

Interview With BSNL CMD Anupam Shrivastava

“BSNL is executing projects worth Rs 25,000 crore in the next 2-3 years and will be profitable by FY18-19” – Anupam Shrivastava, CMD, BSNL



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In a no holds barred discussion with TeleAnalysis, Anupam Shrivastava, the newly appointed CMD of telecom behemoth, talks about the various steps the state run telco is taking under his leadership to turn around things. Brimming with optimism, he says the company can be back to its glorious days and be profitable by 2018-19. Excerpts

Q. BSNL is very active in government projects. What is the status of projects like NOFN, NFS (network for spectrum), LWE (left wing

extremists) and North East?

BSNL is executing projects worth Rs 25,000 crore (\$4 billion) in the next 2-3 years. The projects which BSNL is executing include: NFS for Defence; NOFN for BBNL; LWE for left wing extremists states and North East project for improving connectivity in North East. All these projects are under implementation except North East project where BSNL is planning to float EoI (expression of interest) by next month.

Q. What is BSNL's mobile expansion plan for Phase 7 and Phase 8?

In Phase 7, BSNL is investing Rs 4,804 crore for creating 15 million additional mobile capacity. The capacity addition will take care for both 2G and 3G. In Phase 7, BSNL is building 27,000 towers of which 15,000 will be for 2G and 12,000 for 3G. Presently, BSNL has around 97,000 towers.

BSNL has till date completed 60 percent of Phase 7 expansion and the project is planned to be completed by June, 2015. Phase 7 will help in plugging the gap of 2G, removing blind spots in mobile network and increasing data capacity by 30-40 times.

On the mobile infrastructure, we are working on Phase 8 strategy. Phase 8 will have four parts. First part will focus on Wi-Fi integration. Second will help in increasing data carrying capacity. Third will focus on intra-circle roaming which will help in sharing of 2G and 3G network with other mobile operators in the country and fourth part will focus on classical expansion of 2G and 3G network in BSNL.

Q. What are you doing to enhance customer support services for BSNL customer?

We have around 18 call centers in 20 circles for mobile services. We are also planning call center for CFA department which will focus on customer complaint, customer feedback, VAS and enhancing reach to BSNL consumers.

We are planning enhanced CDR billing which will take care of fixed line, mobile and also leased line.

We are planning converged billing so that we can offer single bill to our consumer for all types of services. With converged billing, we can offer multiple tariff packages offering different services to our enterprise and retail customers. We can come up with different schemes targeting those customers depending upon their usage pattern. We will very soon come up with converged billing RFP on a revenue sharing model.

Q. BSNL is focusing a lot on Wi-Fi hotspots. How will this help BSNL in the long run?

BSNL has lots of copper cable and optical fiber cable which we want to exploit for data services. We want to utilize Wi-Fi hotspots and integrate it with 3G services for increased reach to mobile consumers. We are focusing on data in a big way such that it is a game changer for telecom industry. In future, if we play our cards well we would be successful in data services.

BSNL is planning 2,500 Wi-Fi hotspots in the next 2-3 years. For Wi-Fi, we have tied up with Quadgen Wireless for South and West on revenue sharing basis. We will very soon float tender to provide Wi-Fi coverage for North and West regions.

Q. What's the update on tower leasing and land bank?

Tower leasing proposal has gone to the ministry for its consideration. The proposal focuses on creating a separate business unit, creating a separate subsidiary company within BSNL which is fully owned by BSNL and creating a joint venture.

On the land bank front, eight proposals have been sent to the ministry for building housing complex, IT park and commercial building. For both the proposals, we are awaiting the ministry's approval.

Q. What is the expected revenue for BSNL in FY 2014-15? When are you planning to be profitable?

BSNL revenue should cross Rs 29,000 crore in FY 2014-15 with a growth of 4-5 percent. In FY 2014-15, we would be operational profit or EBITDA comfortable. We plan to be profitable by FY 2018-19.