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BSNL spins web of lies to save Raja

J Gopikrishnan | New Delhi

Tries to cover up shortlisting of non-existent company for WiMax franchise

The BSNL is cooking up one lie after another to save its 'political' master, who reportedly arm-twisted the officials in granting a non-existent company.

First, the BSNL claimed that the franchisee short-listed for running WiMax operation in Chennai, West Bengal and Haryana and was one Ampoules (company). The news was widely reported in the media. When The Pioneer carried a report on Wednesday on a non-existent company, the BSNL came with a rejoinder, identifying the short-listed firm as Ampoules & Auto Private Limited of

In its rejoinder to The Pioneer, the BSNL's Chennai unit said, "The company M/s Ampoules & Auto Private Limited, Kolkata, was in the said tender is a registered firm under the Registrar of Companies, Government of India." The signatory of the letter (Legal) of BSNL, Chennai unit.

A cursory look at the online registry of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs shows that Ampoules & Auto Private Limited is not a company with any of the Registrars of Companies.

As per the guidelines, only Indian companies with Rs 100-crore turnover per year for the last two years could qualify to be a franchisee. These strict norms were imposed last year by the PMO when Telecom Minister A Raja tried to manipulate the franchisee allotment to friendly companies.

According to highly placed sources, the BSNL officials were arm-twisted to entertain the application of this unborn company. But when the company made an attempt to capture a stake in the WiMax franchise process through a Malaysian firm Wellcom Communications. But when the move was exposed, the move was aborted.

Sources said that the so-called Ampoules & Auto Private Limited is being floated by the same elements to grab the monopoly operation.

"When we asked for incorporation document, Ampoules people told us they had approached the RoC in Chennai to for some how the process met a roadblock," said a BSNL official from Chennai.

"All companies were required to submit their latest balance sheets to prove that they had an yearly turnover of Rs100 crore. But we were forced to accept application without any such formalities," disclosed the official.

When, in early 2009, Raja tried to grant WiMax franchisee to Wellcom Communications, which applied through its Indian subsidiary. Raja's close associate T Silvarajoo was the Indian director of this company. He is a sub-contractor of CPWD, hailing from Peramballur.

When this move was exposed, Raja tried to manipulate the procedures through another aide Sanjay Kapoor's five shell companies. He got a single date with same witnesses, auditor and notary. The controversies forced PMO to cancel the entire process and invite other companies.

This time, last week, the BSNL had finalised four firms, including the non-existent Ampoules for allotment of WiMax franchise. The four firms are Teracom Limited, Adhishwar India Ltd and Chennai-based Take Solutions Ltd.

WiMax (Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access) is faster than 3G and 4G in providing Internet connection to mobile. BSNL's WiMax franchisee is considered as a lucrative business as the private players get 70-80 per cent share of the revenue, of the public sector undertakings huge infrastructure.

The franchisee also enjoys the advantage of holding of 20 Mega Hertz of Spectrum, which they could offload stakes at another company. In case of 2G spectrum allotment, real estate companies Swan and Unitech sold their stakes to multinationals.

Ampoules is offering only 31.28 per cent (Chennai), 27.45 per cent (Haryana), 21 per cent (West Bengal) and 20.75 per cent of the revenue share to the BSNL.

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