

GSM players want mobile number portability across India

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), a body representing the country's leading GSM operators, Wednesday said it favours implementation of mobile number portability across the country.

'The COAI has emphasised that number portability should not be introduced in a selective and restrictive fashion,' the association said in a statement adding that it wants the policy to be implemented 'in a complete and holistic manner.'

Mobile number portability allows a user to shift operators without changing the number.

'Number portability benefits all customers, and there is no good reason why this benefit should not be made available to the overwhelming majority of Indian subscribers,' the statement added.

On Monday the Communications and IT Minister A. Raja said the government was going to introduce mobile number portability by the fourth quarter of 2008. He said it would be initially implemented on a trial basis only in Delhi, Mumbai, [Kolkata](#) and Chennai.

'The need for number portability is greater in B and C Circles, where the choice of operators is limited,' COAI said.

Referring CDMA handsets to be unfavourable for such a feature, COAI said: 'CDMA operators invariably lock their handsets so that their subscribers face high switching costs.'

Earlier, Bharti Airtel chief Sunil Mittal had welcomed the move, saying number portability would bolster the company's profit margins and it should be introduced across the country for the benefit of millions of consumers.

According to industry experts, mobile number portability would further intensify competition among telecom firms, ultimately benefiting consumers with better and more affordable services.

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