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

By Romit Guha & Anandita Singh Mankotia | 25 June 2014, 8:48 AM IST

*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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