

## US calling card firm to tap Indians in North America, Gulf

US-based calling card company Aryty - a slang for 'all righty' or 'no worries' - is setting up operations in India to tap the growing market for remitting prepaid phone minutes among the Indian diaspora in the US, Canada and the Gulf.

'Sending just a few dollars of prepaid mobile phone credit to your family and friends in India will allow them to call you whenever they want to talk to you,' said Harbinder Narula, vice president for India and the Middle East for Aryty.

'We started the service from the US and Canada to the Philippines about a year ago. Now, we are expanding this to India as well. This will be followed by similar services to India from the Gulf,' Narula told IANS.

According to him, Aryty allows people in the US and Canada to purchase calling credits - or phone call minutes - for friends and family abroad who use prepaid mobile phone plans.

This can be done in two ways - by sending phone credit online using the aryty.com Web site or from an individual's mobile phone using text messaging. The credit can be sent from any registered mobile phone in the US or Canada.

'This service will prove extremely attractive keeping in view the large number of the Indian diaspora and the social mindset of us Indians for whom family ties and being in contact with loved ones is important,' said Narula.

'The service becomes doubly handy since call rates from India is attractive and people in the US or Canada can send the recharge to the mobile phones of their friends and family back home and have the convenience of them calling back.'

As per various estimates, the US alone has a population of 2.7 million people with roots in India, while the Gulf has 5.5 million non-resident Indians. Even Canada has around 850,000-strong India community.

'We have already set up our Indian subsidiary and we are in discussions with all the mobile operators in India. We plan to launch our service in two weeks,' said Narula.

The Aryty executive explained that his company only charges the amount of the mobile phone credit that is sent by a customer. 'There is no transaction fee. Only the standard text messaging rates will apply.'

He said Aryty hopes to make its money from mobile phone companies by way of the commissions they give to their distributors. 'So, our customers do not have to bear any additional cost.'

Narula said all sensitive information submitted to Aryty's Web site is protected by high levels of encryption standards prescribed in the US and that there was no potential threat of data theft.

The Aryty executive said the company was aware of the competition from several other options available today like Internet telephony, on-line chat and Skype. 'But the clarity and convenience from

mobile phones has no match.'

*Himank Sharma ( © IANS / India eNews)*