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## BSNL Cautious in Partnering with ZTE to Set Up 5G Network, Says Shrivastava

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New Delhi: Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) will be "cautious" while deciding on extending an alliance with Chinese technology vendor ZTE to set up a fifth-generation (5G) network in the country in the wake of security concerns, a top official said.

"When it comes to rolling out the 5G network, a cautious call will be taken," BSNL chairman Anupam Shrivastava told ET, adding that the telecom technology needs to be protected. He was responding to a question on the threat perceived in deploying Chinese telecom equipment. "Should there be a risk in technology, certainly we won't go ahead and as long as it is indigenous and has no hazard in putting it up, we can advance," Shrivastava said.

BSNL, as a state-owned company, awards contracts to vendors only



**ANUPAM SHRIVASTAVA**  
Chairman, BSNL



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through a tendering process. The operator signed a memorandum of understanding with ZTE in September 2017 to work together on 5G wireless technology for research and knowledge-sharing purposes.

"If there is no risk associated, we

should adopt technology advancement from wherever it is coming," Shrivastava said.

The Chinese telecom equipment maker has been under pressure, following snooping concerns initially raised by the US House Intelli-

gence Committee in 2012, which have had ripple effects in other parts of the world.

ZTE did not respond to a query sent by ET.

The Indian government has excluded ZTE from 5G field trials, which aim to showcase India-specific use-cases by early 2019.

ZTE implemented second generation (2G) technology for BSNL and in 2012, bagged a GSM deal from the operator for supply, installation, engineering and annual maintenance to support more than 10 million subscribers.

BSNL has over 113 million wireless subscribers, or about 10% of the nation's total.

Shrivastava said BSNL carries out security audits regularly.

"We have all security features that take care of any abuse or malware. We have a system in place that sanitises networks and have not come out with any single instance yet," the official added.