

TTSL beneficiary of procedural lapses in 2001 to get BSL: Panel

NEW DELHI: Several extensions for compliance with terms of Letter of Intent (LoI) in absence of enabling provisions in the guidelines may have benefited Tata Group firm Tata Teleservices (TTSL) in 2001 to get Basic Services License in various circles, says the one-man committee report.

The report, which was made public today, said, "...time was extended time and again for several months for TTSL for grant of BSLs in Maharashtra, Haryana, Kerala, Punjab and Rajasthan service areas for compliance with LoI."

The Shivraj V Patil report went into the lapses during the allocation of the 2G Spectrum.

The report, presented to Telecom Minister Kapil Sibal last week, said all decisions on spectrum allocation since 2003, that includes NDA regime, were procedurally wrong.

The report said the extension of time in absence of any enabling provision in the guidelines could lead to arbitrary exercise of power and favouritism subjectively.

The report has named several DoT officials. It said the (TTSL) decision was on the basis of note put by ADG (BS II) Jeet Singh and was endorsed by the then Director (BS II), PK Mittal DDG (BS), RN Goyal Member (P), R Ramanathan Member (F) and Shyamal Ghosh Chairman (Telecom Commission)), without raising any objection and finally getting approved by the Minister.

These identified public officials appear to be responsible for the lapse in the procedure, the report said.

Bharti, Idea get advantage due to policy lapses: Patil panel

NEW DELHI: Arbitrary decisions taken by ministry officials may have helped telecom operators like Bharti airtel and Idea Cellular get spectrum, says the one-man committee report.

For instance, additional spectrum of 2 MHz + 2 MHz beyond 8 MHz + 8 MHz was allotted to Bharti airtel in 2003 (during the NDA regime) for Delhi service area though no criteria for allotment of the same was in existence.

"This decision was taken on the basis of note put up by the then concerned Engineer and approved by Wireless Advisor along with his deputies. This was arbitrary and selective besides being unfair to other intending applicants," the report said.

Aditya Birla group firm Idea Cellular also benefitted as it was provided with extra time to acquire eligibility.

Idea Cellular had made application in August 2005 for grant of licence for the Mumbai circle, while the LoI was issued in November 2006. "In the intervening period, time was extended to enable the applicant to acquire eligibility," it said.

However, there were also instances when these operators were not shown preference.

For example, for the Chennai service area, a decision was taken to divide the available spectrum of 1.4 MHz + 1.4 MHz between Bharti airtel and Aircel, irrespective of their priority breaching the 'First Come First Serve' (FCFS) criteria.

On the basis of a note put up by another official, Idea Cellular's application for license for West Bengal and other service areas was returned with the remarks "could not be seen" by the office of the Minister.

The further processing of the file was also withheld on the ground that a proposal had been submitted to the Minister to process the applications only after receipt of recommendations from TRAI, it said.

In deviation from the prescribed procedures, start-up spectrum to Spice Communications/Idea Cellular was withheld on the ground that proposal of their merger was pending, it said.