

SHRIMATI SMRITI ZUBIN IRANI: Sir, POSHAN Abhiyaan is an effort beyond the Ministry of Women and Child Development's efforts. It converges the efforts of 15 Ministries including the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

**VRS to BSNL employees**

\*107. SHRI PRABHAKAR REDDY VEMIREDDY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry is seriously pruning 30 per cent of contract staff in BSNL to address some of the financial problems that the company is passing through;

(b) whether it is a fact that last year BSNL has removed 2,500 contract employees;

(c) if so, the details of (a) and (b) above;

(d) whether it is also a fact that BSNL had earlier taken a decision to introduce VRS to its employees; and

(e) if so, the status of the same?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

**Statement**

(a) to (c) Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has informed that it outsources specific works to contractors who engage contract workers for the said works. In view of the strained financial condition of the BSNL, BSNL decided to implement various austerity measures which include reducing expenditure for different outsourcing works. These works include house-keeping, security and certain repair and maintenance works.

(d) and (e) The Cabinet in its meeting held on 23.10.2019 approved the revival plan for BSNL which *inter-alia*, includes measures to reduce the staff cost by offering Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) to the employees of age 50 years and above. Accordingly, BSNL has launched 'BSNL Voluntary Retirement Scheme-2019' on 04.11.2019 which is open till 03.12.2019.

SHRI PRABHAKAR REDDY VEMIREDDY: Sir, in view of VRS in BSNL and MTNL, many skilled and technical people are leaving the organisation. I would like to know: Will

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technical and skilled people be employed on contract basis, at least, to be able to compete with the private operators?

SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Sir, I had occasion to share our concern before this House that BSNL and MTNL are strategic assets for the country. In case of earthquake or cyclone or defence purposes, only they come in and proactively become active. Therefore, we have decided to revive them. One of the reasons I would like to share with this House, which is very important and it should be noted. The employee cost of BSNL was 75.06 per cent of the revenue. In case of MTNL, it was 87.15 per cent; Airtel was just 2.95 per cent; Vodafone-Idea was 5.59 per cent; and Jio was 4.27 per cent. So, this load had to be revived by proper VRS package. We have given a very attractive VRS package. They are coming forward for this. I would like to tell the hon. Member that it is the desire of the Government and mine in particular — last time, I converted BSNL into operating profit — that we want to revive it, make it professional, including by induction of technical personnel.

SHRI PRABHAKAR REDDY VEMIREDDY: Sir, I would also like to say that the employees have been demanding that amount of *ex-gratia* be increased to 45 days of every year that they have worked and 35 days of the years of service left.

SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Sir, I would only convey to the hon. Member and through you, to this House that the attractive nature of our package is evident from the fact that till date, in BSNL, 79,000 people have applied for VRS and in MTNL, out of 20,000 employees, 14,000 have already applied for it. It was a good package and, therefore, there is this kind of response. We will be giving them one of the finest advantages as far as VRS package is concerned.

MS. DOLA SEN: Sir, I appreciate the revival effort taken up by the Central Government and the Ministry of Communications. But, it is not only about VRS for the permanent workers, but contractual employees of BSNL have not been paid salary since January 2019, for the last eleven months, though they are doing their jobs till date.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please put question.

MS. DOLA SEN: Sir, I am coming to the question. Moreover, BSNL management is trying to reduce the age of retirement to 55 years, the working days to 15 days per month and the working hours to 3 hours per day for the contractual workers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Right. Now, the Minister.

MS. DOLA SEN: What is the opinion of the Central Government and the concerned Ministry to justify all these anti-labour laws and the anti-law-of-the-land activities?

MR. CHAIRMAN: After a time, the call would be cut. You know that.

SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Sir, I want to convey to the hon. Member that as far as contract employees are concerned, they are not employees of BSNL or MTNL. They are contract employees of the contractors who are given work for a specific purpose subject to renewal. We have no problem with that. But the obligation to pay the dues of the workers is that of the contractor. We had also problems of paying salaries of the employees which we are reviving. We will also take care of their dues in due course. But, I want to say one thing that as far as the age part is concerned, though the Government has taken a decision, but for us, the option is open. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please.

SHRI M. SHANMUGAM: Sir, the Government has announced VRS package to BSNL employees. BSNL was supposed to revise the wages for its employees from 1.1.2017. But it has not been done. I would like to know from the hon. Minister: Has the BSNL management any proposal to give benefit of wage revision by merging basic wage and DA to the willing employees who have opted for VRS?

SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Sir, wage revision is an option available. But I would like the hon. Member and the House to know that where we are finding it difficult to pay salary because of these things, let me first revive it. Once revival is there, surely, there is an option to be explored. But presently, my whole stress is upon reviving BSNL and MTNL, infusing funds and also VRS which I am focussing on.

SHRIMATI VIJILA SATHYANANTH: Sir, I appreciate the hon. Minister for giving allocation of 4G spectrum to BSNL. This is the highest revival ever for BSNL and MTNL. Both have been merged. I appreciate wholeheartedly also for pumping some money. I hear that ₹ 40,000 crore will be pumped into BSNL for reviving it completely. Everywhere there is shortage of employees. Now, by VRS, they are going to push many employees out of BSNL. Will new recruitment be made? Will the contract labourers be also made permanent?

SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Sir, the reason as to why 4G has been allocated was to make BSNL competitive. For a variety of reasons in the past, into which I need not go presently, BSNL was denied the facility of 4G. Therefore, in the revival, that has also been taken as a point. We will work extra mile for BSNL to become professional. But, as

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regards the contract employees becoming permanent, I would say that they are the employees of the contractors. We need to understand this. But, surely, their experience over the years can be utilised in better ways. I see a point in that. I know that she is a well-wisher of BSNL.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No.108. Questioner not present. Are there any supplementaries?

\*108. *[The questioner was absent.]*

**Complaint regarding condition of Anganwadi centres**

\*108. SHRI MAHESH PODDAR: Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has resolved the complaints of poor conditions of buildings and services at Anganwadi centres in the country; and

(b) if so, the State-wise details thereof, including Jharkhand?

THE MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI SMRITI ZUBIN IRANI): (a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

***Statement***

(a) and (b) Anganwadi Services under the Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme. The Scheme aims at holistic development of children below 6 years of age and pregnant women and lactating mothers. The scheme provides for a package of six services comprising of (i) Supplementary nutrition (ii) Pre-school non-formal education (iii) Nutrition and Health Education (iv) Immunization (v) Health check-up and (vi) Referral services. These services are delivered through the Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and Anganwadi Helpers (AWHs) at the Anganwadi Centres (AWCs). The Scheme operates through a network of 7075 fully operational Projects and more than 13.77 lakh Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) across the country.

The Scheme is implemented by the States/UTs. The Central Government is responsible for policy and planning and the State Governments are responsible for day to day programme implementation. For effective implementation of the Scheme, Government of India issues guidelines/instructions to States/UTs from time to time, releases funds in the prescribed cost sharing ratio and monitors implementation of the scheme.