

Nearly 87 cr bank accounts seeded with Aadhaar

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A MONTH before the expiry of the deadline, around 80 per cent of bank accounts and 60 per cent of mobile connections have been linked with national biometric identifier Aadhaar, as per a senior official at the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI).

The Centre has mandated submission of the unique identity number by every bank account holder by March 31, 2018, to weed

out unaccounted wealth. For the same purpose, Aadhaar linking with income tax Permanent Account Number or PAN has also been made mandatory. By March 31, all mobile SIM cards are also to be linked with Aadhaar to establish the identity of mobile phone users. Out of the 109.9 crore bank accounts, almost 87 crore have been seeded with Aadhaar, said the UIDAI official.

Of this, 58 crore have already been verified while in case of the rest, the authentication process is underway with the docu-

ments that have been submitted to the banks, the official said.

The official further said that as against the 142.9 crore active mobile connections, 85.7 crore have already been linked with Aadhaar. When contacted, UIDAI CEO Ajay Bhushan Pandey said: "Yes, about 80 per cent of the bank accounts have been seeded with Aadhaar, and we hope that the rest will be covered soon... Financial losses caused to banks and genuine account holders through identity frauds will be curbed." With over 1.2 bn residents already enrolled

for Aadhaar — a unique 12-digit number backed by fingerprints, iris scans and certain demographic details — the programme today is the world's largest biometric database. Aadhaar is required as an identity proof of residents by various government and non-government entities.

While a five-judge Constitution bench is hearing a clutch of pleas challenging the constitutional validity of the Aadhaar programme, as things stand today, PAN, bank accounts, credit cards, insurance policies,

mutual funds, pension plans and social welfare benefits will have to be linked to Aadhaar by March 31, 2018. The UIDAI recently announced a new concept of Virtual ID which an Aadhaar-card holder can generate from its website and give for various purposes, including SIM verification, instead of sharing the actual 12-digit biometric ID. The soon-to-be-introduced Virtual ID, a random 16-digit number, will give the users the option of not sharing their Aadhaar number at the time of authentication.