

Aadhaar-based verification of existing SIMs simplified

NEW DELHI: In a bid to expedite linking of mobile phone numbers with Aadhaar, the Government on Wednesday announced three new modes to complete the process from the comfort of home. Telecom Minister Manoj Sinha said mobile numbers can be linked with Aadhaar through OTP (one time password), app or IVRS facility.

This has been done to simplify the process and make it convenient for people, the minister said. While the authentication of mobile phone number with Aadhaar, a process called re-verification, by visiting stores of telecom firms will continue, the government has also ordered the companies to carry out the exercise at the doorsteps of the disabled, chronically ill and senior citizens. For users who do not have the 12-digit biometric

identification number, a separate mechanism for e-verification -- an exercise designed to weed-out dummy and unscrupulous users -- will be put in place shortly, a source said.

For instance, such verification could be done through passports (in case of NRIs) or ration cards, the source pointed out.

Announcing the new modes, the minister said: "The Aadhaar number system was designed to allow all residents to access to critical government services. It is the Government's endeavour to improve convenience and reduce time and energy spent by consumers to accessing government information and services."

OTP mode will leverage the mobile number which is already registered with the Aadhaar database, and can be



used for re-verification of subscribers' other mobile numbers too. Operators have been directed to facilitate request for the OTP to e-verify the cell phone numbers through websites or mobile apps.

Keying in the OTP would complete the process seamlessly. Similarly, the Interactive Voice Response System or IVRS can be used as also verification through specially designed apps. Nearly 50 crore mobile numbers are already registered in Aadhaar database, and the OTP can be

leveraged for re-verification in all of these cases.

Sinha said the telecom operators should provide an online mechanism for people to request for doorstep verification for disabled, critically ill or old persons.

In case of agent assisted biometric authentication for SIM re-verification or issuance, telcos have been asked to ensure that full e-KYC details of subscribers are not made visible to the agent. Nor should data be stored on the agent's device.

In the current dispensation, e-KYC data of the subscriber including photograph is visible to the agent of the telecom operator.

The government has made it mandatory to link Aadhaar cards with bank accounts, permanent account numbers (PAN), income tax return (ITR), social security schemes and mobile phones. The deadlines for each vary.

The deadline for linking Aadhaar with PAN for tax returns is December 31 and the same for linking the biometric number with mobile number (SIM) is February 6, 2018. The announcement came on a day when the government told the Supreme Court that the deadline for mandatory linking of Aadhaar to avail benefits of various government schemes would be extended till March 31 next year.

PNS