EDITION
INDIA ⌄

Monday, Sep 30, 2024

EPAPER   TODAY'S PAPER

The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

TRENDING   Mumbai News — Delhi News — Chandigarh News — Bangalore News — Pune News — Lucknow News — Ahmedabad News

News / India / Amid reports of 'cyber slavery', telecom ministry to disconnect 2.17 crore mobile connections

Amid reports of 'cyber slavery', telecom ministry to disconnect 2.17 crore mobile connections

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) said it has taken several measures to effectively implement Know Your Customer (KYC) for the procurement of SIM cards.

Written by **Mahender Singh Manral** (Follow)

New Delhi | Updated: October 1, 2024 02:26 IST

✅**NewsGuard**

🕐 4 min read

f   X   ⊙   ⊙

In May, the telecom operators were directed by DoT to block all incoming international spoofed calls that display Indian mobile numbers. (Representational)

The Union Ministry of Telecommunications has informed the Centre's high-level inter-ministerial panel it will disconnect around 2.17 crore mobile connections, that are either taken on forged documents or misused in cybercrime, and also block 2.26 lakh mobile handsets.

Earlier this month, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) is learnt to have shared the data at a meeting held by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) with the officials of Bureau of Immigration, Financial Intelligence Unit, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity), National Investigation Agency (NIA), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), security experts of other agencies, and senior officials of all states and Union Territories.

On March 28, _The Indian Express_ reported that more than 5,000 Indians were suspected to be trapped in Cambodia after being allegedly held against their will, and forced to carry out cyber frauds. According to government estimates, Indians had been duped of at least Rs 500 crore in the six months before March this year. The Centre had then set up the inter-ministerial panel to look into the issue and identify the loopholes. The panel is learnt to have identified gaps in the banking, immigration, and telecom sectors.

measures to effectively implement Know Your Customer (KYC) for the procurement of SIM cards. "They are also disconnecting around 2.17 crore mobile connections, that are either taken on fake/forged documents, more than prescribed limit or misused in cyber-crime/financial frauds. They are also blocking 2.26 lakh mobile handsets," said a source in the security establishment.

In May, the telecom operators were directed by DoT to block all incoming international spoofed calls that display Indian mobile numbers. "The telecom ministry has also informed that now 35 per cent of incoming international calls are being dropped and it will be fully implemented by December 31 this year," the source said.

DoT said in the meeting that to identify roaming phone numbers in scam compounds in the Southeast Asia region, all the telecom service providers (TSPs) have been asked to provide data every week for Indian mobile numbers, which are under roaming facility in Hong Kong, Cambodia, Laos, Philippines, and Myanmar. "As per information received from the DoT, the total number of Indian SIM cards roaming in the Southeast Asia region is more than 6 lakh for the duration of April-June of this year. More than 1.4 lakh point of sale (PoS) agents are involved in selling these SIM cards across India. All the States/UTs police were requested to take appropriate legal action against these PoS agents allegedly involved with such sale of Indian SIMs, which is further used in scam compounds in Southeast Asia," the source said.

Analysis of data by the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), a division of MHA, had found an increase in the number of cyber crimes targeting Indians — about 45 per cent were found to originate from the Southeast Asia region. Around 1 lakh cyber complaints have been registered with the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal since January 2023.

The Indian Express reported earlier the victims are sent to South East Asian countries after being told they would get "lucrative" data entry jobs, and are then forced to carry out cyber frauds. Some of the rescued men told The Indian Express that after they were sent to these countries, their passports would be taken away. The men were then employed by these "scamming companies", to create fake social media accounts, using photos of women, to lure people to invest in a cryptocurrency app or fraud investment funds. As soon as some of these people invested, they would be "ghosted" by stopping all communication or "blocked".

[*Click here to join The Indian Express on WhatsApp and get latest news and updates*](#)

Mahender Singh Manral   [Follow]

Mahender Singh Manral is an Assistant Editor with the national bureau of The Indian Express. He is known for his impactful and breaking stories. He covers the Minist **... Read More**

First uploaded on: 30-09-2024 at 11:27 IST