GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA

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DELAY IN IMPLEMENTATION OF MNP SERVICS
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Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is delay in implementation of Mobile Number Portability (MNP) Services in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any time-frame has been fixed for implementation of MNP in the country;

(d) if so, the details thereof alongwith the measures adopted for security consideration in this regard;

(e) whether the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has recommended that only one operator may be licenced to provide MNP service in the country;

(f) if so, the reasons therefor;

(g) whether licensing two operators to implement MNP service will create more complications in terms of cost for the operators as compared to the original recommendations of TRAI; and

(h) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI A. RAJA)

(a) to (d) Madam, as per the conditions of License for Mobile Number Portability (MNP) Service, awarded to the MNP Service Providers, the MNP Service was to be implemented in the first phase in Metro cities and Category 'A' Service Areas (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu including Chennai, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka Service Areas) in September 2009 and in the rest of the country thereafter by March 2010. Later, the Government has decided to implement the MNP in one go in the whole country. For MNP implementation, all networks in the country are to be ready and tested before the MNP Service is implemented. Various activities are required to be carried out by the operators including technical augmentation and upgradation of their existing networks, carrying out required installation verification tests, establishing links with MNP Operators and conducting inter operator tests. All these are time consuming processes. After the service providers are ready with their own inter-operator test results, a complete Acceptance Test (A/T) is to be carried out by Department of Telecommunications (DOT) across the networks of all the concerned service providers in all the service areas before MNP Service is implemented so that no network problem in call processing/ completion, surfaces out after MNP Services are launched. The Government has reviewed the preparedness of the all Access and International Long Distance (ILD) Service Providers. Substantial progress has been made in augmentations and upgradation of the networks of the operators. The Department is making all efforts to get the MNP implementation at the earliest. The Access and ILD Service Providers have been instructed to complete the Inter Operator Test (IOT) by 15th May 2010 after which Acceptance Test (A/T) shall be carried out by Telecom Enforcement, Resource and Monitoring (TERM) Cells of DOT. TERM Cells have been asked to closely oversee the progress of call flow test. Based on successful completion of A/T, DOT will decide the date for launch of MNP Services in the country, expected by 30th June 2010. The main security concerns of the Security Agencies with regard to implementation of Mobile Number Portability are seamless lawful interception of messages/ call related information in case the ported number is already under lawful interception. The views of Ministry of Home Affairs on porting process for numbers under lawful interception is awaited. Thereafter, necessary instructions regarding porting process for numbers under lawful interception shall be issued.

(e) to (h) Madam, TRAI in its suo-moto recommendation dated 8th March 2006 originally had, inter alia, recommended that

(i) Mobile Operators through neutral third party shall establish logically centralised database with not more than 5 regionally located databases. Cost of this database shall be borne proportionately based on subscriber base by each operator. This database shall be depository for ported numbers.

(ii) Any other issues relating to creation of database, interfaces, performance parameters, service levels shall be resolved by discussion and coordination among all the stakeholders. A steering committee consisting of operators, industry association and TEC under the aegis of TRAI shall be constituted to workout the details of these implementation issues.

Later, based on the interim report of the Steering Committee, TRAI intimated that for MNP implementation in India, the neutral third party should own and operate MNP Clearing house and logically centralized data base. The MNP Clearing House Administrator (MCHA) and Number Portability Data Base (NPDB) will be owned and operated by one legal entity. However, such entity will be licensed by the DoT.

Subsequently, a Standing Committee on MNP was constituted in DoT to finalise the modalities for implementation of MNP. The Standing Committee deliberated the recommendations of TRAI on various issues including number of operators required to implement MNP in India. It came out that for large country like India with large mobile subscriber base, comparison should be made with similarly situated countries like USA having multiple clearing houses. Having multiple clearing houses in the country will provide alternative arrangement for dealing with the situations arising in case of eventuality of any unforeseen technical or commercial/ corporate failure of one clearing house. It will also bring competition and will be beneficial to customers.

Therefore, the government decided to induct one experienced neutral licensed operator each in the two zones of the country. Most of Access Service Provides and International Long Distance Operators have established their centrally located system in the country for MNP service instead of separate systems in each Licensed Service Area (LSA) and connected from their central systems to each of the MNP clearing houses in the two zones. Thus it appears that there are no complications in terms of cost for the operators in licensing two operators to implement MNP service as compared to the original recommendations of TRAI.