

## Write-up by Senior leader Com. M K Bagchi

### **DEBATE ON PENSION REVISION IN BSNL/MTNL:**

Broadly there are two schools of thought:

1. Pension Revision will be carried out giving effect from 1.1.2017, following Wage Revision as per 3<sup>rd</sup> PRC
2. Pension Revision should be delinked from Wage Revision as the disbursing authority for pension is different from that for wages and thereby, pension revision will be carried out as per CPC but on ID pay scales, date of effect being 1.1.2017.

**UNITED FORUM OF MTNL UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS, DELHI BELONGS TO THE 2<sup>nd</sup> CATEGORY. WHY? LET ME EXPLAIN:-**

Those who advocate for 1<sup>st</sup> category pension revision pin their justifications broadly on the following points:-

- (1) Pension Revision as per 3<sup>rd</sup> PRC following Wage Revision will be comparatively easier to achieve.
- (2) This will keep the pensioners close to the working employees as the interest of both groups so far as revision of wage/pension is concerned, will rest on one common fulcrum.
- (3) It will be loss for both employees and pensioners if we invite CDA pay scales and CD Allowance in the process because CDA pay scales are normally less than IDA pay scales and CD Allowances are normally granted after interval of 6 months unlike IDA for which interval is 3 months.
- (4) They are dismayed when they apprehend that if the hard-earned IDA pay scales are sacrificed, the fruits of consistent struggles to achieve IDA scales at the time of absorption will go waste.
- (5) They refer the issue of MTNL pensions stating that Government agreed to take the responsibility /liability of MTNL pension (combined services) only when their pension is calculated on the basis of equivalent BSNL pay scales.

#### My comments:

- (1) It is not difficult to comprehend that if pension revision depends on pay revision as per PRC, there is no certainty whether pension revision will at all be carried out. Pay Revision as per PRC is subjected to a number of obnoxious clauses. There are fair amount of chances that pay revision may not take place. If at all pay revision takes place, there remains the question: to what extent the pay will

be revised. Thus pension revision following pay revision as per PRC is not secured and not uniform.

- (2) When I say so, I don't underestimate the strength of the unions and associations. We must be pragmatic enough to understand that all constraints cannot be done away with fully (and always) with the fighting strength of the unions. There are other factors involved.
- (3) Due to this uncertainty, even DOT feels (subjected to be approval of nodal ministries/departments) pension revision should be delinked from pay revision. DOT feels, pay revision is uncertain under certain situation, but pension revision cannot be resisted for long. For pay revision, MTNL/BSNL will have to pay from their earnings, but pension & pension revision is the liability of DOT/Govt.
- (4) Then there is a contention that CPC is only for CG employees and CG pensioners who are linked to CDA pay scales and not for those who are on ID pay scales or retired from ID pay scales. This statement is only partially true because a number of our pensionary claims of ID pensioners are settled on the basis of recommendations of CPC and for this, we need not sacrifice either ID pay scales or IDA. Only the issue of pension revision is left. Had we overwhelmed ourselves with such poor convictions at the time of absorption, we could not have achieved pension from DOT/Governmental civil estimates.
- (5) If CPC is for CD pensioners' pension revision, then what is there for the pension revision of ID pensioners? Fact is that neither the CPC Report nor the orders issued thereon by Department of Pension & Pensioners Welfare talks of CDA pensioners or IDA pensioners. All the orders issued by DoP&PW implementing the CPC recommendations from time to time state that they are applicable to all Pensioners and family Pensioners covered under CCS (Pension) Rule, 1972. BSNL/MTNL pensioners are covered under the said rule. PRC does not deal with pension revision in that sense. So we demand: let there be CPC guidelines to apply for ID pension like ours.
- (6) Then there is a fear that if we press for CPC, then pension will be calculated on equivalent CD pay scales. Just to bring home this fear, the example of MTNL pension is wrongly pointed out stating that MTNL pension is calculated on BSNL pay scales. The statement is, at the least, confusing. MTNL pensioners are now getting pension from DOT and that too on MTNL pay scales. Com. V A N Namboodiri should know this as I thankfully acknowledge that he was closely associated with us in that struggle and made valuable contributions. MTNL pays to DOT only pension contribution on MTNL's ID pay scale as BSNL pays the same on its own ID pay scale. Beyond that MTNL does not (or, not in a position to) pay.
- (7) I consciously avoid bringing MTNL matter into discussion at this stage to avoid avoidable confusions in this debate. Because DOT's present proposal for delinking is only for BSNL. Why to bring MTNL matters at this stage?

- (8) It is no body's contention to plead for CD pay scale & CD allowances. We should not play this as a ghost in the dark room. Ghost can be tackled appropriately when confronted in actuality.
- (9) One important aspect of CGHS entitlement of BSNL/MTNL pensioners is being lost sight of. Initially the entitlement of CGHS for BSNL/MTNL pensioners was denied on the ground that they are ID pensioners. But Government had to concede the fact that BSNL/MTNL pensioners draw the pension from the same civil estimates as the CD pensioners do. Thus BSNL/MTNL pensioners are made entitled to CGHS benefits as CD pensioners. Please note that BSNL/MTNL employees are not entitled for this, as their wages are not paid from civil estimates of Govt. of India. The amount of one time contributions for life time CGHS benefits of BSNL/MTNL pensioners were calculated keeping their ID pay scales into account. This may be a good pointer in the direction of ID pensioners to get pay revision as per CPC even though pension contributions calculated ID pay scales.
- (10) Then on the question of "easily achievable", some feel that pension revision following PRC can be achieved easily. If so, why it is not possibly done so during last 2 years. Moreover, we want easy solution or permanent solution?
- (11) My point is why to burden ourselves by anticipating what Govt. may say or may not? Why to take the side of Govt. to plead what are the problems on Govt side? Let us leave those to the Govt. at this stage. Let us concentrate on what should be our DEMAND that, on achievement, will solve our problem fully and once for all. If our pension revision is a knotty issue, who is responsible for this? We need not be apologetic or unduly defensive to put up our right DEMAND.

LET US JOIN AS ONE PEOPLE WITH ONE VOICE AND ON SAME JUSTIFICATIONS. FALL OUT? WE SHALL SEE TO IT AS AND WHEN IT APPEARS.

= M. K. BAGCHI, Convener / UF

.....