

DELHI HIGH COURT ISSUED NOTICE TO DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATION ("DoT") ON VODAFONE'S PLEA

FOR EXTENSION OF 2G LICENSE.
Delhi High Court issued Notice to Department of Telecommunication ("DoT") on Vodafone's plea for extension of 2G license.

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Vodafone, India's second largest telecom operator, has approached the Delhi High Court challenging the decision of the DoT which denied extension of their 2G spectrum licenses in Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata circles. The DoT has refused to extend the said licenses stating that it has been granted only for a period of 20 years and, therefore, on the completion of the said time period the interested telecom operators will have to participate in the auction process for issue of fresh licenses. But, Vodafone had sought an extension of its licenses in aforesaid three circles in the 900 MHz band in December, 2012, citing clause 4.1 of the license agreement under which the government can extend the period of license by 10 years at a time if the request is made by the operator during the 19th year of the license period. After hearing Vodafone's plea, Justice Rajiv Shakdhar has posted the matter for hearing on August 29, 2013 and issued notice to the DoT to file their response before the aforesaid hearing date.

PSA view – The matter is sub-judice at present and the court would pass the final verdict after hearing the contention of interested stakeholders. Vodafone has 24 Mhz of spectrum in the aforementioned three circles for which the license period of 20 years expires in November 2014. If the said telecom operator fails to obtain a favorable order, it will have to participate in the auction and pay existing market price and gain fresh licenses.

SEBI to issue Guidelines on the use of social media by companies

In 2011, SEBI had warned investors about investing based on SMS tips and also regarding the employees of the companies using blogs or messaging services to offer unsolicited tips. In yet another circular issued on March 23, 2011, SEBI had said that blogs, chat forums, e-mails and messenger sites were being used by brokers and other intermediaries to communicate unauthenticated news about companies and manipulate the markets. Now, with the unprecedented growth of the social media, it has become necessary to warn the companies regarding its usage to provide services or information or tips to its customers. In August 2011, SEBI had sent a request to the DoT to include the board in the list of law enforcement or investigating agencies which can seek e-mail and call records from telecom service providers. In September 2010, Bombay Stock Exchange had also issued guidelines to enable share market trades through mobile phones. This was following SEBI's move to allow share trading via mobile phones in August 2010.

PSA view – This move will ensure that companies remain ethical while promoting itself in social media. Offering unsolicited tips to its customers using social media should be prevented and the proposed guideline would aim at safeguarding the interest of the investors.

Single Emergency Number for India

TRAI has come out with a consultation paper on Universal Single Number Based Integrated Emergency Communication and Response System ("IECRS") for the entire country. In order to streamline the integrated emergency communication and response system on the lines of the developed nations, TRAI came out with this consultation paper and has sought public views. At present, number 100 is for police services and number 108 for emergency. A special number 112 is dedicated for women in emergency situations. Public has been given the choice to choose from 100 or 108 as the universal single emergency number.

PSA view – In view of the various shortcomings in the present system, there is a need to have a single emergency number. A need is felt for India to come at par with most developed nations like the US and UK where a single emergency number exist. For example, US, UK and Australia have 911, 999 and 000 respectively.

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