

## UIDAI takes on rumour mongering against Aadhaar

■ UIDAI stresses contact number 18003001947 cannot steal data

NEW DELHI, Aug 5 (PTI)

THE UIDAI on Sunday said vested interests misused Google's "inadvertent" act around its old helpline number to create fear and tarnish the image of Aadhaar while emphasising that a number stored in contact list cannot steal data from a mobile phone.

The Unique Identity Authority of India (UIDAI) said rumour mongers attempted to tarnish the image of Aadhaar for a Google's inadvertent act that led to appearance of its old helpline number 1800 300 1947 in the contact list of several mobile phone users.

"UIDAI condemns the vested interests who tried to misuse Google's "inadvertent" act as an opportunity to spread rumours and go around fear-mongering against Aadhaar," the authority said in a statement.

Last week, a French security



expert who goes under the pseudonym Elliot Alderson and describes himself as the "worst nightmare" of the UIDAI, in a tweet had raised alarm on presence of a UIDAI contact number in contact list of mobile phone users without their consent.

His tweet scared many mobile phone users on appearance of the UIDAI's old helpline number in their contacts even though they did not add it.

Google on last Friday admitted that the number 18003001947 was added by it 'inadvertently' along with police and fire number 112 in 2014 and has since been continuing through sync mechanism. The UIDAI said it has earlier clarified and empha-

sised that it has not asked any agency whatsoever to include its helpline number in mobile phones and also added that merely adding a phone number cannot steal data from the phone.

"Just by a helpline number in a mobile's contact list the data stored on the mobile phone cannot be stolen. Therefore, there should be no panic to delete the number as no harm will be caused. Rather people may, if they so wish, update it with UIDAI's new helpline number 1947," the authority said. Anderson in his another tweet had said that there was no need to freak out as it was just a contact but alarmed that it could be the tip of "an iceberg".

The UIDAI said rumours being spread on social media to delete helpline number are "totally false propaganda and is nothing but scare-mongering against Aadhaar by vested interests trying to exploit Google's act to spread misinformation about Aadhaar by scaring people."

The Aadhaar custodian said

that it expects Google, a large digital platform provider, will look into the matter which caused confusion in the minds of people against "India's credible identity system and will exercise due care so that such things are not repeated in future."

The UIDAI said that rumours about Aadhaar database being breached are completely false and baseless. "UIDAI assures that Aadhaar data remains fully safe and secure. Therefore, people should stay away from such rumours and malicious campaign by vested interests. They should also not waste their time and time of their near and dear ones by forwarding or circulating such false and baseless rumours on their WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, etc" the statement said.

It further said that Aadhaar has caused tremendous benefits to our country and helped saved more Rs 90,000 crore by preventing leakage and siphoning of benefits and subsidies meant for poor.