

**Recommendations on “Efficient Utilization of Numbering Resources in India” Released  
TRAI recommends integrated numbering scheme for fixed and mobile services  
by 31st December, 2011.**

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) yesterday released the recommendations on “Efficient Utilization of Numbering Resources in India”.

The existing National Numbering Plan 2003 (NNP 2003) that was designed for 750 million connections including 450 million mobile connections and was designed to last till 2030, has come under severe strain with the mobile numbers having crossed that mark in 2009 itself. With the number of subscribers likely to exceed 1 billion by 2014, the situation calls for an urgent review to facilitate continued availability of numbers with minimum disruption to any service. The recommendations propose a solution in this regard.

In the recommendations, TRAI has proposed that the existing 10-digit numbering scheme should be continued to avoid inconvenience to the customers that would accompany any move to shift to an 11 digit numbering scheme. Giving a two pronged strategy, TRAI has recommended that India should migrate to an integrated numbering scheme for fixed and mobile services by 31st December, 2011. In other words both fixed line and mobile phones will have a 10-digit number. This would make available enough numbers to cater to expansion of existing services and introduction of new services for the next 30-40 years. This integrated numbering will also facilitate extension of number portability to fixed lines.

Till the integrated scheme is implemented the dialling of intra-circle calls from fixed lines to mobile will be with ‘0’ prefixed. This would enable exploitation of spare capacity available in the sublevels of existing Short Distance Charging Area (SDCA) codes, to the extent of about one billion numbers without affecting any telephone number or STD code.

Telephone numbers are a precious resource and should be utilized efficiently. In order to prevent accumulation of unutilized numbers by the service providers, the Authority has proposed that the service providers should not have more than 3 million unutilized numbers, in a service area, at the time of requesting a new block of numbers.

For making allocation of numbers more efficient, TRAI has recommended automation of the allocation process. This would help service providers in getting allocations online.

Once the recommendations are accepted, TRAI proposes to go ahead with the work of preparation of detailed plan for migration to the integrated numbering scheme.

Number resources have always played a central role in telecommunications and have acquired an important economic dimension with the liberalization of the telecommunications sector. Correspondingly significance of numbering as a regulatory instrument has also increased considerably with adequate, fair and transparent access to numbers becoming an essential part of ensuring a competitive telecommunications market.

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