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**Anupam Vasudev**

## **Cost of voice services will move up, says Aircel**

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Expect to get fatter bills for your mobile phone; the good times of cheap calls could well be over.

Mobile service providers say that the cost of providing voice services will move up. Costs for consumers have been declining year-on-year for the last 10 years, and there is nothing left to reduce further, said Anupam Vasudev, Chief Marketing Officer, Aircel. "The service is almost free."

Today, users pay charges as low as 4 or 5 paise per minute. "We are operating at a cost level," he told *Business Line*.

Operators use voice and data through the same network. Globally, voice has proliferated in a bigger way than data, he said.

On the 4G network being a non-starter, Vasudev said that its roll out would be delayed as a network which includes content providers, is not there yet. It may happen, but will take time. While the 3G service itself has not picked up as expected, the roll out of 4G will be delayed.

"Only 6 per cent of mobile users are using 3G services. Its usage is heavily under-utilised. It is way off than what we wanted it to be," he said. In Tamil Nadu, only 6-7 cities have a 3G network, he added.

People are interested only in social networks or chats, but not interested in video downloads or shopping. It is not about the price of the handset but about an ecosystem, including content, not available for better penetration, he said.

### **FOCUSING ON 18 CIRCLES**

Meanwhile, out of the total 23 circles that Aircel has licences for, it will focus on its 18 key circles. "We want to be more aggressive in the focused markets," he said.

Aircel, Vasudev said, was seeing a momentum in terms of market share. It added 0.5-0.6 per cent market share last year to reach 5.1 per cent at an all-India level. In Tamil Nadu, where it is deeply entrenched, the telecom operator has a 20 per cent market share, he said.

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