

Global mobile use to pass 50 per cent mark

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Taking over: Half of all human beings will soon be making mobile phone calls (Getty Images: Harry How)

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Global mobile phone use will pass the three billion mark, equivalent to half the world's population, for the first time in 2007 as mobile phone demand booms in China, India and Africa, a survey said.

From African farmers to Chinese factory workers, mobile operators will have notched up more than 3.25 billion mobile phone subscriptions worldwide by the end of the year, according to a report by UK-based telecoms analysis company The Mobile World.

Along with the Internet, the mobile phone has revolutionised communication, spreading from city whiz kids to Brazilian slum dwellers.

More than 1,000 new customers are effectively signing up for mobile phones every minute around the world, the survey showed.

"It took over 20 years to connect the first billion subscribers, but only 40 months to connect the second billion," said The Mobile World Co-Founder John Tysoe.

"The three billion milestone will be passed in July 2007, just two years on."

Analysts have forecast that 65 per cent of all handsets made this year will be sold in emerging markets

as manufacturers, such as Nokia of Finland and Motorola of the United States, push out low-cost phones and mobile phone operators cut call charges.

The figures cited in the survey take account of multiple mobile subscriptions by customers.

Penetration in Europe has topped 100 per cent of the population, with 666 million mobile connections.

"With handsets and services becoming ever more affordable, the prospect of a fully connected mobile world is becoming ever more real," the report said.

A record 240 million handsets were sold and 135 million new customers signed up to mobile phone networks in the quarter to the end of March.

In terms of connections, the last quarter was the third strongest in the industry's history after the fourth quarters of 2004 and 2006, when 142 million and 163 million signed up respectively.

- Reuters

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