

Aadhaar must for access to Survey of India maps

It is to ensure that only Indians reach the portal: Minister

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

The Survey of India, the country's oldest scientific organisation and official maker of maps, has set up a web portal called Nakshe that allows 3,000 of its 7,000 maps to be downloaded for free. The only caveat is that one would require an Aadhaar number for such access.

The SoI maps – prepared for defence and civilian purposes – are considered a standard reference for the shape, extent and geographic features of the country.

“Over the last year, the government has moved to making several services available through Aadhaar...this too is a major step forward,” Union Science Minister Harsh Vardhan said at a press conference to mark the 250th anniversary of the organisation's found-

ing, “The Aadhaar is to ensure that only Indians are able to access this portal.”

In the last years, the government has passed orders to route a variety of citizen services – from scholarships to subsidies – to possessing an Aadhaar or Aadhaar enrolment number. The Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Bill, 2016 specifically says that the number can't be used as proof of citizenship or domicile.

The maps to be made available through the portal <http://soinakshe.uk.gov.in/> will make it easier for residents of villagers and panchayats to readily access information, said Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, Ministry of Science. Currently, organisations and people who want specific maps need to fill forms and sometimes

visit the SoI. Several times, Ministries themselves had to pay to get certain maps. “We decided that all Indians should be able to get these maps for free because the government has already paid to get them made,” Mr. Sharma added.

A press release said the Nakshe portal would address “...security concerns and tracking through Aadhaar-based user authentication and tagging to Aadhaar number of user.”

New model

Swarna Subba Rao, Surveyor General of India, said the Dehradun-based organisation was developing a so-called Geoid model of the country. This would make measurements of topography by satellite – the modern method – compatible with the traditional ground-based measures.