

Centre asks states not to deny ration sans Aadhaar

'Don't delete eligible households from list of beneficiaries for lack of Aadhaar'

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The Centre has instructed states not to deny PDS benefits to any beneficiary who does not have Aadhaar or has not linked ration card to the 12-digit biometric identifier and warned of strict action on violation.

It has also asked state governments not to delete eligible households from the list of beneficiaries for non-possession of Aadhaar.

An instruction has been issued in this regard this week to all states, after an 11-year old Jharkhand girl allegedly died of starvation recently after being denied PDS ration.

In a directive, the Union food ministry has clarified that deletion from the ration card database can only happen after proper verification of ration card holder establishes "beyond reasonable doubt" that an entry pertaining to the said ration card holder is not genuine.

State field functionaries have been asked to



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ensure that beneficiaries are not turned away on the ground of non-possession of Aadhaar, and all exceptions in this regard are recorded in a separate log-book.

When contacted, Ajay Bhushan Pandey, CEO of Aadhaar issuing body, Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), told PTI, "The intention is to ensure that no one is denied any food benefits for lack of Aadhaar, lack of linking, or technical difficulty in biometric authentication. As long as a person is genuine, he has to be given the benefit, in this case, ration."

States and Union Ter-

ritories will have to make arrangements to provide Aadhaar enrolment facilities to those without Aadhaar and link their Aadhaar numbers with ration card, the food ministry said and cautioned that strict action will be taken for violation of provisions of the notification.

As per the National Food Security Act, states have been given deadline till December to link Aadhaar with ration cards.

The Centre yesterday, however, told the Supreme Court that the deadline for mandatory linking of Aadhaar to avail of benefits of various government

schemes would be extended till March 31 next year for those who do not have the 12-digit biometric identification number.

Sofar, 82 per cent of the ration cards have been seeded with Aadhaar number in the country.

The food ministry directive mentions that till such time Aadhaar is assigned to the beneficiary, subsidised food grains will have to be given on production of ration card, enrolment slip and other stipulated documents like election card.

Irrespective of whether all members of an eligible household have Aadhaar, full quantity of subsidised food grains or cash transfer of food subsidy upon fulfilling the requirements laid down will have to be extended.

Similarly, even in the case of failure of biometric authentication due to a technical glitch or poor biometric quality, the beneficiary will have to be provided the social welfare benefits provided on physical production of Aadhaar card along with the ration card.