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BSNL for issuing e-bills to users by default; Trai may seek public views

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STATE-OWNED BHARAT Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) has asked the telecom regulator Trai to allow it to issue e-bills or soft copy of phone bills to its customers as a default option, unless a subscriber specifically "opts out" of the mode and insists on a printed version.

The telecom regulator is likely to come out with a discussion paper in a month or two, seeking public view on the issue of generation of soft bills by default, a Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) official familiar with the development told PTI.

"Since we have received some requests... we will have a consultation on the matter over the next 1-1.5 months. We will throw up for a discussion questions like whether the current system should continue or be modified, the ramifications of any change for people who are not IT-savvy or those living in rural areas, and the solutions," the official said.

Another official said that besides BSNL, a similar request had also been made by a large private telecom operator.

Trai, via Telecom Tariff Order, has mandated operators to issue hard copy of bills to post paid subscribers, without any charge.

Where a customer prefers receipt of bill through e-mail, instead of a hard copy, the operator needs to take the



subscribers' "explicit consent" for doing the same.

In all other cases, the service providers need to ensure that bills are issued and delivered to consumers in printed form.

But BSNL has cited the digitisation movement, and the green initiatives being implemented and convenience, to pitch for consideration of issuance of e-bills or green bills to its basic services and post paid cellular mobile service customers.

"... it is submitted that BSNL issues printed bills and receipts to a large number of customers every month.

"Due to inertia, only a few customers turn up to opt in for receiving soft copy of the bill.

"Hence, BSNL is bound to issue printed copy of bills and receipts to customers," BSNL said in a letter to Trai recently.