

# ***'Aadhaar will check tax evasion'***

Finance Minister defends move to make Aadhaar mandatory for filing income tax returns.

**T**he government has said that making Aadhaar mandatory for filing income tax returns was necessary to plug evasion and frauds as Finance Minister Arun Jaitley indicated that it could replace other identity cards such as PAN and voter cards in future.

Replying to the debate on the 2017 Finance Bill, Jaitley rejected the Opposition demand to re-examine the issue of making Aadhaar mandatory for IT returns.

"Aadhaar has biometric details, so its chances of misuse become minimal. When the country has so much technology, and when it is being put to use, then why create such a hue and cry about it? It is an anti-evasion measure which will benefit the country. So the government considers it right to implement it," the Finance Minister said responding to MPs' comments on multiple cards such as PAN, voter I-cards and others.

Defending the move to make Aadhaar mandatory for IT returns, Jaitley said nearly 98% of the adult population or about 108 crore have an Aadhaar card.

"We have kept a provision that a person who does not have Aadhaar can say I



have applied for Aadhaar. We can't allow people to say I will not make Aadhaar, but through multiple PAN cards will continue to evade taxes," he said.

"If the technology, which has a network of 108 crore people and all tax-paying households have it, and they give it along with their ITR, then the scope for fraud and tax evasion comes down."

Minutes before the finance bill was passed in the Lok Sabha, Congress, BJD, Left parties and TMC walked out on different issues.

BJD members walked out over the Aadhaar issue, saying the party was not satisfied with the finance minister's reply. The party questioned the government as to why it was "forcing" people to have Aadhaar number when the Supreme Court had clearly said in September last year that it was not mandatory.

During the discussion, BJD member Bhartruhari Mahtab had also raised the issue of imposition of tax on agriculture income. Responding to it, Jaitley said, "The Centre does not have the power to impose tax on agriculture. It is outside the legislative competence of Parliament. It is a state subject. There is no tax on agriculture and it won't be levied."

Congress lawmakers walked out as the government gave no commitment to waive farm loans of small and marginal farmers across the country.

The FM said the move to make cash transactions beyond ₹2 lakh illegal was aimed at stamping out black money. "To encourage digital economy and to discourage cash, I had proposed in Budget that there will be a ban on cash transactions of over ₹3 lakh. I am making it ₹2 lakh by an amendment," he said.