

## Government to challenge TDSAT ruling on 3G pacts in Supreme Court: Ravi Shankar Prasad

ET Bureau Jun 25, 2014



(One of my biggest missions...)

*The government will challenge in the Supreme Court the telecom tribunal's order clearing the 3G intra-circle roaming pacts between operators. In an interview with ET, [communications and law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad](#) reiterated that his focus areas are reviving state-run telecom companies BSNL and [MTNL](#) and to digitally connect the 2,50,000 gram panchayats across the country. He added that he would soon come out with a holistic policy on spectrum as well as address issues raised by telecom operators in the merger and acquisition policy. Excerpts:*

### **Is the government going to contest the TDSAT order clearing 3G intra-circle roaming pacts?**

The view at the highest echelons of the government is that this being a highly contentious issue, it will be important to acquire a structured view of the Supreme Court so that future controversies may be obviated. Now it becomes imperative to get the opinion of the Supreme Court on the matter as this is such a complex and a cumbersome issue, so that a precedent on the

issue is set for once and for all. Getting clarity from the [Apex court](#) will provide us with directions on such matters in future.

**What will be the thrust of the new government's telecom policy?**

I have often quoted from the PM's speech, we need to build information highways and digitally connect the entire country. Secondly we need to make India the manufacturing hub for electronic products and incentivise fab manufacturing units across the country. I will call for a meeting shortly to find out ways through which we can bring in the state governments to implement and speed up the national optic fibre network (NOFN).

**What about the spectrum policy?**

I am currently studying the issues on spectrum sharing, trading, merger and acquisitions, one-time fee, so on and so forth. I will speak on the matter only once we decide on a comprehensive and a holistic policy. One of my biggest missions as the [telecom minister](#) will be to set right this mess of spectrum. It will take some time.

**What are your plans for reviving BSNL and MTNL? Is a possible merger on the cards?**

BSNL and MTNL are top priority for us right now. I can't say much on the issue of the merger yet, give us some time to work on these important issues. All decisions will be taken purely on merit.

**How does your government plan to move ahead on the [2G scam](#) trial?**

If any wrongdoing is there, then it needs to be properly investigated and the guilty be brought to justice.

**Is the government planning to scrap retrospective taxation?**

This is being handled by the [finance ministry](#) and I can just tell you that no opinion has been sought from me.

**What are your other focus areas?**

India must become a chip manufacturer. I am taking personal interest in the matter. The electronics industry will be \$400 billion by 2020 and 80% of this will be in the form of import bill, which will surpass the fuel bill of this country. We want to encourage electronic manufacturing unit in a big way and I will talk to big manufacturers myself. India's software production must be increased and I am going to hold e-panchayats in Bangalore in July first week to interact with start-up entrepreneurs.

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# Telecom dept readies note on merger of ailing MTNL, BSNL

Hindustan Times New Delhi, June 25, 2014

The communications ministry has prepared the draft for a note seeking the merger of ailing public sector telecom companies — Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd (MTNL), sources in the department of telecommunications said. The draft has been sent to communications minister Ravi Shankar Prasad for his approval.

The draft was prepared in the light of weak finances in the two fallen monopolies, sources added. Unaudited financial results for the financial year 2013-2014 indicate that BSNL and MTNL are estimated to report a net loss of ` 7,084 crore and ` 1,908 crore, respectively.

Different groups have already been formed to study various aspects such as human resources, technological systems, financial and corporate integration between both firms. “A steering committee has also been constituted for the coordination of these groups,” a DoT source said.

The draft also mentions the operational level synergy between MTNL and BSNL. It suggests the creation of a separate company for the telecommunications infrastructure and has strongly suggested monetisation of the land assets possessed by both the public sector telecom companies.

**“We have proposed hiving of mobile tower assets of BSNL into a separate company...a 100% subsidiary with outsourcing of operation and maintenance sales and marketing functions,”** the source added.

Once the draft is examined by the communications minister, the proposal is likely to be forwarded to the law ministry, before being sent to the Cabinet for final approval.

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## DoS asks Antrix to arrange satellite capacity for BSNL from ThaiComm, MEASAT



(Antrix is the commercial...)

KOLKATA: The [Department of Space](#) (DoS) has urged [Antrix Corp.](#) to quickly seek out additional transponder capacity for [Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd](#) from global [satellite](#) operators such as [ThaiComm](#) and [MEASAT](#) in order to ensure better communications services in the strategically located Andaman and Nicobar islands and the [Lakshadweep](#) islands.

[BSNL](#) has been finding it difficult to provide telecom coverage in these areas after losing a significant 322 MHz of bandwidth capacity when the INSAT-3E satellite stopped functioning.

"Antrix can negotiate annual lease charges for securing additional transponder capacity for BSNL from international satellite operators like MEASAT and ThaiComm," DoS noted in documents reviewed by ET.

The department has suggested that capacity be sought on ThaiComm-7 from this month itself "since annual leases charges at Rs 6.6 crore per transponder is cheaper than Rs 7.5 crore per transponder per year for capacity on the MEASAT system," according to the documents.

Antrix is the commercial and marketing arm of the [Indian Space Research Organisation](#) (Isro), which comes under the ambit of DoS.

The department has also indicated that fresh "transponder capacity can be made available to BSNL on the GSAT-16 satellite," although such allocations can be considered only next year after the satellite becomes operational in the last quarter of 2014-15.

GSAT-16 will be India's 11th communications satellite and will increase the number of transponders, boosting satellite-based telecom and television services in the country.

