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**B3**

# Telcos get 6 months adjustment period for prepaid validity

By LOUELLA DESIDERIO

The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) is giving telcos six months to adjust their systems for the implementation of the one-year validity of regular prepaid load.

DICT officer-in-charge Eliseo Rio Jr. said the six-month period is intended to prevent the telcos' systems from crashing if changes are made abruptly, which may cause serious damage to the industry and disturb the consuming public.

The DICT previously announced the one-year validity of prepaid load would start on Jan. 5.

"We apologize for giving the public false expectations, but if we have to err, it would be on the side

of being 100 percent certain that nothing untoward will happen," Rio said.

"However, the six-month period is only a time limit where the telcos can be penalized if they have not complied by then," he added.

The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) has been instructed to closely monitor and address all complaints of prepaid loads being eaten up before the present expiration periods lapsed during the adjustment period.

Prepaid credits purchased for promos and other services with specific period of use, meanwhile, are not covered by the one-year validity.

Smart Communications Inc. and Globe Telecom Inc. said they wel-

come the six-month extension and would comply with the directive.

"Smart, TNT and Sun shall comply with the Memorandum Circular (MC) 05-12-2017 issued jointly by the NTC, DICT and DTI (Department of Trade and Industry), extending the validity of prepaid load to one year," Smart public affairs head Ramon Isberto said.

He said Smart, TNT and Sun prepaid loads worth P300 and above would have a one-year validity, regardless of the validity period printed on the physical cards already out in the market.

"We are grateful to the three agencies for the grant of a six-month extension period before the full implementation of the MC. This provides us more time

to implement the extensive re-configuration of our IT (information technology) and other support systems, and to conduct the needed tests, in order to ensure trouble-free implementation of the new expiry period," he said.

Globe general counsel Froilan Castelo said Globe would also comply with the NTC-DICT-DTI joint MC.

"Effective Jan. 5, 2018, all Globe prepaid load with denomination of P300 and above will carry a one year expiration period," he said.

He also said Globe welcomes the six-month period given by DICT as such would give ample time to prepare for the smooth and seamless implementation of the expiration change across all denominations.

\* TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
\* DICT  
\* NTC