

OFCA conducts new round of market surveillance on real-name registration for SIM cards (with photos)

The Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) conducted today (November 21) a new round of market surveillance and publicity and education activities around Apliu Street in Sham Shui Po, and distributed pamphlets to members of the public and traders to remind them not to use, purchase or sell pre-paid SIM (PPS) cards from unknown sources or allegedly having completed real-name registration.

"To raise public understanding of the Real-name Registration Programme (Real-name Registration Programme) for SIM Cards and ensure traders' compliance with the registration requirements, the OFCA conducts ongoing market surveillance and publicity and education activities to remind members of the public to complete real-name registration with their own original identity document, and not to purchase or resell registered PPS cards, with a view to protecting their own interests and avoiding any loss and criminal liability. Meanwhile, the OFCA urges traders not to assist any persons in using the identity document of any third party in completing real-name registration, and not to sell PPS cards allegedly having completed registration," a spokesman for the OFCA said.

The spokesman added, "The OFCA has been maintaining close contact with telecommunications service providers, requesting them to strengthen the inspection of user information of the registered PPS cards. In case of any suspicious cases, they should promptly be referred to law enforcement agencies for follow-up. Up to the end of October 2023, in accordance with the legal requirements and relevant guidelines, telecommunications service providers had deregistered around 1 000 000 non-compliant PPS cards and rejected around 360 000 registration requests owing to the failure to provide information that meets the registration requirements. The OFCA will continue to request telecommunications service providers to enhance their registration platforms and strengthen sample checks of the registration information, including expediting the introduction of the Government's 'iAM Smart' application to verify the identity of the registrants."

The spokesman emphasised that providing false information and/or false document under the Real-name Registration Programme may constitute a criminal offence. Depending on the nature of the act and proof of evidence, the applicable offences include obtaining services by deception under section 18A of the Theft Ordinance (Cap. 210) and/or using false instrument under section 73 of the Crimes Ordinance (Cap. 200). In addition, any person who knowingly transfers PPS cards for illicit purpose may be liable for aiding and abetting the commission of the relevant offence under section 89 of the Criminal Procedure Ordinance (Cap. 221).

Under the Real-name Registration Programme, all SIM cards issued and

used locally (including service plan SIM cards and PPS cards) must have their real-name registration completed before service activation. The OFCA will continue to carry out a series of monitoring and enforcement actions to ensure that telecommunications service providers and other relevant parties comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines.

Telecommunications service providers also conduct sample checks on the registration information from time to time. Upon the receipt of an SMS message from his/her telecommunications service provider using the designated sender address "SIMREG", the user subject to sample check must provide his/her own identity document again as soon as possible by following the instructions provided in the SMS message for verification of the registered information. If the user subject to sample check is unable to provide relevant information to complete the verification before the stipulated deadline, the relevant PPS card will be deregistered and cannot be used afterwards.

For details of the Real-name Registration Programme, please visit the OFCA's website (www.ofca.gov.hk/simreg/en).

