

UIDAI chief: No breach of data in Aadhaar theft case

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Bengaluru/New Delhi: The Qarth-Aadhaar data theft case was the result of fraud at the level of KYC User Agencies (KUAs) and not any breach in the data base of Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), officials said on Thursday.

The data was accessed by the accused from e-hospital, hosted by National Informatics Centre (NIC), described as the government's "prime builder" of e-Government / e-Governance applications, police sources confirmed. According to sources, the fraud came to the notice of UIDAI during a random check by their social media team. The team found the e-KYC app hosted by the accused, associated with the Qarth Technologies Pvt Limited, and alerted its Bengaluru team to file a police complaint.

"The KUA is likely to be arraigned as the accused no 2," a source said. Abhinav Srivastav, founder of Qarth Technologies start-up, is the accused no 1. UIDAI chief AB Pandey said, "The UIDAI would like to inform and reassure the public that there is no breach of any Aadhaar data and compromise of individuals' privacy and security in this case."



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He said that the app was trying to provide Aadhaar verification to the residents based upon their own consent. Pandey said that an inquiry found that the residents were using this app to download their own demographic data, like name, address, gender, after giving their consent through OTP received on their Aadhaar-linked mobiles.

"Hence, alleged privacy violations reported in some section of media is not true as no one could not get data of any other person through this app," he said.

The UIDAI chief said even though residents were downloading their own demographic data, legal actions were initiated against the owner of the app since it was not authorised to provide such services to the people and such acts were criminal offence punishable under Aadhaar Act, 2016.

KYC User Agencies are franchises contracted with

authenticating Aadhaar-enabled services to Aadhaar number holders with the consent of the latter. According to sources, there are at least 254 KUAs engaged by the UIDAI, including government and non-government ones.

Assuming a citizen goes to a mobile phone service provider and gives his or her Aadhaar number as identity proof, the service provider would be the KUA who will be authenticating the KYC (Know Your Customer) details. Once the citizen gives his biometric (thumb print) or authenticates himself through an OTP that comes to his mobile, the e-KYC or the demographic data from UIDAI is passed on to the KUA, which will authenticate whether the citizen's Aadhaar credentials are valid or not.

An UIDAI official said the case was a lesson for KUAs to protect the authentication keys given to them by Aadhaar so that it is not misused.