



UIDAI Enrollment of Prisoners

For Prelims: CAG, UIDAI, Aadhaar Act 2016

For Mains: Aadhaar and related issue, Government Policies & Interventions

Why in News?

Recently, as a special measure to enroll prison inmates across the country, the [Unique Identification Authority of India \(UIDAI\)](#) has agreed to accept the **Prisoner Induction Document (PID)** as a valid document for enrolment or update of Aadhaar.

- Though the campaign to extend Aadhaar facility to prisoners was launched in 2017, **the process did not take off on expected lines** since enrolment to the scheme required valid supporting documents prescribed by the UIDAI.

What is the Unique Identification Authority of India?

- **Statutory Authority:** The UIDAI is a statutory authority established on 12th July 2016 by the Government of India under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, following the provisions of the [Aadhaar Act 2016](#).
 - The UIDAI was initially set up by the Government of India in January 2009, as an attached office under the aegis of the [Planning Commission](#).
- **Mandate:** The UIDAI is mandated to assign a **12-digit unique identification (UID) number** (Aadhaar) to all the residents of India.
 - The overall Aadhaar saturation level in the country has crossed 93%, and in the case of the adult population it is nearly 100%

What is the Significance of Aadhaar?

- **Promoting Transparency and Good Governance:** Aadhaar number is **verifiable in an online, cost-effective way**.
 - It is unique and robust enough to eliminate duplicates and fake identities and thus used as a basis/primary identifier to roll out several Government welfare schemes thereby promoting transparency and good governance.
- **Helping Bottom of the Pyramid:** Aadhaar has **given identity to a large number of people who did not have any identity earlier**.
 - It has been used in a range of services and has helped in bringing [financial inclusion](#), broadband and telecom services, [direct benefit transfers](#) to the bank account of citizens in a transparent manner.
- **Neutral:** Aadhaar number is **devoid of any intelligence and does not profile people based on caste, religion, income, health and geography**.
 - The Aadhaar number is a proof of identity, however, it does not confer any right of citizenship or domicile in respect of an Aadhaar number holder.
- **People-Centric Governance:** Aadhaar is a **strategic policy tool for social and financial**

inclusion, public sector delivery reforms, managing fiscal budgets, increasing convenience and promoting hassle-free people-centric governance.

- **Permanent Financial Address:** Aadhaar can be **used as a permanent Financial Address and facilitates financial inclusion** of the underprivileged and weaker sections of the society and is therefore a tool of distributive justice and equality.
 - Thus, the Aadhaar identity platform is one of the key pillars of '[Digital India](#)'.

What are the Concerns related to Aadhaar?

- **Misuse of Aadhaar Data:**
 - Many private entities in the country **insist on an Aadhaar card, and users often share the details.**
 - There's no clarity on how these entities keep these data private and secure.
 - More recently with [Covid-19](#) testing, many would have noticed that most labs insist on Aadhaar card data, including a photocopy.
 - It should be noted that it is **not mandatory to share this for getting a Covid-19 test done.**
- **Excessive Imposition:**
 - In 2018, the Supreme Court ruled that **Aadhaar authentication can be made mandatory only for benefits paid from the [Consolidated Fund of India](#)** and that alternative means of identity verification must always be provided when Aadhaar fails.
 - Children were exempt but **aadhaar continues to be routinely demanded from children for basic rights** such as anganwadi services or school enrolment.
- **Arbitrary Exclusions:**
 - Central and state governments have made **routine use of the "ultimatum method"** to enforce the linkage of welfare benefits with Aadhaar.
 - In this method, **benefits are simply withdrawn or suspended if the recipients fail to comply with the linkage instructions** in good time, such as failing to link their job card, ration card or bank account with Aadhaar.
- **Fraud-prone Aadhaar-enabled Payment System (AePS):**
 - AePS is a **facility that enables someone who has an Aadhaar-linked account to withdraw money** from it anywhere in India through biometric authentication with a "business correspondent" – a kind of mini-ATM.
 - There have been **rampant abuses of this facility by corrupt business correspondents.**

Way Forward

- **Ensure Benefits to Needy not Withdrawn:**
 - Benefits should never be withdrawn or suspended without (1) advance disclosure of the names that are likely to be deleted along with reason for proposed deletion, (2) issuing a show cause notice to those concerned and giving them an opportunity (with ample time) to respond or appeal, (3) ex-post disclosure of all cases of deletion, with date and reason.
- **Stronger Safeguards Needed:**
 - The [National Payments Corporation of India \(NPCI\)](#) must urgently put in place stronger safeguards against the vulnerabilities of Aadhaar-enabled Payment Systems and better grievance redressal facilities.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

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:

- 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 GoI and UIDAI, Aadhaar is not proof of citizenship.
- 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.

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