

# THEWEEK

## BSNL to bear 50 per cent of 4G spectrum cost



By *Soumik Dey* December 04, 2018 14:47 IST

Lengthy discussions between Union Minister Manoj Sinha and the All Union & Association of BSNL (AUAB) on Monday at the capital resulted in not only the deferring of the strike called by the union but also in a decision on the cost of 4G spectrum allotment to the nationalised telecom service provider.

"Four of our demands were settled. The most important being an in-principle approval of allotment of 4G spectrum to BSNL by the minister," said P. Abhimanyu, general secretary of BSNL Employees Union and the convenor of AUAB.

"It was decided that for allotment of this 4G spectrum, 50 per cent of the cost would be borne by BSNL and the rest would be capital infusion from the government. The minister had assured us yesterday that he would take up the matter with the inter-ministerial group, which had earlier raised objections about allotment of 4G spectrum to BSNL," said Abhimanyu.

Citing that BSNL was a loss-making organisation, finance ministry had earlier objected to the fresh capital infusion in BSNL for 4G services. However, after Monday's discussion, a consensus was reached and Sinha committed to taking up the issue for a Cabinet approval later this month.

More than two lakh employees of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) decided to defer their call for a nationwide strike. The strike was called by the AUAB which comprises nine unions of BSNL workers and officers. The AUAB is a joint platform of these unions, which was formed two years back to help with the cause of financial revival of BSNL.

Earlier this year the unions had approached the Union telecom ministry citing that non-allotment of the 4G spectrum to the BSNL would make them redundant and jeopardise their existence.

Among other issues, which were resolved during the discussion, were that of delinking revision of pensioners with the wage revision of current employees and reduction in the amount of pension contribution paid by BSNL to the government. The unions claimed that the government was fleecing BSNL and taking exorbitant money from them.

While four issues were resolved, the issue of pension contribution and wage revision of employees directly recruited by BSNL and not by the department of telecom was held back for discussion later.

According to telecom ministry sources, telecom secretary Aruna Sundararajan had told the union members that directly recruited employees of BSNL may get a pay revision with lesser fitment than what is allotted to government employees recruited by the DoT.

The telecom ministry had earlier disagreed to revise wages of directly recruited employees citing that BSNL was running in loss. "This is a big victory for us. Especially that our demand for 4G services was accepted. One issue is yet not settled but we want to give the government more time. On the basis of this, it has been decided to defer the strike until further intimation," Abhimanyu said.