The latest developments come as BSNL has sought a waiver on satellite bandwidth charges to sustain telecom coverage in the Andamans and Lakshadweep besides the remote border districts of the Northeast and Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir.

**BSNL currently spends Rs 122 crore on providing satellite services in the Andamans alone, of which nearly Rs 65 crore accounts for transponder charges. This is largely because satellite transponder charges have increased 60% since April 2012.**

While the [Planning Commission](#) recently recommended waiver of satellite bandwidth charges for BSNL, a final decision will be taken by the [INSAT Coordination Committee](#) (ICC) at its next meeting due soon.

BSNL and Antrix could not be immediately reached for comment.

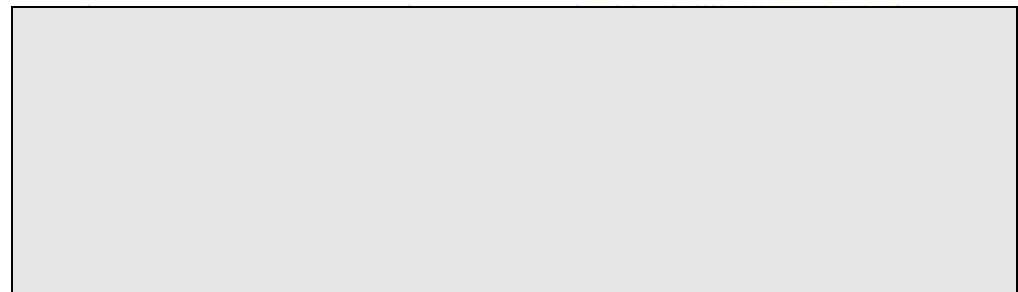
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# BSNL Tamilnadu

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## **DOT orders 9 telcos to pay one time spectrum usage fee of Rs 2451 cr to continue operations in India**

27 Jun 2014



The apex court had in February, 2012 quashed 122, 2G licences. The Supreme Court later in 2013 had asked the government to charge fees from companies that continued operation even after cancellation of their licences on February 2, 2012. The department had earlier estimated the demand at Rs 2,764.29 crore, including basic fee, fine and interest, from nine telecom operators.

Telecom has initiated the

The initial demand was a higher amount, but the final amount has been fixed based on the date of new licences issued to the players following the spectrum auction. Now, Department of process to collect Rs. 2,451 crore from 2G players for being allowed to continue services after the Supreme Court order on February 2, 2012.

These players were able to sustain their operations because the DoT approached the court seeking more time to cancel the licences. Although the initial order was to scrap the licences by August 2012.

The Supreme Court told the DoT to collect a fee from the telcom companies based on the reserve price fixed for the auction.

These telecom players like Sistema Shyam Teleservices amounted, Uninor, Idea Cellular, Loop Telecom, S Tel, Spice Communications, Tata Teleservices, Videocon Telecommunications and Etisalat DB.

Some operators such as Etisalat DB Telecom and S Tel wound up their services, while some others such as Uninor and Sistema Shyam Services bought back airwaves in a reduced number of circles through auctions.

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## Govt gives nod to BSNL's Rs 3,567-cr project in naxal-hit states

, 26 June 2014



Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad

Telecom minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has approved a Rs 3,567.58-crore project of state-run Bharat Sanchar Nigam for rolling out mobile networks in nine Maoist affected states.

The minister has cleared the plan as "the scope of the project stands modified and ownership of the assets to be created is proposed to be vested with BSNL to ensure long-term continuity of services".

Earlier, the USOF has estimated the cost of the project to be around Rs 2,940 crore, but now it has been revised to Rs 3,567 crore. The revised project cost is inclusive of all applicable taxes except octroi and local taxes and the cos will meet BSNL's capex needs for mobile networks in the 1,836 sites and opex costs for 2,199 sites over a five-year span.

The revised project cost is estimated as per the equipment prices realized in the second round of tendering by BSNL last month.

USOF, an arm of the Department of Telecom, subsidises rural infrastructure rollouts and also works for the development of new products and services in order to increase broadband penetration.

The Telecom Commission, the highest decisionmaking body in the communications ministry, has asked the PSU to start mobile coverage in the Naxal-hit regions in a year after Cabinet approves the revised cost.

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***BSNL expects to earn Rs 4 billion by leasing land parcels***

Wednesday, 25 June 2014

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) expects to earn Rs 4 billion-Rs 5 billion during the first year of leasing of its land holdings.

The government has been trying to revive the loss-making unit for several years and leasing of its vast base of land parcels has been identified as one of the measures to improve BSNL's financial health. Accordingly, BSNL plans to offer seven out of 10 identified land parcels on lease of 30-90 years for commercial or residential projects. Bidders will be asked to make an upfront down payment, while the balance will be recovered in installments over a five-year span.

BSNL holds one of the largest base of land holdings amongst various state-owned companies. The properties, present across 3,500 towns in India, are estimated to be valued at several billion of rupees. Earlier this year, BSNL had identified 82 land parcels, valued at Rs 134.39 billion, that it would offer for long-term lease to generate revenue.

Further, BSNL is also planning to offer its telecom factories to third-party contract manufacturers for revenue generation. BSNL has seven telecom factories across India and it plans to initially offer the one in Mumbai to contract manufacturers.

BSNL is also awaiting Cabinet approval to hive off its 61,622 mobile towers into a separate, wholly-owned unit, and thereafter, bring in a private joint venture partner in line with the recommendations of an empowered group of ministers.

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