

Six firms vie to run Syria's third mobile phone network

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DAMASCUS (AFP) - Six foreign companies have submitted bids for Syria's third mobile phone operator, the deputy minister of telecommunications said in remarks carried on Monday by the official SANA news agency.

Mohammed Jilali identified the companies as France Telecom, the United Arab Emirates-based Etisalat, Turkey's Turkcell, STC of Saudi Arabia, Qtel of Qatar and Iran's Tamco.

A ministerial commission is examining the bids which were made in September, Jilali said.

The company that wins the contract will run Syria's third mobile phone network alongside the private local firm Syriatel and South Africa's MTN.

Around 10.2 million people out of a population of 22 million have mobile phone subscriptions in Syria, official figures show, up from 2.9 million subscribers five years ago.

Syriatel and MTN won their licenses in 2001 through a 15-year BOT (build, operate and transfer) deal.