

No Aadhaar? No problem

DoT and UIDAI have proposed a new mechanism for verifying new mobile phone subscribers through an app. The agencies say the system is compliant with the Supreme Court judgement in the Aadhaar case. Here's how it will work:



DoT, UIDAI propose an app to help telcos verify users instantly

Komal Gupta
komal.g@livemint.com
NEW DELHI

With the Supreme Court prohibiting telecommunication companies from using Aadhaar for instant verification of new mobile phone subscribers, authorities on Thursday proposed a new mechanism—a mobile application with a one-time password.

At the same time, they also assured existing subscribers that their Aadhaar-linked phone numbers will not be disconnected.

The new process will involve photographing customers with location and time stamps, as well as their identification documents, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) said in a joint statement.

"In the proposed process, live photograph of the person with latitude, longitude, and time stamp will be captured. The photo of the person's ID such as Aadhaar card, voter ID, etc., will be captured. The SIM card agent will be authenticated through OTP (one time password) and SIM card will be issued. This process will be completely hassle-free and digital," the statement said.

A five-member Constitution bench of the Supreme Court on 26 September barred private companies from accessing Aadhaar details of consumers, affecting telecom operators who had been using the biometric database for instant electronic verification of would-be subscribers. Following the landmark judgment, the UIDAI, earlier this month, asked telcos to submit detailed plans by 15 October on exiting

Aadhaar-based authentication.

Amber Sinha, lawyer and senior programme manager at the Bengaluru-based think-tank Centre for Internet and Society (CIS), said, "The proposed process does not need to access information from the UIDAI's Central Identities Data Repository (CIDR); thus, the surveillance and privacy concerns have been addressed. However, better clarity is needed on how the photo of a person's identity proof including Aadhaar card would be captured and stored by the SIM card agents."

Thursday's statement also clarified that users who had obtained SIM cards with Aadhaar verification will not face disconnection. However, if anybody wishes to get their Aadhaar eKYC replaced by

fresh KYC, they may request the service provider for delinking their Aadhaar by submitting other alternative proofs of identification. In any case, their mobile number will not be disconnected.

On Monday, *Times of India*

reported that 500 million mobile phone numbers—nearly half the total number in circulation—are at risk of disconnection because they were authenticated with Aadhaar.

Describing the report as "completely untrue and imaginary", the statement said that the Supreme Court judgement did not direct anywhere that mobile numbers issued through Aadhaar eKYC would be deactivated.

"Also, the apex court has asked UIDAI not to keep authentication log for more than six months. The restriction of not keeping the log beyond six months is on the



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FROM PAGE 1

UIDAI and not on telecom companies,” the statement said.

Therefore, there is no need for telecom companies or authentication user agencies (AUAs) to delete authentication logs at their end. They are, in fact, required to keep the logs to resolve consumer grievances according to Aadhaar regulations, said the statement.

An AUA is an entity engaged in providing Aadhaar-enabled services. It may be a government, public or a private legal agency registered in India which uses Aadhaar authentication services provided by UIDAI.

“That portion of Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act, which enables body corporate and individuals to seek authentication is held to be unconstitutional,” the Supreme Court bench headed by then chief justice Dipak Misra said in its judgement on 26 September. Section 57 of the Aadhaar (tar-



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geted delivery of financial and other subsidies, benefits and services) Act, 2016 allowed the use of the unique ID for establishing the identity of an individual for any purpose, whether by the state or corporate or person. The provision has been read down by the court and now only allows the government to use Aadhaar for various social welfare schemes.