

● 'SEEMS TCS IS FACED WITH TECH ISSUES'

BSNL staff seek Vi's network to offer 4G

FE BUREAU

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IN ABID to arrest the subscriber churn, employees of state-owned BSNL have reiterated their demand to utilise the network of Vodafone Idea temporarily to provide 4G service.

In a letter to Communications and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Saturday, the BSNL Employees Union said, "TCS, to whom BSNL has placed the purchase order for the supply and commissioning of 4G equipments, is taking abnormally long time for commissioning BSNL's 4G network".

"It clearly seems that TCS is faced with serious technical problems in the commissioning and operationalising of BSNL's 4G networks," the association said.

A copy of the letter was seen by *FE*.

Owing to delay in high-speed 4G network, the company has been losing subscribers continuously, the employees union said in the letter. In March, BSNL lost 2.35 million mobile users, which was its highest monthly user loss so far.

In 27 consecutive months till March, the company lost 26.2 million subscribers, tak-

WEAK SIGNAL

■ BSNL aims to expand 4G services to **100,000 base transceiver stations (BTS)** by end of 2024

■ Its employees said BSNL has been losing users due to delay in high-speed 4G network



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2.35 million mobile users, its highest monthly user loss so far

■ The same month, its market share fell to **7.57%** from **7.78%** in February

ing its total subscriber base to 88.06 million as of March end.

"This is really alarming and it is needless for us to state that BSNL is slipping into an irretrievable crisis," said John Verghese, acting general secretary of BSNL Employees Union.

"Our Union had already suggested that BSNL maybe facilitated to utilise the network of Vodafone Idea temporarily, for providing its 4G service, Verghese said, adding that the government can facilitate this sharing as it is the single largest shareholder of Vodafone Idea.

According to officials in the know, BSNL has started deploying 4G using indige-

nous stack in areas of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand.

The company has installed over 3,500 4G towers and has a target to expand its 4G services to 100,000 base transceiver stations (BTS) by year end. In March, BSNL's market share fell to 7.57% from 7.78% in February, according to Trai data.

In the October-December quarter, BSNL's revenue from operations rose 11.6% quarter-on-quarter to ₹4,549 crore.

The company's net loss rose to ₹1,569 crore in the quarter, from ₹1,481 crore in the preceding quarter.