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TRANSMISSION MONTHLY

1. SAMSUNG TO BOLSTER LOW-END SMARTPHONE SEGMENT.

Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd. (Korea: SEC), the World's leading smartphone manufacturer seems to be readying to take on the low-end smartphone segment with its new smartphone line-up in the country. According to one of the top officials of Samsung, the company is looking at strengthening its presence in the sub-INR 5,000 smartphone category. The official said that the company may announce the new offerings by the end of first quarter of 2013.

Presently, the low-end smartphone segment has not been tapped extensively by the leading manufactures. However, domestic manufacturers such as Fly, Karbonn and Micromax already offer a broad range of Android run smartphones in this segment. The official, however, added that the core focus area of Samsung will remain the high-end segment, which has constantly been growing globally. Samsung leads the global smartphone market with 29 percent share and possesses over 40 percent Indian market share. The company is witnessing aggressive competition from Micromax Informatics Ltd. , Karbonn Mobiles , Spice Mobiles Ltd. and Fly .

Apart from competition from domestic players, Chinese smartphone manufacturers: Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd. and ZTE Corp. (Shenzhen: 000063; Hong Kong: 0763) also pose stiff competition to Samsung. The mass market journey for Samsung would not be easy, due to increased presence of Huawei and ZTE, who have been broadening their low-end smartphone line-up in the country. Both these companies have courted the mass market with their inexpensive smartphones via tie-ups with Indian telecom operators. In addition to carrier bundling, these companies are coming into the open market with their low and mid-end smartphone offerings.

According to market research firm IDC's Worldwide Quarterly Mobile Phone Tracker report for Q4 FY12, Huawei has broken into the top three OEM brands in the smartphone space with 4.9 percent market share in the fourth quarter of 2012, largely supported by low-end smartphones. On the other hand, ZTE has also maintained its fifth position in the global smartphone market with 4.6 percent share.

2. RS 1,100-CR NOTICE FOR VODAFONE IN REVENUE CONCEALING ROW, OTHER TELECOM GIANTS MAY FEEL HEAT TOO

In a double whammy for the Vodafone Group, already embroiled in a Rs 8,000-crore tax dispute with the government, the telecom ministry has prepared a Rs 1,100-crore demand notice for the Indian unit as damages for having under reported revenues earned in 2006-08. Other telecom giants could face heat as well. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is conducting special audits of company books of Vodafone, BhartiAirtel, Reliance Communications, Idea Cellular and Tata Teleservices for under reporting revenues for assessment years 2006-07 and 2007-08. According to sources, DoT is preparing similar demand notices for other telecom companies as well for causing loss to the exchequer. The notices are regarding payment for license fees, spectrum usage charges and interest up to January 2012.

The Vodafone India audit has revealed that the company paid less revenue to government in terms of adjusted gross revenue (AGR). The auditor, S.K. Mehta and Company, had detected many irregularities in the books of the company. The audit found that certain items like interest income and forex gains were excluded while calculating AGR. Telecom companies pay a fix fees as AGR to the government in terms of revenue-sharing agreement. Mobile telephony attracts a license fee of 6-10 per cent while NLD, ILD, ISP and Internet Protocol attract six per cent levy.

3. EURO TRADE LOBBY AGAINST INDIA'S LOCAL SOURCING TELECOM RULES.

After the US, European business lobbies have also deplored India's plans to mandate 100% domestic sourcing for telecom equipment and networks tagged "security sensitive" by 2020.

DigitalEurope, the trade body representing Europe's biggest telecom product makers including Ericsson, Nokia Siemens Networks, Nokia, Alcatel-Lucent, Siemens AG, Bang & Olufsen, BenQ Europa, Schnieder Electric and Philips has in a communique to telecoms secretary R. Chandrasekhar, alleged that "using security concerns as a basis to promote local manufacturing is a coercive approach that will distort India's investment environment".

4. BANKS AGREE TO RECAST TULIP TELECOM'S RS 3,000 CROREDEBT

Lenders to Tulip Telecom have agreed to recast its debt of around Rs 3,000 crore, giving a breather to the company which has been hit by the double whammy of slowdown in business and high debt burden. ICICI Bank is the lead banker.

"The company's debt recast application came in late. We are awaiting mandates from various banks to induct the company into corporate debt restructuring (CDR)," said a senior banker in the know of the development.

5. AIRCEL LAUNCHES FREE ROAMING SERVICE

Aircel today launched a product that offers users one rate for voice, SMS and data in home circles and on roaming. 'One Nation, One Rate', offers one rate for voice, SMS and data in home circles and on roaming on Aircel network, the company said in a statement.

"Incoming calls while on roaming on Aircel network will be free," it added. Aircel users in Delhi can avail the service for Rs 39, while Mumbai subscribers have to pay Rs 32, the statement said. The price points for the service for other circles range from Rs 21 to Rs 59, it added.

"This product will enable Aircel customers to enjoy one rate for voice, SMS and data services in their respective home circles and even while they are on roaming," Aircel Chief Marketing Officer Anupam Vasudev said. The product will offer voice - (Local/National) calling at 1paise/second in home circle as well as on roaming on Aircel network, while incoming calls on roaming will be free. SMS will be charged at Re 1 for home circle as well as on roaming while data users will be able to carry the home circle rate on roaming, the statement added.

6. AIRTEL BIDS FOR LICENCE IN MYANMAR; TELENOR, AXIATA AMONG OTHERS.

BhartiAirtel has bid for telecom license in Myanmar as India's biggest private telecom company looks to expand its overseas operations.

A host of other global players including Norway's Telenor and Malaysia's Axiata have also submitted their bids in the process of awarding a license to provide mobile telephony services in Myanmar.

7. IDEA POSTS 13.7% RISE IN NET PROFIT IDEA CELLULAR LTD

India's third-largest private telecom services provider by revenue, posted a 13.7% rise in net profit to Rs.228.57 crore for the quarter ended 31 December from Rs.201 crore a year ago. It fell 4.6% from Rs.240.04 crore in the trailing quarter.

The Aditya Birla Group Company's consolidated revenue grew 0.8% from a year ago to Rs.5, 578.58 crore and was up 4.9% sequentially, primarily led by expansion of voice minutes, the company said in a statement on Tuesday. While this was the third straight quarter of earnings growth for the company, analysts had expected net profit to be higher, with Thomson Reuter's I/B/E/S having pegged it at Rs.265 crore.

8. RIM LAUNCHES BLACKBERRY 10 SMARTPHONES

RIM has launched its latest flagship BlackBerry 10 smartphones, and has revealed it has changed its corporate name to BlackBerry to coincide with the launch. The company used events in six major cities around the world to unveil the BlackBerry Z10 and BlackBerry Q10 smartphones.

The phones are each powered by dual-core, 1.6-GHz processors, have 2GB of RAM and 16GB of internal storage. The Z10 has a 4.2-inch touchscreen only, while the Q10 has a 3.1-inch screen and a physical keyboard.

Both smartphones use BlackBerry 10, the new OS on which the company is banking its turnaround hopes. Features include multitasking support for up to eight simultaneous apps, a new universal hub for notifications and a revamped web browser.

The handsets will go on sale in the UK today, in Canada on February 5, the UAE on February 10 and the US in March. They will be rolled out in other markets starting in April.

To mark the launch, RIM has changed its name to BlackBerry, effective immediately. The company's ticker codes, website and company email addresses will be changed to reflect the new name.

9. INDIA GSM PLAYERS SLAM 2G AUCTION PRICES.

Indian GSM operators including Vodafone India has taken issue with the government's decision to slash the reserve price for 800-MHz CDMA spectrum or an upcoming auction.

Vodafone India has written to the nation's telecom secretary calling the move to reduce the reserve price by 50% “illegal” and “discriminatory”.

The price cut means the reserve for 900-MHz spectrum is three times that of 800-MHz, Vodafone India complained.

The operator is seeking the withdrawal of the recently-approved guidelines for the second round of auctions to reallocate the spectrum to be vacated by the cancellation of 122 2G operating licenses.

GSM lobby group the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has meanwhile called on the government to also halve the reserve price for the 900-MHz and 1800-MHz GSM airwaves to be auctioned off.

Norway's Telenor, which operates the Uninor brand in India, has also threatened to sit the second round out if the GSM reserve in the Mumbai circle is not cut by at least 50%.

The government decided to reduce the reserve price for CDMA spectrum after an earlier, aborted attempt to auction off the airwaves attracted no bids.

A concurrent auction of 1,800-MHz spectrum also ended in relative failure, with the government shifting just 42% of the airwaves put up for auction. The auction drew no bids for the major telecom circles of Delhi, Mumbai, Karnataka and Rajasthan.

COAI blamed an unrealistically high reserve price for the muted response to the auction.

10. PRIVATE TELECOM OPERATORS OPPOSE BAILOUT FOR BSNL AND MTNL

The major private telecom companies have raised their voice against the move of Department of Telecommunications (DoT) to Union Cabinet seeking a Rs 23,000 crore bailout for BSNL and MTNL.

According to a news report DoT had sought Cabinet approval for the Centre to bear the one-time spectrum fee for state-owned telcos and also refund part of the 4G airwaves costs of these companies as they had surrendered this spectrum last year citing lack of a business case.

Industry bodies representing of GSM and CDMA operators in a letter written jointly to Kapil Sibal, telcom minister, said, *‘consideration of any such proposal was not permissible as it would be in contravention of all tenets of policy, fair competition and level playing field’*, while adding that under current rules *‘assures all level playing field for all operators’*.

