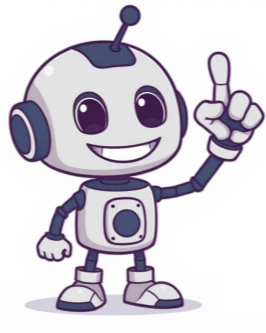


I'm not a robot



The Centres new SIM-binding rules will now determine how long you can stay logged in to WhatsApp Web and other web platforms of messaging apps like Telegram, Signal, Arattai and Snapchat. The apps themselves cannot run unless the active SIM linked to the users mobile number is physically present in the device. Centres new SIM-binding rules will now determine the duration for which you can stay logged in to WhatsApp Web. This step has been introduced to reduce cybersecurity risks. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) notification lists the following app-based communication services in India: WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal, Arattai, Snapchat, Sharechat, Jiochat, Josh. 'No later than 6 hours'As part of the new mandate, the notification by the DoT: From 90 days of issue of these instructions, ensure that the web service instance of the Mobile App, if provided, shall be logged out periodically (not later than 6 hours) and allow the facility to the user to re-link the device using QR code. It was issued on November 28, 2025, and has taken effect immediately. It also requires apps to stay tied to the phone numbers physical SIM at all times: From 90 days of issue of these instructions, ensure that the App based Communication Services is continuously linked to the SIM card (associated with Mobile Number used for identification of customers/users or for provisioning or delivery of services) installed in the device, making it impossible to use the app without that specific, active SIM, it added. Also Read | No WhatsApp without active SIM: Centre issues new rules to prevent cyber crimesWhy news measures are being enforced?The DoT said the issue arises when App Based Communication Services run on devices without the required Subscriber Identity Module, which creates telecom cyber security risks. According to the department, this gap is being exploited from outside India to carry out cyber frauds. It added that the matter had been discussed with major service providers for months, and the growing seriousness of the threat made it necessary to issue these directions to prevent misuse of telecom identifiers and protect the security and integrity of the telecom ecosystem. What are the measures ensuring compliance?The Department of Telecommunications has instructed all TIUEs that use mobile numbers to identify users or deliver services to comply with the new rules. These platforms must submit their compliance reports to the DoT within 120 days of the directions being issued. Any failure to comply will invite action under the Telecommunications Act, 2023, the Telecom Cyber Security Rules, 2024 (as amended), and other applicable laws. The Union government passed directions on Friday (November 28, 2025) requiring services like WhatsApp to only work if users have the SIM card used to sign up for the service in their device, and to log out web-based chat sessions every six hours. The order, sent directly to messaging platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram and Signal, represents a major enlargement of the Department of Telecommunications (DoTs) exercised jurisdiction, building on groundwork laid by a set of contentious cybersecurity guidelines notified this year. Government officials have expressed frustration over their inability to track cyber fraudsters who use apps like WhatsApp, which currently only require users to validate their mobile number once, before being able to use the service on a range of devices. SIM binding, as the directions put it, would force WhatsApp and other messaging platforms to stop working if the SIM is taken out, and presumably aid in the traceability of cyber frauds operating on WhatsApp by, in return, adding possible friction to other users. The directions were first reported by tech policy news site MediaNama.SIMs used outside the phone where WhatsApp has been registered, the DoT said in its order, were being misused from outside the country to commit cyber-frauds. The order is in effect from February 2026. The DoT and WhatsApp did not have an immediate response to a query by The Hindu sent outside normal working hours. An industry source called the instructions problematic and that no feasibility study or consultation was held before these directions were issued, and that it was unclear if these measures would resist circumvention by fraudsters.The DoT, which typically oversees telcos, has rarely waded beyond carriage, or the means of transmission, into the content layer of the internet, where apps like WhatsApp arguably operate, with the notable exception of website blocking. One official said that such divisions had to be constantly rethought in light of the convergence that the internet and telecom ecosystems have seen in recent years. Throughout this year, the groundwork for instructions like this to messaging platforms was laid: the DoT notified amendments to its 2024 Cyber Security Rules, which defined the concept of Telecommunication Identifier User Entities, or TIUEs. This term could be applied to any firm which uses mobile numbers to identify users, from e-commerce platforms to messaging apps.The Internet and Mobile Association of India, which represents Meta and other digital firms, said in a filing to the DoT this year that the amended rules not only represented a clear overreach of the delegated legislative power under the [2023] Act, but will also have broad implications for digital businesses across fintech, e-commerce, mobility, social media, and essentially any service that relies on telecom identifiers.The telecom industry has repeatedly called on the DoT to act in this direction, ruling that strict anti-spam regulations that are routinely issued for them do not curb frauds perpetrated on platforms like WhatsApp. Published - November 29, 2025 09:50 pm IST

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