

## Airtel set to pay interim fine of ₹2.5cr to UIDAI

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**New Delhi:** Bharti Airtel is set to pay an interim penalty of Rs 2.5 crore to Aadhaar body Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), according to sources, and return over Rs 190 crore to subscribers (with interest), who were alleged to have been surreptitiously added by the company to Airtel Payments Bank.

UIDAI prima facie found the company to have breached provisions of the Aadhaar act and has also decided to de-link over 31 lakh accounts from its payments bank, sources said. When contacted, a spokesperson for Bharti Airtel declined to comment on the matter. UIDAI officials also refused to confirm the development.

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UIDAI had taken a stern view on the matter, and on Saturday decided to bar Airtel as well as its payments bank from accessing the online Aadhaar verification (e-KYC) process for on-boarding new customers or verifying existing ones.

**TOI** had first reported about the impending action against Airtel in its edition dated November 30. The matter had come to light earlier this year after cooking gas subsidy under the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme had allegedly flown into the Airtel Payments Bank accounts of a large number of subscribers, who said that they had not signed up for it.

UIDAI had issued a show-cause notice to the telecom company, and later found prima facie violations of the Aadhaar Act. It has also ordered PricewaterhouseCoopers to conduct an audit of Bharti Airtel and Airtel Payments Bank to ascertain if their systems and processes are in compliance with the Aadhaar Act.