Aadhaar-based e-KYC: DoT calls for OTP verification to expedite compliance

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TAKING INTO account the inconvenient experiences of customers with re-verification of mobile numbers using Aadhaar-based e-KYC, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has asked operators to implement new methods including a one-time password (OTP) based verification in order to expedite the compliance process.

Following a Supreme Court order earlier this year, the DoT had mandated re-verification of all existing mobile subscribers to weed out numbers obtained through fraud and duplicate identities. For this purpose, the DoT asked telecom operators to conduct the verification through Aadhaar-based e-KYC authentication by February 6, 2018. However, a number of mobile consumers had cited inconvenience with the process, especially with the constant mes-

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sages being sent by telecom operators to fulfill the compliance.

Thus far, customers had to visit the premises of their service provider to undergo the Aadhaar-based re-verification. With the new rules coming in, those having their mobile numbers seeded with their Aadhaar will be able to re-verify their numbers through an SMS-based OTP, operator's mobile app, or

the interactive voice response service. According to DoT data, almost 50 crore mobile numbers are already registered in the Aadhaar database, which the government plans to leverage for re-verification through these new methods.

"The Aadhaar number system was designed to allow all residents of the country access to critical government services and important information that they may need from time to time. Mobile penetration is increasing rapidly in the country and the subscribers need to be provided with the ease of linking of the Aadhaar number with the mobile number," Minister of State for Communications with independent charge Manoj Sinha told reporters on Wednesday.

Furthermore, for customers unable to visit service centres of telecom operators, the government has asked the companies to arrange re-verification at subscribers' doorstep. "Some mobile

subscribers, due to factors such as age, disability, and chronic illness are not able to visit the TSPs' service points for biometric authentication. The TSPs should provide the facility for verification of residents at their doorstep," a DoT order noted.

A representative of industry body Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) said that while the latest clarifications from the DoT were aligned with what the industry, and the subscribers need at this time, it would take some time to implement the directions. "...we are working closely with the government to improve and enhance the convenience of our consumers for undertaking Aadhaar based e-KYC linking of their mobile number," the representative said. Earlier, even as the industry backed the DoT's move to re-verify the existing subscribers, it had pointed out that the time frame provided to them was not enough to complete the entire exercise.