

ALL INDIA BSNL DOT PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION



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ALL INDIA BSNL DOT PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION,
NEW DELHI, INDIA.

Proposed speech to be delivered by Com.K.G.Jayaraj, General Secretary in the 2nd Congress of Trade Union International (Pensioners & Retirees) being held at Bogota, Colombia on 27-28, February, 2019.

Respected Presidium comrades, Com.Quim Boix, General Secretary, Com.Antonio Forero, President, OCP, other distinguished guests and leaders participating from various countries representing different organizations of pensioners and retirees.

At the outset, on behalf of All India BSNL DOT Pensioners Association, let me extend you all a warm and revolutionary greetings.

I feel proud and privileged to attend and address this second congress of TUI(P&R) and thank the General Secretary and the Organising Committee in Bogota for extending an invitation to AIBDPA. I am happy to mention that we got an opportunity to participate in the foundation congress held at Barcelona on 5-6, February, 2014 in which our Advisor, Com.VAN Namboodiri attended. He was elected Technical Member and also attended the first Asia Pacific Regional conference held at Kathmandu, Nepal on 20th December, 2017.

Pensioners and Retirees are playing an important role in the society in every country and they have become a force to reckon. I take this opportunity to congratulate WFTU for taking the initiative to organize them globally, particularly in the wake of mounting attacks on pension and other benefits in almost all capitalist countries. This situation could be attributed to the adverse impacts of globalization being pursued by these countries. We feel that this could only be resisted successfully with the involvement of the workers of each country, as they are also being targeted in the form of cut in wages, and fortunately such struggles are being waged in these countries, especially in European Union countries.

INDIAN SITUATION.

The government of India started pursuing the neoliberal policies in the year 1991 and its impacts are felt in every sector. Though there had been change of governments during this period no basic changes are made in the policies by the subsequent governments. The only exemption was the period of 2004-06 when the United Progressive Alliance government led by Indian National

Congress was supported by the left parties. Even then, there was no major change in the policy but certain limit was insisted by the left parties and also some welfare programmes to the poor people was compelled to be implemented.

ATTACK ON PENSION AND THE BACKGROUND.

Pension in India was first implemented to the government employees in 1871 by the British when India was ruled by them as a colony. Initially it was a contributory pension scheme. Employees had to pay pension contribution during their service. Later in 1925, the Royal Commission appointed by the British government recommended that the entire liability of pension should be borne by the government as the employees had served the government for such a long period during the hey days of their life. The British Parliament accepted the recommendation and was implemented in India. After independence, a constitutional provision was made in the Constitution for granting statutory pension to the government employees. But necessary pension rules were not framed and instead the pension scheme recommended by Royal Commission was continued from 1950 to 1972. It is after numerous struggles that comprehensive pension scheme was evolved namely, Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 1972. This rule, evolved based on an Indian Constitutional provision, ensured the central government employees statutory pension. However, there existed a big gap between the past pensioners and present pensioners as there was no revision of pension since first pay commission onwards. The government of India introduced a Liberalised Pension Scheme in 1979 but thousands of past pensioners were denied this benefit as it was implemented only with prospective effect. This further aggravated the position of past pensioners. No effective pensioners organization existed during this period in India. So, one of the affected pensioners, D.S.Nakara approached the Supreme Court of India against this gross injustice and got an historic judgment. This was a great morale booster for the pensioners and they started organizing themselves. Other sectors like public sector, bank and organized workers in private sector are being denied the statutory pension. The government of India was not happy on the intervention of Supreme Court and started to think about the alternative for statutory defined benefit pension scheme.

The international financial institutions like IMF and World Bank under the control of US imperialism also exerted pressure on Indian government for pension reform. The BJP led NDA government appointed a committee for pension reforms and on the cover of this report the statutory defined benefit pension scheme was replaced with the contributory pension scheme for the employees recruited after 01-01-2004. It was implemented in a most undemocratic manner, through an executive order, without the approval of the Indian Parliament. The contributory pension scheme envisages recovery of 10% of the pay and Dearness Allowance of the employees per month and equal amount will be contributed by the government. The amount will be entrusted to certain fund managers and they will invest the amount to the shares of their choice and what may happen is unpredictable. On attaining the age of 60, 60% of the amount available will be given to the employee and the balance 40% will be deposited in an annuity fund. Whatever interest is got from this annuity fund will be given as the monthly pension. Actually, the New Pension Scheme or National Pension Scheme, as it is being called, is virtually a No Pension Scheme. Pension is the great social security and it cannot be subjected to vagaries of stock market.

