



## **GAIL (India) Limited launches its on line initiative #GreenDriveWithNaturalGas**

GAIL has been striving to play a significant role in providing "Clean Energy & Beyond" for better environment & sustainable living considering "Environmental Responsibility" is one of the core elements of its vision statement. Towards this, GAIL (India) limited has taken up the online initiative called #GreenDriveWithNaturalGas to create awareness among the Indian masses about greener mobility through the use of Natural Gas as cleaner fuel option along with other cleaner mobility solutions. This initiative encourages citizens to take greener initiatives for a better environment. An on-ground activation for pledge taking under this initiative was also executed at AutoExpo 2020 where GAIL had participated for promoting Natural Gas as a greener mobility fuel option. Thousands of people have participated in the online pledge initiative since AutoExpo 2020. This initiative, #GreenDriveWithNaturalGas, is in sync with the Government of India's vision of a Natural Gas based economy, which supports better environment, better lifestyles & convenient mobility. To realize this vision, the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas has been working towards increasing the share of Natural Gas from around 6 % to 15% in the nation's energy basket. GAIL is committed in developing Natural Gas infrastructure in the country in the form of laying Natural Gas pipelines and City Gas distribution networks in more number of cities which would be a back bone for a greener mobility with Natural Gas among other benefits to people at large.

# Allow telcos to pay dues over 20 years: Centre to top court

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**NEW DELHI:** The Union government sought the Supreme Court's permission on Monday to allow telecom companies to pay licence and spectrum usage fee dues over a 20-year period, offering a last-minute lifeline to several operators who have to cough up tens of thousands of crores after they lost a dispute with the ministry over how they calculate revenue.

In an affidavit to the top court on the eve of the next hearing on the matter, the department of telecommunications (DoT) also proposed the companies pay a reduced annual interest rate of 8%. The dues—a result of the top court's October 24 order revising adjusted gross revenue (AGR) calculation in favour of the government—stood at ₹1.69 lakh crore as of October, the department said in the affidavit.

The move was meant to protect consumers as well as impact the country's economy, the department said. If as a consequence of the judgment, any of the major service providers go into insolvency, consumers will be jeopardised because porting mobile numbers from a non-operational to an operational service provider will take consider-

## LIFELINE FOR SECTOR?

The DoT said the move is crucial in order to protect consumers as well as the economy

THE DUES		
<b>VODAFONE IDEA</b>	<b>₹58,254 crore</b>	
By self assessment	Paid till now	(equivalent to principal amount)
₹21,533 crore	₹6,854 crore	
<b>BHARTI AIRTEL</b>	<b>₹43,980 crore</b>	
By self assessment	Paid till now	(includes extra ₹5,000 cr to cover for extras in DoT calculation)
₹13,004 crore	₹18,004 crore	
GOVT'S STAND		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Give companies 20 years to pay in annual instalments with 8% interest</li> <li>■ If any major service provider goes into bankruptcy, consumers will face severe disruptions since porting from non-operational providers will</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>be difficult</li> <li>■ Competition in the telecom sector and quality of services will suffer and direct and indirect employment will be lost if any company is forced to shut operations</li> </ul>	

able, the affidavit said.

The hearing in the matter, however, has been pushed back since only a few benches are holding hearings. The top court has pared back hearings to thin crowds in view of the coronavi-

rus disease (Covid-19) outbreak.

According to latest figures submitted by DoT, Vodafone Idea owes ₹54,754 crore, Bharti Airtel ₹25,976 crore, Reliance Communication ₹25,194 crore

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## DoT

and Tata Group ₹12,601 crore.

The proposal, if approved by the court, will offer a lifeline to Vodafone Idea, whose executives have on several occasions said the top court ruling puts its ability to exist as a company in doubt. The company has assessed its dues to the department at ₹21,533 crore.

Vodafone Idea paid a second instalment of ₹3,384 crore to the government on Monday, taking its total payments to ₹6,854 crore, which is the entire principal amount it had self-assessed as dues related to the court's order on adjusted gross revenue.

The top court in its judgment delivered on October 24, 2019, had upheld the interpretation given to the definition of AGR by the DoT and included revenues from various heads for calculation of AGR thereby imposing a cumulative burden of over ₹1.69 lakh crore on 16 telecom companies.

Review petitions against the judgment were dismissed by the court on January 16.

The DoT then issued an office direction on January 23 which stated that no coercive action should be taken against companies until further orders, thereby effectively keeping the Supreme Court judgment in abeyance.

Subsequently, various telecom companies filed applications in the top court seeking extension of time for making payment of dues.

When those applications came up for hearing on February 14, a bench of justices Arun Mishra, S Abdul Nazeer and MR Shah took strong objection to the DoT's office direction to keep the SC judgment in abeyance.

It had said that the office direction was a device to scuttle the order of the top court and such a direction must not have been passed at all.

The court directed on February 14 that if its order was not complied with, the managing directors and directors of the defaulting telecom companies

should be present in court on the next date of hearing which was kept for March 17.

The DoT's plea was mentioned before justice Arun Mishra on Monday by centre's second senior-most law officer, solicitor general Tushar Mehta who sought listing of the plea. Mehta pointed out that the case was scheduled to be taken up on March 17, Tuesday.

Justice Mishra said that the bench hearing the case will not be available for the time being since the Supreme Court is functioning in a restricted manner due to coronavirus threat. He agreed to list the plea as and when the bench, which passed the judgment in October 2019, becomes available.

Besides private telecom companies, various public sector units like GAIL India, Power Grid Corporation, Oil India, and Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilisers who held telecom licenses for internal communications were also hit by the Supreme Court judgment. DoT has sought ₹1.72 trillion from GAIL (India) Ltd, ₹48,000 crore from Oil India Ltd, ₹22,168 crore from Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd, and ₹15,019 crore from Gujarat Narmada Valley Fertilisers.