

## Recent Updates in the 5G Tech Space in India

### Spectrum Allocation for 5G Trials

Subsequent to the Department of Telecommunications (“DoT”), Government of India granting permission to Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio Infocomm and Vi (formerly Vodafone Idea) as well as state-run telco, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited, to start 5G trials in the country, spectrum for the same has been allocated by the DoT. The telecom operators have been allocated spectrum in 700 Mhz band, 3.3-3.6 Ghz band and 24.25-28.5 Ghz band across various locations including Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Gujarat, Hyderabad, among others. The allocation of spectrum paves way for Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio Infocomm and Vi to partner with non-Chinese network vendors and conduct the 5G trials in urban, rural and semi-urban settings across India. This marks the first official allocation of 5G trial spectrum in the coveted 26 Ghz band that ranges from 24.25- to 28.5 Ghz frequencies which is critical for supporting the efficient deployment of 5G. The telecom operators have repeatedly emphasised that without the 26 Ghz band deployment costs of 5G wireless broadband networks be unaffordable to consumers in India.

### Price Cuts for 5G Spectrum Bands Under Consideration

Reports state that the DoT is likely to shortly seek a fresh base price for the 3300 MHz-3600 MHz band earmarked for 5G, the 700 MHz band, and other new bands which can be used for 5G technology. Additionally, there may also be a reduction in the money to be paid upfront by the Telecom Service Providers (“TSPs”) as the DoT believes that it is necessary to encourage TSPs to place bids for the next spectrum auction which is expected to be sometime in 2022. Further, the need for a longer spectrum payment moratorium, to replace the current moratorium of two years, is also being considered by the DoT as it would encourage most TSPs to bid on the spectrum bands despite the high level of debt of most TSPs. This is in light of the previous auction in March where the highly efficient but pricey 700 MHz band went unsold for the second time, owing to its high base price. Reports highlight that India’s 5G pricing is the most expensive in the world as it is four times higher than in South Korea and seven times higher than in the United Kingdom.

## Allocation of 5 MHz Spectrum in 700 MHz Band for Indian Railways

The Union Cabinet has allocated 5 MHz spectrum in 700 MHz band for Indian Railways in order to boost hi-speed radio communication. Reports state that Rs. 25,000 crores will be spent in next 5 years by the central government for signal modernization and 5G spectrum implementation in the Indian Railways. The spectrum will enable the Indian Railways to provide long term evolution (“LTE”) based mobile train radio communication on its route. This LTE in the Indian Railways will provide secure and reliable voice, video and data communication services for operational, safety and security applications. It will be used for modern signalling and train protection systems and will ensure seamless communication between loco pilots and guards. It will also enable Internet of Things (“IoT”) based remote asset monitoring of the coaches, wagons & locos, and live video feed of CCTV cameras in the train coaches which would ensure efficient, safer and faster train operations

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