

11-digit mobile number may come soon

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NEW DELHI: With phone operators expected to run out of 10-digit mobile numbers soon, the Department of Telecom (DoT) is now considering an 11-digit numbering system.

"With so many telecom service providers and a growing customer base, the need for new numbers and their consequent shortage will be felt soon," a senior telecom official, who did not want to be identified, told reporters on Saturday.

India has reportedly added 10.81 million mobile subscribers in December 2008.

"The TEC (Telecom Engineering Centre, DoT's technical arm) has recommended the new numbering plan that has been forwarded to the government for the final decision," the official said.

The telecom department had come up with a 30-year numbering plan in 2003 but the fast growth in the telecom subscriber base has forced the authority to relook into its policy and consider 11-digit numbering system.

"The infrastructure is ready and this should be implemented within two years," the official said.

Telecom operators said the new policy would not cause any technical problems.

"With such a robust growth, we would require new (number) series very soon. There would be no technical issues as such but the customers may have to face some problems initially," Aircel chief operating officer Gurdeep Singh told IANS.

Every telecom operator is allocated a series of mobile numbers on requirement basis - for six months or a year depending on the customer base it has.

"The change, however, will be in the software only and it will not take more than a month to upgrade the changes," the telecom official said.