

Aadhaar helps 16 mentally challenged boys return home

Registration Aided In Tracing Kin

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Bengaluru: Nearly three months after he went missing from his home in Damoh district of Madhya Pradesh, 17-year-old Arun Tiwari, who has severe intellectual disability, was reunited with his family in Bengaluru, thanks to Aadhaar.

Found loitering at Yeshwantpur railway station on April 11, 2018, Arun was rescued by an NGO, which sent him to the government-run home for mentally challenged boys off Hosur Road. Efforts by officials to trace his family bore fruit as Arun was reunited with his father, Bharat Prasad Tiwari, a businessman, on July 2.

Arun is among 16 boys from the home, the only such government-run facility in Bengaluru, whose families have been traced through Aadhaar since 2017.

The boys were rescued from Majestic and railway stations by various NGOs and brought to the home run by the women and child welfare department. Staffers get the boys enrolled for Aadhaar, which has aided in tracing some of their families.

LOST & FOUND CASES

“If the word ‘duplicate’ pops up during the registration process, it means the person has already been registered under Aadhaar. In such cases, we co-ordinate with Aadhaar officials and get details about the geographical coordinates of the boy’s family,” said R Nagarathna, superintendent of the government home.

Arun, in fact, had identified himself as Sahil. During Aadhaar registration, officials found out his

HE'D GONE MISSING DURING YELLAMMA FAIR

A 20-year-old boy from the government home for mentally challenged boys in Ballari was brought to the Bengaluru centre for epilepsy treatment on December 23, 2017. Aadhaar registration revealed he had been enrolled earlier and his address was Janata Colony, Davanagere. One of the



Bengaluru home staffers was from Davanagere, which made things easier. The staff promptly got in touch with an anganwadi centre in the Colony.

“Seeing the boy’s photo, a teacher at the anganwadi recognised him as one of her ex-students and alerted his mother, who stayed in the locality. The boy’s Aadhaar details had been verified by the Ballari home staffers too but they didn’t take it forward as the address was not complete,” the officials said.

The boy’s mother, Chandamma, visited Bengaluru on March 22 and he immediately recognised her as his ‘amma’. Chandamma shared documents pertaining to the complaint she had filed about her missing son seven years ago and his photographs. Chandamma, a vegetable vendor, told officials that he had gone missing from Saundatti seven years ago when they had gone to attend the annual Yellamma fair.

From Harohalli to Odisha

A 17-year-old boy found near Harohalli in south Bengaluru was sent to the government home on August 3, 2017. Aadhaar registration showed he had been enrolled and his family was from Odisha’s Sambalpur district. Odisha police and the boy’s father came to Bengaluru and after verification, he was reunited with his family on December 11, 2017.

TIMES VIEW

Though it’s at the centre of a raging privacy debate, Aadhaar has proved to be a crucial tool in facilitating the reunion of missing children and their distraught families. While there have been many instances of registration drives helping orphanages / shelter homes locate inmates’ kin, cases of kids with intellectual disability – for whom communication is a mammoth challenge – making it back to their homes are even more heartwarming. Staffers of NGOs and government homes also deserve to be lauded for their effort. The success stories only show that the flagship unique identity scheme, which has drawn flak from many quarters, is not entirely without benefits.

name was Arun. Officials contacted Arun’s parents, who came all the way from Madhya Pradesh and produced relevant documents before the Child Welfare Committee. The family said Arun went missing when they took him to a wedding in a train in early April.

“Sahil was apparently his nickname. With the boy’s behaviour we could understand that he comes from an upper middle-class family. He would refuse to sit on the ground and would not walk without slippers,” the officials said.

72 inmates at B'luru home

The centre has 72 inmates and is open for those aged 12-21. But eight of the inmates are aged above 22. “Children must be nurtured at home. Though we take care of them, they miss their parents. They can’t express much as they suffer from intellectual disabilities. We make efforts to locate their families,” said a staffer.