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BSNL likely to get Rs 5.5k crore more for defence network

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NEW DELHI: The [Telecom Commission](#), the apex decision-making body of the communications ministry, will meet within days to clear a proposal by state-owned BSNL seeking an additional capital expenditure of Rs 5,503 crore for the alternate network it is building for the armed forces, officials with direct knowledge of the development told ET.

This will be over the Rs 8,098 crore that has been approved by the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure for this project, whose completion will result in the armed forces moving their communication requirements to this network, thus freeing airwaves for commercial telephony.

The defence services had vacated 3G frequencies in August 2010 after they had been assured by the Centre that the telecoms department would rollout this alternate network within a two years.

According to internal Department of Telecom documents reviewed by ET, BSNL had submitted a revised estimate of Rs 13,334 crore for this network on August 12, 2011.

In addition, the telco said that it would have to spend an about Rs 267 crore for maintaining this network for a two-year period, taking the total cost to Rs 13,601 crore. The BSNL proposal was also placed before the inter-ministerial group overseeing the project which in turn had sent it to the defence ministry.

The ministry of defence (MoD) in its reply has warned that the project must be completed at the earliest as it was of critical importance to the nation. The MoD has constantly expressed concerns over the slow place of construction of the alternate network for the armed forces.

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