GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 52
TO BE ANSWERED ON 2ND FEBRUARY, 2024

INCREASE IN UNWANTED ADVERTISING AND SPAM CALLS

52   Shri Raghav Chadha:

Will the Minister of Communications be pleased to state:

(a)   whether there has been an increase in unwanted advertising and spam calls in the recent past;

(b)   the measures in place to allow telecom users to opt out of receiving such calls;

(c)   whether Government has observed any linkages between spam calling and cyber fraud;

(d)   the strategies in place to enhance cyber security in the telecommunications sector, particularly against scams involving unconditional call forwarding; and

(e)   the steps being taken to educate the public about identifying and reporting telecom-related cyber frauds and spam calls?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS
(SHRI DEVUSINH CHAUHAN)

(a) to (e)   Government is committed to ensuring the safety and security of telecommunication users and has adopted various security measures as including:

   i.   Strengthening the existing Know Your Customer (KYC) framework.
  ii.   Mandating indisputable verification of each Point of Sale (PoS) by Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) while registering them for issuing Subscriber Identification Module (SIM).
 iii.   Blacklisting of PoS across all the TSPs in case of non-compliance of instructions.
  iv.   Re-verification of all users enrolled by non-compliant PoS.
   v.   Replacement of old bulk connections framework by a new business connections
  vi.   Framework having mandatory KYC of each end-user before activation.
 vii.   Introduction of a robust KYC process for SIM Swap/replacement.
viii.   Discontinuation of Paper based KYC process w.e.f. 01.01.2024.
  ix.   Launch of a citizen centric services Sanchar Saathi portal (www.sancharsaathi.gov.in) facilitating the citizens to check mobile connections taken in their name and reporting the mobile connection(s) not required/taken by them.

Impact of these measures:

1.	Number of mobile connections disconnected taken on fake/forged documents	55.52 lakh
2.	Number of requests resolved under 'Know Your Mobile Connections' facility	27 lakh
3.	Number of suspected mobile connections reported by citizens and disconnected failing re-verification	13.42 lakh
4.	Mobile phones traced under 'Block Your Lost or Stolen Mobile' facility	5.60 lakh
5.	Mobile phones recovered by State Police and returned to citizens	63,548
6.	Point of Sales (PoS) blacklisted	70,313
7.	Number of FIRs registered against errant PoSs	365
8.	Number of mobile connections disconnected involved in cyber-crime / financial frauds as reported by law enforcement agencies on National Cyber Crime reporting portal	2.78 lakh
9.	Mobile phones blocked for involvement in cyber-crime / financial frauds	1.32 lakh
10.	Accounts disengaged by WhatsApp which were linked to disconnected mobile connections taken on fake / forged documents	2.21 lakh
11.	Number of illegal telecom setups busted since 2021	162
12.	No. of principle entities (PE) sending SMS, headers and content templates blocked	19,776 PEs 30,700 Headers 1.95 lakh Templates
13.	Number of accounts frozen by Banks and Payment wallets which were linked with disconnected mobile connections taken on fake/forged documents	9.83 lakh
14.	Amount of money saved which was siphoned off by cyber criminals and number of citizens helped	More than Rs. 1,000 crore of 4 lakh citizens

Several measures have been taken to protect consumers from pesky calls and spam commercial messages. TRAI has issued Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preference Regulations, 2018 (TCCCPR-2018) and directions are issued thereunder from time to time. Users have the option to block commercial communications in specific categories or all of them.

Since 2019, more than 20 Telemarketers, roughly 500 PEs, more than 3,000 SMS headers, and more than 40,000 content templates have been put on a blacklist for sending phishing SMS or Unsolicited Commercial Communication (UCC).

In compliance with the TRAI regulations, Telecom Service Providers have temporarily deactivated more than 4 Lakh headers and over 11 Lakh content templates to prevent the transmission of promotional messages through unregistered telemarketers or telemarketers using 10-digit telephone numbers.

Government conducted an AI/ML (Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning) based analysis of the entities sending commercial SMS with their headers and content templates, more than 20,000

Principal Entities (PEs), 30,000 SMS headers and 1.95 lakh SMS content templates have been removed.

As per the Performance Monitoring Reports (PMRs) submitted by Mobile Companies, action taken against Unregistered Telemarketers (UTMs) during April-2020 to September-2023 is as follows.

- Usage caps were imposed in 7,90,843 number of cases during investigation of complaints.
- Warning notices were issued in 11,06,920 number of cases for first instance of violations.
- Usage caps were imposed for 6 months in 1,92,816 number of cases for second instance of violation.
- 74,113 telephone connections were disconnected for violating regulations for third time.

So far, TRAI has imposed Financial Disincentive amounting to Rs. 109.92 crores in accordance with the provisions of TCCCPR-2018.

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