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# Marcos signs law mandating SIM card registration

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LIVESTREAM: President Marcos signs SIM Registration Act - Replay



President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. on Monday signed into law a measure seeking the registration of Subscriber Identity Module, which aims to promote accountability in the use of SIMs.

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The ceremonial signing was held at the Ceremonial Hall of Malacañang with key government officials in attendance.

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The SIM Registration Act or Republic Act 11934 seeks to end crimes using the platform including text and online scams by regulating the sale and the use of SIMs through mandating registration to end-users.

In his speech, Marcos said with the signing of the law, the government has achieved an effective means of regulating the issuance of SIMs to curb the spread of spam text messages and scams.

"We will soon be able to provide law enforcement agencies with the tools needed to resolve crimes perpetrated with the use of these SIM cards, as well as providing a strong deterrence against the commission of wrongdoing," Marcos said.

"Crucially as well, included in this crucial piece of legislation are provisions that make paramount the protection of confidentiality and data privacy rights of subscribers, which shall begin to take effect at the point of sale," he added.

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"Crucially as well, included in this crucial piece of legislation are provisions that make paramount the protection of confidentiality and data privacy rights of subscribers, which shall begin to take effect at the point of sale," he added.

The President ensured that any information in the SIM registration shall be treated as "absolutely confidential unless access to this information has been granted by the written consent of the subscriber."

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"These public telecommunication entities (PTEs) shall only be required to disclose information contained in the SIM card, upon a duly issued subpoena or order of a court upon finding of probable cause," Marcos said.

"They can likewise be compelled to do so upon written request from a law enforcement agency in relation to an ongoing investigation, that a particular number is used in the commission of a crime or that it was used as a means to commit an unlawful act," he added.

The law mandates all public telecommunication entities to submit a verified list of their authorized dealers and agents nationwide to the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) and an updated list of the same every quarter of each year.

According to the law, failure to comply within the prescribed period shall authorize the PTEs to automatically deactivate its services to the specific existing prepaid SIM subscriber.

The new law provides provisions on Confidentiality and Non-disclosure of Information which prohibit disclosure of any information of a subscriber, unless upon subpoena or lawful order from a competent court or written request from law enforcement agency in relation to an ongoing investigation, that a particular number requested is used in the commission of a crime.

The confidentiality clause in the SIM registration shall take effect at the point of sale, the law states.

The law also mandates appropriate penalties for failure to register a SIM, for breach of confidentiality, for breach of confidentiality due to negligence, for providing false or fictitious information or for using fictitious identities or

fraudulent identification of documents to register a SIM, for spoofing a registered SIM, for sale of stolen SIM, and for sale or transfer of a registered SIM without complying with required registration.

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Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) Secretary Ivan John Uy said the National Telecommunications Commission would set the period for the telecommunication firms to facilitate the registration process.

"I think the prescribed time has to be set by NTC and with the consultation with the telcos kasi they have to prepare the systems, they have to prepare their people in order to do this," Uy told reporters.

"I think madali na, maraming process... for instance, one way I'm thinking of approaching it is lahat tayo may cellphone na eh. So the telcos will just send you a notice na please go to this site and validate, put in your validation na kayo 'yun and then take a picture of your ID and then upload it and then they can verify whether that's correct or not," he added.

(I think this will be easy... for instance, one way I'm thinking of approaching it is we all have cellphones so the telcos will just send a notice that you need to go to this site and validate, and then take a picture of your ID and then upload it and then they can verify whether that's correct or not.)

Asked if there is already an estimated number of prepaid users who need to be registered, Uy said he is not privy to it.

"Yung mga telcos nakakaalam noon eh kasi maraming mga claims and ang iba diyan kasi lalo na kung prepaid, pag gamit tapon so sa sistema nila nandoon pero di na ginagamit so I think they need to revalidate all of that," Uy said.

(The telcos have that information because there are a lot of claims and some, especially those using prepaid, if they are finished using the sim, they will just throw it away so I think they need to revalidate all of that.)

## Long-overdue

Meanwhile, Senator Grace Poe, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Public Services and one of the authors of the law, lauded the signing, calling it long-overdue.

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"We worked hard to pass the legislation anew as a crucial first step to fend off text scammers, while guaranteeing utmost respect to fundamental human rights," Poe said in a statement.

"The law has instituted sufficient safeguards that accord primacy to consumers' right to privacy to ensure a safe and secure mobile use in the country," she added.

For his part, Senator Jinggoy Estrada said this landmark legislation is envisioned to deter cybercrime and other electronic communication-aided criminal activities.

"At a time of rapid digital adoption driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, it's imperative to have laws that are more attuned to the times and the needs of society – not only in the ways Filipinos communicate, work, engage in e-commerce, access information, etc.," Estrada said in a separate statement.

On the other hand, Senator JV Ejercito expressed gratitude to Marcos for signing the measure.

"I commend my colleagues at the Senate, especially Senator Grace Poe, our chair at the Senate Committee on Public Services, for making this possible. We ourselves have fallen victim to the text scams that the SIM Card Registration Act hopes to address," said Ejercito in a separate statement.

"We assure the public that we will be closely monitoring the implementation of this Act, the first bill to be signed into law under this administration. We will ensure that the fears and anxieties of some groups about this Act will not materialize."

Senior Deputy Majority Leader and Ilocos Representative Ferdinand Alexander "Sandro" Marcos, meanwhile, said this law is a welcome addition to the security of the public's personal information.

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"I think the most obvious thing that people will feel is hopefully mawawala na 'yung mga scam texts na nakukuha natin like I said before, medyo nakakatakot kasi pati ngayon, dinagdag din 'yung mga pangalan ng tao," the younger Marcos said in an ambush interview.

(I think the most obvious thing that people will feel is hopefully scam texts will no longer proliferate. Nowadays, it's somehow scary because our names are being included in the text messages.)

Marcos also said other countries are already enforcing this mandatory SIM registration.

"I think it's more of an inconvenience getting those messages on a daily basis, I think if you waive those two, and you have to understand also that these regulations and these rules are some things that are apparent in other countries already. So, this is nothing new and let's see... I hope it has desired effects," he said.

Aside from deterring crimes, Uy believes that this could help in digital banking in the future. He added that this could even be integrated with the national ID so that the public could use this when paying government agencies.

"Eventually, I think that can be used for digital banking and digital payments diba? Kasi once you are able to verify now that these people are legitimate people and even if they're not registered with GCash, eventually maybe some other PayMaya or WeChat pay," Uy said. — **RSJ/KBK, GMA News**

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