The New Pension Scheme was stoutly opposed by all the employees organizations and pensioners organizations as well. The resistance movement is being led by Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers and State Government Employees Federation and pensioners movements like NCCPA, AIBDPA, AIPRPA, CGPA and various State government and PSU Pensioners are joining such struggles. Meanwhile, the UPA II government, in 2014, managed to get the bill in this regard passed with the active support of the then opposition party,

BJP despite strong opposition of the left parties. The fight against the draconian act is continuing. The New Pension Scheme is also implemented in all the states barring West Bengal. The left front governments in Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura had not implemented but when the governments were changed, the Congress and BJP implemented it in Kerala and Tripura, respectively. It is a welcome and significant development that the present Left Democratic government in Kerala has appointed a committee to examine the possibility of replacing the New Pension Scheme with the statutory defined benefit pension scheme.

It is a pitiable condition that a large section of workers are denied pension or to be content with meager pension called EPF pension. It clearly points to the necessity of introduction of universal pension scheme to ensure pension to all at the fag end of their life. The Left Democratic Government in Kerala is paying pension to all the senior citizens and weaker section of the society a monthly pension of Rs.1200 with marginal increase every year whereas some other states in India like Bihar is paying only a paltry Rs.200.

FUNCTIONING OF AIBDPA.

All India BSNL DOT Pensioners Association was founded by BSNL Employees Union, the majority and recognized Union in BSNL on 21st October, 2009 . By organising numerous struggles independently and working in close association with the workers organizations, we could achieve certain important demands of pension revision for the pre 2007 BSNL retirees, 78.2% IDA fitment and revision, annulment of 60:40 condition stipulated for payment of pensionary benefits and restoration of quarterly medical allowance . We are also joining the struggles of BSNL unions and Associations against privatization bids of BSNL by the government and other genuine issues of workers and pensioners. We are affiliated with the National Co-Ordination Committee of Pensioners Associations and a dominant participant of its agitations. We also participate in the nationwide struggle and strikes jointly called by the central trade unions like CITU,AITUC, HMS,UTUC, INTUC, LPF ,AICTU etc against the anti-worker and anti-people policies of the government. When the farmers , agricultural workers and the workers joined together and held an impressive rally at New Delhi on 05-09-2018 against the anti-people policy of the government, AIBDPA also joined it in an humble way.

AIBDPA is now in a serious struggle path for pension revision which has become due from 01-01-2017. This demand has also been taken up by All Unions and Associations of BSNL and have conducted a three day strike recently from 18-02-2019. NCCPA also included this demand in its charter of demands and a phased programme of agitation is being conducted and a massive Hunger Fast will be held at New Delhi on 15-03-2019.

The government of India rejected the only positive recommendation made by the 7th Pay Commission in respect of pensioners; parity in pension between the present and past pensioners. The Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers and NCCPA are continuing the struggle against this gross injustice.

AIBDPA is regularly publishing a quarterly journal, Tele Pensioner for its members and well wishers. It also maintains a website, aibdpa.com, with news, useful information and government orders on important issues.

With its unique style of functioning and moving forward choosing the path of struggle for the settlement of genuine demands, more and more pensioners are joining AIBDPA making it the biggest pensioners organization in BSNL. I am attending this congress just fresh from our 3rd triennial All India Conference held at Kolkata on 23-24, February, 2019 which has taken important decisions.

I hope this Congress will review the functioning of TUI (P&R) for the last five years with critical analysis. No doubt advancement is very much visible; but it has not been up to its potential. We have to widen our base utilizing the guidance of WFTU and through its vast affiliate organizations in each country.

It will be also a welcome initiative by TUI (P&R), if the 2nd Congress give a call for observance of an International Day for Protection of Pension.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the Colombian Pensioners Organisation for hosting the 2nd Congress and the excellent arrangements made for the successful conduct of the congress.

I wish the second congress all success.

Thank you Comrades.