

TELECOM EXECUTIVE ASSOCIATION OF M.T.N.L.

[Key Note Address of General Secretary for the Open Session

held on 10/10/2012]

Hon'ble Chief Guest Shri. Rajendra Gawit Ji, Hon'ble Labour Minister of State, MH, Guests of Honour Shri. Bhai Jagtap, MLC, Maharashtra State, Chairman, UFU&A of MTNL Delhi, Shri. A.K.Garg, CMD, MTNL, Mrs. Anita Soni, Dir (F), MTNL, Shri. S.P.Pachauri, Dir(HR) and Shri. Peeyush Agrawal, ED, MTNL, Mumbai, Shri. M.K.Bagchi, Founder GS of TEAM and Convener of United Forum of MTNL, Delhi, Press and Electronic Media, we, on behalf of the members of our Association welcome you all and convey our heartfelt thanks for attending this Open session of the 3rd. CHQ Conference of our Association. We feel honoured and privileged for having such distinguished gathering on this occasion.

ABOUT US

Telecom Executive Association of MTNL (TEAM) was formed after absorption of DOT recruited officers in MTNL w.e.f. 1.10.2000. The Officers belonging to all disciplines i.e., Telecom Engineering, Finance, Civil and Electrical wing, Hindi Officers and the Administrative Officers etc. Ours is an all MTNL organization having its Central Headquarters at Delhi. We have two circle organizations, one at Delhi and the other is in Mumbai. The 3rd. CHQ Conference is being held by our Mumbai Circle Organization.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF MTNL AND PROVIDING QUALITATIVE TELECOM SERVICES TO OUR CUSTOMERS

Apart from our burning issues like realizing 78.2% neutralization in the wage revision as per Wage Commission reports, proper promotion policy for career progression, and pension etc, we have deliberated above two issues thoroughly in our delegate session on 09/10/2012. The main focus was on the functioning of the field organizations. The availability of essential spares, tools and accessories is one of the main concern areas. Non-availability of essential modems and accessories has deterred our capability to harness the full potential of broadband connectivity. In GSM service there are number of loose ends ailing mobile service of MTNL causing heavy loss in terms of market share. Huge amount has been wrongfully invested in CDMA service but there is definite lack of managerial will to make it effective and commercially viable. The half-hearted move for introducing convergent billing has created more problem than solve it.

We intend to crystallize the various valuable opinions/suggestions expressed in the deliberations' in form of a resolution and forward the same to the MTNL Management for their consideration and appropriate action on their part.

But one important point that was stressed repeatedly by our participating delegates in this respect is that whether DOT/Government is really serious and duly concerned about survivability of MTNL. The basis of their such doubts are as follows:-

- (1) MTNL was not financially sick despite low tariff charges that slides down the earned revenue in the competitive scenario. Suddenly Government took away huge amount to the extent of 11,000 Crores from MTNL exchequer and push MTNL to the debt trap. It is a huge blow that compelled MTNL to borrow Rs.7000 Crores from the market to make this payment to the Government. Most importantly, MTNL was compelled to pay higher charges for spectrum compared to its competitors who are private service providers, but the spectrum allocated to MTNL is of inferior quality.
- (2) Huge liability of pension and pensionary benefits of DOT recruited employees absorbed in MTNL has been put on MTNL's shoulder. This should actually be the liability of DOT/Government. But DOT/ Government put it on MTNL deliberately to avoid its own responsibility and liability. This has hastened the financial deterioration of MTNL.
- (3) DOT has inflicted irreparable damage to MTNL/BSNL by deliberate mishandling of absorption of a section of senior officers. The absorption issue could have been settled long back if DoT actually wanted to settle it by following the rules in place. Instead, DOT bent the rules again and again to linger the crisis and thus inflicting huge damage to MTNL/BSNL. The Management of important field operations and key responsibility of customer care and revenue earning are handled by those who are not only non-stake holders in MTNL, they are now disgusted, distraught and frustrated lot. They are disbeliever in MTNL and are counting days to abandon MTNL. It does not require much managerial skill to understand what kind of performance can be expected from such disgruntled work force.

RESTRUCTURING OF TELECOM SERVICE-PROCLAIMED AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main objective of restructuring telecom service was, to our understanding, to make the field ready for substantial private investment for growth in this field which Government alone cannot provide as well as to introduce private-public competition so that the customers can be provided affordable service. It is still fresh in everybody's memory the very high absorbitant tariff rates introduced by the private operators for mobile service in the beginning while till then MTNL mobile service was not made

available for general customers. There were deliberate attempt by TRAI to delay MTNL mobile service at that time and as a result of that customers continued to be robbed of. At last when MTNL was allowed to introduce mobile telephone service, the charges were drastically reduced overnight.

By now it is no secret that some insiders in DOT and TRAI act at the behest of private operators. In the name of providing level playing fields, these elements serve the private operators at the cost of MTNL/BSNL.

Government enacted policy with some proclaimed purposes but the same were reversed at the stage of implementation due to this black sheep insiders. Therefore, if we genuinely want to save MTNL/BSNL we shall have to relentlessly fight against these black sheep elements and the aberrations they are bringing in implementing the policy of the Government.

DISCRIMINATORY & DEPLORABLE ATTITUDE OF DOT TOWARDS MTNL

DOT is the administrative ministry of MTNL as it is for BSNL. But DOT neglects MTNL and makes serious discrimination against MTNL. The responsible officers of DOT are very candid in their opinion and attitude in this respect. They very clearly and unhesitatingly say that Government owns 100% of BSNL but for MTNL, Government owns only to the extent of 56 % implying that MTNL merits no serious consideration from DoT. If it is so, how could DoT take away Rs. 11,000 Crores from MTNL when approx. 44 % stake of MTNL is vested with the private share holders ?