“It is submitted that if BSNL /MTNL are given any refunds or financial aid, this will give a huge pricing advantage to public sector companies over private operators and create a price distortion which will be both discriminatory and anti-competitive. DoT decision to waive this one-time charge for PSUs would clearly establish that the Government agrees that imposition of this charge is legally not valid and this charge cannot be levied on existing private licensees also,” the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), the industry body representing GSM operators, and the Association of Unified Service

Providers of India (AUSPI), the lobby for CDMA and dual technology operators said in a January 29 letter to Sibal.

11. MANOJ KOHLI TO BECOME MD, BHARTIAIRTEL

According to the reports, Manoj Kohli has been appointed as Managing Director of BhartiAirtel's International Operations from 1 March. Currently he is looking after African operations.

Reports also states Gopal Vittal, in March will be appointed as Joint Managing Director, currently heading India and South Asian business.

This is believed to be the part of restructuring at the top level.

Off lately, it was announced that Vittal will replace Sanjay Kapoor as CEO of BhartiAirtel's India operations.

Kohli has served in many capacities in the company as president and CEO. He also looked after Airtel's mobile services in the past.

12. GSM OPERATORS SEEK SIBAL'S HELP IN REDUCTION OF SPECTRUM BASE PRICE.

The GSM telecom companies have asked Kapil Sibal, Telecom Minister to intervene in the issue of reducing the base price of airwaves by 50 percent, in sync with a recent Cabinet decision to halve the reserve price of CDMA spectrum

The Cellular Operators Association of India's (COAI) decision to approach Sibal also coincided with Norway's Telenor claiming on Wednesday that it will not bid for spectrum in Mumbai in the upcoming March auctions if India did not reduce the base price of GSM airwaves by at least 50 percent.

13. JOB CUTS AT TTSL, RESTRUCTURING ON CARDS

The telecom unit of Tata Group, Tata Teleservices Ltd. , is evaluating job roles in the company and plans to give pink slips to around fifteen-to-twenty people in each circle.

"The evaluation process has already begun and is expected to be completed by February 2013. The aim is to improve productivity and ease out non-performing people," says a source close to the developments.

Job cuts are expected to happen across all roles, with a major impact on roles in operations. This is not the first time though that the company has decided to go for a restructuring exercise. Earlier in 2011, TTSL aligned all its operations - GSM, CDMA and landline - under one brand, Tata DoCoMo and is reported to have cut jobs of hundreds of its employees.

The company might also reshuffle some of its top management in a bid to improve profits. In December last year, the company's Chief Technology Officer AG Rao resigned.

There were also speculations that the telco's Managing Director, N Srinath, will switch to a larger role in the Tata Group.

Continuous losses forced the company to wrap up its CDMA-based mobile operations in the North-East, Assam and Jammu & Kashmir regions. The company had lost licenses in these circles following the Supreme Court verdict of 122 telecom-license cancellation but decided not to bid for these circles in the fresh auction. The closure in these operations had impacted around 120 employees.

14. DOT PULLS UP TELECOM OPERATORS FOR NOT INSTALLING LBS

After being pulled up by Union Home Ministry, Department of Telecom (DoT) has asked all operators to install Location Based Servers (LBS) at the earliest to help security agencies track calls along with locations on real time basis. DoT officials recently summoned all telecom operators and made it clear to them that the LBS should be installed at the earliest failing which action may be taken, official sources said today. The Home Ministry had earlier conveyed its displeasure to Telecom Department for extending the deadline given to telecom operators for installation of LBS in their system.

There was a voice of dissent from Telecom operators who said installing of LBS equipment will entail heavy costs, the sources said. Some of the operators instead suggested putting in place a Enhanced Cell Global Identity (ECGI) system that could cut down costs but it was not accepted by the DoT, the sources said. The Home Ministry had demanded that all service providers must be able to provide location details of their consumers with certain degree of accuracy and these should be part of call detail records in the form of longitude and latitude, and coordinates of cellular sites, which can be made available to security agencies, they said. The purpose is to track down the location from where the call had originated with an accuracy of 30-90 per cent in an area of 50-300 metres depending on the population and area.

15. TELCOS GET OVER THREE WEEKS TO REGISTER FOR SPECTRUM AUCTION.

Telecom companies interested in buying spectrum in the second round of auction beginning March 11 has being given over three weeks to register for participation. Last date for submission of applications is February 22, according to the notice inviting applications (NIA) issued by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) here.

The auction is expected to fetch over Rs 45,000 crore to government if all the airwaves for which bids are invited are sold at base price. Issuing the NIA, the DoT said last date for submission of applications is February 22 while the final list of bidders will be out by March 6.

Mock auction will take place on March 8-9 and auction process for 1800 MHz and 900 MHz will commence on March 11, NIA said. Auction of 800 MHz will start two days from the close of first auction, it added. In order to ensure aggressive bidding, the

government has removed restrictions on the number slots that a company should be allowed to bid in the auction for both CDMA and GSM spectrum.

In the last auction held in November, new operators were mandatorily bid for a minimum of 4 blocks of 1.25 MHz each and a maximum of five for GSM spectrum. It was a minimum of two and a maximum of three in case of CDMA airwaves. The government will put 12 blocks of 1.25 MHz each in Delhi and Mumbai for 1800 MHz and 900 MHz while 10 blocks in 900 MHz will be put on the auction table for Kolkata. In Karnataka and Rajasthan, 8 blocks of 1.25 MHz each (10MHz) is being put to auction while additionally, a provision is also made available for spectrum up to three blocks each for topping up.

For 800 MHz auction, 3 blocks each of 1.25 MHz (3.75MHz) is being put to auction. "In addition, a provision has been made for spectrum of one block, wherever available, for topping up the 3 blocks of spectrum put to auction, to meet the requirement of new entrants, if such an exigency arises," the NIA said. In the second round of auction, government will put unsold GSM spectrum in 1800 MHz band and airwaves held by telecom licenses in 900 MHz band that is coming for renewal starting 2014 onwards.

Government had slashed base price of CDMA spectrum by 50 per cent and for unsold GSM spectrum by 30 per cent. The price of spectrum in 900 MHz has been fixed at two times the price of airwaves in 1800 MHz. The government has also given the option of deferred payment to the successful bidders.

16. RELIANCE COMMUNICATIONS & LENOVO TIE UP FOR LAUNCH OF SMARTPHONES

Telecom operator Reliance Communications and ThinkPad range of computer maker Lenovo have partnered to launch four or five smartphones for Reliance GSM and CDMA technology customers, the companies said in a joint statement on Thursday. The phones will be priced under 8,000 each and will comprise two slots for SIM cards or cell phone connections. A user would be able to plug in one CDMA and one GSM connection on the instrument and can selectively use the services. For example if he or she wants to use data services on the CDMA network but call on GSM it can, Reliance Communications said. The phones that will be available at Reliance operated stores will be available in the market from March-end.

17. BHARTI AIRTEL MISSES STREET CALL AS Q3 PROFIT PLUNGES 72%.

BhartiAirtel's profit fell for the 12th straight quarter and missed Street estimates to post a 72% decline, posing a formidable turnaround challenge for the new top management team that takes charge at the Gurgaon headquarters of India's largest telecom company. The company's net profit nosedived to Rs 284 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2012, as it blamed foreign exchange losses, higher taxes, and a 69% increase in financing costs for the steep fall. But sales increased 10% to Rs 20,236 crore during the quarter, helped by a 70% increase in its mobile internet business in India.

18. CAP ON SPECTRUM BID REMOVED

An empowered group of ministers tasked with mapping out the details of spectrum auction Friday decided to remove the cap on the quantum of spectrum that an operator can bid in the upcoming auctions. This will allow service providers to bid for as much spectrum they may require.

The EGoM headed by FM P Chidambaram also sealed March 11 as the date for holding the second round of auction. The DoT issued auction guidelines in the notice inviting application which had said that the minimum and maximum number of blocks could be changed depending on approval from the government. According to the notice inviting application (NIA) issued by DoT, a company cannot bid for more than 25 per cent of total spectrum on offer. Also no firm can bid for more than 50 per cent of the spectrum being offered in a particular band.

In the last auction held in November, new operators were to bid for a minimum of four blocks of 1.25 MHz each and a maximum of five for GSM spectrum. It was a minimum of two and a maximum of three in case of CDMA airwaves.

19. SISTEMA, TELENOR GET SUPREME COURT BREATHER

The Supreme Court on Friday extended the deadline for shutting down mobile networks to March 11, the next date of hearing the case. The apex court was scheduled to hear the case on February 4, but changed the date to March 11 without specifying any reasons.

The extension would give a lifeline to Indian operations of Russia's Sistema and Norway's Telenor that were allowed to offer services till the previous hearing date. Both did not comment on the development. An executive with Sistema said without wanting to be named that as per its legal experts, the change in hearing date extended the validity of licenses 'by default.'

However, an executive from Telenor India said that 'it could be inferred' from the Court's earlier orders that licenses stand extended but added that the company would wait for clarity from the telecom department. As per the court's earlier directive, all mobile phone companies whose permits were quashed in February last year were mandated to shut down their networks by February 4, unless they had obtained airwaves and new licenses in the recently concluded auctions. A two-member bench of the apex court had also indicated that it may not extend the permits of mobile phone companies if they did not bid for licenses in the upcoming airwaves sale.

20. ELITECORE BAGS CONTRACTS FROM TOP TELCOS.

The leading OSS/BSS player Elitecore Technologies Ltd. has bagged contracts for Mobile Data Offering (MDO) from leading telcos like Idea Cellular Ltd. , BhartiAirtel Ltd. (Mumbai: BHARTIARTL) and Vodafone India .

