

Icasa aims to auction 4G, 5G spectrum next March

South Africa will restart efforts this month to auction off 4G and 5G high-speed spectrum licences for telecom operators with a view to offering them next March, the regulator said on Friday.



A journalist uses his mobile phone to take a picture of the 5G logo prior to the auction of spectrum for 5G services at the Bundesnetzagentur headquarters in Mainz, Germany, on 19 March 2019. Reuters/Kai Pfaffenbach

The country's first auction of telecoms licences has been mired in bureaucratic red tape for almost a decade but President Cyril Ramaphosa has made it a cornerstone of his agenda to bolster growth in Africa's most industrialised economy.

It had been due to take place this March before MTN Group and Telkom filed two separate cases against the regulator asserting the process was flawed.

A fresh round of consultations is likely to start this month and invitations for bidders to apply for various spectrum on offer will be issued by 10 December, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa) said.

Invitations for the wholesale open-access network (Woan) will start in November, Icasa said.

"We envisage to license the IMT (International Mobile Telecommunications) spectrum no later than the end of March 2022," Icasa chairman Keabetswe Modimoeng said in a statement.

Ramaphosa has termed a successful auction critical to lowering the country's data costs, which are seen as an impediment to doing business.

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