMEDIATELY ON RECEIPT OF CLAIM:

DoP&PW has issued O.M. reiterating the instructions in its earlier O.M.dated 29.07.2020 for sanction of provisional family pension by the Head of Office immediately on receipt of a claim for family pension and death certificate from the eligible family member, without waiting for forwarding of the case to PAO. Simultaneous action needs to be taken on priority basis for disbursement of regular family pension through the bank and for payment of other entitlements of the family on death of the Government Servant. The O.M. stipulates that it should be ensured that the PPO for family pension is issued and disbursement of regular family pension is commenced by the Bank not later than one month of the receipt of the claim for family pension. [View the DoP&PW O.M.](#)



RESPONSE/ACTION TAKEN ON AIBSNLREA'S REPRESENTATIONS

30.06.2021: BSNL, TAMILNADU CIRCLE REPEATS ITS EARLIER RESPONSE TO AIBSNLREA'S REPRESENTATION REGARDING NON-REFUND OF BALANCE AMOUNT OF GPF CONTRIBUTION TO SHRI V VELAPPAN, RETD DGM, TAMILNADU CIRCLE, ALSO- SAYS THAT RETENTION PERIOD FOR GPF STATEMENT IS ONLY ONE YEAR:

AIBSNLREA had last taken up with the Prime Minister of India, the above case of non-refund of balance amount of GPF contribution for the period the pensioner Shri V Velappan, Retd

DGM worked in Coimbatore, on his joining DOT as Junior Engineer, and in MTNL Mumbai on his promotion as Assistant Engineer from 03.12.1980 to 30.09.1990 vide its No. AIBSNLREA/CHQ/2021/27 dated 09.02.2021 (view posting dated 03.05.2021 in this website to read the letter]. Now, BSNL, Tamilnadu Circle, vide its No. TAC/GPF/Genl.Corr/2014-17/V.Velappan/32 dated 22.06.2021, has again expressed its inability to concede to the request on the ground that “no serious attempt was made by the officer during his period of service to settle the issue and instead chose the fag end of his service to exert pressure for settlement of the issue of missing credit.” Earlier the Tamilnadu Circle BSNL was taking the plea that due to a major fire during February 1998 at Coimbatore, all GPF records were destroyed and as such claim of Shri V Velappan cannot be verified and hence the payment cannot be made. Now it says, citing Records Retention Schedule and GFRs, that the retention period of GPF Annual Statements is only one year. [View the CAO \(CA\) BSNL Tamilnadu Circle letter](#)

28.06.2021: GMTD BSNL KOLHAPUR RESPONDS TO AIBSNLREA LETTER DATED 06.05.2021 REGARDING NON-TRANSFER OF GPF BALANE IN RESPECT OF SHRI CHANNAPPA M UROGIN RETD JTO KOLHAPUR :

AIBSNLREA vide its letter dated 06.05.2021 had written to the Sr.General Manager (Finance), Maharashtra Telecom Circle requesting to take appropriate action in the matter as requested by the Joint CCA, Maharashtra & Goa in his letter dated 09.04.2021 addressed to GM (F) Maharashtra Telecom Circle. In this regard, Accounts Officer (Pay), GMTD, Kolhapur has informed that now all the available details are forwarded to Maharashtra Circle Office for taking up with WTP Circle for early settlement of the issue. [View the AO GMTD Kolhapur response](#)

26.06.2021: CB&B DIVISION OF BSNL CORPORATE OFFICE RESPONDS TO AIBSNLREA LETTER DATED 04.05.2021 ADDRESSED TO DIRECTOR (HR) REGARDING REIMBURSEMENT OF PENDING MEDICAL CLAIMS OF THE RETIRED BSNL EMPLOYEES IN THE BACKGROUND OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC :

AIBSNLREA vide its letter dated 04.05.2021 had written to the Director (HR) BSNL following his D.O. letter to Circle Heads on extending financial support to deserving and genuine COVID cases, pointing out that the indoor and outdoor medical claims of the retired employees have not been paid for years, which includes claims related to COVID. AIBSNLREA had pointed out that since 'Fund constraint' is not being talked of now while grating advance to serving employees, BSNL Management should start clearing all pending medical claims of the retired employees including the reimbursement of one-time payment made to CGHS as Life-time subscription for switching over from BSNLMRS. Corporate Budget & Banking Division of BSNL Corporate Office vide its letter dated 02.06.2021 has now responded stating that "funds amounting to Rs.68 Crores against medical pendency of the retirees under medical head were released during the year 2021-22 (till date) to various circles in BSNL and one time subscription paid for CGHS migration by retirees, to be reimbursed by BSNL, is being paid regularly every month as per ERP data generated along with salary payment of working employees. Further the funds with reference to demand raised by the circles will be released as per availability of cash inflow in future. [View the CB&B response](#)