

Airtel told to explain payments bank a/c issue by December 4

NEW DELHI: The UIDAI has asked Airtel to explain, by December 4, why action should not be taken against it for allegedly opening payments bank accounts without 'informed consent' of customers who went for Aadhaar-based mobile SIM verification. Airtel, on its part, has refuted the allegations, saying all "Airtel Payments Bank accounts are opened only after explicit consent from the customer".

A company official added that Airtel is preparing to submit a detailed response to the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) within the stipulated deadline. The Aadhaar-issuing body, the UIDAI, had slapped notices on Bharti Airtel and Airtel Payments Bank in this regard in September. A UIDAI source said the company's initial reply was not satisfactory necessitating the need for seeking further explanation. According to the UIDAI source,

WE HAVE ISSUED NOTICE TO A TELECOM OPERATOR AND ARE AWAITING THEIR RESPONSE. AFTER GIVING FULL OPPORTUNITY OF HEARING TO THE COMPANY CONCERNED, WE WILL TAKE JUDICIOUS VIEW OF THE MATTER, SAYS



**UIDAI CEO
AJAY BHUSHAN PANDEY**

Bharti Airtel has been given time till December 4 to explain why action should not be initiated against it, including imposition of penalty on the issue.

The UIDAI official, who did not wish to be named, said that authority had found prima facie 'wrongdoings' on the matter. When contacted, UIDAI CEO Ajay Bhushan Pandey said, "We have issued notice to a telecom operator

and are awaiting their response. After giving full opportunity of hearing to the company concerned, we will take judicious view of the matter."

Pandey, however, did not identify the operator, saying the issue is under examination. To an e-mail query by PTI, an Airtel spokesperson said the re-verification of mobile phones and the opening of Airtel payments bank account were separate transactions and not linked. "Airtel Payments Bank is fully compliant with all guidelines and follows a stringent customer on-boarding process," the Airtel spokesperson said.

He claimed that the consent for opening Airtel payments bank account as also DBT is taken separately from all customers. The DBT amount is automatically credited to the most recent Aadhaar-linked bank account of a customer as per the applicable norms, the spokesperson added. **PTI**