

India misses deadline for 3G auction

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A man talks his mobile phone in front a government telecommunication billboard in New Delhi in October 2009. India's government has missed a deadline for inviting bidders to take part in its long-awaited auction for third generation (3G) mobile telecom services.

India's government has missed a deadline for inviting bidders to take part in its long-awaited auction for third generation (3G) mobile telecom services.

The invitation delay comes amid media speculation that the auction could be held later than the scheduled date of January 14 due to uncertainty over available spectrum and the number of slots to be put up for bids.

The department of telecommunications said in a website announcement Wednesday that the invitation to take part in the 3G auction was "being

fine-tuned" and would be "issued shortly."

A spokesman for the telecommunications ministry was not available for comment on when the invitation might be issued for the auction which has already been delayed twice by the government.

The announcement came after the government had originally said the invitation would be issued Tuesday for bids from operators to participate in the auction to allow 3G [mobile services](#) nationwide.

Last week, Communications Minister A. Raja said the auction process would be completed by March but gave no date when it would start.

Speaking on the same issue, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said last week the auction "will be conducted shortly."

The latest telecommunications ministry notice advised "interested parties" to await further details on the auction which was originally slated for late last year.

The defence ministry has said it is unable to release some of the spectrum needed for the auction, which could reduce the number of slots up for sale.

The auction of 3G radio spectrum for mobile services is set to put India's cellular market -- the fastest growing in the world -- on track for a new level of wireless telephony, experts say.

Third-generation mobile services would allow [high-speed Internet](#), video downloads and other sophisticated media services on cellular telephones.

The government has said it aims to raise 250 billion rupees (5.38 billion dollars) from the sale of pan-India 3G [spectrum](#) and hopes to use the

money to help plug a fiscal deficit that is the biggest in nearly two decades.

[India](#) had said it aimed to sell four 3G licences and three broadband wireless access licences in 20 of the 22 telecom zones.

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