

IT minister hits out at Aadhaar critics

OUR CORRESPONDENT

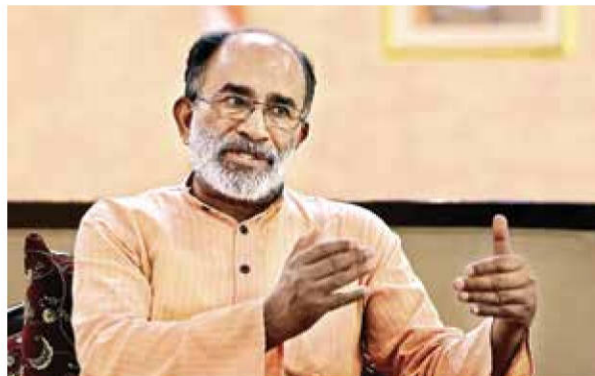
NEW DELHI: Taking on critics of biometric identifier Aadhaar, Minister of State for IT KJ Alphons Kannanthanam on Wednesday said people have no problem in giving out details to foreign nations like US while applying for visa but call it violation of privacy when asked to give simple details for Aadhaar.

The government, he said, is making payments to Aadhaar-linked beneficiaries of different schemes to prevent frauds and diversion of funds to unintended people.

Giving his own example, he said when filling for US visa, he had to fill a 10 page form that sought information starting from grand parents to when he got married and which countries has he travelled so far.

He said details were on what he talks on Facebook or WhatsApp, information on countries visited in last 10 years is asked and given.

"We have absolutely no problem in giving it to the Americans, to the British, to the Europeans to every coun-



try of the world.

"(But) when government of India asks you very simple thing in your Aadhaar (like) gives your name, your date of birth, your address... you have a huge problem. Some people think it is compromising on privacy and security," he said at first open session of APCERT being held in India.

For visa, biometrics, iris and fingerprints are asked, he said adding the same is also given at airports.

"Then why there is huge scare (in giving the same) when you own country which looks after you, protects you, gives

you all the benefits. Why is that you have this scare not with visa and others. I dont understand," he said.

Law and IT Minister Ravi Shankar at the event said that he sees inner conflict in stance of people who are raising privacy issues around Aadhaar but advocate for Right to Information.

"No poor is talking against Aadhaar. A poor will not be bereft of food if he is not having Aadhaar. However, I definitely see that those who oppose Aadhaar, many of them are those who support RTI," Prasad said.

He said that RTI gives a

person right to know everything and the right should be respected. "The same people say that their privacy should be honoured. On one side they are talking about RTI and on the other side talking about privacy, according to me it has huge inner conflict," Prasad said. He said that Aadhaar is absolutely safe and secure and it has helped poor a lot.

Prasad said government is seriously looking at all aspect of data security and give preference to those firms in government procurement that develops cyber security product indigenously.

Talking about cyber security, Prasad announced that government of India will promote good PhD research in cyber security of intending students from the country of Asia-Pacific and fund them.

The minister said Ministry of Electronics and IT is working with the Data Security Council of India to fund research of start-up with grant of Rs 5 crore for indigenously developing cyber security solution.