

# BSNL trade union wants management to stop tower subsidiary's operations

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## BusinessLine

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The employees' union of state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) has asked the management to stop BSNL Tower Corporation Ltd's (BTCL) operations, a subsidiary company set up to house the operator's telecom towers. The union is opposing BTCL's functioning stating the move is to

privatise the subsidiary by selling it to a strategic partner.

According to the union, the management has started to undertake other businesses such construction and smart city works, which are not related to tower business for which the company was set up. BSNL has about 70,000 towers, but the towers are yet to be hived off to BTCL.

"The government has made its intentions of mopping up ₹40,000 crore by monetising the towers and optic fibre assets of BSNL and MTNL in the current financial year itself. For monetising BSNL's towers, the option left before the Government is the induction of a strategic partner in BTCL. This is nothing but a clear agenda of privatising BSNL's star assets," BSNL Employees Union (BSNLEU), the biggest trade union of the company, said in a letter.

"Thereafter, BSNL will be converted into scrap," said the letter, addressed to BSNL Chairman and Managing Director P K Purwar.

Stating the Government's Initial Public Offering (IPO) plans for Life Insurance Corporation of India and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd prove "beyond doubt" that they will not hesitate to privatise BTCL, the union urged management to stop "operationalising" the tower firm.

In September 2017, the Union Cabinet had decided to hive-off BTCL, following which numerous protests were organised by BSNL's unions and associations. They were of the opinion that the move was "fraught with the danger of privatisation," after which operations of the company were kept on hold.

BSNL's management was also of the opinion that BTCL was set up to carry out the non-telecom activities and with a view to reduce the licence-fee liability.

"...this argument of BSNL management was reasonable. However, in the wake of the recent announcement made by the Government to monetise BSNL's towers and fibres, the arguments have proved to be deceptive," it said.

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