

Prasad defends Aadhaar, says biometric ID proved benefit to people

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New Delhi, June 18 () IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad today came out in strong defence of Aadhaar, saying the world's largest biometric identification programme has already established its usefulness and benefit for over 121-crore unique ID number holders.

Refusing to be drawn into a "hypothetical" question on Government's action plan in case Supreme Court (SC) decision did not go in favour of Aadhaar, Prasad - also the minister for law and justice - said the team of Aadhaar lawyers has made arguments with proof and that benefits of the programme were for everyone to see.

"The question is hypothetical...the judgement (on the case) is reserved but I believe our Aadhaar team lawyers have argued it with proof, and Aadhaar has already established its benefits for the public," Prasad said at a conference to highlight the four years' achievement of his ministry.

The comments come at a time when the Supreme Court has reserved its verdict on a batch of pleas challenging the Aadhaar Act and the use of biometric identifier in various government and non-government services.

Seeking to draw a distinction between Aadhaar initiative of the Modi government and the previous Manmohan Singh-led UPA government, Prasad said Aadhaar today has a robust law backing it.

"Let us see the difference between Narendra Modi Government's Aadhaar and that of Manmohan Singh...The old Aadhaar was Niradhar (without basis)...there was no legislative support to that platform. Today, Aadhaar has a robust parliamentary law,"

Prasad said.

While only 61 crore Aadhaar had been generated up to 2014, the number jumped to over 121 crore as on June 16, 2018.

As many as 59.15 crore Indians have linked 87.79 crore bank accounts with the Aadhaar, the IT Minister said.

Nearly Rs 4 lakh crore has been disbursed as direct benefit transfer to poor people which has led to savings of Rs 90,000 crore by removing fictitious beneficiaries in the last four years, he asserted.

"We will make Aadhaar robust," the minister pointed out. MBI MKJ MKJ