"Idea and Airtel are already our customers for all the circles and other top operators are engaged in trials with us," says DhavalVora, VP, Product Management, Elitecore in a recent interaction with *Light Reading India*.

Increasing volumes of data traffic on telecom networks have compelled operators to look for alternate data access options to offload. WiFi is considered to be a leading technology alternative because of its ease of use for smartphone users.

Considering a high volume of data, Indian telcos are evaluating various offload strategies such as dual-WiFi implementation, which involves setting up their own WiFi network and forming partnerships with telecom equipment vendors.

"LTE rollouts are still some point away. If LTE is getting delayed, then it is the right fitment. Our solution enables operators to offer WiFi and provide the same or an improved level of connectivity to their existing mobile users who are on 2G/3G network," adds Vora. Elitecore claims to have done over 2500 WiFi deployments across the globe.

21. VODAFONE ASKS DOT TO ALLOCATE SPECTRUM IT WON IN NOVEMBER AUCTION

Vodafone India has sought spectrum allocation in service areas it won bids for in the November auction, pending which the company says the license period should not start.

The spectrum allocated to the company in some of the 14 service areas, where it emerged as the highest bidder, are still being used by operators whose licenses were cancelled, Vodafone said in a letter to the secretary, Department of Telecom (DoT). The company highlighted that the license period of 20 years has been counted from December 19, 2012, when it paid 372 crore, but it is yet to receive the airwaves.

22. AIRTEL LAUNCHES EMERGENCY HOTLINE SERVICE

BhartiAirtel has launched an emergency hotline which allows customers to alert family and friends through a predefined list of 10 numbers should they find themselves in a dangerous situation.

Talks were being held with the city and State police to assign a police control number also on the loop, so that they could also get information on such incidents if any, and act promptly, said VirInderNath, Chief Operating Officer, Kolkata and West Bengal Telecom Circle, BhartiAirtel, said.

He said that while the service had been planned for some time, the Delhi gang rape incident had prompted a quick launch.

23. AIRTEL LAUNCHES APNA CHAUPAL; VOICE BASED ONE STOP SOLUTION PORTAL FOR VAS

Telecom provider BhartiAirtel has launched ApnaChaupal- a first-of-its kind voice based one stop solution portal for value added services. Designed especially for the rural and semi-urban market, the ApnaChaupal service aims to empower mobile customers across the country to easily browse and subscribe from a bouquet of value added services while on the move by just dialing 58080 toll free. While calls to the IVR number 58080 is toll free, customers would be charged applicable subscription rates for the service packs subscribed.

The voice based service will provide information in the regional language of the customers on key day-to-day activities including agriculture, devotion, job updates, entertainment, education and health. The service will enable customers to easily access a host of informative services like learning agricultural techniques, receive instant updates on Mandi rates and Government jobs, listen to Live Aarti's from popular religious shrines, access entertainment services like Hello Tunes, Comedy FM and radio, receive ball-by-ball updates on cricket matches, learn English, seek career counseling and much more on their mobile phones with just a simple voice call.

24. TIKONA SHORTLISTS VENDORS FOR 4G: SOURCES

Tikona Digital Networks Pvt. Ltd. , owner of the Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) spectrum in five circles, has shortlisted equipment vendors for the launch of 4G services later this year or early next year. "Technically, Tikona has conducted all trials and has shortlisted vendors it would like to work with. It has decided in favor of Ericsson AB and ZTE Corp. for equipment to roll out services," says a source close to the developments.

In 2010, Tikona won the BWA spectrum in the five circles of Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh East and UP West, which covers 31-percent population of India, for over INR 10.5 billion.

This year is likely to see a number of developments around the launch of 4G services in the country. BhartiAirtel Ltd. is the only operator to have launched 4G services last year in Kolkata, Bengaluru and Pune. Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) , which is the only operator to own pan-India BWA spectrum in the country, is planning to launch 4G services by mid this year. Aircel and Videocon also plan to launch 4G services later this year.

Tikona is offering broadband services by using unlicensed spectrum. It would continue to offer services through the unlicensed band for fixed broadband users, while an LTE-TDD network will address the need of mobile users.

25. VODAFONE REPRESENTATIVE MEETS REVENUE SECRETARY IN A BID TO RESOLVE RS 11,200 CRORE TAX ISSUE

Vodafone India non-executive Chairman Analjit Singh today met Revenue Secretary Sumit Bose in an attempt to resolve the Rs 11,200 crore tax liability issue related to the British firm's acquisition of Indian telecom assets of Hutchison Whampoa.

"We met the Revenue Secretary today," Singh told reporters but did not provide any detail when asked if a resolution was in sight.

26. HP, HCL, ACER IN RACE FOR LARGEST GOVT ORDER FOR TABLETS

Hewlett-Packard (HP), Acer India (Pvt.) Ltd and HCL Infosystems Ltd are in the race for the biggest government order for tablets in the country, according to an official at UP Electronics Corp. Ltd, which is managing the tender, and officials at HCL and Acer.

In the run-up to elections in the state last year, Uttar Pradesh's Samajwadi Party had promised to distribute tablets and laptop computers to school students if it came to power.

It did, and the consequent order it placed—2.6 million tablets and 1.5 million laptops—is significant because, at 2.6 million, the number of tablets the state is seeking to buy is almost as large as the market for tablets in India. According to estimates by CyberMedia Research, around 3 million tablets were sold in 2012 and the market is expected to double this year.

HP won the laptop order from Uttar Pradesh in January, and will supply 1.5 million laptops at just under Rs.20, 000 apiece. Companies submitted their bids for supplying tablets only last week. The tablets could cost below Rs.10, 000, although there is no indicative price range for them.

The Uttar Pradesh government has allocated Rs.2, 721.24 crore for distributing laptops and tablets to students in the current fiscal year.

27. GOOGLE ROLLS OUT GOOGLE+ HANGOUTS FOR GMAIL USERS IN INDIA

Google has officially rolled out Google+ Hangouts for all Gmail users in India. The official Google blog stated, "Over the last few months, we've been rolling out updates to Google+ Hangouts to make it easy for you to connect with friends and family no matter where you are. Today we're excited to bring Hangouts to all of our Gmail users in India."

Google+ Hangouts will allow Gmail users to video chat with up to 9 people at once, after they've upgraded to Google+. Apart from this, with Hangouts, users can watch YouTube videos with friends, collaborate on Google Docs, or play games by adding apps from the menu on the left. In case of a slow connection, users can opt for an ultra low bandwidth mode to keep the conversation going.

To activate Hangouts, one has to just click on the hangout button at the top of the chat list in Gmail. Users can also schedule a hangout with Google Calendar, and use the Google+ app for Android and iOS to hang out while on the go.

28. TELECOM COMMISSION MEET LIKELY ON FEB 18 ON NEW LICENCES

Inter-ministerial body Telecom Commission (TC) is likely to meet on February 18 to discuss guidelines of new licences that will be issued to companies under the National Telecom Policy 2012.

A senior Department of Telecommunications official told PTI that the TC will 'probably' meet on February 18 to discuss details of Unified Licences for both new and existing players.

Telcos get over 3 weeks to register for spectrum auction

The government under new telecom policy has announced that all new licences in future will be de-linked from spectrum and will be technology neutral. There are various issues related to the new licences guidelines like provision to allow opening of internet telephony (allowing calls using internet on phones), Foreign Direct Investment in telecom tower firms, recommendation made by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India to cancel licences on 5th major violation, that the panel will have to look in to.

As per broad framework issued by DoT earlier, a new pan-India license that has been delinked from spectrum will cost Rs 22 crore compared to earlier price of Rs 1,658 crore that were issued along with 4.4 megahertz of airwaves frequency.

The DoT in the notice inviting applications for spectrum auction in 2012 has said that "Entry fee (non-refundable) Rs 1 crore for each Service Area Level UL (Access Services) except for Jammu and Kashmir and North East Service Areas where Entry Fee shall be Rs 50 lakh each."

The companies will have to pay separately for spectrum which at present is over 7 times more that of previous price. Holders of new licenses, Unified Licenses, who have received spectrum at new rates, determined through spectrum auction in 2012 and to be allocated thereafter, will be allowed to share spectrum with their counterparts.

Spectrum sharing was not permitted under old telecom licenses that are in use by existing telecom operators.

29. RELIANCE COMMUNICATIONS GETS STAY ORDER AGAINST ONE-TIME LICENCE FEE

The Centre's attempts to collect over Rs 5,000 crore this fiscal as a onetime fee from mobile phone companies for the airwaves they currently hold has received a setback as leading operators have managed to obtain stay orders from different courts in the country.

The latest telco to win a stay order till February 28 is Reliance Communications, with the Calcutta High Court directing the telecom department on Wednesday not to take any coercive measures against the company to recover Rs 173.47 crore against existing GSM airwaves held by it. A Reliance Communications BSE 0.60 % spokesman declined comment on the development.

The likes of BhartiAirtel, Idea Cellular, Vodafone India and Aircel have already managed to stall imposition of the one-time airwaves charge that was to come into effect from January 1, 2013. In case of BhartiAirtel BSE 1.00 % and Idea, the Bombay High Court had recently asked the telecom department not to engage in "coercive action" to recover the one-time spectrum fee till March 1, while the telecom tribunal, TDSAT, has barred the government from taking similar steps against Vodafone India till February 25. Aircel, in turn, is also armed with a stay order from the Madras High Court, refraining the telecom department from imposing a one-time airwaves charge till "a final judgment is passed".

