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Monkey's photo passes in SIM card registration in Philippines



MANILA, Philippines – A photo of a monkey is enough to register a Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) card in the Philippines.

This was exactly what the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Cybercrime Division did when they tested the SIM registration systems of telecommunication companies.

NBI Cybercrime Division Chief Jeremy Lotoc said in a Senate hearing on Tuesday, September 5, that anyone can easily fake one's identity online and use a SIM despite supposed verification systems in place.

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register using different identities.

“If you’re with the telcos and you see this application form of a monkey smiling at you, what the heck are you doing?” asked Senator Joel Villanueva during the hearing.

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Globe Telecom, through legal group head Ariel Tubayan, said they have asked for access to government ID issuers to validate the documents submitted by registrants.

In an emailed statement, Globe Telecom said it is aligned with the Senate’s intent to find out why malicious and dangerous text messages continue to find their way to mobile users’ phones despite the law and industry efforts to clamp down on fraudsters.

“Criminals will always find a way to circumvent the law. That’s why we continue to collaborate with stakeholders to be a step ahead. The SIM Registration Act, which gives teeth to our efforts against fraudsters, is a major initial step towards curbing cybercrime. To be effective, it needs multi-stakeholder efforts and beefed-up law enforcement,” said Froilan Castelo, Globe Telecom Group general counsel.

Meanwhile, DITO Telecommunity government affairs head Niño Martin Cruz said telcos use “face liveness,” where the platform recognizes faces when one registers. All telcos also use optical recognition technology to help verify details in submitted IDs.



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Smart Communications vice president and head of regulatory affairs Roy Ibay admitted that there are “technical glitches” that could happen, and they are currently perfecting the implementation of technologies that verify one’s identity.

Ibay also noted that verifying identities through the portal is not “simply a plug-and-play solution,” adding that telcos were still improving their systems even after the SIM registration of existing users ended.

The [SIM Registration Act](#) aims to curb text scams through [mandatory registration](#). To date, there are over [118 million registered SIM cards nationwide](#). – [Rappler.com](#)

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