

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

RAJESH KURUP
Mumbai, July 1

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 MTNL Chairman and Managing Director PK Purwar as BSNL CMD for three months from July 1.

SonyLIV targets 50 m users with new gaming platform

OUR BUREAU
Mumbai, July 1

SonyLIV on Monday announced the launch of a new gaming platform with over 100 exclusive show-based games, to be introduced in a phased manner.

With this move, SonyLIV aims to reach out to 50 million new users and be a one-stop gaming destination. These games are curated around some of Sony Pictures Networks' (SPN) biggest IP's across channels such as *KBC*, *CID*, *Crime Patrol*, *The Kapil Sharma Show*, *Baalveer*, *Kicko* and *Super Speedo*, among others.

As per a recent KPMG report, the Indian gaming industry is estimated to be worth ₹43.8 billion in FY18

and is expected to grow further at 22.1 per cent CAGR, taking it to ₹118.8 billion by 2023. Increased digital usage and a rise in the number of gamers will be key in headlining this growth in online gaming. SonyLIV's launch of the OTT gaming destination is reflective of this progress and is sure to catalyse more change in audience consumption patterns.

OTT gaming platform

From video quiz formats to uniquely designed board games to big ticket tournaments, there is something for everyone between the ages of 7-35 years in this gaming platform, Sony said in a statement.

Uday Sodhi, Business Head, Digital, Sony Pictures Networks India, said: "India houses 10 per cent of the world's gamers and this number is slated to rise exponentially. With the launch of our OTT gaming platform, we intend to trigger this target segment and capture the market to an extent of 50 million users. This falls in line with India's OTT market share predictions, which is expected to triple its size in the next four years. Our database of 100+ games will cater to every generation of gamers that we aim to engage with through a plethora of events to capture their attention."

SonyLIV will also intro-

duce exciting Augmented Reality (AR) games around iconic shows from SPN.

The platform will also introduce an array of user engagement features to gratify winners with abundant opportunities. With the Game Store hosting a 24x7 tournament feature, consumers will stand a chance to win cash anywhere between ₹1-5,000 depending upon the size and duration of the tournament.

Through the Daily Rewards Feature users will also stand a chance to meet-and-greet celebrities or attend famous shows such as *KBC*, *Indian Idol*, *The Kapil Sharma Show*, *Super Dancer* and others just by playing games on the platform.

CCI to probe charges of unfair competitive practices against Google

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, July 1

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Monday said it has ordered a detailed probe into alleged anti-competitive practices of Google after it found that the search giant's conduct may help perpetuate its dominance in the online space while resulting in denial of market access for competing apps.

The order follows a complaint which alleged that Google indulged in anti-competitive practices by mandating smartphone and tablet manufacturers to exclusively pre-install its applications and services in smartphones made or sold in India.

Uniphore Software raises \$38 million in Series C funding, valuing start-up at \$130 million

OUR BUREAU
Bengaluru, July 1

Global conversational AI start-up, Uniphore Software Systems, has raised \$38 million in a Series C round led by California-based March Capital Partners at an estimated valuation of \$130 million.

National Grid Partners, Sistema Asia Fund, IntuitiveVC, The CXO Fund, Patni Wealth Advisors and existing investor Chirata Ventures also participated in this round. Of the proposed \$38 million in the Series C round, \$37.9 million has been raised, as per the start-up's RoC filings accessed by paper.vc.

The start-up has raised a total of \$51.9 million, includ-

ing the current round. Its investors include IIFL, Ray Stata, YourNest Angel Fund and India Angel Network. Founded in 2008 at IIT-Madras, Uniphore was recognised as a 'Technology Fast 500' company in Asia-Pacific by Deloitte and ranked 10th in Deloitte's Fast 50. Its co-founder and CEO, Umesh Sachdev was named as one of the '10 Millennials Changing the World' by *TIME* magazine.

Uniphore delivers transformational customer service across touch points by providing an integrated suite of software products for conversational analytics, conversational assistant and conversational security.

Telcos set to deploy TRAI-mandated blockchain tech to curb pesky calls; relief in a month

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, July 1

Mobile operators are in the final stages of operationalising the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)-prescribed new system for curbing pesky telemarketing calls, and consumers will begin to experience benefits of the new 'blockchain' framework in a month, TRAI Chairman RS Sharma said on Monday.

