

BSNL to start 4G services only after April – CMD

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image: <https://rtn.asia/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/bsnl.png>



Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd, the state-owned telecom services provider, will start its 4G services only in the next financial year that starts in April.

“BSNL is likely to start 4G services in 2017-18,” Anupam Shrivastava, the chairman and managing director of the company said.

The company has fallen far behind all its rivals in putting up 4G networks even though it got its spectrum in 2010 — six years ago.

BSNL, Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel were the three companies who got 4G spectrum in 2010. While Airtel started its 4G operations in 2011-12, Jio started last year and BSNL is yet to start.

Faced with a cash crunch, the state-owned operator surrendered its 4G spectrum in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Kolkata in 2014. It had been allotted pan-India airwaves in 2010.

The company had plans to roll out LTE networks in the remaining circles, but it is not clear whether the company has decided on its business model for the 4G roll out.

Unlike other operators like Bharti Airtel, BSNL does not want to buy 4G base stations. Instead, it wants to hand over its spectrum and facilities to private parties, who can then launch 4G services using the company’s existing equipment, network and spectrum after purchasing required new equipment.

However, this is likely to be a long-drawn-out process since, being a public sector company, questions will be raised about why it decided to go for this model, how it identified the private partners and so on.

It has tried out the model in Chandigarh.

In May, Shrivastava said the BSNL management committee approved the rollout of 4G services.

“We are in process of issuing expression of interest for rolling out 4G services on revenue sharing basis,” he said.

“We will provide only bandwidth to technology service provider who will manage and operate 4G services,” he added.

It is not clear if other telecom players, like Tata DoCoMo, who do not have their own 4G spectrum, will be allowed to bid for BSNL’s 4G spectrum and use it to roll out a co-branded data service.