

BSNL moves SC, alleges private cartel in 3G auction

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NEW DELHI: The government-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) has accused Bharti Airtel, Vodafone and Idea Cellular of forming a cartel in 2010 for bidding in the auction for 3G spectrum. This is part of the affidavit filed by the company in the Supreme Court in the ongoing 3G roaming case.

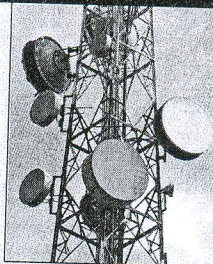
Bharti, Vodafone and Idea are offering 3G services and acquiring customers in circles where they do not directly have 3G spectrum. They have entered into bilateral agreements, calling them 3G roaming agreements. The department of telecommunications (DoT) has said that these agreements are in violation of licence conditions, and has served notices on these companies, imposing fines and calling for stopping these services.

These companies approached the Supreme Court after a high court verdict asked them to stop services in circles where they do not have licences.

"The cartelisation by the petitioner (Bharti Airtel) with law violating telecom service providers (Vodafone, Idea cellular) have clearly robbed the DoT of the benefit of higher auction fees from the eventual licensees and hence caused a detriment to public interest and exchequer," the BSNL affidavit said.

None of the telecom service providers could win pan-India 3G spectrum in the 3G auction held in 2010. The government earned about ₹67,000 crore

AIR WAR HOTS UP



- The government auctioned 3G spectrum in 2010
- No telecom company got pan-India licence for providing 3G services
- BSNL says that the bilateral pacts among Airtel, Vodafone and Idea to provide 3G roaming amounted to cartelisation
- It also said it had paid 3G spectrum fees, which the three telcos had not.

through 3G auction that was held when A Raja was the communications and IT minister.

BSNL has also said that it has paid a spectrum fee of ₹10,186 crore for 3G spectrum charges. "On the other hand, the law violating telecom service providers have neither paid for 3G spectrum charge nor have they invested in setting up their infrastructure for providing 3G services and are yet illegally obtaining benefit by illegal roaming arrangements," the affidavit said.