Aadhaar not a tool of exclusion: Pandey

UIDAI chief says denial of benefits is 'undisputedly' a violation of instructions

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Taking on criticism about some individuals being denied benefits owing to issues related to Aadhaar, Ajay Bhushan Pandey, CEO of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), said it is a "technology of people's empowerment and not a tool of exclusion or denial."

Pointing out that regulations put that responsibility on the agency requiring Aadhaar to enrol the beneficiary and provide him benefits till he is given Aadhaar, Mr. Pandey said that the Aadhaar Act also provided statutory protection to those who were unable to authenticate because of worn-out fingerprints or other reasons such as technical faults and connectivity failure.

"Section 7 of the Aadhaar

Legal aid: Aadhaar Act provides protection to those unable to áuthenticate due to worn-out fingerprints or other reasons.

Act mandates delivery of benefits through Aadhaar authentication or furnishing proof of possession of Aadhaar number," he said in a statement on Thursday.

Therefore, in case a person has difficulty in getting the fingerprints authenticated on a machine, he or she can provide a copy of the Aadhaar card and receive the benefits till the system is

rectified. The field agencies had been instructed through the notifications issued by the government.

"In spite of this, if a person is denied (benefits) because he does not have Aadhaar or he is unable to biometrically authenticate, it is undisputedly a violation of instructions issued by the government and such violators have to be punished." To

claim that Aadhaar is responsible for denial of the benefits is nothing but a "misconstrued fact presented with malafide intent," Mr. Pandey said.

Erstwhile system
The UIDAI CEO said beneficiaries of the "erstwhile leaky system" would do everything possible "by denying benefits to deserving people on one or other pretext and would squarely blame it on Aadhaar." "They would make stories and videos showing how Aadhaar is leading to largescale denial, how old and poor people are being deprived of their rations and pensions, how a ration shop dealer has to climb up a tree to make his biometric authentication machine work, and circulate them in media," he added.