"We will review in the first week of July as to what was the progress of each entity, but the last I reviewed — I was informed that everybody is ready or in the final stages of operationalising it," Sharma told PTI.

Last year, the regulator had tightened the rules to curb pesky telemarketing calls

and messages, asking telecom operators to leverage the blockchain technology to reduce such unwanted communications.

The rules lay down stringent obligations for operators, including evolving Code of Practices, maintaining records, registering customers preferences, and mandate the adoption of blockchain or the Distributed Ledger Technology.

Blockchain provides a decentralised database or digital ledger of transactions that everyone on the network can see.

"The blockchain technology is soon going to be operational in controlling the unsolicited communications. This will be the first instance of implementation of

the blockchain technology in this area globally, and we are looking forward to the results," Sharma said. He said that telecom consumers will start seeing the benefit of the new system in a month or so.

The turnaround for reporting complaints and action will be "much faster" as the underlying blockchain framework would allow UCC related data to be shared on a realtime basis, he added.

Spectrum pricing

On review of spectrum pricing recommendations, RS Sharma said, "We have not received any back reference from the Department of Telecom on this issue (spectrum pricing) as yet, therefore we cannot respond to a question which is yet to be posed".

BY INVITATION

When it comes to Digital Transformation, India is building a powerful edge



DEBJANI GHOSH

While developed nations invest to compete at the top end of innovation, India is choosing to do things a little differently and in the process creating the playbook for digital at scale and real time on ground impact.

As the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) rightly calls out in its report 'Payment and Settlement Systems in India: Vision - 2019-2021', payment and settlement systems are the backbone of any economy! And in a master stroke, this is where India decided to begin its phenomenal journey of transforming 1.3+ billion lives with tech disruption. And, the transformation of India's digital payment story is nothing short of inspiring, especially when you see the impact it is creating at the grassroots. Driven by progressive regulatory policies that led to increased use of mobile inter-

net, growth in a robust ecosystem of non-banking players like Paytm and most importantly the interoperability between players, the India digital payment transformation has become a global case study of transformation at scale.

As the nation celebrates Digital India, we are well poised for the next level. As per a study by ASSOCHAM and PWC India, in less than four years from now, digital payments will more than double itself, from \$64.8 billion (at present) to reach \$135.2 billion, growing at a mindboggling CAGR of 20.2 per cent.

On cue and challenges notwithstanding, the rural BPO playbook has created tremendous hope and skill-building opportunities to provide a major push towards generating employment for the rural youth. As per MeitY-Mckinsey study, this segment has the potential to create jobs for at least 1.5 lakh Indians. Approximately, 184 companies are operating in 110 locations, spread across 26 States and two Union territories. Once again, a transformation that is

designed for scale for impact.

And then, there are opportunities waiting in the pipeline. Did you know that 95 per cent of Indians communicate in local languages? We have close to 780 odd languages, but multilingual software solutions are being offered in only a handful of them. Driven by massive smartphone penetration, compounded by phenomenal data consumption, yet another billion dollar opportunity lies in the offering.

Another phenomenon that I am very excited about is the rise in start-up ecosystems in tier-2 and tier-3 cities in India. As per the Nasscom start-up report, 40 per cent of the 7,700 tech start-ups in 2018 were accepted outside the main metros, rising from ~35 per cent in 2017. That again, I believe will create a transformational model. Talent availability, government initiatives, infrastructural support, have all contributed to its propagation.

The India Digital Transformation narrative must find a special mention of the 43 billion dollar e-commerce

industry. While leveraging social media, AI-driven tools, chatbots, immersive media and the digital payments ecosystem, this segment has changed buyer behaviour beyond recognition. Even remote locations have not been left untouched. Online retail may well rival electricity in market penetration in New India.

At the heart of these transformations is one significant change that is taking shape in all of India's towns, the changing Indian mindset, driven by the youth of India. No more we are okay to wait patiently for a change to happen — we dare to dream big, we are impatient and we have the conviction in our dreams and ourselves to go after them. Be it one man's mission to restore the dying lakes of Bengaluru or one woman's commitment to turn her passion in AI to find non-obtrusive and cost-effective ways to detect breast cancer early to save fatalities, the next generation of Indians are on a mission to drive change. And imagine the possibilities even if 10 per cent of the population are successful!

