

FORUM OF BSNL UNIONS / ASSOCIATIONS

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Opp. Shadipur Bus Depot., New Delhi – 110 008.*

Forum//103/17

17.12.2015

To

**Respected Sri Narendra Modiji,
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India,
New Delhi.**

Sub: Exemplary and unparalleled effort of the BSNL in providing landline and mobile services during recent catastrophe and life threatening turmoil at Chennai should act as an eye opener for Telecom Policy makers who have been abjectly overlooking with disdain the great contribution that BSNL has played in the past and continues to play during the time National calamities strike and when question of grave National Security arises. Private operators have betrayed and continue to betray. Policy framework needs to recognize this critical fact and firm policy provisions to strengthen BSNL need to be incorporated and executed like 1) Free Space to built up mobile network at every Government buildings, Pilgrim Centers, Airports, Railway stations, Ports, Tourist destinations, Bus stands, Hospitals, parks, Fishing Harbours, Beach, Market places, Educational institutions and other State Govt. offices etc and 2) reduce the huge Air Wave /Satellite Charges levied from BSNL for giving Telecom services in Andaman, Jammu Kashmir, Lakshadweep and North East areas.

Respected Sir;

Be it Bhuj in Gujarat, Tsunami in TN, Falon in Odisha, great catastrophe in Uttarakhand, cyclone in AP, flash floods in Leh, recent turmoil in Chennai and the list is endless, BSNL has exhibited extraordinary resilience and commitment in rising to the occasion and providing succor to our Countrymen and also playing a very critical role when issues of grave national security confront the Nation. It goes without saying that this great Organization has never let down neither its fellow Countrymen nor the Nation in meeting gravest of grave crisis. Political leadership and the bureaucracy need not only to recognize and acknowledge this critical fact but have to come out of the parochial outlook that continues to capture them while Telecom policy is drafted and executed.

Political leadership and the bureaucracy alike deliberately berate and discriminate the prestigious and strategic "National Telecom Institution" that BSNL is and will continue to be while finalizing telecom policy and its implementation. Both should recognize the wide and sharp line that divides BSNL and the private operators and that is while BSNL stands firms grounded to providing of services at affordable rates and in remotest inaccessible areas of the Country, private operators remain obsessed with earning huge money in green pastures, even at the altar of National interests and security. In the past, the Govt have never come down on private operators when they nakedly breached policy and the direct victim of endless policy infringements has invariably and inevitably been BSNL. Even today, naked policy breaches continue to be overlooked by those entrusted to monitor policy implementation and BSNL continues to be the captive of these brazen faced policy breaches. Political leadership of the Country should never be under any illusion whatsoever that private operators will ever meet the grave National crisis which arise when Natural calamities strike or when issues of grave National security arise. No, not at all because private operators have unflinchingly and unambiguously demonstrated that they have no commitment in this regard. They are deeply committed to profits. They deserted their Countrymen and the Nation when such threatening situations arose in the past and will continue to do so in future.

Recent Chennai flood tragedy is an eye opener for the policy makers to review the process of mode of telecom service delivery in our country. As witnessed by millions all over the world, when **the telecommunication network of all major private service providers collapsed pathetically and even they shut down the services fearing damage to the equipments, the only ray of hope to the flood affected community and to the rescue teams was the uninterrupted wire line/wireless network of the Government owned Telecom Company, BSNL.** As per reliable media reports, when more than 80% of the private telecom networks collapsed for days together, the failure of BSNL landline/mobile network was only less than 20%, throughout the disaster period. This really helped the trapped victims of Chennai flood to reach out to their dear and near ones and also to the rescue teams. BSNL's inimitable services helped the rescue operations in a big way. The Chennai residents who were using private mobile connections, had to depend on BSNL connections of their neighbours or friends to get them connected to the external world. The social media responses of the Chennai residents clearly conveys, to what extent BSNL network and services helped the flood victims, as well as rescue teams. **Out of the nine mobile networks that operate in Chennai, only BSNL was functional during the flood, at very heavy operational cost.**

Social Media Acceptance:



BSNL could provide such a dreamlike intact network, even in such an adverse situation, just because of the commitment and dedication of its employee's right from the top management, CMD/BSNL to the bottommost contract workers who worked as a team to help

the affected fellow countrymen. This is another occasion, BSNL proved its social obligation and commitment, when all other private operators failed. The failure of the private operators in providing even basic services in such crucial junctures and at most needed times is a matter to be viewed very seriously. Why BSNL can and others can't deliver in the hour of crisis is just a matter of commitment of the workforce and social obligation of the stakeholders and the management.

BSNL network also helped the Central as well as State Government machinery and Police to remain connected to carryout rescue operations and to extend immediate relief measures to the affected people. BSNL staff even reached mobile towers wading five to six feet deep water in flood affected sites to ensure uninterrupted operations. Even the military relief services used BSNL network to extend relief to the affected, during the flood. Also, the Air Traffic Control at Chennai International Airport could be made operational in quick time with the help of BSNL connectivity. Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Tamil Nadu has appreciated the efforts of BSNL during flood calamity. Unlike other private telecom companies, BSNL once again proved that it is not only a profit oriented company but also the one which keep its social commitment on top of its agenda. BSNL had provided telecom services to the people of Chennai 24x7 that too at a time when it was really needed. **It is worth mentioning here that, to facilitate relief operations during this natural calamity and to extend the real helping hand to the stranded people of Chennai, BSNL offered free calls, free SMS and free data packages for mobile and landline customers for a period of seven days with effect from 02-12-2015.** The whole nation acknowledged this earnest effort by BSNL at a time when the network of all other private operators collapsed. Almost all social media has accepted and appreciated the responsibility shown by BSNL during tough times.

