

### SC pulls up Centre for being "casual" in 2G case.

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Ticking off the Government for being "very casual" in handling the 2G case, the Supreme Court today said withholding of even 0.1 per cent of spectrum, licenses for which were cancelled, will not be acceptable.

A bench of justices G S Singhvi and K S Radhakrishnan also directed the Centre to file a fresh affidavit within two days explaining why all the 2G spectrum was not put on auction on November 12.

"Government is very casual in dealing with the matter," the bench said while turning down an affidavit filed by an Under Secretary-level officer on the matter and directed that it must be filed by Secretary of Department of Telecom.

"This affidavit cannot be accepted. It has been filed by Under Secretary officer. Our earlier order clearly said that affidavit must be filed by Secretary-level officer. This is a deliberate action on the part of DoT," the bench said.

"On earlier occasion the court had unequivocally rejected affidavit filed by an Under Secretary. It is unfortunate that the same mistake has been done again. Needful should be done within two days," it said.

The court said that it would hear Centre's stand on auction on Monday but made it clear that withholding of spectrum from being auctioned would not be acceptable.

"Keep in mind that withholding of spectrum, even 0.1 per cent would not be acceptable," the bench said adding that it was never told earlier that the entire 2G spectrum would not be put on auction.

"At no point of time this court was informed that the auction was only for 800 and 1800 MHz band," the bench observed.

It was contended before the court that government has not complied with the apex court's direction and it has withheld 136 MHz spectrum out of 431 MHz in 1800 band.

The apex court had on February 2 cancelled 122 licenses for 2G spectrum and directed the government to allocate the natural resource by auction.

The government had received on November 12 bids worth Rs 9,224.75 crore on the opening day of auction for 2G mobile phone spectrum that drew scant interest due to high base price. The government was hoping to net a minimum revenue of Rs 28,000 crore in the auction.

There was no bidder for pan-India airwaves for which the government had set a base or bid start price of Rs 14,000 crore. Demand was concentrated in select circles like Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh (East) and Uttar Pradesh (West). MORE