

# Airtel Bank gets ₹167cr sans 31L users 'consent'

## Govt Must Get Cash Refunded, Says Official

**New Delhi:** As much as Rs 167 crore was deposited by 31.21 lakh customers in their Airtel Payments Bank accounts which were activated without their "informed consent", leading to suspension of Aadhaar-linked KYC verification of Bharti Airtel and Airtel Payments Bank.

The discovery that subsidy amounts for LPG were being deposited in these accounts has led to officials suggesting that it would be appropriate if the sums were returned to the customers.

The amounts were collected in an improper fashion and in violation of Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) norms.

The malpractice came to light after the UIDAI investigated a complaint from an individual who said Bharti Airtel not only opened a payments bank account without his per-



Subsidy amounts for LPG were being deposited in Airtel Bank accounts without 'informed consent' of customers

mission but also linked it to receive LPG subsidy.

The amounts transferred from Hindustan Petroleum Corporation was Rs 40 crore, from Bharat Petroleum Corporation Rs 39 crore and IndianOil Corporation Rs 88 crore.

An official said the government must act to ensure that the subsidy of Rs 167 crore was returned to the normal bank accounts of customers.

He added that the government should stop sending subsidy to payments banks and wallets as the UIDAI investigation found that in several cases, cooking gas subsidies were transferred in the

Airtel Payments Bank account of customers without their knowledge, while they had linked the subsidies to their savings bank accounts.

After investigating the case, the UIDAI in its interim order barred Bharti Airtel and Airtel Payments Bank from conducting Aadhaar-linked e-KYC verification of SIM cards and bank clients.

The UIDAI found that at the time of mobile verification using Aadhaar e-KYC, Airtel retailers were also opening Airtel Payments Bank accounts. The opening of bank account was integrated with the process of mobile verification.