## ● INTERVIEW: J SATYANARAYANA, CHAIRMAN, UIDAI

# Aadhaar is completely secure... it isn't connected to the internet

*The question of data breach and security issue doesn't arise at all in the government's ambitious unique identity programme, stresses* **J Satyanarayana,** *chairman, Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and advisor (IT), government of Andhra Pradesh. Satyanarayana has been associated with the design and implementation of over 20 major e-government projects at the state and national levels; he is best known as the founder of eSeva, a one-stop-shop for citizen services in Andhra Pradesh. A key speaker at the Oracle Open World in New Delhi last week, Satyanarayana tells* **Sudhir Chowdhary** *that India's digital transformation will significantly improve the quality of government services and increase transparency in its style of working. Excerpts:*

**The Digital India programme was announced in 2014. How is it keeping pace with an extremely dynamic technology world?**

Digital India is more of an approach and a philosophy. It was sufficiently generic when it was originally designed. The very purpose of designing Digital India was deliberate so that it can be adaptive to technology. It is reasonably future-proof.

So, as some of these government projects are being put in place, they are designed in a manner to not only embrace the latest technology but also remain relevant for the next two to five years or even more. A case in point is the Aadhaar project conceptualised in 2009-2010; robust, scalable and future-proof largely. The Aadhaar cards and data are expected to last a citizen's lifecycle. Technology progression and innovations should not be seen as potential threats to legacy applications and should be able to co-exist and adapt to each other.

**What is e-Pragati project and what lessons can be drawn from it in the larger context of government of India?**

E-Pragati is again a philosophy with the vision of creating 'One' government. It follows the approach of adopting enterprise architecture principles not only with the purpose of delivering services but good governance in particular. The sole purpose of 'One' government is to streamline multiple departments and hundreds of agencies to work in tandem with each other for better governance of the state and the nation.

Translating this into reality is fairly simple and I would draw its analogy with the way and manner in which global multinationals function. A conglomerate can have multiple offices and an array of businesses but it follows similar processes, is bound by same principles and is identified by a common brand and set of brand values. The same blueprint can be applied to governance. E-Pragati is a step towards that at a state level. March 1 this year has been declared as the year of e-Pragati and gradually all government departments are expected to transcend towards convergence.

**What is the status on e-Pragati currently?**

We are currently in the process of submitting our recommendations for this project. It has been christened 'IndEA—India Enterprise Architecture' as the idea is to create resonance and value for this project within the citizens. We have designed different models and will be submitting our technology framework proposal to the government for a national rollout. While e-Pragati is in in the process of being rolled out in Andhra Pradesh, it is currently still a concept at the national level and only at the stage

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of submission to the central government.

**Is Aadhaar secure? What potential changes or additions can be done to improve its privacy and security?**

It is completely secure. The moot point is that Aadhaar isn't connected to the internet. Most people believe that your biometrics is taken, put on the internet and is visible and accessible to all. This is technologically not feasible, legally not permissible and organisationally not possible. So I would say it is 300% secure by nature. Data is captured, immediately encrypted and passed on to the data centre, where it is taken to our servers in UIDAI. UIDAI servers are not on the internet. There is a wall separating them from the SAs and infrastructure of UIDAI. It is a physical demarcation. Hence, the question of data breach and security issue doesn't arise at all.

Coming to the second part of your question, improvement is an ongoing process. We have a professional unit in place managed by PwC to oversee and evaluate various security aspects and threat situations on a 24x7 basis. We have a significantly strong and large security operation centre based in Delhi, overseeing the infrastructure at Bengaluru and the disaster recovery at Manesar. We have de-

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ployed about 7,000 servers, accessible at our centre in Delhi round the clock.

**Could you throw some light on how technology and Digital India will address employment, skill development, rural and agricultural growth in the country?**

Digital India is not about e-governance; it isn't about electronics, IT, servers or mobility. These are actually various components and definitely contribute towards Digital India and what it seeks to achieve. However, at the end of the day, if you have good governance, it yields results. So, in all these areas like agriculture, healthcare, and employment, the respective domain needs reform and re-engineering.

It is the government that needs to change and the change needs to be fast signifying re-engineered and re-imagined processes and freshly designed innovative services. Technology cannot overhaul things overnight. The lesson is to introspect first and then embrace the right technology and IT.

**What is the concept behind the People Hub project?**

People Hub is a part of e-Pragati programme. It collects, collates, streamlines and uses relevant socio-economic data about the households in India. There are various government schemes and programmes for which correct and relevant data about families is a prerequisite. A good example here would be a 'Ration card'; which is not technically issued to any and every person. Again, government-run health insurance schemes and many more are largely driven by comprehensive and authentic family data at a household level.

People Hub is going to be the single source of truth for an individual at a household level. We have conducted a very extensive survey using the Oracle Customer Hub as the fulcrum and we have created a databank of 150 million records; ready to be launched now. In Andhra, we need three months to acclimatise the departments and we can launch the project.