Face recognition to be must for all authentications by Aadhaar

Move To Provide Extra Security Layer: UIDAI

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New Delhi: The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has announced a new measure that seeks to mandate facial recognition – by taking on-the-spot live pictures — for every authentication that requires Aadhaar. Services that most commonly use Aadhar authentication include issue of mobile SIMs (new or replacement), banks, the public distribution system and office attendance at government offices.

Facial recognition will come in as an additional feature

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Which services require Aadhaar facial recognition?
Prominent ones include procuring new or duplicate SIM cards, Aadhaar verification at banks and PDS ration shops, and office attendance systems at govt establishments

Will it be a one-time process?
Facial recognition will be required every time one uses Aadhaar for verification

Is it mandatory only for new SIM cards or even those

procured earlier?
At the moment, it will be sought only for new SIMs. With effect from Sep 15, at least 10% authentications will be through facial recognition

Will changes to face— through ageing, hairstyle change or growing/shaving beard — impact facial recognition?
UIDAI says that the systems processing the authentication are sophisticated and normal changes will have no impact on facial recognition

along with the regular process that identifies an individual based on fingerprints or iris (eye) scans.

The measure is being implemented following 'official circulars' by UIDAI (on June 19 and August 17) to Authentication User Agencies (AUAs), Authentication Service Agencies (ASAs), and certified biometric device providers.

Failure to follow the process will be treated as a criminal offence by authentication agencies, punishable with imprisonment and fine under Section 42 and 43 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016, sources said.

UIDAI said the measure is being used to provide an added security layer, while also making the Aadhaar process 'more inclusive'.

"There have been numerous instances where people have been excluded from Aadhaar authentication as their fingerprints are worn out due to old age, or since they are involved in manual labour or agriculture. This will help include them in the Aadhaar authentication process," UIDAI CEO Ajay Bhushan Pandey told **TOI**.

▶ To be done in phases, P 14

'New Aadhaar authentication process to be done in phases'

UIDAI CEO Ajay Bhushan Pandey said the new Aadhaar authentication process would be rolled out "in a phased manner", and would initially be mandated for providers of SIM cards of telecom companies. Telecom operators have been directed that with effect from September 15 of this year, at least 10% of their total monthly authentication transactions should be performed using facial recognition. Any shortfall in transactions using face authentication would face a penalty, at 20 paise per transaction.

"Face authentication is the latest technology, and provides added security. After we hit 10% of authentication transactions, we will have a review of any possible shortfalls that we notice in the system or processes. Thereafter, we will expand, within telecom and also to other service areas where separate instructions shall be issued regarding implementation of face recognition," the UIDAI CEO said.

Explaining how the new system would work, he said that whenever an individual would seek authentication based on Aadhaar, the authorised machine/device being used for the purpose would also capture a picture of the face of the individual.

The photo, along with the fingerprint or iris scan, would be sent to UIDAI, which will verify the details on its database, and thereafter send a confirmation of the authenticity of the individual (based on facial and fingerprint/iris confirmations). "Since face photo is already available in UIDAI database, there is no need to capture any new reference data," the June circular of UIDAI said.

The original UIDAI circular on the matter was issued on January 15 this year and had sought the integration of facial recognition from July 1. Thereafter, the same was extended to August 1, after which it was decided to go for a phased rollout "due to non-readiness of few device providers" to give machines that have face recognition technology.