

No one can build Aadhaar users' profile: UIDAI chief

In an exclusive interview with Mahendra Singh, Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) CEO Ajay Bhushan Pandey addresses concerns about Aadhaar's privacy and security systems.

■ Critics say Aadhaar has a poorly verified database and questions are asked about generation of fake Aadhaar cards

Aadhaar enrolment is done through registrars - state government, banks, Common Service Centres (CSCs) which employ enrolment agencies empaneled by UIDAI. These agencies employ operators who are certified by UIDAI. Aadhaar enrolments are done only through a special customised software developed and provided by UIDAI. Every day operators have to log into the enrolment machine through Aadhaar number and fingerprints. Once an enrolment is done he has to sign through his biometrics. That moment the whole enrolment data is encrypted and can't be read by anyone other than the UIDAI server.

If a person gives fake I-card and obtains a number?

Suppose Ram Kumar fabricates his identity documents such as ration card or voter's ID card in the name of Shyam Kumar. However Ram will also need an Aadhaar card in his real name. When he goes to enrol in the name of Ram Kumar he will be rejected because his biometrics is already in the database. So if somebody has Aadhaar with a fake identity, then he will be stuck for his whole life with that fake identity. He will be caught very soon. Very few will dare to use fake Aadhaar identities to commit a crime of impersonation or money laundering.

■ What if there is a terror act facilitated by use of fake Aadhaar cards? If bank accounts opened through fake Aadhaar cards are used for money laundering?

It is wrong to assume that the authorities would rely only on Aadhaar for allowing access to all type of services. It does not mean that authorities are required to give up other necessary verifications. After necessary verifications, after having confirmed the identity of



“Aadhaar number, bank account number and mobile numbers are not secret. If someone knows your Aadhaar number, it will be wrong to assume he will be able to hack your Aadhaar-linked bank account”

AJAY BHUSHAN PANDEY
CEO, UIDAI

pirators and bring them to justice. If the person had used his fake ration card, the authorities would find it much harder to trace him.

■ Alleged leaks of Aadhaar numbers has caused concern among people...

Some agencies of central or state governments have been putting up details of their beneficiaries state-wise, district-wise, village-wise through a search menu as required under the RTI Act. Now, IT Act and Aadhaar Act are there. They impose restrictions on publication of Aadhaar numbers, bank account, and other personal details. As soon as it came to notice that some agen-

cies were displaying Aadhaar numbers and bank account numbers of beneficiaries in a search menu, they were told to remove them and they complied. Remember that no biometric was displayed. Therefore to say that Aadhaar has been breached, 13 crore people's privacy is endangered is completely incorrect, misleading and even irresponsible.

■ If someone comes to know my Aadhaar number should I be concerned?

Aadhaar number, bank account number and mobile numbers are not secret. They are sensitive personal identity information. Secret numbers are your PIN, passwords etc. While these should not be shared, one can give his sensitive personal identity information such as bank account number and Aadhaar number to others for transactional purposes.

When you write a cheque, it will have your bank account number. Just because someone knows your bank account number, it will be wrong to assume he will be able to hack your bank account. If someone

knows your Aadhaar number, it will be wrong to assume he will be able to hack your Aadhaar-linked bank account.

■ Section 7 of Aadhaar Act ensures that no one will be denied benefits because of not having Aadhaar. But notifications mandate Aadhaar in contravention of this provision.

Section 7 of the Aadhaar Act is very clear that if a subsidy is to be given from the Consolidated Fund of India, then the government can ask for Aadhaar number. If he doesn't have Aadhaar then beneficiary can be mandated to enrol for Aadhaar and till then benefits shall have to be given through alternative means of identification.

■ There is fear that Aadhaar will allow government agencies to play big brother

Aadhaar Act ensures the following three fundamental principles - minimal data, optimal ignorance and federated databases. Aadhaar enrolment collects minimal data that is name, address, date of birth, gender and biometrics. We don't

ask income, religion, profession, caste, etc. The principles also ensure no agency - UIDAI, government or any department or agency is able to track and profile any individual. For example, a person may use his Aadhaar number for obtaining a SIM card, opening a bank account, and receiving PDS benefits. But the telecom company will not have any information about bank details or PDS benefits. Similarly, the bank will not know his SIM card details and PDS benefits. UIDAI or any agency will not have any of the information - bank details, SIM cards and PDS benefits. There can be no 360 degree view of any of customers or beneficiaries. Each agency remains optimally ignorant. Section 29 prohibits any attempt to link different databases.

■ Can police ask for it?

No. There is strong protection against it in Aadhaar Act which prohibits sharing of biometrics with anyone including police. So far as sharing of non-biometric information is available with UIDAI is concerned, they can be shared only if a district judge permits.