Toll free number on Android invalid, says UIDAI

Authority says some vested interests creating confusion

NEW DELHI, PTI: The UIDAI on Friday said it has not asked any device maker or service provider to include its toll free number on mobile phones, and clarified that the number 1800-300-1947 appearing in the contact list of Android phones is an "outdated and invalid" helpline number.

Distancing itself from the backlash it faced on social media over the default inclusion of '1800-300-1947' in contact list of Android phones, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) said in a statement that, "... The said 18003001947 is not a valid UIDAI toll free number and some vested interests are trying to create unwarranted confusion in the public".

The UIDAI's valid toll free number is 1947, which is functional for more than the last two years, it said.

"UIDAI has reiterated that it has not asked or advised anyone including any telecom service providers or mobile manufacturers or Android to include 18003001947 or 1947 in the default list of public service numbers," the statement added.

Referring to the reports on automatic inclusion of the UIDAI's "outdated and invalid" helpline number 1800-300-1947 in phone's contact list, the Aadhaar-issuing body said that it "has not asked or communicated to any manufacturer or service provider for providing any such facility whatsoever".

Amid heightened privacy concerns, many on social media have questioned how the UIDAI helpline number had crept into their smartphone contact list.

Google apologises

Amid public outrage over Aadhaar helpline number being pre-stored without user consent on certain mobile phones, Google on Friday night apologised for "inadvertently" loading the old UIDAI helpline number and 112 helpline number into the 'setup wizard' of Android phones.

"Our internal review has revealed that in 2014, the then UIDAI helpline number and the 112 distress helpline number were inadvertently coded into the setup wizard of the Android release given to OEMs (Original equipment manufacturers) for use in India and has remained there since. Since the numbers get listed on a user's contact list these get transferred accordingly to the contacts on any new device," a Google spokesperson said in a statement.