

PRIVACY & INCONVENIENCE ISSUES ADDRESSED

There's No Need to See Ghosts in Linking Your Mobile with Aadhaar

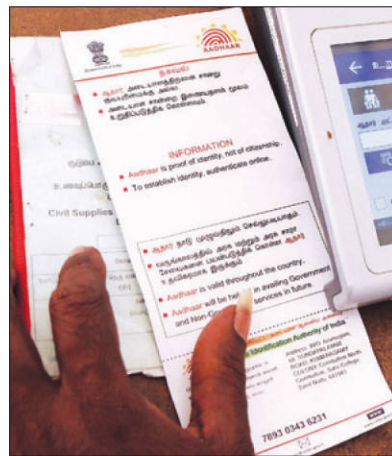
After govt tweaked rules last week, it will now take a minute to link mobile to Aadhaar using OTP

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Who benefits if you link your mobile number to Aadhaar? For sure it's you, much more than the government. After the government finally acted a week ago to allow you to do so using a one-time password (OTP) while sitting at home, instead of having to make the trip to the telecom operator and queue up there, all it will take is a minute to get this job done.

There are two concerns: privacy and inconvenience. Activists question whether a Supreme Court order of February has been deliberately misread by the government to force citizens to link their mobile numbers to Aadhaar. For the record, a majority of Indians have already divulged their mobile number to the government while taking an Aadhaar. This is your "registered mobile number" in Aadhaar records. The government is simply seeking to re-verify your mobile number with your Aadhaar to ensure you have not used a fake identity while getting a SIM connection in the first place.

ET ANALYSIS



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The Indian Telegraph Act requires fulfilment of know-your-customer norms before issue of SIM cards. That is why people were required to give proof of identity such as a passport, voter ID card or a PAN card for SIM cards. Have you ever thought what happened to the photocopy of your document that you left with the mobile operator or the local shop? The government's suspicion is that such documents collected by the local telecom retail agents are being

recycled and misused by them to give connections to other persons. You would not even know if that has happened with your ID document copy. Worse, if the person, who got such a SIM card with your ID document, commits a crime or an act of terrorism, the cops will be at your door and you will be faced with an exhaustive round of explanations or harassment. Because of Aadhaar biometric authentication, there will be nearly no possibility in the future of somebody else taking a SIM card in your name. And if someone already has, the re-verification exercise will expose it and lead to the disconnection of connection.

The other concern was over the inconvenience to millions who would need to queue up at a service centre to get their connections re-verified through Aadhaar by giving their biometrics there. The government has now stipulated that those having their mobile numbers registered with Aadhaar or having a second phone connection (not registered with Aadhaar) to link and re-verify the same using Aadhaar through an OTP. This is the same way bank accounts are linked to Aadhaar.

Another concern – that an agent could see the e-KYC details of a subscriber while re-verifying or issuing new SIM to a subscriber – has been addressed. The latest order says this will not be allowed. In short, privacy and convenience have been addressed by the government in the SIM-Aadhaar linkage process. It is time to see no more ghosts.