

SC Asks Govt to Verify ID of All Mobile Users

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New Delhi: A year from now, you may be asked to prove your identity again when you recharge your prepaid connection, as the Supreme Court has asked the government to ensure up-to-date verification of all mobile phone users.

On Monday, the government told the court that it was drawing up an Aadhaar-based verification plan, after a bench headed by Chief Justice JS Khehar suggested that prepaid users may be asked to give identity details when they recharge their connections.

The court was hearing a public interest litigation seeking to make Aadhaar mandatory for the verification. It directed the government to put in place a programme within a year to ensure that all the customers are verified.

Attorney general Mukul Rohatgi earlier told the bench that the government cannot rush such a project as it affects many. Also, it will hurt banking and monetary transactions that are increasingly getting phone-based, the government's top law officer said.

At present, a user needs to provide identity proof at the time of taking a connection, be it prepaid or postpaid. Nine out of every 10 mobile con-

nections in India are prepaid, according to industry data. The address and identity proofs given to take such connections are often found to be fake, creating major security risk.

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government to make Aadhaar-based

verification mandatory, the AG resisted it. Aadhaar is voluntary now, but a Bill has since been introduced to make it mandatory, he told the court.

He claimed that so far 110 crore people had enrolled for Aadhaar cards. Other such identity proofs can be cloned, but the biometric information captured in Aadhaar cannot be copied as of now, he said.

"The government is planning Aadhaar-based KYC for all cellphone subscribers ... But this will take time. It cannot be done overnight," he said. "In a year we will put in place a system for Aadhaar-based KYC."

The CJI was initially persistent on its immediate implementation, saying that the government just needs



to put a form in the hand of every subscriber when he walks in to recharge his account. It can then say that you submit the identity proof within a fixed time or don't get to recharge it.