

Plea against UID reflects elitist bias: Centre to SC

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New Delhi: With just around 15 crore of the country's population left to enrol for Aadhaar, the Centre has termed the petitioners' arguments in the Supreme Court opposing mandatory registration for the unique ID number an "elitist bias".

The bias, it said, had severely undermined Aadhaar's crucial role in checking the massive pilferage of subsidies to the poor. In an affidavit submitted in the apex court, the government said, "The petitioners' argument fails to consider the positive duties of the State, which reflects the elite nature of the petitioners, who were more concerned with the rights of privacy over say, right to food or right to receive targeted subsidised LPG."

The Centre argued that the petition was not representative of the larger population of the country — this, it said, was reflected in the fact that more than 115.15 crore citizens had already enrolled for and been allocated an Aadhaar number.

The affidavit said that, with almost the entire population having registered with Aadhaar, the petitioners' apprehensions about "large-scale exclusion" of people from government benefits for not having the Aadhaar card was "misplaced, self-contradictory and unfounded".

"This is classic case where crores of individuals who have enrolled for the Aadhaar number have not complained of violation of fundamental rights, while a handful of individuals who are not aggrieved by the Act are questioning its vires and consequently, the benefits it seeks to make available to the poorer and weaker sections of society," the Centre said.

The Centre argued that the term 'human rights', which traditionally means protecting individual freedom against state intrusion, required a radical revision.

"Human rights are based on a far richer view of freedom, which goes beyond being left alone, and instead pays attention to individuals' ability to exercise their rights. The petitioners' argument fails to consider positive duties on the state, which reflects the elite nature of the petitioners, who are more concerned with rights of privacy over, say, right to food, or right to receive targeted subsidised LPG," it added.