



Aadhaar-Voter ID Linkage

For Prelims: Election Commission (EC), Aadhaar, Voter ID, Right to Privacy, Personal Data Protection (PDP) law.

For Mains: Impacts of Linking Voter-ID with Aadhaar.

Why in News?

Recently, the [Election Commission \(EC\)](#) started a campaign to promote the linkage of Voter ID and Aadhaar,

- Further, Government officials have asked individuals to **link them [Aadhaar](#) with their Voter IDs and failure to link voter ID with Aadhar could lead to the cancellation of their Voter ID card.**

Why is the Government Pushing to Link Voter ID with Aadhar?

- **Update Database:**
 - The linking project would help the Election Commission, which **conducts regular exercises to maintain an updated and accurate record of the voter base.**
- **Remove Duplication:**
 - To **weed out duplication of voters, such as migrant workers who may have been registered more than once on the electoral rolls** in different constituencies or for persons registered multiple times within the same constituency.
- **Pan India voter ID:**
 - As per the government, linkage of Aadhaar with voter IDs will **assist in ensuring that only one Voter ID is issued per citizen of India.**

What are the Significances of this Linkage?

- **Universal coverage:**
 - At the end of 2021, **99.7% of the adult Indian population had an Aadhaar card.**
 - This coverage **exceeds that of any other officially valid document** such as driver's licence, ration cards, PAN cards etc that are mostly applied for specific purposes.
- **Reliable & Cost Effective:**
 - Since Aadhaar allows for biometric authentication, **Aadhaar-based authentication and verification are considered more reliable, quicker and cost-efficient when compared to other IDs.**

Is linking Aadhaar with One's Voter ID mandatory?

- **Legal status:**
 - In December 2021, Parliament passed the [Election Laws \(Amendment\) Act, 2021](#) to

amend the [Representation of the People, Act, 1950](#), Section 23(4) was inserted in the Representation of the People Act, 1950.

- According to it the **electoral registration officer may for the purpose of establishing the identity of any person** or for the purposes of **authentication of entries in electoral roll of more than one constituency or more than once in the same constituency for citizens already enrolled**, require them to furnish their Aadhaar numbers.

▪ **Recent Changes:**

- Recently, the government **notified changes to the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960.**
 - **Rule 26B** was added to provide that **every person whose name is listed in the roll may give his Aadhaar number to the registration officer.**
 - **Confusing Government Actions:**
 - There have been assurances given by both the government and the EC that linkage of the Aadhaar with Voter ID is optional, but this **does not seem to be reflected in Form 6B issued under the new Rule 26B.**
 - **Form 6B:**
 - It provides the format in which **Aadhaar information may be submitted to the electoral registration officer.**
 - Further, it provides the **voter to either submit their Aadhaar number or any other listed document.**
 - However, the option to submit other listed documents is exercisable **only if the voter is not able to furnish their Aadhaar number because they do not have an Aadhaar number.**

What are the Issues Related to Linking Aadhaar with Voter ID?

▪ **Unclear Constitutional Status:**

- In the [Puttaswamy case\(Right to Privacy\)](#), one of the questions that the Supreme Court explored was **whether the mandatory linking of Aadhaar with bank accounts was constitutional or not.**

▪ **Different Purpose:**

- The preference for Aadhaar for the purposes of determining voters is puzzling as Aadhaar is **only proof of residence and not proof of citizenship.**
 - Therefore, verifying voter identity against this will only **help in tackling duplication but will not remove voters who are not citizens of India from the electoral rolls.**

▪ **Biometric Errors:**

- The estimate of **error rates in biometric-based authentication differs widely.**
 - As per the **Unique Identification Authority of India in 2018, Aadhaar-based biometric authentication had a 12% error rate.**
 - This concern is also reflected in the previous experiences of using Aadhaar to clean electoral rolls.
 - A similar exercise undertaken in 2015 in Andhra and Telangana **led to the disenfranchisement of around 30 lakh voters** before the Supreme Court stalled the process of linkage.

▪ **Violation of Right to Privacy:**

- The linking of the **two databases of electoral rolls and Aadhaar could lead to the linkage of Aadhaar's "demographic" information with voter ID information and lead to violation of the right to privacy and surveillance measures by the state.**

Way Forward

▪ **Reforms in Legislation:**

- The Government must **invite public opinion and allow deeper parliamentary scrutiny** before implementing any new provisions.
- It is of utmost importance in a Parliamentary democracy like India that not just the ordinary citizens but also the **elected representatives are not being deprived of their rights and opportunities.**

- A **productive debate** raising the concerns and the significance of a proposed bill is **essential to identify and eliminate the concerns** legislation may pose.
- **Ensure the Privacy of Citizens:**
 - Before pursuing the Aadhaar-voter ID integration, the **government shall first go for enacting the [Personal Data Protection \(PDP\) law](#).**
 - The **PDP regime must also apply to government entities** and require them to obtain an individual's explicit consent before sharing their data across various government institutions.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following statements: (2018)

1. Aadhaar card can be used as a proof of citizenship or domicile.
2. Once issued, Aadhaar number cannot be deactivated or omitted by the Issuing Authority.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) is a statutory authority established under the provisions of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 by the Gol, under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- UIDAI is responsible for issuance of a 12 digit Unique Identification number (UID), named as "Aadhaar", to all residents of India that is robust enough to **eliminate duplicate and fake identities, and can be verified and authenticated in an easy, cost-effective way.**
- The Aadhaar platform helps service providers authenticate identity of residents electronically, in a safe and quick manner, making service delivery more cost effective and efficient. According to the Gol and UIDAI, **Aadhaar is not a proof of citizenship. Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- However, UIDAI has also published a set of contingencies when the Aadhaar issued by it is liable for rejection. **An Aadhaar with mixed or anomalous biometric information or multiple names in a single name (like Urf or Alias) can be deactivated.** Aadhaar can also get deactivated upon non-usage of the same for three consecutive years. Hence, statement 2 is not correct. Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.

Mains

Q. Examine the scope of Fundamental Rights in the light of the latest judgement of the Supreme Court on Right to Privacy (2017)

Source: TH