Last December, the Cabinet had endorsed the recommendation of a panel of ministers to slap a onetime levy on telcos, both prospectively and retrospectively, for airwaves held. Subsequently, DoT gave these mobile carriers the option to pay one-third upfront and the balance in equal installments based on validity of their permits. The one-time fee has two components.

GSM operators have to pay for all their 2G spectrum holdings beyond 4.4 MHz prospectively for remaining duration of their permits based on prices discovered in auctions last November. Under the second component, incumbents like Bharti, Vodafone, Idea, Aircel and BSNL would be charged a onetime fee retrospectively for all "excess" 2G spectrum held beyond the 6.2 MHz from July 2008 to December 2012. The charges would be calculated by indexing the 2001 spectrum auction prices to interest rates of SBIBSE -0.97 %. Based on demand notices recently issued by DoT, Airtel will have to shell out Rs 5,201.24 crore, Idea Cellular BSE 1.90 %Rs 1,882 crore, Vodafone India Rs 3,599.4 crore and Aircel Rs 1,365 crore on their existing GSM airwave holdings.

30. ALCATEL-LUCENT CEO TO QUIT

Alcatel-Lucent chief Ben Verwaayen has revealed plans to step down from the company, as the struggling vendor reported a €1.37 billion (\$1.83 billion) net loss for 2012.

The company announced that Verwaayen resign as CEO after this year's AGM, which is typically held in June. He will not seek re-election as a director.

Verwaayen was appointed CEO in September 2008, with an aim of bringing reliable profitability to the company created from the - so far ill-fated - merger of Alcatel and Lucent in 2006.

In a statement, Verwaayen said that while it has been "a difficult decision to not seek a further term... it was clear to me that now is an appropriate moment for the Board to seek fresh leadership to take the company forward."

31. TELEFÓNICA ANNOUNCES VOLTE TO 3G HANDOVER TEST

Telefónica has become the first network operator to demonstrate a breakthrough new technology that transfers telephone calls from an LTE network to a 3G mobile network seamlessly and without interruption. While there has been recent progress with VoLTE technology in South Korea and the United States, today's LTE networks are not able to handover a VoLTE voice call to 2G or 3G when moving out of LTE coverage. This means

most networks fall back to a legacy 2G/3G network whenever they make or receive a voice call or as it is the case with South Korea stay within the LTE network. Telefónica's engineers in Germany have demonstrated the SRVCC standard (Single Radio Voice Call Continuity) allows for the handover of a VoLTE call from the LTE network to 3G.

32. IDEA CELLULAR MOVES COURT AGAINST RULE ON 3G ROAMING PACTS

Idea Cellular on Thursday approached the Delhi High Court, challenging the telecom department's move to introduce a clause in the letters of intent for seven circles where it bought 2G spectrum, which bars the company from entering into roaming agreements with other operators on the 3G network.

The telecom department had introduced a rule, under paragraph 6 of the letters of intent, which specified that under the unified license, using 3G spectrum of another operator was not permitted. "UL (AS) does not permit provisioning of 3G service using the 3G spectrum of any other service provider using any kind of arrangement," states the rule.

33. BHARTIAIRTEL REJIGS INDIAN OPERATIONS, SPLITS BUSINESS INTO 8 SEGMENTS

India's top mobile phone company BhartiAirtel BSE -0.39 % on Thursday said it was splitting its business into eight divisions and doing away with its current structure of three regional hubs. This is the third major organizational change in as many weeks after Bharti recently said its chief executive for India and South Asia, Sanjay Kapoor, would quit February-end and be replaced by Gopal Vittal, currently the company's director for special projects.

The eight divisions will report to the newly created position of market operations. It has elevated the operations director for North and East Ajai Puri to this position and the latter will report to Vittal. Vittal, who will take over the Indian operations from March, was made the joint managing director of the company last week. The world's fourth-largest mobile operator by customers had also elevated its African operations head Manoj Kohli to the position of managing director, extending its restructuring exercise. Bharti also said that its B2C president K Srinivas, currently the No.2 after Kapoor, will take over as director, special projects and be responsible for 'evaluating potential investment opportunities and developing business case across various lines of business'. In his new role, Srinivas will directly report to BhartiAirtel chairman Sunil Mittal.

34. TATA COMMUNICATIONS OFFERS SOLUTIONS TO CONSOLIDATE TELCOS ROAMING OPERATIONS

Extending its managed services portfolio, Tata today launched solutions that will help mobile operators to consolidate their roaming operations as well as streamline roaming for 4G networks.

In order to help operators manage their roaming arrangements, Tata Communications has introduced 'Virtual Private Roaming Hub' and 'LTE Roaming Service', the company said in a statement.

"The Virtual Private Roaming Hub consolidates roaming operations and the LTE Roaming Service streamlines roaming for 4G networks," the statement said.

The company has also launched 'Managed SMS Firewall' to protect operators and consumers against mobile spam.

"What we bring to the market is a comprehensive, yet modular, managed services framework which efficiently empowers mobile operators to generate revenue from new services, capabilities and business models - many of which are supporting evolving customer demands," Tata Communications Vice President (Mobile Segment Strategy) Tim Sherwood said.

35. VODAFONE INDIA'S REVENUE GROW 10% TO 1.1 BILLION POUND IN OCT-DEC

Boosted by strong growth in voice minutes, Vodafone India's revenue grew by about 10 per cent to 1.1 billion pound (about Rs 9,388.40 crore) in the quarter ended December 31, 2012.

The company had reported revenue of 1.02 billion pound in the corresponding quarter last year, Vodafone, the UK-based parent of Vodafone India, said in a statement. Service revenue increased by 9.9 per cent, driven by strong growth in mobile voice minutes and a stable competitive environment, it added.

As on December 31, 2012, Vodafone had 147.47 million subscribers in India. Data revenue grew by 23.8 per cent driven by an increase in sale of data bundles and an increase in 2G data pricing. "As on December 31, 2012, active data customers totaled 33.1 million, including 2.5 million 3G subscribers," it added.

The voice revenue for Vodafone India stood at 785 million pound while data revenue was 94 million pound. However, Vodafone's global revenue was down 2 per cent at 11.38 billion pound impacted by difficult market conditions in Europe, especially southern parts of the continent.

"Our results continue to reflect very difficult market conditions in Europe. We are addressing this through firm actions on cost efficiency, and continuing to invest in areas of growth potential," Vodafone Chief Executive Vittorio Colao said.

36. TELCOS CONTINUE REMOVING INACTIVE SIMS; 26 MILLION USERS LOST IN DECEMBER

As cellphone operators continued disconnecting inactive SIM cards, India's total telecom subscriber base declined by 25.97 million to 895.51 million in December, sectoral regulator Trai said.

In November, the country had 921.47 million telecom subscribers. "Total wireless subscriber base decreased from 890.60 million in November 2012 to 864.72 million at the end of December 2012. This decline is majorly due to large scale disconnections of inactive SIMs by some of the service providers," Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) said in a statement.

With this, the overall teledensity (connections per 100 people) in India decreased to 73.34 per cent at the end of December, 2012 from 75.55 per cent in the previous month.

37. WILL INVITE PARTNERS FOR MANAGED SERVICES COMPANY: AIRTEL

Bharti Airtel on Friday said it will invite other telecom operators for equity participation in its managed services company, in which it has bought out Alcatel- Lucent's entire stake for an undisclosed amount.

"We just did it so we will talk to companies over a period of time... We would be open to everybody, "Bharti Enterprises Deputy Group CEO and MD Akhil Gupta told reporters here. Asked if the company is open to an alliance with RIL and other dual technology operators, he said: "Not at this point. We have just taken it back and separated it as a company but yes the model will be that we will invite everybody."

BhartiAirtel has said it would buy out Alcatel-Lucent's entire stake in a joint venture company that manages the fixed-line and broadband network for Bharti. Bharti and the Indian unit of Alcatel-Lucent had formed the 26:74 joint venture, Alcatel Lucent Managed Network Service India Ltd, in 2009 to manage Bharti's fixed-line and broadband networks.

The five-year USD 500 million network contract for the joint venture was to end in April 2014. BhartiAirtel has said it was introducing a new business model for managing fixed line and DSL broadband networks, on the lines of Indus Towers. The company's subsidiary Bharti Infratel holds 42 per cent stake in Indus Towers, with the remaining stakes in the company with Vodafone (42 per cent) and Idea (16 per cent).

BhartiAirtel offers broadband, data and telephone services (fixed line) in 87 Indian cities and has a customer base of 3.3 million. Out of them, 1.4 million are subscribed to broadband/Internet services.

38. DOT PANEL SEEKS A NEW LICENCE FOR COMMON TELECOM & TV SERVICES OPERATOR

A DoT panel has recommended a new unified license for telecom and broadcasting offerings that would enable end users to get a host of services such as mobile, landline, DTH, cable TV from a single company without the entity necessarily owning the full infrastructure.

A Department of Telecommunications (DoT) committee in its report on Unified Licensing regime under National Telecom Policy 2012 has proposed a new kind of license - Unified License (Service Delivery) - that can be used by its holder to use infrastructure of other companies to deliver all kind of communication services to its subscribers.

This new service operator may not be required to own complete infrastructure for delivering the services as required at present.

According to sources, the report of the panel has recommended that "UL (Services delivery) licensee need not create its own full infrastructure and at the same time delivers the services to the end users on a single platform."

The panel in its report has proposed another license which will be Network Services that will own the network infrastructure that can be used by Services Delivery license holders.

39. ENABLEM AND CHANGECORP NOMINATED FOR BEST MOBILE EDUCATION AWARD AT GSMA 2013

EnableM and Change Corp have been nominated for "Best Mobile Education or Learning Product or Service Award" category at GSMA 2013 for "E-Life Tablet for Teachers" built on EnableM's Magic Pencil platform.

