

HC refuses to defer deadline for Aadhaar, ration card linking

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THE BOMBAY High Court recently refused to defer the March 31 deadline imposed by the Maharashtra government for linking the Aadhaar card to ration card.

In an order passed on Friday, the bench of Justices Shantanu Kemkar and Rajesh Ketkar directed the state to look into citizens' grievances of technological glitches faced while linking the ration card to the Aadhaar card.

The bench, however, refused to defer the deadline saying that going by the petition, it seemed that the problem was limited to the district of Nashik alone.

The bench, however, directed the Maharashtra government's Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Department to grant an urgent hearing to the petitioner and address his grievance within a week.

"We are of the opinion that the grievance is mainly restricted to Nashik district. We think the petitioner can approach the Food Supplies department in Mantralaya and make a representation there and apprise the authorities of issues faced by citizens in his district," the bench said.

"The secretary of the concerned department must also treat this petition as a representation and look into the problems faced by residents while digitisa-

tion of their ration cards," the bench said. "We expect the secretary to take (an) appropriate decision expeditiously and within a maximum period of one week," the court added.

The bench was hearing a petition by Aziz Pathan of Nashik district.

In 2015, the Maharashtra government issued a resolution notifying a scheme for digitisation of ration cards.

The scheme includes, among other things, digitisation of ration cards, issuance of foodgrains through biometric authentication, including linking the beneficiary's Aadhaar numbers in their ration card database.

But the petition said several beneficiaries from Nashik were

facing problems in digitisation of their ration cards and their biometric authentication. Pathan said there were inconsistencies in the biometric machines and the upgraded ration cards of several residents of Nashik bore incorrect names, addresses and employment and caste details.

The residents were facing difficulty in linking their Aadhaar cards to their ration cards and as a result, the linking process was getting delayed. Pathan had urged the court to grant him interim relief by deferring the March 31 deadline and by directing the government to ensure that the affected people did not lose out on foodgrain subsidies and other benefits under the PDS.