

BSNL pensioners' body demands withdrawal of proposed amendment to Pension Rules

Supreme Court in its ruling had held that differentiating pensioners solely on the basis of retirement date was unconstitutional, the association leader said

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P. SUJATHA VARMA

Members of All-India BSNL Pensioners' Association have strongly condemned the Central government's proposed amendment to the Pension Rules, which seeks to override Supreme Court rulings and deny rightful benefits to pensioners.

In a statement issued on Friday (March 28), association's president V. Vara Prasad in Vijayawada said the amendment is not just a bureaucratic change, it is an outright assault on the dignity and financial security of millions of retirees who have served the nation with dedication.

Pointing to the fact that the Supreme Court, in its landmark judgement in D.S. Nakara vs Union of India case, had upheld that pension was not a government charity but a vested right of the retirees, and that differentiating pensioners solely on the basis of retirement date was unconstitutional, Mr. Prasad said in contradiction to the Apex court's ruling, the government was trying to manipulate the law to suit its convenience, bypassing judicial scrutiny and institutionalising discrimination against past pensioners.

Alleging deliberate exclusion of past pensioners, Mr. Prasad said: "amendment ensures that future Pay Commission benefits apply only to new retirees, robbing existing pensioners of fair revisions. This is an open violation of equality and natural justice."

Asserting that financial austerity cannot be exercised at the cost of the elderly, he said if there was money for corporate bailouts and political extravagance, why deny justice to pensioners. Accusing the government of evading legal accountability by rewriting the law, he asserted saying: “Pension is a right, not a favour. Retirees do not live on government generosity, they live on what is rightfully theirs.” The proposed amendment reeks of betrayal, treating pensioners as a burden rather than the backbone of the nation’s workforce, he added.

He said the association demands immediate rollback of the “anti-pensioner” amendment and urged Parliamentarians to oppose the move and the judiciary to take suo motu cognisance of this “attempt to override legal protections”. He said if the government failed to pay heed to their plea, the association would escalate protests across the nation.

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