The Economic Times
Aadhaar doesn't pose any privacy issue: Bill Gates

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Asked if India's Aadhaar technology is worth emulating by other countries, Gates replied, "Yes".

WASHINGTON: India's **Aadhaar** technology does not pose any privacy issue and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has funded the **World Bank** to take this approach to other countries as it is worth emulating, Microsoft founder **Bill Gates** has said.

The 62-year-old multi-billionaire entrepreneur and philanthropist said **Nandan Nilekani**, Infosys founder who is considered as the chief architect of Aadhaar, was consulting and helping the World Bank on the project.

Asked if India's Aadhaar technology is worth emulating by other countries, he replied, "Yes".

"The benefits of that (basic ID -- Aadhaar) are very high," he told PTI.

More than a billion people in India have enrolled in Aadhaar, the world's largest biometric ID system.

"Yes, countries should adopt that approach because the quality of governance has a lot to do with how quickly countries are able to grow their economy and empower their people," Gates said in response to a question.

"We have funded the World Bank to take this Aadhaar approach to other countries," he said.

It is believed that several countries, including some from India's neighbourhood, have approached New Delhi for assistance in this matter.

"Aadhaar in itself doesn't pose any privacy issue because it's just a bio ID verification scheme," Gates, the head of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, said when asked about the concerns about privacy issues raised by certain quarters in India.

"The individual applications that use Aadhaar, you have to look and see what's been stored and who has access to that information. And so, application by application, you have to make sure that's well managed. In the case of the financial bank account I think it's handled very well," he said.

"(It uses) Aadhar to set up the accounts so that you can both get your cell phone and get your bank account," he added.

Observing that Aadhaar was started before Prime Minister Narendra Modi came into office, Gates said that it was very much to his credit that he was willing to embrace it.

"I'm both good friend and an admirer of Nandan Nilekani and some of the initiatives of digitisation efforts that can help with education that can help with governance," he said.

In his lecture on 'Technology for Transformation' organised by NITI Aayog on November 2016, Gates had said that Aadhaar is something that had never been done by any government before, not even in a rich country.

Aadhaar is a 12-digit unique identity number for Indians, based on their biometric and demographic data. The data is collected by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), a statutory authority established in January 2009 by the Government of India.