EnableM is a pioneer in mobile learning having set trends for the future of education through mobile devices. MagicPencil is a Cloud based Tablet Learning platform designed as a Software as Service (SaaS) model on which E-Life Tablet for Teachers runs across South America.

EnableM's partnering organization, ChangeCorp Inc. (USA) is a mobile learning content solutions social enterprise that empowers people in the emerging markets. ChangeCorp works with the United Nations Office for Partnerships, UN Women, New York University Stern School of Business, Cherie Blair Foundation for Women and many NGOs around the world who provide educational services to women and girls in need.

40. RCOM INKS RS 5.3K-CRORE, 8-YEAR OUTSOURCING DEAL WITH ERICSSON.

Telecom operator Reliance Communications has outsourced its network operations and management in northern and western India to the Swedish firm Ericsson in an eight-year contract for about Rs 5,385 crore.

The company on Monday said that under the \$1-billion contract, one lakh km of fibre and mobile infrastructure will be set up in its 11 telecom circles, including Delhi and Mumbai, and that Rs 5,000 of its employees would join Ericsson. Ericsson will manage daily operations of the wireline and wireless networks, besides field maintenance, network operations and operational planning of RCOM's 2G, CDMA and 3G mobile networks, the companies said.

While RCOM will increase focus on its core business and innovation, Ericsson will improve network performance, service quality and increase customer satisfaction and

retention. Ericsson will also work closely with RCOM to identify opportunities to introduce new services and expand its existing businesses. RCOM's infrastructure covers 24,000 towns and six lakh villages across the country. This is the second billion-dollar deal that the dual-technology operator has signed in less than a month. Earlier, it outsourced data communications and customer experience to France's Alcatel Lucent for eastern and southern India for Rs 5,485 crore over eight years. Under the contract signed last month, Alcatel-Lucent will converge management of RCom's wireless and wireline teams integrate resources and standardize tools, processes and best practices.

The payouts to Alcatel will be dependent on customer feedback to a third-party survey done on time milestones. Between the two contracts, RCOM has outsourced a large portion of its operations on a pan-India basis to two equipment makers. The move is part of the shift in business strategy of the operator that has been battling falling profits and thinning revenue margins. RCOM's net profit took a sharp fall of 43.3% to Rs 105 crore in the quarter ended December, 2012 from a consolidated net profit of 186 crore in the year ago period.

41. SELL ALL AIRWAVES VACATED BY TELCOS IN UPCOMING AUCTIONS: SC

The Supreme Court on Monday said that all spectrum vacated by 122 quashed mobile permits must be put up for sale in the upcoming spectrum auctions. The apex court also ruled that telecom companies with quashed permits, who were allowed to continue providing services till February 4, should cease operations, unless they had successfully won back their permits in the recently concluded sale process, or intended to bid for airwaves in the upcoming auctions scheduled to begin on March 11.

This extension could give a lifeline to Indian operations of Russia's Sistema and Norway's Telenor that were allowed to offer services till the March spectrum auctions. It further clarified that the 19 permits given to Tatas on the same date as the now quashed 122 licenses cannot be clubbed with the cancelled permits. This could be a major relief to Tata Teleservices as the apex court had so far not explicitly said if its February 2, 2012 ruling applied to its permits that were given through the same press release that it used to award the contentious 122 licenses. However, the court is yet to formally pass an order clarifying all these aspects.

42. RUSSIA'S SISTEMA SHELVES PLANS TO BUY OUT AIRCEL ON PRICE DIFFERENCES

Russia's Sistema and Malaysia's Maxis Group have shelved talks for a possible buyout of Indian telecom operator Aircel after inconclusive negotiation on price and a recently failed government auction of airwaves, said two people close to the deal. The Russian conglomerate, which offers services here under the MTS brand, was in talks to acquire unlisted Indian telecom operator Aircel, majority owned by Malaysia's Maxis, in a deal valued around \$3 billion (Rs 16,000-17,000 crore). "But talks went cold shortly after the November auction failed," said one of the persons. In an e-mailed response, both Sistema and Aircel denied any talks of a merger.

"SistemaShyamTeleServices Ltd (SSTL) has time and again maintained that there were are no plans of acquiring any telecom service provider."

Sistema, whose mobile permits were quashed by the apex court last year, is learnt to be evaluating the possibilities of getting back its license in the upcoming spectrum sale in March. Sistema is also awaiting the outcome of its review petition that it has filed in the apex court over the cancellation of its permits. The company has also challenged the Supreme Court revoking its mobile permits under the bilateral agreement between India and Russia.

43. MOBILE VIRTUAL NETWORK RULES LIKELY SOON

Mobile subscribers will soon have more choice on service providers. Nearly three years after the policy was cleared, the Telecom Commission is set to finalize the guidelines to issue mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) license. Under MVNO, a service provider can offer mobile services to customers under its own brand name, without owning network or spectrum. It buys wholesale minutes from an operator and resells these to customers.

The move will not only allow new players to come in; it will also provide a revenue source for many Indian telcos with a lot of excess network capacity and spectrum. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT), which had cleared the MVNO policy in 2009, however, has had serious differences with the regulator on the final guidelines to allow MVNO.

Top sources say this has not been sorted, but the final guidelines are expected to be endorsed by DoT, for which a memo has already been prepared. Under the guidelines, an MVNO can be affiliated to only one mobile network operator but a mobile network operator can have more than one MVNO. The MVNO license will be for 20 years. License fee and spectrum charges will be payable by the MNO on the adjusted gross revenue (AGR) arrived at after adding the gross revenue of the MVNO to the gross revenue of the MNO, less the amount received by the MNO from the MVNO. Also, as part of the license condition, DoT will have the right to seek details of the revenue and the accounts of the MVNO and audit these. According to analysts, there would be 86 million subscribers on MVNO's network by 2015. In the last few years, around 500 MVNO's have launched services across the globe. In the US, there are a little over 50 MVNOs, including companies such as AirVoice Wireless and Boost Mobile. Virgin Mobile, which tied up in India with the Tatas to offer services, is one of the leading players in this business.

44. CCS NOD FOR TELECOM TESTING AND SECURITY CERTIFICATION CENTRE

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has approved establishing a Telecom Testing and Security Certification Centre (TTSCC) to create a security testing framework to ensure that telecom service providers only induct 'safe to network' elements, as part of the telecom Security Policy.

The Government has already allocated Rs 50 crore for the same and the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore has been asked to work on the same. The Centre will be responsible for development of processes; systems attack prevention tools, security standards and certification of security testing labs, according to a recent discussion of the Cabinet Committee on Security. The Centre will require 100 people over the next two to four years. The allocated fund of Rs 50 crore is expected to be used over the next two to three years, and the Centre is expected to generate its own revenue through fee of certification of labs and charges for security testing equipment after that.

45. AROUND 30% YOUTUBE INDIA VIEWERS ACCESS VIDEOS ON MOBILE – GOOGLE STUDY

According to a recent online survey conducted by Google, around one-third of YouTube viewers in India access videos on their mobiles and spend over 48 hours a month on the website. The online survey was conducted on more than 2000 Indians.

The study revealed that almost two-thirds of the viewers on YouTube in India are under 35 years of age. The survey also revealed an emerging consumer class on YouTube, which it nicknamed 'Generation C' and represents a young, tech savvy group of youngsters.

46. TELCOS' ARPUS FINALLY ON UPSWING

Amidst the ongoing regulatory unrest in the Indian telecom industry, telcos have managed a major feat by recording a substantial increase in their ARPUs (Average Revenue per User) in the last-quarter results.

Most of the GSM operators have recorded an increase in ARPUs in the last quarter when compared with the previous quarter. Reliance Communications Ltd. (RCom) has posted maximum increase in its voice ARPUs from INR 102 in the second quarter FY12-13 to INR 119 in the third quarter of the same year. The company has been disconnecting inactive subscribers from its network, which is the prime support for the given increase in its ARPU. Reliance disconnected around 20.5-million subscribers from June to November 2012. Apart from RCom, all the major GSM service providers have also been disconnecting their inactive subscribers, which resulted in substantial increase in their respective ARPUs.

India's third-largest operator by subscriber, Idea Cellular Ltd. has posted the second-largest jump in its ARPU from INR 148 in the second quarter FY12-13 to INR 158 in the third quarter. BhartiAirtel Ltd. has observed a 4-percent sequential growth in ARPU at INR 185 in the third quarter FY12-13, up from INR 177 in the second quarter. Vodafone India's ARPU has also jumped to INR 182 in the third quarter from INR 174 in the previous quarter.

In addition to the disconnection drive for inactive subscribers, an increase in data uptake has also helped service providers raise their ARPUs for the last quarter.

For instance, BhartiAirtel has posted a 9-percent growth in its data ARPU from INR 43 in the second quarter to INR 47 in the third quarter.

47. DOT SLAPS RS 877-CR SPECTRUM CHARGE DEMAND ON VODAFONE

Department of Telecommunications has raised demand of around Rs 877.6 crore from Vodafone as spectrum charges for the period between 2008-09 and 2011-12, sources said. Every operator has to pay various kinds of annual charges like spectrum usage charge, license fee which is based on their revenue earned from telecom services. The total amount rose against Vodafone, includes penalty and interest for all the four financial years separately, has to be paid by February 20, sources added.

