

Man pays ₹34L for BSNL number

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Chennai: In the age of 3G, WiMAX and zero-cost mobile number portability, who wants a fancy BSNL landline number? Many, apparently. The first public auction of BSNL landline numbers in Chennai saw some nail-biting moments, and when the auction ended at 5pm on Thursday, a cab operator walked away with the number '20002000' after paying Rs 33.93 lakh.

There were 16 people bidding for the number which was put up for electronic auction by the public sector telecom operator since September 30. Ten of them competed on the last day of the bid, and five stayed on till the last minute, together clocking 156 bids. Ravi Travels, a taxi operator from Kodambakkam with more than 2,000 cabs, bagged the number at 4:59:33pm.

S Jyothi Sankar, general manager, BSNL marketing, said the auction was a game of skill and luck. "Every sec-

ond counted, as five bidders vied between 4.59pm and 5pm. At a time when many establishments and corporates are shifting their phone services to private operators, selling a fancy number for such a price is a major achievement for us," he said. The service provider ex-



pects a monthly revenue of Rs3 lakh from this number.

B Kumar, a manager with Ravi Travels, said the company was happy to have the number. The prized

'20002000' is an ISDN number with a capacity to handle 30 outgoing and incoming calls simultaneously.

While this is the first auction of a landline number in the country, BSNL has been selling fancy numbers for cell phone customers for quite some time. The highest bid for a cell phone number was offered by Kerala-based businessman Ravi Pillai, who paid Rs12.13 lakh for a number that has zero as its last eight digits in July 2012.