

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has rejected Bharti Airtel's request to consider the Supreme Court's (SC's) verdict in deciding telecom cartelisation fine against Airtel, Vodafone India and Idea Cellular. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) had suggested penalties of Rs 10.5 billion each on Airtel and Vodafone and Rs 9.5 million on Idea for allegedly violating licence conditions by not providing enough points of interconnection (PoI) to Jio, which led to call failures and hurt the quality of services.

The DoT's move comes in response to Bharti Airtel's letter to the telecom minister in mid-February 2019, wherein it pointing out that the panel should take cognisance of the court ruling.

Earlier, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) on behalf of Reliance Jio had ordered the probe after it found a prima facie case of cartelisation by Airtel, Vodafone India and Idea Cellular. Following this, the operators approached the Bombay High Court (HC), which dismissed the CCI's probe. The CCI and Jio then approached the SC, which upheld the HC's order.

Recently, the Digital Communications Commission (DCC) of the DoT had sought the views of a DoT committee on the SC rulings, which scrapped a probe into the allegations of cartelisation. The DCC will now decide whether to accept or reject the combined penalty of Rs 30.5 billion proposed to be levied on Airtel, Vodafone India and Idea Cellular in October 2016.

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