

# Views on Pre-Consultation Paper on Spectrum

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My dear Sudhir

Apropos of the view (expressed in the pre-consultation Paper) favouring wireless spectrum allocation through auction, I broadly agree with the view. However objectivity and transparency are two parameters of paramount importance. Airwaves belong to the people and the right to use is subject to in-built restrictions - this was the crux of a judgment of the **Supreme Court of India** in 1995 on a cricket telecasting case. This, essentially, is the national perspective in which radio spectrum needs to be viewed.

The mechanisms for allocation and pricing of this finite and precious resource have been debated time and again across the world. Within India the criteria have, from time to time, varied from “first come first served”, “initial minimum allocation”, “additional increments on traffic and subscribers”, “auction”, “revenue sharing”, etc. However, while finalizing the policy on this subject the special spectrum needs of **rural India** must also be honoured, besides conformance to international compatibility.

Auction is no doubt a good procedure but for such a large country as ours, it would perhaps be advisable to resort to this method on a ‘**regional**’ basis rather than allocation for the entire geographical area of the country.

Moreover, the network rollout, in terms of usage, time-period and volume, should be **specified** for each licence so that in default situation, Government could reclaim the auctioned bandwidth **free of cost**. Segregating spectrum and licence is fraught with risk – as we have recently seen.

Government have also to consider the needs which would arise for introduction of emerging and **next generation** services in the communications domain. Moreover, the **evolution of technology** towards dynamic spectrum sharing could be yet another factor to bear in mind.

In respect of the **extant** licences, the same broad principles could be adopted, mutatis mutandis, while maintaining technological neutrality. Such a procedure would ensure that the benefits flow not only to allottees but more so to the **citizens** of this country.

Kind regards

(NK Mathur)