

# BSNL to launch 4G services in 14 telecom circles

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NEW DELHI: State-owned **BSNL** is gearing up to launch **4G** services in 14 telecom circles where it has 20 MHz liberalised **broadband** wireless access (BWA) spectrum.

The company, which has already soft launched 4G services in Chandigarh, is exploring two methods -- revenue sharing model and capex model -- for the 4G rollout.

The **company** has 20 MHz liberalised spectrum in 2,500 MHz band which allows it to rollout 4G services without any licensing hurdles.

A senior official said BSNL will be installing 4G base tower stations (BTS) in the existing GSM sites, which means there will be no additional expenditure on towers.

Regarding the device ecosystem for 2,500 MHz band, the official said sufficient number of 4G handsets makers like Apple, Motorola, Lenovo, Google, Nokia are already available in the market.

"By considering all the facts, it appears that launch of 4G services in 2,500 Mhz band is feasible and commercially remunerative," he added.

However, the company is yet to finalise a timeline for the launch.

In January, the company demonstrated speed of 35 Mbps during the soft launch in Chandigarh.

BSNL will be the latest entrant in the 4G space, which has seen in action recently with the top mobile operators including Bharti Airtel, Vodafone and Idea Cellular commencing services in various circles.

Also, Reliance Jio Infocomm is set to commercially launch 4G services soon, which will further intensify competition in the market.

Elaborating on the models for 4G rollout, the official said in revenue share model, BSNL will be extending passive infrastructure and its BWA spectrum and other elements like BTS will be arranged by the vendor or franchisee.

"This model is best suited as BSNL will not incur expenditure and much of the investment required will be borne by the vendor. This can be initiated in all 14 service areas. 4G customers will be owned by BSNL and billing will be done by BSNL," the official said.

On the capex model, the official said procurement of essential **LTE** (long-term evolution) elements can be initiated in some select cities of one circle on experimental basis. However, this model involves procurement cost and also integration cost.

The company will explore both the methods before taking a final call on the rollout.

BSNL had paid Rs 8,313.80 crore for 2,500 MHz spectrum in all its service areas but later returned airwaves in 6 of them which include Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kolkata.



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