

Your PAN could be invalid without Aadhaar by Dec

END OF THE ROAD Existing accounts must be linked with unique-identity details

Mahua Venkatesh

■ letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Permanent account numbers (PAN) not linked to Aadhaar cards will likely become invalid after December 31, a government source said on Thursday, as the Centre pushes to widen the use of the 12-digit biometric identity project.

Currently, all taxpayers need to have a PAN number to file income tax return but others, such as students outside the tax bracket, also use the card as a proof of identity.

The government says many of these PAN cards are fraudulently obtained, a practice that can be checked by a unique identification number.

The official — who refused to be quoted because he isn't authorised to talk to media — said the government had arrived at the tentative cutoff date of December 31 as it believed the Aadhaar enrollment process will be complete by the end of the year.

"Considering that 98% of the adult population is Aadhaar card holders, a timeframe till the end of the year is more than adequate for linking PAN with Aadhaar," said State Bank of India group's chief economic adviser Soumya Kanti Ghosh.

What you need to do

Here's a quick guide to how you can link your Aadhaar with PAN



- 1** Log in to e-filing portal <https://incometaxindiaefiling.gov.in>
- 2** A window will show up to facilitate linking of the two unique identity numbers
- 3** Punch in your Aadhaar number at the space provided
- 4** Check that your personal details (**name, date of birth, gender**) match with those stated in PAN
- 5** Data will be corroborated to ensure authenticity of your identity
- 6** Click on '**link now**'. PAN and Aadhaar will be linked only when the details of both match

More than 1.08 billion Indians have the unique identification number that was aimed at plugging leaks in the distribution of government entitlements and benefits.

Over the past few years, the Centre has linked Aadhaar to a growing list of subsidies and schemes, such as the mid-day meal.

On Wednesday, the Lok Sabha passed a controversial bill that made Aadhaar mandatory for filing income tax returns or applying for a PAN card.

According to the amendments in the finance bill, taxpayers can't file income tax returns from July 1 if they fail to quote the Aadhaar number or show proof of having applied for the document.

At present, there are 250 million PAN cards that are mandatory for cash transactions of hotel or travel bills exceeding ₹50,000. It is also mandatory to quote the number for purchase of jewellery above ₹2 lakh either in cash or by plastic money, and while making large deposits in banks.

CONTINUED ON P 8

Aadhaar architect Nilekani supports mandatory linking

Sarika Malhotra

■ sarika.malhotra@hllive.com

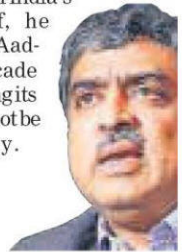
NEW DELHI: There's nothing wrong in making Aadhaar mandatory for PAN cards or other public services, Nandan Nilekani said on Thursday, defending the government's decision to expand the use of a controversial biometric ID project he helped create.

The 61-year-old appeared to row back on his previous position on the use of 12-digit ID, which is supposed to cut fraud in distribution of state benefits, but which critics see as vulnerable to data breaches.

As Unique Identification Authority of India's first chief, he rolled out Aadhaar a decade ago, insisting its use would not be mandatory.

» P10

■ **Nandan Nilekani**



Aadhaar

But the government says many of those PAN cards are duplicates or obtained through fraud.

“The government has proposed quoting the Aadhaar number mandatory for filing (IT) returns to eliminate discrepancies ...many individuals hold multiple PANs and filing returns multiple times; once quoting of Aadhaar becomes binding, this problem will not be there,” revenue secretary Hasmukh Adhia told HT.

People with existing PAN cards will either have to link them to Aadhaar or show proof of having applied for the 12-digit ID by December 31, the source added.

The recent push to expand the usage of Aadhaar has triggered a torrent of criticism but the government has remained undaunted.

Finance minister Arun Jaitley indicated on Wednesday that Aadhaar would be made mandatory for all income-tax related issues to weed out fraud and duplicates.

“Aadhaar is a more foolproof identity of a citizen as it cannot be duplicated and this will help in addressing graft and though the move will ensure transparency in filing of income tax returns but at the same time, this can also help in tracing money launderers,” said a senior government official.

“The next thing on our agenda will be to decide on the timeframe that will be given to people to link their PAN with Aadhaar,” Adhia added.

The finance minister had said that making Aadhaar mandatory for filing IT returns would help in checking tax evasion. “Why shouldn’t we make use of this technology if it helps us catch tax evaders,” Jaitley had said in Parliament.

Several banks and insurance companies started linking Aadhaar accounts with savings accounts and insurance policies to address graft but they are not allowed by law to seek mandatory quoting of Aadhaar.

There are several bank account holders who have quoted PAN but do not have Aadhaar. “We are yet to figure out what will be the course of action for them as legally, quoting Aadhaar has not yet been made mandatory,” a senior bank executive said.

In 2013, the Supreme Court said Aadhaar couldn’t be made mandatory and people without the document shouldn’t be denied from genuine entitlements and subsidies.