

### 3G Did Telecom biggies form cartel for 3G bidding?

TT Correspondent | New Delhi | 27 May 2010

Conspiracy theories are associated with all big historic developments. No wonder, India's most successful spectrum auction has its own share of conspiracy theories. There were rumours towards the last few days of the 3G spectrum auction that some kind of understanding (or cartelisation) has been reached among a group of bidders so that the spectrum prices do not go up further.

We do not believe this, but there is an interesting trend on the footprint of 3G spectrum these operators have got. It is here for the readers to make their own conclusions.

An analysis of the six biggies of the circles won by 6 biggies namely Airtel, Vodafone, Idea, TTSL, Reliance Communications and Aircel shows some interesting trend.

The circles won by Tata Teleservices and Aircel are almost altogether different and if combined lead to a pan-India presence. Recent Income-Tax reports which were leaked out, speculated ownership links between TTSL and Aircel.

Another visible trend which may spark off cartelization allegations, is an analysis of the circles won by Bharti Airtel and Vodafone. This again points out hardly any circles which overlap between the two firms.

Indian telecom industry has been charged with cartelization allegations in the past as well when incumbents were accused of resorting to such tactics while formulating tariff plans.

