

UIDAI allows Airtel Aadhaar re-verification till March 31

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The Unique Identity Authority of India (UIDAI) has extended the temporary permission it gave to Bharti Airtel for using biometric identity for re-verification of its mobile customers, till March 31.

UIDAI had temporarily barred Airtel from conducting the Aadhaar-based eKYC, after the telco allegedly opened accounts of its mobile phone subscribers without seeking their 'informed consent', and deposited LPG subsidy worth crores into them. It had last month allowed Airtel to use Aadhaar for re-verification of its mobile customers till January 10 with stiff riders, after the company returned ₹138 crore of LPG subsidy which had flowed into unsolicited Airtel Payments Bank accounts.

"The company has been allowed to continue the re-verification of mobile customers till March 31. PwC has submitted its audit reports to the authority and the Department and Telecommunications; the Reserve Bank of India is expected to give its audits in the next few days," a senior government official told *BusinessLine*.

When contacted, an Airtel spokesperson confirmed that the company has been given

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the extension, subject to "compliance to the guidelines laid down by UIDAI."

Sources from the company also said the firm is undertaking all the needed steps under strong supervision, and a minor issue is raised to higher authorities. Both Airtel and Airtel Payments Bank had come under fire after the Sunil Mittal-led firm allegedly opened accounts of its mobile phone subscribers without seeking their 'informed consent', and LPG subsidies worth crores were deposited into them.

To avoid a similar fiasco, the UIDAI last month directed banks to seek an explicit consent of the beneficiary before changing the account to which government subsidies are remitted.