48. DOT SLAPS FRESH NOTICES ON AIRTEL AND RELIANCE COMMUNICATIONS.

The telecom department has issued notices to the country's three top operators – BhartiAirtel and Reliance Communications - demanding that they pay an additional revenue share for spectrum usage from 2008 onwards. This is a fresh blow to mobile phone companies who are already contesting penalties, fines and one-time spectrum charges to the tune of thousands of crores. DoT officials said that similar notices are being issued to the remaining operators within the next few days.

It is learnt that BhartiAirtel has been issued several notices totaling over Rs 1,200 crore towards this charge on Wednesday and the company is expected to receive the same by Friday.

A RCOM executive said the company had received notices towards additional charges for airwaves, but declined to reveal the amount the company has been asked to pay up. Telecom companies share certain per cent of their revenues towards spectrum usage charges and the government is of the view that revenue share is applicable on 'total aggregate gross revenues' (AGR) of the operator. Telcos on the other hand argue this charge is applicable on only on revenues from mobile services.

49.2G SPECTRUM: SC DISMISSES CURATIVE PETITIONS OF TELECOM FIRMS AND RAJA.

The Supreme Court today dismissed curative petitions of several telecom firms for re-examination of its verdict cancelling 122 2G spectrum licenses allocated during tenure of former Telecom Minister A Raja.

The apex court also denied permission to Raja to file his curative petition. The companies whose petitions were rejected are Videocon Telecommunications Ltd, SistemaShyam Teleservices Ltd (SSTL), Tata TeleservicesLtd (TTSL) and Idea Cellular Ltd. A bench of Chief Justice AltamasKabir and justices P Sathasivam and G S Singhvi rejected the plea of the telecom firms and Raja saying "no case is made out".

50.2G SPECTRUM: UNSUCCESSFUL BIDDERS IN FRESH AUCTION TO CEASE OPERATION, RULES SC

The Supreme Court on Friday held that telecom companies which were unsuccessful in availing fresh 2G spectrum and those which did not participate in the auction process will cease to operate "forthwith". However, telecom companies which were successful in the fresh auction held on November 12 and 14, 2012 will be asked to start their services in the respective circles immediately, the court ruled.

"The telecom companies which have been unsuccessful in the bidding and those after the cancellation of the licenses did not participate in the fresh auction are directed to cease from continuing from operation forthwith and the successful bidders will immediately start in their respective circles," the court said.

A bench comprising justices G S Singhvi and K S Radhakrishnan directed that those telecom companies which were allowed to continue operation after scrapping of their licences by February 2, 2012 judgment will have to pay the reserved price fixed for the licences in the first round of the auction held in November 2012. The apex court by its interim orders had extended the deadline for them to continue with the operation. The bench clarified that the apex court's February 2, 2012 judgment will not be applicable on telecom companies holding the spectrum with 900 MHz band.

51. DOT, TRAI TO LOOK IN TO OPTIONS TO REFUND CONSUMERS' MONEY

The Telecom Ministry and the sector regulator TRAI will look in to the possibility of refunding money as part of measures to protect interest of consumers on mobile networks that may shut shop soon.

Telecom firms, who neither have spectrum nor the Supreme Court reprieve to continue operations, are to shut operations with immediate effect. "We will examine the issue and look at how interest of consumers can be saved," a Department of Telecommunications official told PTI. Similar words were echoed by an official at Telecom Regulatory Authority of India who did not wish to be named. The Supreme Court today directed that the "entire" licenses quashed by it for 2G spectrum be auctioned without "further delay" and those telecom firms which were unsuccessful and did not participate in the auction process will cease to operate "forthwith".

Post Supreme Court order of February 2, 2012, telecom companies Uninor, Sistema Shyam (SSTL), Videocon and Tata Teleservices (TTL) were continuing their operations. These companies were required to win spectrum through November 2012 auction to continue their services beyond January 18, 2013. Out of these, only Uninor and Videocon participated in auction and won spectrum in 6 circles each. SSTL and TTL did not participate in the auction. A TTL spokesperson said: "Tata Teleservices has complied with Supreme Court order and closed operation (of 3 CDMA licenses) on January 18. The company has also completed process to transfer its customers on other network through Mobile Number Portability service."

52. SUPREME COURT ORDER SET TO HIT DOT'S PLANS OF REFARMING

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered unsuccessful bidders of 2G spectrum auction held in November to cease operations and make way for those who have won the new licenses. A two-judge bench of the apex court also directed the government to auction all spectrum vacated after its February 2012 order "without any delay". The court had last year revoked 122 licenses held by nine telecom companies following the scandal over the allocation of 2G permits in 2008.

"Those companies which did not bid or those who made bids and lost will cease operations so that successful licensees can start," a bench of Justices GS Singhvi and KS Radhakrishnan said in a short order. Hours after the ruling, a DoT official said it may put up the entire 430 MHz airwaves freed after cancellation of mobile permits for auction in March. "Clarifications to this effect will be issued on Monday along with those related to the notice inviting applications for the March auctions," the official said. The Supreme Court's order is set to disrupt the telecom department's plans of refarming the 900 MHz band as DoT would have to put up all available 2G spectrum for the March auction.

The government had earlier said it would allow operators to keep a portion of airwaves in the more efficient 900 MHz band and refarm, or reallocate, the rest, replacing it with less efficient spectrum in the 1800 MHz band. Since all spectrum in the 1800 MHz band will be up for sale, as per the Supreme Court order, DoT may not be able to keep enough airwaves for refarming.

A senior DoT official, who did not want to be named, conceded that the court's order could 'potentially jeopardize' the refarming process if all 1800 MHz spectrum put up for auction gets sold. However, the official added that such a situation may not arise. "In the November auctions, all spectrums that was put up for auction was not sold. So, there would be spectrum available in all circles," he said. "Plans to refarm the 900 MHz band would be off the table for now," said Rajan Mathews, director-general of the Cellular Operators Association of India, a GSM operator lobby.

"The government will have to determine the next steps regarding this band, and the industry will have to consider its legal options now that the SC has ruled 900 MHz does not fall under the ambit of the February 2 judgment," Mathews added. The government had earlier decided to limit the sale to only 271 MHz, but the court did not take it kindly. The November auctions had turned out to be a damp squib even with limited airwaves on the block. The Centre had got less than a fourth of its revenue target of Rs 40,000 crore from the auction as there were no takers for 57% of the airwaves put up for sale. The judges, however, exempted SistemaShyam Teleservices Ltd, a joint venture of Russian conglomerate Sistema and India's Shyam Telecom, from the order (asking unsuccessful bidder to cease operations) since the company said it wanted to bid in the next round of spectrum auctions scheduled for March 11. The court had earlier said it may allow telecom companies that wish to bid in the next round of auctions to continue operations.

"We will pass separate orders for Sistema," Justice Singhvi said when the company's lawyer Vikas Singh, sought clarification on whether Friday's order will apply to his client. The bench said telecom companies whose licenses were cancelled but they continued operations under the court's interim orders will have to pay the reserve price fixed for the November auction. The judges also clarified that their order directing fresh auction of airwaves vacated by cancellation of licenses did not cover the most efficient 900 MHz airwaves.

"900 MHz was not the subject matter," Justice Singhvi said. The bench said telecom companies, which had disputes over the 900 MHz airwaves, were free to approach other judicial and quasi-judicial for a such as TDSAT. Existing 900 MHz license holders had opposed any move to place this band up for auction. Industry executives said the court's clarification will not hit telecom companies hard since the department of telecommunications has already told the court that it will issue temporary licenses to those willing to participate in the March auction.

The exemption given to SistemaShyam came as a lifeline for the company, which would have otherwise been forced to shut operations in 21 of its 22 circles. The company, which offers mobile and data service under the MTS brand, had not bid in the November auctions, saying the reserve price of CDMA airwaves was too high. Even if Sistema is successful in the next auction, it will have to pay for airwaves from December 19 — the date applicable to winners of the November auction.

Sistema Shyam is the only telecom operator offering services exclusively on the 800 MHz band used to offer CDMA services, and has maintained that its case was different from the remaining GSM operators. The only other company that will be affected by Friday's order is Uninor, the Indian arm of Norway's Telenor. It will have to shut operations in the Mumbai circle, where it may buy spectrum in the next auction. The company, however, did not comment on this. "Uninor wishes to clarify that this order will have no impact on its operations and services in the six circles of UP East, UP West, Bihar and Jharkhand, AP, Maharashtra and Goa and Gujarat, since it has already secured fresh spectrum for 20 years in these," Uninor said.

53. UNINOR SHUTS UP SHOP IN MUMBAI

India's Uninor has been forced to pull the plug on around 1.8 million mobile customers in Mumbai, as Indian operators lose an appeal against the cancellation of 122 2G licenses. Uninor shut down operations in the key telecom circle on Sunday, the company said in a statement. The shutdown was enacted in accordance with a court directive that operators with cancelled licenses must cease operating, unless they have won spectrum in the recent re-auction or are bidding in an upcoming one. While Uninor did participate in the November auction and won back spectrum in six circles, it did not submit a bid for spectrum in the Mumbai region.

54. ANDROID & IOS ACCOUNT FOR 91.1% OF GLOBAL SMARTPHONE SHIPMENTS IN Q4, 2012.

According to a recent report by IDC, in Q4 2012, Android and iOS smartphones accounted for 91.1% of all smartphone shipments. The report shows that Android smartphone vendors and Apple shipped a total of 207.6 million units worldwide during 4Q12, up 70.2% from the 122.0 million units shipped during 4Q11.