With this kind of thought on the back of mind, DoT deals with MTNL. That is the reason perhaps BSNL employees are strongly against any disinvestment of Government share in BSNL. They have justifiably learnt the lesson from MTNL's situation.

ISSUE OF ITS ABSORPTION

This is one of the most important issues in the area of MTNL/BSNL. As already stated, mishandling by DOT is, to a great extent, deliberate and conspiratorial and aimed at damaging MTNL/BSNL to the delight of the private telecom operators. DOT has successfully done this so far. It is strange that none in DoT is held responsible for the failure of implementing the Governments' policy.

Our point is, when DOT could not complete the absorption process even after decades, why then to hang on this ? Let the absorption be abandoned completely and take us back to DOT's fold. It is not fair for the Government to apply different norms and different parameters for different section of employees.

MERGER OF MTNL & BSNL

Our Association has all along favoured this proposal. Logically merger of MTNL & BSNL is perfectly tuned with the present telecom policy of the Government that telecom licensing should be on PAN INDIA basis. In practice it will provide leg space for Govt. owned telecom operator to grow and function more comfortably with least procedural delay.

Here again formidable vested interests are active to see that this does not take place.

Whenever new incumbent comes in Ministry of Communication, for some time this proposal moves around loudly. But after sometimes it is silenced for the reasons not known to us.

There will be always some difficulties in implementing merger. The difficulties have been experienced during the merger of Air India and Indian Airlines merger also. These can be hammered down without much rancour if the policy implementation is in the interest of the industry and public entrepreneur.

From the experience of merger of Air India and Indian Airlines, we can say that if Government really wants, Government can do it. If it does not want, the excuses are big enough to say NO.

Hon'ble Chief Guests & other dignitaries on dais, we may now be excused if we apprise you of some of the career issues. With a view to not engaging your valuable time more than it is required, we intend to touch, in brief, only two issues i.e., **Executive Promotion Policy in MTNL and MTNL Pension.**

PROMOTION POLICY FOR THE BELOW BOARD LEVEL EXECUTIVE CADRES

At the time of absorption, DOT recruited officers were assured in writing that in MTNL the promotion prospect will be better than what it was in DOT under Govt. set up. This has now come out as a hoax. The Promotion Policy announced are erroneous on number of accounts.

The prospect of vertical promotion has been deteriorated due to preposterous provisions in the policy. The prospect has been further plagued by inevitable court cases filed by the genuinely aggrieved and affected officers. This is not the proper place and time to tell this in details. We only would like to tell our esteemed CMD that the executive promotion policy that he himself prescribes in BSNL during his tenure there as

Director (HR) is far better in some aspects. We would request him to look into this matter along with Director (HR).

MTNL PENSION

MTNL Pension (for combined services) is one glaring example to show how MTNL and MTNL employees are discriminated against by DOT/Govt in the matter of most important issue like pension. The absorbees in both MTNL and BSNL are originally DOT employees having similar service conditions and provision of pension and family pension as per Govt service rules. They have been absorbed in two CPSUs under the same administrative ministry i.e., DOT. The BSNL absorbees have been entitled to the Govt. pension payable by DOT whereas MTNL absorbees have been denied. For MTNL employees, DOT/Govt has denied to take the responsibility of pension. To justify such naked discriminatory treatment, the following reasons are forwarded:-

- (1) MTNL and BSNL were incorporated at two different times and, unlike in the case of BSNL, at the time of formation of MTNL, it was not the condition that DOT/Govt. would pay the pension.
- (2) The employees of MTNL and BSNL are getting different pay scales, MTNL's pay scales are higher than those in BSNL.

Several relevant questions have been raised, some even by the Parliamentary Committees, in respect of the veracity of the justifications put forth as follows:-

- (a) Were the employees of MTNL responsible to decide when MTNL or BSNL would be incorporated ? If not, why would then the employees be denied on this account ?
- (b) Were the employees associated with the process of framing the conditionalities of formation of MTNL ? If not, why would then the employees be denied on this account ?
- (c) Were the pay scales of MTNL decided unilaterally by the employees on their own ? Were the employees of MTNL sounded/cautioned at the time of deciding the pay scales that they would be denied Govt pension payable by the Govt. if they accept the pay scales prescribed for them ? If answer is NO in both the cases, why would the employees be denied similar pension as in BSNL on this account at this stage ?

Govt/DOT/MTNL/BSNL had an opportunity to remove such disparities, if at all this seemed to be a bottleneck, during two successive Wage Commissions. But it was not done so. Then what is the purpose of raising such bogey at this stage ?

The vision of Late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that steers the formulation of Telecom Policy for restructuring the telecom service was not aimed at robbing the Govt. employees of their legitimate secured pension. These are the fall out of beauracratic jugglery.

MTNL employees will not accept anything other than the pension to be paid by DOT as in BSNL. MTNL employees continuously pleading for this case for more than last one decade. Two Hon'ble Minister (C) categorically assured that there will be no discrimination against MTNL employees on this account. Even parliament was assured once on this line.

Despite all this, if DOT tries to deny this with force, we shall oppose this with whatever are there at our disposal. We shall not allow to play with the security and honour of our old age and old age of our families.

Hon'ble Chief Guest and other dignitaries on dais,

We may be pardoned if we sound harsh. Kindly appreciate our present position which is out of sheer frustration. Constantly we are on tender hook and under threatening that the responsibility of our pension will be finally disowned by the DOT/Govt and left to the Trust. In present day's scenario, Trust is not that much trust worthy. Having legacy of long Government service, how can we allow to mortgage our old age honour and security to any Trust ?

With due honour, and thanks for patient hearing, we remain.

Sd/

(A. K. Kaushik)

General Secretary/ T E A M