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Yota and IT Watchdog Make Peace in Frequencies Dispute

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A month after Prime Minister Vladimir Putin visited the Moscow office of Scartel, the wireless Internet provider has settled its conflict with the Federal IT and Mass Media Inspection Service over the distribution of fourth-generation network licenses as the ninth arbitration appeals court upheld an amicable agreement between the two.

Scartel, which operates under the Yota brand in Russia, had a falling out with the federal communications watchdog in July when, after initially issuing the company a license to use frequencies in the 2.5-2.7 gigahertz range, it revoked that license, prompting a lawsuit.

Under the new agreement, Scartel is to reapply to the federal service for the use of the frequencies, and the agency will have 15 days to make a decision, Interfax reported.

Analysts, however, say that, while it is good that the dispute over frequencies is over, the problem of technological neutrality remains unresolved.

"The tech neutrality principal should be applied so that, in the future, there are no violations of any technological requirements," said Anna Lepetukhina, telecommunications analyst at Troika Dialog.

Both WiMax and LTE networks can be built using the same frequencies, yet when frequencies are distributed by the regulator it specifies which equipment the frequencies are intended for.

This, Lepetukhina explained, leaves room for potential conflict over frequencies in the future and is the reason why mobile operators were careful about participating in previous frequencies auctions.

In early March, Putin visited Scartel to oversee the signing of an agreement by the big four telecommunications operators to create a joint venture to develop a 4G network on the basis of Yota's 4G structure.

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