



# IMEI Number

## Why in News?

The [Department of Telecommunications \(DoT\)](#) has made it mandatory for mobile phone manufacturers to register the [International Mobile Equipment Identity \(IMEI\)](#) of all handsets made in India with the **Indian Counterfeited Device Restriction portal** of Government of India.

- The IMEI number of mobile phones imported to India will also have to be registered on the same portal of the Government prior to the import of the mobile phone into the country.

## What is an IMEI Number?

- **About:** 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 telecom department and the customs department work together to check and record the IMEI numbers of handsets that come into India.
- **Functions:** 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 has 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.
- **Categorisation:** The Communications Ministry had earlier rolled out a **Central Equipment Identity Register (CIER)**, which **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 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.
- **Prevention of Tampering:** 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.

## What was the need for Making IMEI Number Mandatory?

- It has been found that the IMEI numbers have been **reprogrammed for creating duplicate handsets** as well, right from the supplier to the seller, one may not realise that a phone with a duplicate code has been sold.
- **Reduce Theft & Cloning of Mobile Phones:** The theft and cloning of mobile phones has become a serious problem. The theft of mobile phones is not just a financial loss but also a **threat to the personal life of the citizens as well as national security**.

**UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)**

**Prelims**

**Q. Which among the following do/does not belong/ belongs to GSM family of wireless technologies? (2010)**

- (a) EDGE
- (b) LTE
- (c) DSL
- (d) Both EDGE and LTE

**Ans: (c)**

**Exp:**

- GSM (Global System for Mobile communication) is a digital mobile network that is widely used by mobile phone users. GSM, together with other technologies, is part of the evolution of wireless mobile telecommunications that includes High-Speed Circuit-Switched Data (HSCSD), General Packet Radio Service (GPRS), Enhanced Data GSM Environment (EDGE) and Universal Mobile Telecommunications Service (UMTS).
- **LTE or Long-Term Evolution is a standard for wireless broadband communication for mobile devices** and data terminals which is based on the GSM/EDGE and UMTS technologies. It increases the capacity and speed using a different radio interface together with core network improvements.
- On the other hand, DSL or Digital Subscriber Line is a family of technologies that are used to transmit digital data over telephone lines, thus it is not a wireless technology. **Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.**

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