

BSNL, MTNL may Seek Review of HC Order on ITS Officers

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State-run Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd (MTNL) are likely to file for review of a Delhi High Court order to relieve all Indian Telecom Service (ITS) officers who want to return to the Department of Telecommunications by May 14.

"Both telcos are likely to seek more time from the court on the grounds that relieving so many ITS officers at a single stroke would rob them of their senior managers and ring in an organisational collapse," two executives aware of the development in BSNL and MTNL told ET.

The decision was taken after Additional Solicitor General AS Chandiok said that the government would have to heed the high court order and accept back all ITS officers in BSNL and MTNL who wish to return within two weeks of these executives exercising their option.

Last week, the government had sought Chandiok's legal advice since there were no vacancies in DoT to absorb so many BSNL and MTNL officers belonging to the ITS cadre.

On April 17, the court had asked these ITS officers to take a final call by April 30 and it is believed nearly all have opted to return to government service where the pension benefits are higher. More so, since they would lose out nearly seven years of central government pension if they opted to be remain in either BSNL or MTNL as the high court has fixed August

Fact Sheet

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AFTER DOT CONFIRMED that neither BSNL nor MTNL would be able to hold on to the remaining 1,300 ITS officers, both telcos decided to seek a review of verdict.



12, 2005, as the absorption date.

"After the BSNL and MTNL chairmen received internal feedback that nearly all ITS officers have opted to return to DoT, they urged telecom minister Kapil Sibal to protect the central scale pension benefits of all these executives in a last ditch bid to stop an exodus of their top managers," said a senior BSNL executive who did not wish to be named.

At present, there are nearly 1,700 ITS officers, of whom nearly 1,400 were deputed to BSNL 12 years ago when the telco was spun off into a separate corporate entity from the telecom department. The balance 300-odd

have been on deputation in MTNL since the formation of the telco in 1986.

Last November, when the communications ministry gave these officers an option to return to government service, a majority opted to return to DoT. Last month, the Delhi High Court detected glitches in this repatriation exercise and asked all ITS officers to exercise a fresh option by April 30.

After DoT's legal advisors confirmed that neither BSNL nor MTNL would be able to hold on to the remaining 1,300 ITS officers following the court order, both telcos have decided to seek a review of court verdict.