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With new service, BSNL to take on WhatsApp, other OTT players

Begins advanced testing of voice over Wi-Fi that allows users to make/receive calls on Wi-Fi

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Joining its competitors, state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) has commenced advanced testing of Voice over Wi-Fi (VoWiFi), a move that will allow it to take on over-the-top (OTT) players such as WhatsApp.

The company has been testing the services over carpet Wi-Fi or unbroken Wi-Fi networks in certain circles. The intent is to use the best of technologies to provide the "best of the services", a source close to the development said.

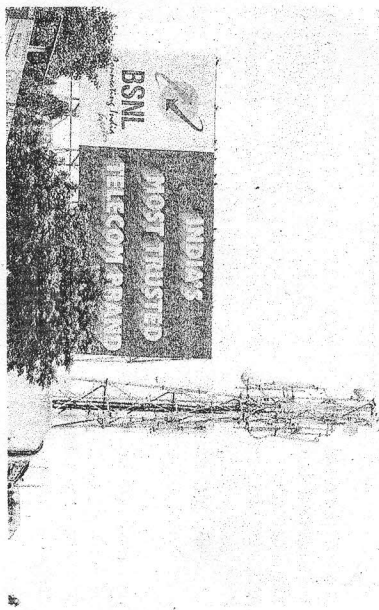
BSNL will provide the services mainly in Tier-II and -III cities and remote locales with little or scarce availability of spectrum. While the company is prepared

to launch the services in all circles, the initial rollout will be in areas without sufficient mobile networks, the source added.

Other telecom players such as Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio Infocomm (Rjio) are also in advanced stages of testing VoWiFi and would launch the services "soon".

VoWiFi is hailed across the world as the technology that keeps users connected even without a mobile signal. Commonly referred as 'Wi-Fi calling', VoWiFi eliminates mobile blackspots for users by making it possible to make and receive calls over Wi-Fi or wireless internet connections.

Currently, this type of service is offered by OTT players such as



In 2018, the DOT had approved voice calls over a Wi-Fi network to improve connectivity, especially in rural areas. WhatsApp, Calls can be accessed on a Voice over Long Term Evolution (VoLTE), the technology for 4G services) handset. Telecom companies have always complained of OTT players — such as Skype, WhatsApp, Hike, Facebook and Google — eating into

their voice revenues, and had demanded that they be brought under a licensing regime since they offer similar services such as voice calling and messaging. In 2018, the Department of Telecommunications had approved voice calls over a Wi-Fi

network to improve connectivity, especially in rural areas.

Salaries credited

Meanwhile, the beleaguered telecom firm disbursed June salary of its employees on Saturday, with about ₹2,000 crore coming from operations and internal accruals.

BSNL, as per the company policy, credited the salaries on the last working day of the month, which was June 29 (Saturday), said another source.

The company, which had missed paying February salaries, employs about 1.63 lakh personnel, as on March 31, including 46,597 executives and 1.17 lakh non-executives.

The government has appointed MTRNL Chairman and Managing Director PK Purwar as BSNL CMD for three months from July 1.