

UIDAI introducing facial recognition for Aadhaar authentication will ensure greater inclusion

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The feature makes Aadhaar more inclusive. (IE)

The UIDAI has just made facial scanning and recognition for Aadhaar-based authentication mandatory. This will accompany the fingerprint- and iris-based scanning procedures already in place. This added feature is being piloted for just telecom subscriptions at the moment, with UIDAI directing that, from September 15, a minimum of 10% of each company's monthly authentication transactions be achieved through facial recognition. The phased rollout will allow UIDAI and industry to observe and assess any possible kink in it, before it is available for services in other sectors.

The feature makes Aadhaar more inclusive. Most of those who will benefit from this are those who are unable to provide a clean fingerprint every time due to the nature of their work. After returning from the fields, a labourer is mostly unable to provide their fingerprint due to clay and micro-grit getting embedded in the lines of the fingers. Many kinds of work also cause an erasure of finger-prints. A finger-print expert interviewed by Scientific American says people in many professions, from brick-laying to working with corrosive chemicals such as lime, in the absence of protective gear, and even constant paper-handling (by office secretaries!), could lose their finger-prints either temporarily or even permanently. Thus, farm labourers and factory workers were being deprived of services and government benefits because of a systemic issue, as were people affected by certain disabilities and diseases. The implementation of facial recognition will change this. It will also serve as a safeguard to prevent scams—so far unsuccessful, though—such as those involving forging finger-print records.