

Consolidated Fund benefits may soon be Aadhaar-linked

Saurabh Kumar

New Delhi, Jan 11: Don't be surprised if in the near future, filing a police complaint requires a person to produce Aadhaar number as all services, benefits and subsidies that are paid out of the Consolidated Fund of India will necessarily require the unique identity number.

After making Aadhaar compulsory for availing senior citizen discount on railway tickets, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and Employees' Provident Fund, the government may soon make Aadhaar, issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India, a required identity proof for all such services.

"Increasingly yes, that will happen. Under the Aadhaar Act, passed by Parliament, any subsidy, benefit or service for which money is going out of the Consolidated Fund of India, the government is empowered

UNIQUE REACH



Aadhaar-enabled Payments System: 119 banks active, undertaking more than 3 crore transactions per month through 1.3 lakh devices across the country



Direct Benefit Transfer using Aadhaar: Initiated in 2013, as on mid-December 2016 almost 159 crore transactions have been carried out covering several major schemes such as PAHAL, MGNREGS and Pensions etc. Currently, there are about 537 different schemes which are covered under the DBT programme



Aadhaar-enabled Biometric Attendance System: Launched in 2015, the service is now available at more than 678 organisations, registered over 2.07 lakh employees, over 5,000 active devices



Jeevan Pramaan: Jeevan Pramaan is an Aadhaar-enabled digital life certificate for pensioners. Over 24.77 lakh pensioners are taking benefit of this facility



Digi locker: Dedicated 1 GB of personal storage space, linked to each

resident's Aadhaar number for storing docs electronically with over 40.8 lakh users



Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana: 25.98 crore bank accounts are opened under the scheme of which 14.30 crore are linked to Aadhaar number



Universal Account Number: Over 1.86 crore have been linked to Aadhaar



Permanent Account Number: Over 91.8 lakh are linked to Aadhaar

to use Aadhaar," said a senior government official requesting anonymity.

All government receipts such as taxes and loans make up the Consolidated Fund of India and all expenses barring the exceptional ones are met through this corpus. As on December 31, a total of ₹43,856

crore has been transferred to the beneficiaries through the Aadhaar payment bridge.

The NDA government has made Aadhaar the cornerstone of its policies and schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) and others under the Digital India initiative such as DigiLocker, eSign and Jeevan

Pramaan, among others, critically depend on the biometrics-based unique identity.

The current government had earlier tried to make the use of Aadhaar mandatory for availing services and subsidies, but the move was challenged in the Supreme Court by petitioners on grounds of data security.

However, the apex court in October 2015 allowed the government to use the identity on voluntary basis for selected purposes including MGNREGS, PMJDY, pensions by central and state governments, and the Employees' Provident Fund Scheme, in addition to the already allowed use in the public distribution system and the distribution of cooking gas and kerosene.

In March 2016, the government passed the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Bill, 2016, as a money bill thus backing the unique identity by law which it earlier lacked. "Considering the advantage of Aadhaar, every department will be motivated to use this infrastructure because if you are going to interact with anyone, don't you have a right to know who the person is?" asked the official quoted above, adding that non-usage of Aadhaar may be contended in the future.

"Tomorrow the CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General of India) can take objection that if a better system was available, why was it not availed to check who is receiving benefits. So, anywhere where there is subsidy and benefits are flowing, Aadhaar will be required," the official added.

The Constitution bench of the Supreme Court is still to be constituted to hear the Aadhaar case.

According to the official, Section 7 of the Aadhaar Act says that to avail services paid out of the Consolidated Fund of India will require Aadhaar, and if one does not have it, she/he will be required to enrol. Also for those who are entitled for Aadhaar but don't have a number assigned will get services by making an application that they did apply, but didn't receive or there are no enrolment centres available in the area. However, one who does not want to enrol will have to forfeit the benefit because the law says so.