It is also to be noted that not only during catastrophic situations, but also during normal hours also, BSNL is the one and only operator who address the communication needs of the socially/economically backward community and along all geographically different and difficult areas, where private service providers turn their eyes closed. BSNL provides seamless mobile coverage and landline/broadband network in the tough geographical regions such as extreme remote north eastern states and even in Himalayan regions, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar Islands etc and by spending huge amount as operational costs and by paying even very high bandwidth and satellite charges. This of course, justifies the very relevance of this government owned Telecom Company to expand its network presence to crucial and strategically important locations, throughout the country. In order to address the communication needs of extreme rural India, BSNL has to spend huge operational & maintenance costs, which of course, drags this public sector telecom company to incur operational losses. But these losses are incurred as part of the social obligation of BSNL to extend rural services without any profit motive. When all other operators in private sector plan profit oriented network expansion projects, BSNL plans networks with social commitment, without aiming profit alone, especially in rural areas.

Thus, especially in view of the various natural calamities the country has faced including the most recent Chennai flood, during which the private Telcos failed miserably to provide network services in most needed hours, as always in the past, it is high time for the Government to review the policies of telecom services in our country as well as the approach and commitment of Central & State Governments towards this CPSU, BSNL. **At this point of time, while the whole nation acknowledges the responsibility and leadership shown by BSNL towards the citizen of our country, the Forum of BSNL Unions and Associations representing all the Executives and Employees of BSNL would like to bring the following for your kind consideration and necessary favorable action at your end.**

1. Necessary instructions may kindly be bestowed to various departments and agencies under Govt. of India to permit BSNL to equip its telecom installations in all major Central

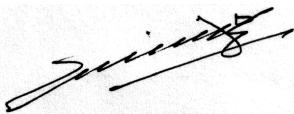
Govt. offices including strategic/vital establishments that directly deal with life and liberty of our country men including Airports, Railway stations, Ports, Tourist destinations, etc.

2. Instructions may kindly be given to State Governments to permit BSNL to make its presence in all major bus stands, hospitals, parks, pilgrim centres, fishing harbours, beach, markets, educational institutions and other State Govt. Offices by installing their telecom equipments wherever it is not available at present.
3. High bandwidth/Satellite charges levied upon BSNL for ensuring trouble free services in regions like Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, J&K, North Eastern states etc should be seriously reviewed to the advantage of BSNL.

The recent flood in Chennai has thus again revealed that, National Telecom backbone BSNL is the most trusted, only reliable and ever dependable telecom operator for our countrymen in all operating conditions. Thus political leadership and the policy makers need to open their eyes wide open and look at the hard reality that weakening of BSNL will only lead to massive and uncontrolled cartelization of private operators and eventually holding telecom users to ransom and the Country to hostage in situations where exclusively singular commitment to providing services is unwarranted and profits are just of no consequence. Various agencies connected to framing of telecom policies, its implementation and monitoring like TRAI, USO fund Managers, mighty Ministries of Home and Finance and the bureaucracy must bear this stark in mind. Keeping these hard realities in mind, it is urged to incorporate provisions in the policy to be executed in order to strengthen BSNL. Holding up refund of BWA spectrum charges on flimsy grounds, arm twisting and abnormal and unwarranted delay by USO fund managers in disbursing USO fund, huge loss inflicted on BSNL due to inter- circle roaming pacts to provide pan India 3G services are just tips of an iceberg.

The only way for the Govt to have an assertive say in matters of implementation of telecom policy, safeguarding interests of users, meeting National security concerns of paramount significance and dealing with very tough situations and turmoil during natural calamities is to have a very stable, resilient and viable institution of its own - BSNL. That should not be lost sight of.

Thanking you,
Yours sincerely,



[P. Abhimanyu]
Convener, Forum of BSNL Unions/Associations.
Mobile No: 9868231113

Copy to:

1. Shri. Ravi Shankar Prasad, Hon MOC&IT for information and n/a please.
2. Shri. Nripendra Mishra , Principal Secretary, PM(O) for information and n/a please.
3. Shri. Pradeep Kumar Sinha, Cabinet Secretary, Govt of India for information and n/a pl.
4. Shri. Rakesh Garg, Secretary, DoT for information and n/a please.
- 5-7. Member(Fin)/Member(S)/Member(T), Telecom Commission for information and n/a pl.
8. Shri. Ram Sewak Sharma, Chairman/TRAI, for information and n/a pl.
9. Shri. Anupam Shrivatava, CMD, BSNL for information and necessary action pl.
10. USO administrator, Dept of Telecom, for information and n/a pl.
- 11-14. All Board of Directors of BSNL.