Nokia Sues Bevy Of LCD Makers For Price Fixing

Matti Huuhtanen, Associated Press Writer

HELSINKI (AP) — Nokia Corp., the world's biggest mobile phone maker, said Tuesday it has filed suits against several leading liquid crystal display makers — including Philips, Toshiba, Sharp and Samsung — for alleged price fixing.

Nokia spokesman Mark Durrant said the suits — filed last month in the United States and Britain — came amid international criminal investigations in the U.S., the European Union "and elsewhere."

The companies, or their subsidiaries, named in the suits are AU Optronics Corp., Hitachi Ltd., LG Electronics Inc., Philips Electronics NV., Samsung Electronics Co., Seiko Epson Corp., Sharp Corp. and Toshiba Corp., Durrant said.

"The investigations are into alleged cartel activities, effectively price fixing, in the supply of both CRTs (cathode ray tubes) and LCDs (liquid crystal display) — components that we have bought in significant volumes over a number of years," Durrant said. "Had we not been overcharged for them our profitability would have been higher."

Durrant declined to say how much Nokia was claiming in compensation but said the sums involved were "not insignificant."

Companies named in the suits, including Sharp, Hitachi and LG Display, declined comment, saying they were unaware of the litigation.

Durrant said Nokia considers litigation as a "last resort" and is still open to agree "to appropriate compensation" with the companies.

He declined to say if talks between Nokia and the companies allegedly involved in price fixing were continuing outside the courts.

"Clearly there is no doubt that these activities have been happening and Nokia has been overcharged and we are taking the appropriate, responsible steps to recover the damage that has been caused," he added.

Nokia said that similar civil suits had been filed in the U.S. by other claimants.

Nokia, based in Espoo near the Finnish capital, sold 468 million handsets last year, up 7 percent on 2007.

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