

Mandatory Aadhaar gets SC green signal

By **Harish V Nair** in New Delhi

THE Modi government, which is going ahead to make Aadhaar mandatory for availing benefits of 17 social welfare schemes from July 1, including scholarships, right to food and midday meals, received a huge shot in the arm from none other than the Supreme Court on Tuesday.

While hearing a slew of pleas led by former High Court judge K Puttaswamy, the vacation bench of the Supreme Court comprising justices AM Khanwilkar and Navin Sinha refused to stay the government notification mandating furnishing of Aadhaar cards.

This was after additional solicitor general Tushar Mehta said the cut-off date for those who did not possess the card has been extended till September 30 and they could avail the benefits till then by furnishing alternate ID proof such as voter ID card, driving licence or PAN card.

"The Centre itself is saying nobody will be deprived of benefits. Heavens will not fall if we do not stay the notification. Such interim orders cannot be passed

Centre said cut-off date for those who did not possess Aadhaar card to avail schemes has been extended till Sept 30



on mere apprehensions that somebody will be deprived of benefits. Show us some case and then we can do something about it," the bench told the petitioners' lawyer Shyam Divan who requested for an interim stay until the apex court's final verdict on the constitutionality of Aadhaar to be heard by a constitution bench.

Divan kept arguing that getting Aadhaar cards and subjecting to the scheme should be voluntary and not mandatory. Raising privacy issues, he contended that biometric identification denoted for UID, namely the iris scan, finger print

identification, and personal details collected, can easily be misused by a miscreant. He added that the manner in which biometric details are collected without any safeguard by private contractors and NGOs hired by UIDAI makes it prone to misuse.

In its order, the court said, "The petitioners seek a clarification that facilities provided under social benefit schemes will continue for even those who do not possess Aadhaar card. The additional solicitor general says no such clarification is required as the cut-off date is extended till September 30 for those not possessing Aadhaar cards. Let the matter be now listed on July 7 before the appropriate bench."

Centre is saying nobody will be deprived of benefits. Interim orders can't be passed on apprehensions that somebody will be deprived.

— SUPREME COURT BENCH