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BSNL to roll out Wi-Fi hot spots to take on competition in 4G space

To invest ₹1,400 cr for creating 80,000 hubs

at an investment of ₹1,400 crore.

OUR BUREAU

Chennai, January 1

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd will invest ₹700 crore to roll out 40,000 Wi-Fi hot spots across India in the next one year. This strategy is to compete with lucrative 4G connections offered by its competitors.

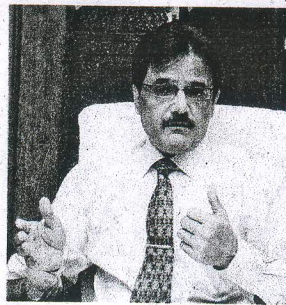
Speaking to media persons, Anupam Shrivastava, Chairman and Managing Director, said BSNL does not have the required spectrum to roll out 4G services. So, instead, it will use the existing LTE and optical fibre network for installing new Wi-Fi hot-spots across the country. Around 4,400 hot spots have been created so far. In the next two years, the operator will create 80,000 hot spots

Partnership

Shrivastava said the operator is looking to partner with private operators who can utilise 2,500 MHz available with BSNL to roll out 4G schemes. The investment is part of ₹4,800 crore the telecom provider planned to invest in the country for the fiscal 2016-17.

Discussions to hive off BSNL tower business is under progress. Shrivastava said the provider receives ₹300 crore from tower sharing and this is likely to increase in the coming year. Having a BSNL tower can help leverage this, he added.

With the economy moving towards cashless mode, the operator will install 1.5 lakh PoS machines in its customer service centres and franchise



Anupam Shrivastava

partners in retail outlets. A customer can avail himself of a discount of 0.75 per cent for online payment of bills and recharges using BSNL portal or MyBSNL mobile app.

MobiCash, joint venture between BSNL and SBI, will be launched across India next week. It is available in four States – Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Bihar.

The operator's new plans

such as landline for ₹49 and broadband for ₹249 introduced this year saw increased takers. Shrivastava said, "In fact, our data usage increased from 270 terabyte to 340 terabyte after the launch." After the launch of landline plan at ₹49 in August, the operator added 1.5 lakh landlines a month across India. In Tamil Nadu circle, 56,000 lines were added since August.

BSNL has registered an operating profit of ₹3,855 crore for the fiscal ended March 2016 and is expecting to close the year with ₹4,500 crore.

The operating profit was in the negative during 2013-14 at ₹691 crore as it was not able to procure materials required for expansion due to legal issues. Since 2014-15, the telecom service provider began making positive operating profit at ₹672 crore.