The writer is President, Nasscom



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NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the 5th Annual General Meeting ('AGM') of the Members of IDFC FIRST Bank Limited ('IDFC FIRST Bank' or 'the Bank') will be held on **Thursday, July 25, 2019 at 11:00 a.m.** at The Music Academy, T.T.K Auditorium (Main Hall), Near Acropolis Building, New No. 168 (Old No. 306), T.T.K. Road, Royapettah, Chennai - 600 014, Tamil Nadu, India, to transact the business as set forth in the Notice of the AGM dated June 25, 2019.

Electronic copies of the Annual Report for the financial year ended March 31, 2019 including Notice convening the 5th AGM have been sent to all those Members whose email-ids are registered with the Bank / Depository Participants. The said Annual Report including Notice of 5th AGM of the Bank is available on the Bank's website: www.idfcfirstbank.com. The physical copies of the Annual Report for the financial year ended March 31, 2019 including Notice convening the 5th AGM has been sent to all other members at their registered addresses in permitted mode by July 01, 2019.

In compliance with Section 108 of Companies Act, 2013 read with Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Amendment Rules, 2015 and Regulation 44 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 ('Listing Regulations'), the Bank is pleased to provide its Shareholders with facility to 'Remote E-Voting' (e-voting from a place other than venue of the AGM) through E-Voting Services provided by Karvy Fintech Private Limited ('Karvy'), to enable them to cast their votes.

In accordance with Rule 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Amendment Rules, 2015, the Bank has fixed **Thursday, July 18, 2019 as the 'cut-off date'** to determine the eligibility to vote by electronic means or in the said AGM. A person whose name is recorded in the register of members or in the register of beneficial owners maintained by the depositories as on the **cut-off date i.e. Thursday, July 18, 2019** only shall be entitled to avail the facility of remote e-voting or voting in the AGM.

The remote e-voting period commences on **Saturday, July 20, 2019 at 9:00 a.m.** and ends on **Wednesday, July 24, 2019 at 5.00 p.m.** During this period, the eligible shareholders of the Bank, holding shares either in physical form or in dematerialized form, may cast their vote electronically. The e-voting module shall be disabled by Karvy for voting thereafter.

The members attending the said meeting who have not already cast their vote by remote e-voting shall be able to exercise their right at the meeting through tablet based electronic voting system at the AGM (*in case of any technical failure or eventuality resulting into non functionality of tablet based electronic voting system at AGM, the Members would be provided the ballot paper for casting their votes at the AGM*). The members who have already cast their vote by remote e-voting prior to the meeting may also participate in the AGM but shall not be entitled to cast their vote again at the AGM.

The notice of the AGM forming part of the Annual Report is displayed on the Bank's website: www.idfcfirstbank.com and also on the website of Karvy: <https://evoting.karvy.com>.

Those persons who have acquired shares and have become members of the Bank after the dispatch of Notice of the AGM by the Bank and whose names appear in the Register of Members or Register of Beneficial Holders as on the **cut-off date i.e. Thursday, July 18, 2019**, can view the Notice of the 5th AGM on the Bank's website or on the website of Karvy. Such members can exercise their voting rights through remote e-voting by obtaining login id and password by sending a request at einward.ris@karvy.com or call on toll free no.: 1800 345 4001 by following the procedure as mentioned in the Attendance slip of AGM under 'Instructions for Remote e-Voting' or by voting at the AGM.

In case of any queries / grievances pertaining on remote e-voting, members may refer FAQs section of <https://evoting.karvy.com> (Karvy's website) or contact Mr. M R V Subrahmanyam, Head Operations-Corporate Registry, at Karvy Fintech Private Limited (Unit: IDFC FIRST Bank Limited), Karvy Selenium, Tower B, Plot No. 31-32 Gachibowli, Financial District, Nanakramguda, Serilingampally Hyderabad - 500 032, Tel: +91 40 6716 1500, 3321 1000, Fax: +91 40 2342 0814, +91 40 3321 1000, Toll Free No.: 1800 345 4001, e-mail: einward.ris@karvy.com or Mr. Satish Gaikwad, Head - Legal & Company Secretary of the Bank at corporate office of the Bank i.e. Naman Chambers, C-32, G-Block, Bandra - Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai 400 051 Tel: +91 22 7132 5500 or through email at secretarial@idfcfirstbank.com.

By order of the Board of Directors
For IDFC FIRST Bank Limited
(Formerly IDFC Bank Limited)

Sd/-

Place: Mumbai
Date: July 01, 2019

Satish Gaikwad
Head - Legal & Company Secretary

