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## IMG asks Govt to Bail Out BSNL

**OUR BUREAU**  
KOLKATA

An inter-ministerial group has asked the government to give loans to state-run Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd (MTNL) to help both loss-making telcos pay a portion of their salary bills.

BSNL's annual salary bill in 2013-14 is likely to touch nearly ₹14,000 crore while MTNL's is envisaged at roughly ₹1,900

crore. "The government is likely to consider roughly ₹8,500 crore of soft loans at a token 1% interest to help BSNL and MTNL pay salaries to a section of employees who were absorbed from the telecom department," said a top official privy to the discussions on Tuesday. BSNL is likely to receive about ₹7,500 crore at net present value over a 10-year span while MTNL will receive close to ₹1,000 crore over a similar span to

clear a portion of their staff pay dues. BSNL and MTNL are likely to receive roughly ₹2,000 crore and ₹390 crore, respectively, in the first year, said the official quoted above. Repayments will kick off after the 10th year.

The inter-ministerial group also gave in-principle nod to BSNL's plans to hive-off its tower assets into a new company. The telecom department had recently moved a Cabinet note in this light.