

ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL DATABASE FOR LOST/STOLEN MOBILE PHONE AND INTRODUCTION OF NATIONWIDE HANDSET BLOCKING SERVICE

Mobile phone theft and its reuse is a major problem in many countries around the world and this trend is also increasing in Malaysia and immediate attention needs to be given to this issue.

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) in collaboration with the Mobile Service Providers and with the support of the Malaysian Royal Police, FOMCA and Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation is planning to set up our very own National Database for Lost and Stolen Mobile Phones and simultaneously introduce a nationwide handset blocking service.

The benefit of establishing a National Database and the blocking services is many fold which includes:-

- Reduction in mobile phone related crimes such as snatch thefts and mobile phone robberies
- Enhancement of personal security of mobile phone users especially among the children and the elderly
- Reduction in Government's revenue leakage due to unapproved and unpaid tax mobile phones smuggled into the country

Prior to establishing the National Database, MCMC is studying the experiences of other countries around the world who has successfully implemented their own national lost/stolen phone blocking service. One of the countries that is currently being studied is the United Kingdom.

How would the Database work?

All mobile phones are assigned a unique 15 digit International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) code upon production. The IMEI is unique to every GSM and UMTS mobile phones.

The IMEI number can be used by the GSM network to identify valid devices and can be used to stop stolen phones from accessing the network. If an owner's mobile phone is stolen, the owner can contact their respective network provider and instruct them to block the mobile phone using their IMEI number. Once the mobile phone is blocked, it renders the phone useless regardless whether the phone's SIM card is changed.

It is hoped that with the establishment of the National Database, if a mobile phone is stolen or lost, the owner would contact the Database to blacklist the device making it unusable and eventually rendering theft of mobile phones a useless business.