

Rapid rise in N.Korea mobile phone use: report

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The number of mobile phone subscribers in the communist state stood at over 120,000 in April, said the Chosun Sinbo, a pro-North Korean newspaper published in Tokyo.

Equipment for [mobile service](#) has been set up in more than half of North Korean cities and counties, it said.

The regime is expanding its wireless telecom network to accommodate about 600,000 subscribers before the end of this year, the paper said.

North Korea has strictly controlled access to outside information and fixes the tuning controls of radios and televisions to official stations.

It began a [mobile phone](#) service in November 2002 but shut it down without explanation 18 months later and began recalling handsets.

But in December 2008, the country introduced a [3G mobile phone network](#) in a joint venture with Cairo-based Orascom Telecom.

Mobile phones in use in Pyongyang are made in neighbouring China.

The paper quoted Choe Un, head of the North's mobile telecom department, as saying the country plans to produce its own phones in six months.

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