

# Apex court had asked government to link Aadhaar with mobiles: Attorney General

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**A**ttorney General (AG) K.K. Venugopal on Thursday told the Supreme Court that it was indeed the apex court that had asked the government to link all mobile numbers with Aadhaar.

He said he would argue on this aspect in detail at the next hearing on 2 May.

The AG's submission followed the court questioning the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) on Wednesday regarding a 23 March, 2017, notification by the department of telecommunications (DoT) that the linking was being done on the basis of an earlier order passed by the top court.

UIDAI's counsel Rakesh Dwivedi had conceded it was not the Supreme Court that had mandated linking of Aad-



AG's submission followed the court questioning UIDAI regarding DoT notification on Aadhaar-mobile linking. PRADEEP GAUR/MINT

haar with mobile numbers, but that this was done on a recommendation of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai). Dwivedi had, however, added that the government had a legal basis to link Aadhaar with mobile numbers under provisions of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, and that such a measure was "reasona-

ble in the interest of national security". Dwivedi had also given examples of how companies like Vodafone had far more demographic data about an individual than UIDAI. He also said online grocer BigBasket could learn people's eating habits based on what they buy.

He reiterated that UIDAI, unlike Google, did not have

big data, processing power, and statistical know-how to do big data analysis. UIDAI does not have that kind of algorithms, Dwivedi said. At an earlier hearing, UIDAI, which administers Aadhaar, had claimed that data collection for the 12-digit unique identification number cannot be compared with the Cambridge Analytica scandal involving data breach of at least 87 million Facebook users.

Curbing terrorism, money laundering, black money and delivery of subsidies and benefits have been listed by the centre as "legitimate state interests" in rolling out Aadhaar. UIDAI maintains that Aadhaar is backed by a robust system of security and that there has not been a single breach of biometric data from its end. It was also claimed that Aadhaar has a 2048-bit encryption key, which works like a number lock, making it extremely secure.