



# Orange negotiating acquisition of Airtel's African units

PARIS, FRANCE: French telecom group Orange announced on Monday it is in exclusive negotiations to purchase four African subsidiaries from India's biggest mobile company, Bharti Airtel...



"Orange and Airtel have entered into an exclusive agreement to explore the possible acquisition by Orange of Airtel's subsidiaries in Burkina Faso, Chad, Congo Brazzaville and Sierra Leone," the French group said in a statement.

Orange noted there was "no certainty of any binding agreement as a result of these discussions" currently underway with the Indian company's Netherlands-based affiliate, Bharti Airtel International.

The negotiations come as Orange president Stephane Richard pursues his drive to ramp up the telecom's development in Africa -- an effort that previously raised the possibility of the French group acquiring Bharti Airtel's African units last February.

At the end of 2014 Orange had 97.5 million clients in Africa and the Middle East, a regional customer base the company is looking to increase rapidly.

According to consultancy Deloitte, the number of smartphones in use in Africa is expected to double by 2017 to exceed 350 units, fuelled primarily by increasing sales of low-cost handsets.

Active in 29 countries with 247 million clients, Orange is a major global telecoms player -- generating 39 billion euros (\$42.2bn) in sales last year, and employing 155,000 people worldwide.

*Source: AFP*