

MTN opposes Telkom's court order against Icasa

The MTN Group has said that it has opposed a court application by rival Telkom seeking to halt a spectrum auction, in a bid to prevent further delays to a process that has been stuck in a bureaucratic and legislative maze for years.



A shopper walks past an MTN shop at a mall in Johannesburg, South Africa. Reuters/Siphiwe Sibeko

South Africa's third-biggest telecoms company Telkom sought an urgent court order to prevent regulator Icasa from holding a spectrum auction in March, calling the auction process unlawful and illegal.

The move by Telkom, which won a court order last year forcing the regulator to review its auction process and delay it to March this year, could potentially delay the country's rollout of 5G and expansion of 4G capacity seen as critical for access to digital services and cheaper data costs.

"While the current ITA (Invitation to Apply) is not perfect, we believe the regulator has tried to strike a delicate balance for all players," Africa's biggest telecoms company said in a statement, adding that it had filed court papers to oppose Telkom's application.

Icasa on Wednesday censured Telkom's application calling the move "narrow and selfish".

Last year, Icasa was set to auction the spectrum when both Telkom and MTN objected to the process in separate filings, delaying what would have been the country's first spectrum auction in 14 years.

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