

Airtel, Vodafone, Idea Cellular were in collusion for 3G auction: BSNL tells SC

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State-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) has alleged that Bharti Airtel, Vodafone India Ltd and Idea Cellular were in collusion in bidding for 3G spectrum auction in 2010.

It said that the whole strategy was aimed at bidding selectively so that they don't have to compete with each other.

In an affidavit filed the Supreme Court on Thursday, BSNL said that Bharti Airtel entered into illegal arrangements for roaming in contravention of the terms of the license held by them. The apex court has listed the matter for May 9.

"These arrangements have caused the government exchequer huge losses in terms of spectrum charges (paid at the time of the spectrum auction) and spectrum usage charges, that are paid annually as a percentage of the annual gross revenue of the telecom service provider," It said.

Recently, the apex court had restrained Bharti Airtel from adding new 3G customers in circles where it does not license meaning that its existing customers would continue to enjoy the 3G roaming facility.

In a temporary relief to Airtel the apex court also directed the government not to take coercive steps on issue of penalty against the company till by May 9, when the court hears the case.

Leading telcos Vodafone and Idea have been asked by the Department of Telecommunications to stop 3G roaming services.

Earlier the High court had vacated its stay order which prevented government from executing its order asking these companies to stop 3G services.

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