

International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) number

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In news- The Ministry of Communication has made it **mandatory for mobile phone manufacturers to register the IMEI number** of all handsets made in India with the government.

New rules-

- In a recent gazette notification **amending the prevention of tampering of the Mobile Device Equipment Identification Number, Rules, 2017**, the Ministry has said that the **manufacturer shall register the international mobile equipment identity number of every mobile phone manufactured in India with the Indian Counterfeited Device Restriction portal** of the Government of India in the Department of Telecommunications prior to the first sale of the mobile phone.
- It added that the **IMEI number of mobile phones imported in India for sale, testing, research or any other purpose will also have to be registered** on the same government portal prior to the import of the mobile phone into the country.

What is IMEI number?

- The IMEI is a **unique number that is used to identify a device on a mobile network.**
- It has **15 digits and is like a phone's unique identity.**
- The number is used to verify the identity of a device when a user uses the Internet or places a call through it. Phones with a dual-SIM option have two IMEI numbers, one for each SIM.
- **The IMEI number can help network providers track down a**

device in case it gets stolen or is lost.

- Once such loss or theft is reported, the carriers can deny the device access to the cellular network even with a new SIM card.

Earlier measures-

- In a bid to curtail the rampant cloning and theft of mobile phones, the **Communications Ministry had earlier rolled out a Central Equipment Identity Register.**
- The identity **register categorises mobile phones based on their IMEI status in three lists – white, grey and black.** Mobile phones with IMEI numbers on the white list are permitted for use, while those on the blacklist are the ones that are reported stolen or lost and are not be allowed to access the network.
- Devices with IMEI numbers in the greylist do not conform to standards but are permitted to connect under supervision.
- The register also allows the DoT to carry out IMEI-based “lawful interception”.
- **In 2017, the government had notified rules to prevent tampering with IMEI numbers of phones by making it a punishable offence** which could also attract a jail term.
- The DoT had announced its plan to implement this project in July 2017 and a pilot was conducted in Maharashtra.