

Now, govt pushes offline tools to verify Aadhaar

Bid To Assuage Privacy Concerns

Rajeev Deshpande & Sidhartha

New Delhi: In an effort to address fears over surveillance, breach of privacy and data farming, the Centre is promoting offline verification tools for Aadhaar such as QR codes and a paperless KYC that will not require sharing of biometrics or involve UIDAI servers for authentication.

The KYC process will not even need users to reveal their Aadhaar numbers, the collection of which has often been subject to controversies over potential data mining and tracking. The offline processes will fulfil the Supreme Court's order ruling out biometrics-based Aadhaar authentication for private firms.

2 WAYS TO DO IT

1 A service provider can download QR code reader from UIDAI site or use a scanner to read code from a Aadhaar number printout

2 'Paperless local eKYC', a digitally signed XML stored on a laptop or phone, can also be used

BENEFIT: UIDAI server is unaware of where & when QR code/eKYC is used for authentication. Plus, demographic info protected

The offline KYC can be used by service providers, including government, and will be in addition to other IDs such as driving licences, ration and electoral photo cards, passports and PAN cards.

► **Offline apps, P 14**

Offline apps to protect privacy

► Continued from P 1

The government hopes reliability of offline Aadhaar KYC will make it popular and also provide options to fintech firms that are disadvantaged by being denied access to UIDAI authentication.

The QR codes can be downloaded and printed from the UIDAI site. A service provider can download a QR code reader from the UIDAI site or get scanner that can read the code on an Aadhaar number printout. The UIDAI offers a 'paperless local eKYC', too, which can be stored on laptop or phone. As long as a service provider has the appropriate software, a user can share the zip file with a "share code" to establish ID.

Officials said eKYC and QR codes protect privacy as UIDAI is ignorant of their use. Also, you can restrict demographic information, giving only name and address.

IN A JIFFY, WITHOUT THE JITTERS

QR CODE OPTION:

- Aadhaar printouts offer 3 QR codes for offline verification. Two have demographic info plus photo, one only demographics. Code is tamper proof. UID number is not revealed.
- Can be downloaded from Aadhaar site, presented to any service provider who can download QR code reader application or procure scanner.
- QR code eliminates need for finger print or iris authentication, does not involve Aadhaar server. Other ID documents like passport, PAN card or driving licence do not have such offline verification.
- QR code eliminates risk of forgery, fraud, photoshop of eAadhaar.

PAPERLESS LOCAL eKYC:

- Aadhaar offers downloadable offline eKYC which is digitally signed secure document. It contains as much demographic info as you want, with five options. Apart from name and address, other demographics like gender, date of birth, mobile, email and photo are optional
- It can be verified offline and electronically transferred to a service provider. It can be in an electronic or printed format. Much more reliable than other forms of ID
- Advantage of both QR code and paperless eKYC is that there is no submission of biometrics and authentication through UIDAI server, addressing fears of data tracking and collection



The eKYC can help open a bank account or get a phone connection without sharing unique ID number. This could help do away with the need to amend the law to enable authentication through the Aadhaar server.

Since the tools are offline, the government will not know if you have used Aadhaar to open a bank account, buy insurance or get a SIM, addressing privacy concerns, officials said, adding that the two tools

were developed before the SC verdict. "For everything other than direct benefit transfer, the two applications can be used for authentication. This also addresses concerns of fintech companies" said a source.