

Responsibility of attesting papers lies with gazetted officers, say UIDAI officials

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Bengaluru: The case of three Pakistani nationals arrested in Bengaluru last week for forging documents and obtaining Aadhaar cards has once again raised doubts about security and privacy issues around the 12-digit unique identification number.

However, officials with the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) say the Aadhaar system is foolproof and in this case, the fault lies with the gazetted officer who didn't check the credentials of the persons concerned and authenticity of the documents before attesting them.

"Once an individual comes with documents attested by a gazetted officer, the said documents become valid and enrolment is done. However, in this case, only enrolment ID and e-Aadhaar were generated," he added.

Asked whether UIDAI has initiated talks with state governments to ensure gazetted officers do proper checks before attesting documents, a senior UIDAI official said such directions and steps are already in place. "All gazetted officers have to cross-check credentials of the individual whose documents they are attesting," he added.

Police on Monday arrested Dr C Nagalakshamma, a senior specialist with Jayanagar General Hospital, for allegedly attesting forged documents that helped the three Pakistanis get Aadhaar cards.

UIDAI officials said Aadhaar enrolment is free of cost. Therefore, nobody needs to pay anything at the enrolment centre

On individuals, who are not citizens of India but getting Aadhaar numbers, the UIDAI officer said Aadhaar doesn't validate citizenship or identification of address proof for anybody. Quoting the Aadhaar Act, he said UIDAI was created with the objective to issue Aadhaar to all residents of India, and to build a system that is robust enough to eliminate duplicate and fake identities.

"Also, one should not forget that Aadhaar per se doesn't assure any privileges or benefits. Government agencies are asking for Aadhaar numbers to weed out duplicates and fakes from schemes, and also because they help in providing accurate data and enable implementation of direct benefit programmes," said an official.

"As per the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016, only a resident individual is entitled to obtain Aadhaar. Resident, as per the said act, means an individual who has resided in India for a period amounting to 182 days or more in the twelve months immediately preceding the date of application for enrolment," he said.