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Sukhram sentenced to 5 years jail in 1996 telecom case; attacked outside court

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NEW DELHI: Former Telecom Minister [Sukhram](#) was today awarded five years imprisonment by a Delhi Court after being convicted of taking Rs three lakhs as bribe to give a lucrative contract to a private firm in 1996.

The ex-telecom minister was assaulted by a man as he was coming out of the court complex in Rohini.

[Special CBI Judge](#) R P Pandey imposed a fine of Rs four lakh on 86-year-old Sukhram, who held the Telecom portfolio in P V Narasimha Rao's Cabinet.

The CBI prosecutor said Sukhram will be taken into custody and sent to jail to serve the punishment as the sentence exceeded a three-year jail term and convicts in these cases are not granted statutory bail.

Sukhram was held guilty yesterday under various provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act and the Indian Penal Code(IPC). Various offences under which he has been convicted entail a maximum sentence of 7 years jail term.

Sukhram was held guilty for misusing his official position during his tenure as Telecom Minister in award of contract worth Rs 30 crore to private firm Haryana Telecom Limited (HTL) to supply 3.5 Lakh Conductor Kilometers (LCKM) of Polythene Insulated Jelly Filled (PIJF) cables to the telecom department. . Arguing on the quantum of sentence, Sukhram's counsel pleaded that his client is an 86-year-old person and attending the trial for the past 12 to 13 years.

The defence lawyer has sought leniency for his client saying Sukhram is suffering from age-related ailments and has also lost his wife.

The prosecutor, however, termed Sukhram as a "habitual offender" saying he has been sentenced in two other cases also and thus deserved no leniency.

"We should not forget that he was an MP and a minister and has betrayed the confidence of public at large," the prosecutor said.

CBI, in its chargesheet filed in 1998, had accused Sukhram of showing undue favour in awarding the cable supply contract to HTL. Sukhram had been put on trial along with HTL chairman Devinder Singh Choudhary who died during the trial.

In 2009, Sukhram had been held guilty of possessing disproportionate assets worth Rs 4.25 crore.

In 2002, Sukhram was awarded a three-year jail term under the Prevention of Corruption Act in a separate case relating to equipment supply that resulted in a loss of Rs 1.66 crore to the state exchequer. He had allegedly provided undue benefits to Rama Rao, Managing Director of Hyderabad-based Advance Radio Masts.

A seven-time MLA and three time MP, Sukh Ram was expelled from the Congress at a time when his son Anil Sharma was a minister in Himachal Pradesh.

In 1997, he had floated Himachal Vikas Congress. He was inducted in the cabinet of BJP-HVC government led by Prem Kumar Dhumal on March 24, 1998, but had to resign when charges were framed against him in corruption cases. PTI

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