

Escotel may make M2M incoming calls free from Aug 6

Suresh R Menon in Kochi

With its nearest competitor, BPL Mobile Cellular, offering mobile-to-mobile (M2M) incoming calls free from Thursday, Escotel Mobile Communication is likely to announce free M2M incoming calls for its customers with effect from August 6.

Escotel, a joint venture of Delhi-based Escorts and Hong Kong-based First Pacific Company, currently operates its cellular phone services in Kerala, Uttar Pradesh (West) and Haryana circles.

Industry sources say, if Escotel delays the introduction of free M2M incoming calls any more, it may start losing customers to its competitors.

Escotel is the market leader in the cellular phone segment in Kerala and has a customer base of 2.6 lakh subscribers.

BPL Mobile and Airtel are the other two mobile phone operators in the state, with BPL Mobile placed at the second position with 150,000 customers. Bharat Sanchar Nigam is also expected to launch its cellular service this month.

According to Escotel chief operating officer (Kerala) V G Somashekhar, out of the total 1,02,200 new mobile phone subscribers added in Kerala during the 12 months ending June 30, 2002, around 93,000 customers have opted for Escotel services.

Escotel has been granted licences to operate GSM mobile services in Punjab, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh (East) and is expected to launch its operations in these four circles within the next one month.

Meanwhile, Escotel has announced a new scheme termed 'Call & Fly Free to Dubai' for its postpaid and prepaid customers.

Cherian Peter, general manager (sales and marketing) said, under this scheme, all Escotel customers who make international calls worth Rs 100 in the month of August would become eligible for a lucky draw, which will select two winners and present them with free return tickets to Dubai.

For the scheme, Escotel has tied up with Oman Air and there would be four weekly draws offering a total of eight prizes in August, he added.

Revealing that the ISD facility has already been activated for all prepaid customers and postpaid customers can get the facility at a reduced refundable security deposit of Rs 5,000, he said: "The 'Call & Fly Free to Dubai' offer will act as an additional incentive to customers to take full advantage of the 40 per cent reduction in ISD rates being offered by us," he added.

Emphasising that an Escotel subscriber becomes eligible for the weekly draw the moment he makes international calls worth Rs 100, Peter said: "All those who reach Rs 100 in the first week itself will get to participate in all the four weekly draws to be held in August, which means they stand a better chance of winning the prize."