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Babus cook Raja's goose, tell CBI of his 'dirty' deals

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Say Minister manipulated 2G allocation; Swan, Unitech claims were collected from PS chamber

Senior officials in the Union Telecom Ministry have made startling revelations to the CBI about Minister A Raja's role in manipulating the 2G spectrum allocation to real estate companies.

Top officials in the access service section of DoT have given details to the CBI of how the cut-off date for spectrum allotment was manipulated on January 10, 2008, sources said. The same day, DoT issued a Press release reversing the cut-off date from October 1, 2007, to September 25, 2007, at 2.45 pm. It also asked the operators to remit the requisite fee by bank drafts between 3.30 pm and 4.30 pm.

Even as the bidders clamoured to meet the one-hour deadline and fought pitched battles with the 'bouncers' employed by competitors at the Sanchar Bhavan cash collection counter on the eighth floor, the DoT officials have confessed to the CBI that they were directed by DDG (Access Service) RK Srivastava to come down to Minister's Private Secretary RK Chandolia's chamber to collect the fee of Rs 1,537 crore and Rs 1,651 crore each respectively from the CEOs of Swan and Unitech.

"We had been instructed by Srivastava to come down to Chandolia's chamber on the first floor to collect the application form and fee from Swan and Unitech owners. Our office is on the eighth floor and when we come down at 3 pm, Chandolia asked us to collect the application forms and bank drafts from the duo sitting in his chamber," access service section officials have told CBI.

The officials gave serial number-1 status to Swan's application and number-2 to Unitech. "After that only, we were asked to open the counter at 3.30 pm to receive papers and the money from the remaining seven operators on first-come-first-served basis," they told CBI.

Sanchar Bhavan witnessed a mad rush and anarchy in the evening when some CEOs of telecom companies were manhandled by their rivals' bouncers so that they could remit the fee at the earliest. "Some bouncers attacked us too. Police arrived after some time, but were directed to abstain from registering a complaint," said the officials.

It is still a mystery that how within an hour of the Press release being issued, these new players were able to furnish bank drafts worth Rs 1,500 crore and Rs 1,650 crore. It clearly shows that the favoured players were given prior information about reversal of the cut-off date and fee structures.

Raja, who normally sits in the decorated Electronics Niketan office, was present in the barely-used Sanchar Bhavan office that day. Chandolia's office is just opposite Raja's in the building.

The documents available with The Pioneer clearly show the conspiracy by Raja to reverse the last date of filing applications to September 25, 2007. According to the list of applicants prepared by DoT, Unitech — one of the favoured companies of Raja — submitted the application on September 24 evening.

Unitech had applied through several companies like Nahan Properties, Azare properties, Aska Projects, Adonis Projects, Unitech Builders, Unitech Infrastructures etc.

"The Minister's office told us the following morning that all applications of the Unitech Group of Companies were in order," said the officials. They also confessed to the CBI that they were summoned for a breakfast meeting at 8 am at Raja's residence on January 10, 2008, and that Telecom Secretary Siddharth Behura, Wireless Planning Adviser PK Garg, DDG (Access Service) AK Srivastava and Private Secretary RK Chandolia were also present. "The Minister told us that he expects wholehearted cooperation from us in allocation of the spectrum as early as possible," they claimed.

In the past 10 days, most top Ministry officials were summoned at the CBI's Anti-Corruption Wing for interrogation to discover the ramifications of the biggest-ever scam to hit the nation in recent times. Most of the relevant files are now in CBI custody and the investigators have seized incriminating documents from private companies also.