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Start of Cell Phone Migration Leads to Operator Discord

By The Moscow Times

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Operators are complaining of competitors rejecting transfer requests. **Vladimir Filonov**

Hundreds of consumers have been rejected by mobile operators when attempting to transfer to another network and keep their phone numbers, even after a law ending "mobile slavery" took effect on Dec. 1, Vedomosti reported Tuesday.

Mobile operators have flooded the Communications and Press Ministry with complaints, accusing their competitors of ignoring consumers' applications to switch providers, the business daily said.

VimpelCom was the first to report the problem, making a complaint about MegaFon. MTS then made a complaint about both MegaFon and VimpelCom, which owns the Beeline brand.

The most common reason for a rejected request to move to another provider is that mobile operators have been declaring applications to switch networks invalid. A Federal

Communications Agency spokesman, Vladimir Kalinin confirmed that there had been rejections but did not provide an exact figure.

MTS spokesman Dmitry Solodovnikov said MTS was fully ready to give away its numbers and had all the necessary equipment set up.

VimpelCom is also ready to provide the new service, said company spokeswoman Anna Aybasheva. But not all the other operators are ready to the same extent because some of them had not introduced a new routing system to deliver calls and messages from a one mobile operator's network to another, she added.

At the beginning of December, Aybasheva had asked customers to wait until mid-January to switch networks because of possible issues with companies processing payments — a sentiment that was echoed by other operators, who complained that they were not given sufficient time to prepare for the new service.

MegaFon spokeswoman Yuliya Dorokhina said all the mobile operators had problems with the new service, which she blamed on a lack of proper testing before offering to real customers.

Communications and Press Minister Nikolai Nikiforov gathers telecom operators for discussions on number portability every week, ministry spokeswoman Yekaterina Osadchaya said.

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