

UIDAI ready with masked Aadhaar cards sans number, biometric details

Can be used as an ID card, but not for welfare schemes

SWATHI MOORTHY

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Having faced flak over privacy issues, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has been exploring ways to further strengthen its systems. A step in this direction is 'masked Aadhaar' ID.

Masked Aadhaar is an offline verification system that can be used by the holder without revealing his/her 12-digit number or giving biometric details for services. It can be downloaded from UIDAI website and has only your name, address, photo and virtual ID.

Privacy-proof version

"The masked Aadhaar is available to 122 crore people as it can be downloaded by the Aadhaar holder from our website or at any Aadhaar centre. This is privacy-proof, digitally signed and cannot be manipulated," Ajay Bhushan Pandey, Chief Execut-



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ive Officer, UIDAI said. "You have option to use masked Aadhaar in place of any other ID. Also, for people who do not want to share date of birth, there is the option to mask even that," he added. For instance, it can be used as identification at airports and on trains for ticket verification, linking mobile number or tourist places in India where you are asked to show proof at times. In case an

agency refuses to accept the masked ID, Pandey said, "UIDAI is the issuer of the masked Aadhaar ID and we are saying that one should have no problem in accepting it. If some agency doesn't accept it, then people can raise questions."

Offline eKYC routes

"The idea of masked Aadhaar did not come overnight. We were working

on it for the last one year," Pandey said. Apart from masked Aadhaar, the regulator has come out with other offline verification options using QR Code to ensure citizens' privacy.

The QR Code, which can be downloaded from the UIDAI website, contains demographic information and photograph of the resident, but not the Aadhaar number. In addition, the information in QR code is made secure and tamper-proof with UIDAI digital signatures. This too can be used for services if the service provider has QR code reader application downloaded from the UIDAI website.

However, the masked Aadhaar or QR Code form of identification cannot be used for government welfare schemes such as LPG subsidy, pension or Ayushman Bharat because that requires beneficiaries to furnish their full Aadhaar details and undergo authentication. "This is so that there is no duplication. It is provided in Section 7 of the Aadhaar Act. The Supreme Court has permitted it in such cases," he added.