

Phase one of Real-name Registration Programme for SIM Cards to commence tomorrow

The Telecommunications (Registration of SIM Cards) Regulation (the Regulation) will take effect tomorrow (September 1) to implement the Real-name Registration Programme for Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) Cards (Real-name Registration Programme). The Real-name Registration Programme requires that all SIM cards issued by telecommunications operators of Hong Kong to be used for local person-to-person communications shall have real-name registration within a specified period before activation.

The Real-name Registration Programme will be implemented in two phases. Telecommunications operators are required to put in place relevant infrastructure and systems for implementing real-name registration within phase one (i.e. on or before February 28, 2022). During this period, the public can continue with the existing use of pre-paid SIM (PPS) cards and there is no imminent need for real-name registration.

Phase two of the Real-name Registration Programme will begin on March 1, 2022. All newly effective SIM service plan (SSP) services and new PPS cards issued from this date onwards will require real-name registration before activation. Existing PPS card users are required to complete real-name registration with respective telecommunications operators before the end of phase two (i.e. on or before February 23, 2023). PPS cards without real-name registration can no longer be used after phase two. Existing SSP users are not required to re-register with their telecommunications operators unless they change to another operator or subscribe to a new phone number.

The Real-name Registration Programme will plug the existing loophole arising from the anonymous nature of SIM cards to assist law enforcement agencies in the detection of crimes involving the use of such SIM cards, thereby safeguarding the integrity of telecommunications services and the security of the communications network, as well as law and order. According to the Regulation, each individual user may register no more than 10 PPS cards with each telecommunications operator whereas each corporate user may register up to 25 PPS cards with each telecommunications operator. There is no limit on the number of registrable SSP cards. For details of the Real-name Registration Programme, please visit the website:

www.cedb.gov.hk/ccib/en/legco-business/document/LegCo%20Brief%20SIM_EN.pdf.

The Communications Authority has also issued guidelines to telecommunications operators to provide specific operational details and requirements of the Real-name Registration Programme. The guidelines will take effect concurrently tomorrow.