

... but lack of Aadhaar 'will not deprive people of benefits'

Govt says other identification can be used till Aadhaar number is issued

OUR BUREAU

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No one will be deprived of the benefits for lack of Aadhaar, the government said on Tuesday, adding that other means of identification can be used till an Aadhaar number is assigned, even for the mid-day meal scheme.

In a statement, the government said in, "the case of Mid Day Meal scheme and under the Integrated Child Development Scheme, the schools and Anganwadis have been asked to collect the Aadhaar number of the children beneficiaries and in case a child does not have Aadhaar, the school or ICDS functionary will be required to provide enrolment facilities to a child and till Aadhaar number is

assigned, the benefits will continue."

It also directed the departments to provide Aadhaar enrolment facilities to their beneficiaries under Regulation 12 of Aadhaar (Enrolment and Update) Regulations 2016.

The government's clarification comes after widespread criticism for making Aadhaar mandatory in a host of public schemes. Civil society members and Opposition parties such as the Congress, Trinamool Congress and Left have decried Aadhaar linkage to the mid-day meal scheme, and have said that they will raise the matter in the upcoming Parliament session.

In its statement on Tuesday, the government reiter-

ated the "usefulness of Aadhaar in curbing leakages and bringing transparency in delivery system", adding that it had recently issued orders to use Aadhaar in several other welfare schemes funded from the Consolidated Fund of India.

"Aadhaar is also ensuring that the foodgrains are received only by the genuine beneficiaries and not diverted by any middle man or unscrupulous elements. It has, thus, saved huge sums of public money which otherwise was being siphoned away by middlemen," the government said.

"Total savings because of plugging of leakages due to Aadhaar during the last two-and-half-years in just a few schemes where Aadhaar has been implemented amount to more than ₹49,000 crore," the statement added.