

# THE HINDU Business Line

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## DoT panel rejects 10-digit proposal for fixed-line phones

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New Delhi, Oct. 14:

A Department of Telecom panel has rejected the telecom regulator's proposal to introduce 10-digit number series for fixed-line telephones. The committee has said that the fixed-line phone number should continue to be eight digits, but the series should start with digits 2 and 4 only.

Currently, eight-digit fixed-line telephone number series starting with 3 is used by subscribers of Reliance Communications, 6 belongs to Tata Teleservices and 5 has been allocated to HFCL and Sistema Shyam.

### Enough capacity

While number series starting with 2 is currently exclusively used for subscribers of BSNL and MTNL, Bharti Airtel users are on series starting with 4. According to the committee, there is enough capacity left in 2 and 4 to accommodate all the other players to free up the other numbering series for wireless services.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India had suggested an integrated 10-digit number system for both mobile and fixed phones, as in the US. This was done in a bid to make more phone numbers available to cater to the growing subscriber base over the next 30-40 years.

The current numbering system was designed for 750 million connections. The numbering system was supposed to last till 2030, but it came under severe strain with mobile numbers crossing the mark in 2009 itself.

Rejecting the TRAI proposal, the DoT committee said that moving to a 10-digit series would require a lot of changes in the fixed-line exchanges, in the way calls are routed, and also in the billing software.

"In-C-DOT and other legacy wireline exchanges, it is not possible to implement 10-digit series. This will have adverse affect on rural telephony," the panel said in its report. It added that freeing up 5, 6 and 3 number series would make available nearly 2.7 billion additional numbers which would be enough to meet mobile growth.

If the DoT accepts its committee's proposal, then fixed-line users of RCom, Tata Teleservices, HCFL and Shyam Sistema will get a new prefix to their phone numbers. There will be no change for Bharti Airtel and BSNL/MTNL subscribers.

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## Alternative plan

**Continue with**

**8-digits**

**Use only number**

**series starting with 2 and 4**

**Free up series**

**with 3,6 and 5 for mobile phone numbers**

**Phone numbers**

**of RCom, Tata Tele, HFCL, Sistema to change, if plan accepted.**

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