55. GOVT MULLS SWAP OPTION IN 700-MHZ SPECTRUM AUCTION

The operators offering 4G services with 2,300-MHz spectrum are likely to get the options of switching to the more efficient 700-MHz band, with the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) working out modalities to offer the latter in the next round of auction. Reliance Industries, BhartiAirtel, Aircel and Tikona Digital are among the major telcos that had won 20 MHz of 2,300-MHz spectrum in each circle for 4G services. Bharti has already launched services in a few cities, while RIL is expected to make an announcement in June.

These firms and BSNL had together paid Rs 38,543 crore for three blocks of spectrum. Of the total, RIL's subsidiary had worked out Rs 12,847 crore for pan-Indian operations. Under a 'swap' scheme, this money would be adjusted against the value of the spectrum they win in the 700-MHz band. It is still being considered how much spectrum they would be allowed to swap. Telco's say the 700-MHz band, one of the most efficient spectral bands, requires only half the number of towers for offering the same quality of service as 2,300-MHz spectrum. That means a substantial cut in the capital investment required for rollout.

Also, with many countries like the US (AT&T Mobility, Verizon), Latin America and Australia setting up 700-MHz-based LTE networks globally, an ecosystem is already in place. So, there already are 284 4G devices currently working with 700-MHz spectrum. Just a month ago, AT&T had paid \$ 1.9 billion to buy additional 700-MHz spectrum from Verizon.

A DoT official says the department is considering the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) recommendation that spectrum in the 700-MHz band be priced at four times the 1,800-MHz base price. Many experts say, at this high price, the swap option might not look attractive, as it would effectively mean the base price for 5 MHz of 700-MHz spectrum for pan-Indian operations would be a staggering Rs 47,508 crore — more than 10 times the price of an equivalent amount of 2,300-MHz spectrum. That would almost neutralize the lower investment requirement and the advantages of higher spectral efficiency.

As part of the plan being considered, about 90 MHz of spectrum would be available in this band for auction. The government is looking at offering up to 10 MHz in each circle, in eight blocks, with no restriction on operators for the number of blocks they want to bid.

A top DoT official says: "We are looking at an auction of about 100 MHz of the 700-MHz spectrum in the first half of 2014-15. Its likely 2x45 MHz would be auctioned, while 10 MHz would be kept in between as guard band. We might consider allowing operators to swap 2,300-MHz spectrum with the 700-MHz one."

The limit for operators' spectrum acquisition in this band would be 50 per cent of that assigned in their respective circles and 25 per cent of the total spectrum assigned in all bands in all service areas put together. As part of the plan, a large part of the 700-MHz spectrum, used by analog and digital broadcasting services, will be shifted to a new band.

56. BBC MEDIA ACTION BRINGS MHEALTHCARE TO BIHAR

Mobile revolution has swept the country in the last decade and it is no surprise that the medium is now being used by a number of non-profit organizations to spread awareness.

A program initiated by BBC Media Action, Ananya, is one such initiative. It extensively leverages the easy accessibility of mobiles as a key to generate demand for healthcare services in the state of Bihar.

The organization basically launched an IVR-based training program called, Mobile Academy, for the 200,000 healthcare workers in Bihar. To provide these services at affordable rates, BBC Media Action struck a deal with five prominent operators in the region to offer IVR services at a discounted price. The organization is working with BhartiAirtel Ltd. (Mumbai: BHARTIARTL), Vodafone India, Idea Cellular Ltd., Tata Teleservices Ltd. and Reliance Communications Ltd. to provide services at just INR 0.50 per minute, which otherwise would cost INR 6 per minute on an average. The organization is close to signing a deal with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL). It took about eight months to close deals with all the operators.

"We found from our research that 85 percent of healthcare workers own phones and 100 percent have access to a phone from their families. So they just dial the number, a short code and they can do a complete audio-based training course, structured into chapters. They are awarded a certificate by the Government of Bihar at the end of the training," says Sara Chamberlain, Head of ICT, BBC Media Action (India). About 1.58-million minutes of mobile academy have been used in the first six months. And 4,000 healthcare workers have received the certificate so far.

The program is a result of the Memorandum of Collaboration signed between the Government of Bihar and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2010, with the objective of improving the infant and maternal mortality rate.

OnMobile is the platform partner for the project. Agreements with both telecom operators and OnMobile are for pan-India. BBC Media Action is now planning to offer similar services in other states too.

57. TELCO CONSORTIUM PLANS NEW AU-NZ CABLE

Australia's Telstra and New Zealand's Telecom NZ and Vodafone will team up to deploy a new \$60 million subsea cable between the two nations. The operators revealed they have signed an MoU covering deployment of a cable link between Auckland and Sydney with a total design capacity of 30Tbps. The announcement states that the cable, tentatively named the Tasman Global Access (TGA), will cost "less than \$60 million." The design will be finalized in the next few months, and the operators are aiming for a completion date of mid-to-late 2014. The New Zealand operators involved in the project said another cable to Australia makes sense, given that an increasing percentage of New Zealand traffic is being routed from Australian servers and CDNs, and given Australia's superior connectivity with the rest of the world.

58. TATA LAUNCHES GLOBAL LTE ROAMING SERVICE

Tata Communications has launched a new global managed LTE roaming service for mobile network operators worldwide. The India-based international network operator said it aims to simplify global roaming complexity, by enabling operators to provide 4G roaming services through a single point of interconnect. The service is designed to eliminate the need for operators to separately negotiate hundreds of bilateral peer agreements. It will use Tata's Diameter SignallingXchange and IPX Connect platforms for routing traffic. Tata said it had spent the last 18 months trialing the service with vendors, to ensure it works with their various Diameter implementations. LTE roaming activity is building up steam as LTE rollouts accelerate worldwide. Australia's Telstra last month launched LTE roaming between its domestic network and that of Hong Kong subsidiary CSL. The operator is planning to negotiate more such agreements with other international mobile operators.

59. SAMSUNG, GENBAND FORM UC ALLIANCE

Genband has arranged to integrate its Smart Office unified communications applications with Samsung's enterprise-optimized devices. The two firms also announced that the integration seeks to extend or even replace the standard office communications environment. The solution delivers voice, data, and video communications and collaboration capabilities on Samsung SAFE devices to fully mobile-enable the enterprise market. SAFE covers Samsung Mobile's family of enterprise solutions that include security and feature enhancements designed for business use. Genband plans to offer Samsung Mobile devices through its service provider customers and large systems integrator partners.

60. TELECOM COMMISSION ALLOWS 4G AIRWAVE HOLDERS TO OFFER VOICE, BOOSTS RELIANCE INDUSTRIES

Inter-ministerial body, Telecom Commission (TC), today approved provision for companies holding internet services licenses with spectrum like Mukesh Ambani led Reliance JioInfocomm (RJI), Augere, Tikona Digital to provide phone call service by paying additional fee of Rs 1,658 crore each.

"The Commission broadly endorsed recommendation of DoT committee with regard to Unified Licensing regime...The ISP (internet service provider) license holder who hold BWA spectrum if they wish to provide using that spectrum then an additional fee of Rs 1,658 crore will be levied for migration to Unified Licenses (UL)," TC Chairman and Telecom Secretary R Chandrashekhar said here. The framework for new licenses will be ready by end of this financial year, he added.

In 2010, six private players--RJI, formerly Infotel Broadband, BhartiAirtel, Aircel, Qualcomm, Tikona Digital and Augere had won BWA spectrum. BhartiAirtel and Aircel have unified access services license under which they are allowed to provide phone call services both on fixed as well as landline. Other companies were given Internet Service Provider (ISP) license that has restrictions on providing phone call services across networks.

The additional amount of Rs 1,658 crore was charged from telecom players till 2008 for providing mobile telephony. The license issued to mobile telephony operators for Rs 1,658 crore had 4.4 MHz spectrum bundled with it but government has announced providing no spectrum with UL. The current value of the quantum of spectrum allocated under old licenses has increased around 7 times.

"UL does not include any spectrum. Grant of UL including migration to UL does not include any spectrum," Chandrasekhar said. The TC, however, deferred decision on bringing telecom tower companies, called IP-1, under licenses.

"Issue of IP-1 operators under UL regime was deferred and it was decided that this required further study of certain aspects," Chandrasekhar said. Companies like Bharti Infratel, GTL Infrastructure and Indus Towers are involved in IP-1 business. The DoT committee had recommended bringing IP-1 companies under license regime.

Telecom regulator TRAI has recommended a charge of 8 per cent license fee to IP-1 companies once they are brought under licenses. For companies who wish to continue to "provide limited services like only internet services under cafeteria approach they can do so with a lower entry fee which will be same as present," Telecom Secretary said.

The TC also endorsed around Rs 3,000 crore support for mobile services in left wing extremist affected areas through Universal Service Obligation Fund for a period of 5 years.

"This proposal will have to be finally approved by Cabinet," Chandrashekhar added.

61. MAJOR TELECOM OPERATORS GO ALL OUT TO WOO UNINOR USERS IN MUMBAI

Norway-based Telenor's 1.8 million Mumbai customers are being wooed by all major telecom operators in the country after the company, which operates under the Uninor brand, shuts operations overnight in accordance with a Supreme Court order. Uninor customers with outstanding balances for services are left in the lurch as the network has been switched off. Uninor has so far not devised any plan to help resolve

balance or network transfer issues for these customers. Also, the company is unable to help customers port out of its network either, said a company spokesman.

However, competing companies are going all out to win these customers. New service offers, shorter activation cycles and new local advertisement campaigns are being rolled out by companies like Vodafone India, BhartiAirtel and Reliance Communications to woo these customers. Uninor's average monthly revenue per user (ARPU) for all its operations in India was around Rs 110. In Mumbai, companies estimate consumption would be higher than other parts of the country.

