

PRESS RELEASE

COAI Seeks Full Portability for All Customers

- Deplores misinformation by vested interests

New Delhi dated 14th November'2007

We are greatly disappointed to note that certain vested interests are deliberately misrepresenting the COAI and the GSM industry position on Number Portability. We clarify as under :

1. The COAI and the GSM industry have clearly stated, even in a media report dated November 13, 2007, that they have no difficulty with the introduction of Number Portability. On the contrary, they are demanding an aggressive introduction of Number Portability, in a complete and holistic manner, to benefit all consumers, both fixed and mobile, and in all parts of India, not just the four metros. The COAI has emphasized that Number Portability should not be introduced in a selective and restrictive fashion. 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.
2. Licensing in India, in any event, is on a Service Area basis. Hence a phased implementation serves no purpose. The COAI states that a full implementation can and should be done concurrently, for all service areas, and for all consumers, mobile and fixed. In fact, the need for Number Portability is greater in B & C Circles, where the choice of operators is limited.
3. It should be noted that even after nearly five years of CDMA operations in the country, India still does not have the concept of unlocked CDMA handsets. CDMA operators invariably "lock" their handsets, so that their subscribers face high switching costs. As a result of a recent class – action lawsuit in the USA, the concerned US CDMA provider has agreed to unlock all handsets in their collection, so that these can also be activated by competing CDMA providers. (Source : <http://www.htlounge.net/articles/4450/1/CDMA-provider-Sprint-Nextel-agreed-to-Unlock-Phones>). The DoT and the TRAI, in the interests of consumers, could immediately decree that CDMA providers should unlock handsets. This will provide subscribers the freedom to choose between CDMA service providers, as indeed is the case with GSM service providers. Such a change should be carried out swiftly, without waiting for several months for the implementation of Number Portability.
4. In the fiercely competitive Indian market, the GSM operators enjoy high customer preference in their respective service areas, and are happy to embrace Number Portability. It is befitting that pure consumer choice should prevail. The GSM players have welcomed and thrived upon fair competition on level playing field terms.

In conclusion, the COAI deplores the misinformation being circulated, and reiterates that it welcomes an aggressive and comprehensive introduction of Number Portability, instead of a selective bits and parts approach.

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