

Government plans 5G sale in early next fiscal

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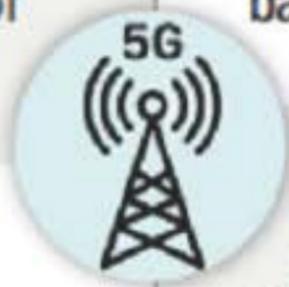


NEW DELHI: After unleashing a mega reform-cum-bailout package for the telecom sector in September, the telecom department is finally taking decisive steps for a spectrum sale in the early parts of fiscal 2022-23, which will also see auction of 5G airwaves as the government eyes a technological upgrade across industrial, consumer, healthcare and educational sectors in line with similar trends across the developed world. Telecom and IT minister Ashwani Vaishnav said that while the auctions may be delayed by a few months against the originally-envisaged targets, the plan is to roll out an attractive policy that will see companies ride over the recent reform package and plan new investments after the spectrum sale.

LOOKS TO LEAD IN **IP, HARDWARE**

➤ Govt wants global lead in 5G technologies, including indigenous development of hardware, IPs, and partnerships

➤ Auctions to be tech-neutral and could involve sale across a cross-section of bands such as 700MHz, 800MHz, 900MHz, 1,800MHz,



2,100MHz, 2,300MHz, 2,500MHz, 3,300-3,600MHz bands, and millimetre-wave band (24.25-28.5GHz)

➤ 5G is aimed at variety of new-age connected services in the area of industrial automation, smart education, healthcare, internet-of-things (IoT)

Speaking at the Times Now Summit 2021, the minister said that regulator Trai is undertaking consultations with regards to the upcoming auctions, including for 5G airwaves. "I think they will submit their report by February-mid, is what we are thinking, may be February-end, maximum to maximum March. Immediately after that, we will have the auctions."

On final timelines of the auctions, he said, "Today, our estimate is by April-May. I was earlier estimating March. But, I think it will take time... because consultations are complex, diverse opinions are coming."

The government feels that the bailout package given in March will enable companies to have greater cash in hand that will not only help them invest higher in networks, but also plan liberally for the auctions. The government relief package had included removal of non-telecom revenues from the AGR definition, increasing tenure of spectrum holdings from 20 years to 30 years, no spectrum usage charges for new auctions, 100% FDI through the automatic route.