62. THIRD ROUND OF SPECTRUM SALE TO FOLLOW MARCH AUCTIONS

India will hold another round of airwaves sale in 18 regions immediately after the March auctions, a top telecom department official said. The third round of spectrum sale could happen either in March or in April and is being undertaken as the Supreme Court last week directed the government to auction all spectrum vacated by companies whose permits were quashed last year, this official added.

"The second round of spectrum auctions that are scheduled to begin in March 11 cannot be changed now. This sale of spectrum in the 1800 MHz band will be restricted to the four regions — Delhi, Mumbai, Karnataka and Rajasthan — where no bids were received during the November sale.

The only change is that we will increase the quantum of airwaves that is put on sale in both Karnataka and Rajasthan to comply with the apex court's orders. In Delhi and Mumbai all spectrum vacated by quashed permits are already on sale. This will be sold along with 900 MHz band held by incumbents in the three metros," this official, who declined to be named said.

63. SISTEMASHYAM SEEKS TEMPORARY LICENCE FROM DOT TO CONTINUE BIZ.

Sistema Shyam Teleservices has written to the government seeking a temporary license, in case Supreme Court orders it to close operations, till the time auction process is completed. "In the event of any negative order from Hon'ble Supreme Court, we would request you to issue us temporary licenses till such time the auction process is completed and spectrum along with new licenses are issued to SSTL," the company said in a letter to Secretary, Department of Telecom.

As per the data of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, the company had over 1.26 crore customers in 21 service areas that can be impacted by Supreme Court order. Last week, the apex court had asked telecom operators whose licenses were cancelled by it in February 2012, and they failed to win spectrum or did not participate in the November auction, to close operations immediately.

SSTL said, however, that the Supreme Court order of February 15, 2013 for telecom firms does not apply to it and a separate order is to be issued for the company.

It has informed DoT that the company's counsel has said in the court that "SSTL is desirous of participating in the upcoming auction". The CDMA spectrum auction was not conducted in November, 2012 as there were no bidders for it. CDMA operators had cited high reserve prices for staying away from the auction. SSTL said, however, that it did not participate in the auction as the company was awaiting decision of the apex court on its curative petition, which was pending for hearing at the time of auction.

64. VODAFONE AND AIRTEL TO FIGHT TELECOM DEPARTMENT'S MOVE TO AUCTION 900 MHZ AIRWAVES.

BhartiAirtel and Vodafone India has challenged in the Delhi High Court the telecom department's decision to auction 900MHz airwaves as part of a grander scheme to reform all such spectrum.

In the auction beginning March 11, the government is looking to sell a bulk of the airwaves held by incumbents in the 900 MHz band in metro cities. The auction follows a February 2012 Supreme Court order that reversed license and airwave allocations after the 2G scam of 2008. Under the plan, the government proposes to take back 900 MHz airwaves from operators as their licenses come up for renewal and replace it with 1800MHz at a market discovered price. Vodafone, however, said it is entitled to an extension of license. "Vodafone believes that it is entitled to a fair and reasonable extension of its license as per mutually agreeable terms," a company statement said on Wednesday. The 900 band is more efficient and the government hopes to get a higher price for the airwaves.

Incumbent GSM operators - BhartiAirtel, Vodafone and Idea - have to give up most of their holdings in the 900 MHz band when their mobile permits come up for renewal. Like Vodafone, Bharti uses a significant portion of the more efficient airwave band. Idea doesn't use any in the metro cities, but will have a similar problem in some other service areas for the next round of spectrum auction.

For telecom companies that have spent on 900 MHz equipment, the shift to another airwave band will be expensive. The 1800MHz band also requires a larger number of tower sites to emit the airwaves. When contacted, the Bharti spokesperson confirmed the development and said: "We want the auction process to proceed and hope that the government will take considerate view in this matter, and our contractual right for extension of license along with the spectrum as per guidelines is fully protected. Our decision to undertake this legal recourse is only aimed at protecting our legal and contractual right with regard to 900 MHz spectrum and ensuring business continuity."

65. BLACKBERRY USERS ON BSNL, MTNL NETWORK FACE DISCONNECTION.

BlackBerry phone users on Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd's network face disconnection as the two public sector telecom companies are yet to comply with the security requirements.

The Department of Telecom had asked all telecom companies to connect to a server set up by Blackberry in Mumbai that would enable security agencies to get access to data transmitted through some of the applications offered on the device.

While all the private players including Vodafone and Airtel have complied with this requirement, the two PSUs have sought more time. Both MTNL and BSNL have told DoT that they need to buy some additional equipment to connect their network to the server for which they are going through the tendering process. DoT may set a deadline of February 28 for the two operators to comply or switch of Blackberry services.

66. WHATSAPP THE TOP SMARTPHONE APP IN INDIA-NIELSEN

According to the latest Nielsen India Consumer rankings report, mobile messenger application WhatsApp is the topmost smartphone app followed by the Facebook app and Google Play store app. The report ranked brands in six lifestyle categories – apps, books, e-tailing, mobile handsets, mobile operators and travel. The rankings are based on popularity and consumer experience.

67. DOT EXTENDS LAST DATE FOR AUCTION APPLICATION TO FEB 25.

The Department of Telecommunication (DoT) has extended last date of application for spectrum auction to February 25.

In an announcement late last evening, DoT made amendments to its notice inviting application in which it announced new dates in the schedule for auction. In the previous schedule, last date for submission of application was February 22. DoT had to issue clarifications on queries raised by potential bidders on auction rules by February 18, but sources said that due to the Supreme Court order of February 15, "DoT had to examine SC order on impact it may have on present auction process due to which clarifications were delayed".

68. SISTEMASHYAM TELESERVICES TO BID FOR SPECTRUM, SHUT DOWN OPERATIONS IN 10 CIRCLES

CDMA operator SistemaShyam Teleservices (SSTL) on Thursday announced it will participate in the spectrum auction to be held next month and will close operations in 10 service areas after 30 days.

"I would like to confirm our intention to participate in the upcoming spectrum auctions in March 2013....The go forward plan includes continuing with the Company's focus on its data centric-voice enabled strategy in select circles," SSTL President and CEO Vsevolod Rozanov said in a statement.

The company, which provides service under MTS brand name, said it has started the process of informing its customers in 10 circles--Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, North East, Orissa and Punjab--to switch to other telecom operators of their choice.

"SSTL is providing a 30 day time window to all its customers in the 10 circles to exhaust their balance and to port out to a telecom operator of their choice," it added. The closing down of SSTL's operation in 10 circles will impact around 22 lakh customers on its network. "SSTL has a customer base of over 14 million, out of which less than 15 per cent come from the impacted circles," the company said.

69. GOVT EXPECTS RS 43,000 CR FROM SPECTRUM SALE AT BASE PRICE

The government will get Rs 43,011 crore if the entire spectrum is sold at the base price in the auction, Minister of State for Communications and IT Milind Deora said today. The government has announced starting auction in March for 2G spectrum that remained unsold in November auction. Also, spectrum held by existing operators Airtel, Vodafone and Loop Mobile through licenses that are due for renewal in 2014 will also be auctioned.

70. TELECOM FIRMS' LICENCE RENEWAL BE DECIDED IN 2 WEEKS: DOT TO HC

The Centre today informed the Delhi High Court that the renewal of licenses for 900 MHz spectrum of three leading mobile service operators would be decided within two weeks.

"The government will decide their applications (for renewal of licenses) within two weeks as per the law," Additional Solicitor General (ASG) A S Chandhiok told a bench of Justice Rajiv Shakhder.

71. UNINOR ASKED TO REFUND USERS' BALANCE AMOUNT IN MUMBAI, KOLKATA.

Telecom regulator TRAI today directed Uninor to refund within 15 days the balance amount of its subscribers in Mumbai and Kolkata where the company has closed its operations.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) in its direction to Uninor also asked the company to facilitate shifting their numbers to networks of other service providers. The regulator directed other telecom operators to accept porting request of Uninor customers. TRAI also directed Uninor to publish procedure for porting number and refund of money in newspapers and on its websites.

72. MOBILE CONNECTIONS WITH RS 20 BALANCE CANNOT BE DEACTIVATED.

Telecom regulator TRAI today said inactive mobile connections of pre-paid customers cannot be deactivated if they have a minimum balance of Rs 20 in their account and the time period for considering 'inactive' has been set at 90 days. Announcing an amendment to a regulation for protecting consumers, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) said: "There shall be no deactivation if the balance in pre-paid consumer account is Rs 20 or more."

"The mobile connections of prepaid consumers shall not be deactivated for any period of non-usage less than 90 days," TRAI said. As per amended regulations, telecom operator will have to provide facility to pre-pay to reactivate numbers by paying reasonable amount.

"A consumer whose connection is deactivated shall be given a grace period of 15 days within which he can reactivate the same number," TRAI added.

73. GSM OPERATORS ARREST CUSTOMER SLIDE, ADD 0.4 MILLION USERS IN JANUARY

GSM operators added a modest 0.4 million customers in January 2013, managing to arrest a precipitous slide triggered by 16.6 million customer losses in November-December 2012, as India's leading mobile phone companies managed to notch up net-additions amidst fewer deactivations and reduced churn.

The pan-India GSM subscriber base last month stood at 657.56 million, a tiny 0.06% rise over the December 2012 level. The country's top three GSM operators — BhartiAirtel, Vodafone India and Idea Cellular who collectively account for nearly 67% of the sector's revenues — jointly added a shade over 4.96 million subscribers last month, according to latest customer numbers released on Friday by the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), the industry lobby representing GSM operators.

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