

Publication:	<i>The Economic Times</i>	Page No:	12
Place:		Date:	29/4/2

## BSNL Plans to Offer 4G services, in Talks with Rel Jio to Rent out Infrastructure

**DANISH KHAN**  
NEW DELHI

BSNL plans to offer fourth-generation services by converging its wireline and wireless capabilities and is in talks with Reliance Jio Infocomm to rent out infrastructure, as the state-run telecom operator charts a path to return to profitability by 2018.

"2014 is going to be a transition year for BSNL, as we are overhauling our operations and upgrading our networks. We are looking at providing 4G services by March 2015," said Anupam Shrivastava, its director for consumer mobility, who is set to become chairman and managing director on July 1.

The government, meanwhile, has started a process to separate the tower assets of BSNL into a new company. "We are probably the second-biggest tower infrastructure provider with over 65,000 towers and are looking at sharing this infrastructure with private operators," Shrivastava said. BSNL's discussions with Mukesh Ambani-controlled Reliance Jio to rent out towers across the country are in an advanced stage, Shrivastava said.

Reliance Jio didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment. It already has multiple infrastructure-sharing contracts, with Bharti Airtel, Reliance Communications, American Tower Corp and Viom Networks. A tower-sharing deal with BSNL would help Reliance Jio speed up its 4G rollout, especially in areas where private operators have little presence.

BSNL has broadband wireless access spectrum in 16 circles, but it won't be using that for providing high-speed 4G services because of the large capital expenditure involved.

The once monopoly telecom PSU has been unable to keep pace with private rivals, as its government control has often come as an impediment in carrying out expansion and modernisation. At a time when other operators have been quick in upgrading their networks and implementing latest technologies, BSNL's efforts to retain customers have often been ended without much success. The company hasn't posted a profit in the past four fiscal years. It made a loss of ₹7,884 crore for the financial year ended on March 31, 2013. Unlisted BSNL hasn't announced its latest fiscal-year results.

The company has of late been overhauling its network to improve quality of service and enhance subscriber base. It is also rationalising cost and is considering steps such as sharing its infrastructure with private telecom operators to improve financials.

[danish.khan@timesgroup.com](mailto:danish.khan@timesgroup.com)