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## Concept of ₹ per GB will cease to exist: BSNL chief

Services will dictate tariff, in keeping with the global trend, says Anupam Shrivastava

**S RONENDRA SINGH**  
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Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) has launched a slew of offers since the NDA government came to power in 2014. It has also changed strategy to retain customers following the entry of Reliance Jio in 2016. In an interview with *Businessline*, Anupam Shrivastava, Chairman and Managing Director, said BSNL will not lag behind any global company in launching 5G by 2020. Excerpts:



### What about broadband services?

To offer higher broadband speed, we strategised to give it through wireless. For this we have tied up with various companies such as TIKONA and B4S, where they take the broadband from us and relay it to various areas with speed of 30-100 Mbps under a revenue-sharing model.

### What is BSNL's plan on 5G?

In mobile, BSNL has the largest 3G network and we have launched 4G on the basis of 3G.

At around ₹16,000 crore, our salary expenses take up almost 55 per cent of the topline annually and still we pay dividend. Salaries are pulling down BSNL's financial performance. We are in the corrective phase, with several offers for customers to compete with the new entrant.

Now we are waiting for spec-trum on an equity infusion/pay-ment basis. We will also be launching 4G services soon. We are now number one in provid-ing Wi-Fi services in the public domain.

We have already got 25,000 Wi-Fi hotspots across the coun-try including all tourist places like Taj Mahal, Khajuraho, Varanasi, Konark and Kamakhya Temple.

India saw 3G almost seven years after it was globally avail-able. BSNL launched it first in In-dia, India launched 4G, too, four years after the rest of the world. We would like to launch 5G, which is a Herculean task. We would like to launch it along with everybody in 2020. That is why we are building the-ups with various companies like Nokia, ZTE and NTT.

### What will the tariff plan be like when 5G is launched?

Soon, the concept of rupees per GB will cease to exist. Tariff will be on the basis of the product and there is a fixed cost to that.

The customer can use as many services as they can from what they pay. So services will decide the tariff, which is happening the world over.

Japan is expected to be the first country to launch 5G, during the Olympics. I think 5G will be driven by Asia — Japan, South Korea, China and India.

### What innovations are happening around the landline business?

We will soon launch landline calling through the Wi-Fi net-work (Voice over Internet Pro-tocol) via the BSNL app. We will call it 'Wings'. So all the benefits of landline will come in this mo-bile app. BSNL customers going abroad can also utilise 64 mil-lion Wi-Fi hotspots worldwide at an affordable rate of ₹1,999. We

recently tied up with Ipass for that. This way, they won't miss any landline call.

### How long will it take for the lower subsidiary to be operational?

The company has been formed and the management is also be-ing decided. The transfer of as-sets is going on. But there is strong opposition from the uni-ons and associations and we are in talks with them. About 1,600 employees may go there and the rest will be outsourced.

### How about the number of employees in BSNL? From more than 3.25 lakh in 2000, it has come down to around 1.85 lakh. Will you be hiring?

Hiring is going in a very small level — around 3,000 junior en-gineers. With people retiring we may come down by 50 per cent from the current level in five years. Around 16,000 employees will be retiring every year from next year.

"I think 5G will be driven by Asia — Japan, South Korea, China and India... We would like to launch it along with everybody in 2020."

**ANUPAM SHRIVASTAVA**  
Chairman and Managing Director, BSNL

