



CENTRE HINTS AT POSSIBILITY OF EXIT FROM AIR INDIA, HOSPITAL SECTOR

News / Airlines



The NDA government on Saturday indicated the possibility of its exit from Air India and from the hospital sector, a month after a committee of secretaries recommended that it start planning to get out of air services.

“In times to come, the DoPT will chalk out a possible plan for exit of government sectors from hospitals, air services, etc, and a sunset clause will be attached to every new scheme,” minister of state in the prime minister’s office Jitendra Singh said on Saturday, according to an official press release.

The release was issued after Singh addressed a meeting of the department of personnel and training to review the action plan for the year.

Sources in the ministries of health and civil aviation maintained they were “not aware” of the government’s privatisation plans, as disclosed by the minister.

Singh later told HT, “There is no decision on privatisation of these sectors. What the government is looking at is what its optimum participation in these sectors should be. These are issues that will be thrashed out later.”

But Public Health Foundation of India president Dr K Srinath Reddy said it was absolutely

necessary for the government to stay significantly involved in the healthcare sector. “AIIMS, PGIs and other such (institutes) provide quality healthcare without commercial motives. These hospitals are also major training centres for doctors. Institutes like AIIMS, PGIMER have benefitted the private sector as well as the best doctors in private hospitals come from there,” he said.

Last month, a group of 12 secretaries — including S Jaishankar (foreign), Rajiv Mehrishi (home), Shaktikanta Das (economic affairs) and PK Malhotra (law) — had recommended that the government start planning to get out of sectors like air services, hotels and travel agencies to bring Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s mantra of ‘minimum government, maximum governance’ to fruition.

It was one of eight such groups constituted by Modi to come up with ideas for transformative changes in ‘good governance — opportunities and challenges’.

At the review meeting, Singh also said the DoPT proposed to reduce the number of tribunals from 36 to 17 and reduce or restructure 685 autonomous bodies/institutions. He said a mechanism would also be worked out to ensure information available on official websites or portals are not sought under the Right To Information Act, a move to “reduce pendency and workload accruing from such queries”.

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