

Forum - NITI AAYOG (Planning Commission of India)

Mandate – Formulates policies for the Central Government and also leads its engagement with the states.

Issue – Should the use of UPI (Unified Payments Interface) and the Aadhaar be made mandatory for the general public.

Chairman - Bhavya Agarwal

Vice Chairman – Arnav Ghurde

INTRODUCTION

The National Institution for Transforming India, also called NITI Aayog, was formed via a resolution of the Union Cabinet on January 1, 2015. NITI Aayog is the premier policy 'Think Tank' of the Government of India, providing both directional and policy inputs. While designing strategic and long term policies and programmes for the Government of India, NITI Aayog also provides relevant technical advice to the Centre and States.

The Government of India, in keeping with its reform agenda, constituted the NITI Aayog to replace the Planning Commission instituted in 1950. This was done in order to better serve the needs and aspirations of the people of India. An important evolutionary change from the past, NITI Aayog acts as the quintessential platform of the Government of India to bring States to act together in national interest, and thereby fosters Cooperative Federalism.

At the core of NITI Aayog's creation are two hubs, the two key tasks of this organisation **Team India Hub** and the **Knowledge and Innovation Hub**.

The Team India Hub leads the engagement of states with the Central government. The first Team India meeting was held on 8th February 2018, chaired by Honourable Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi.

The Knowledge and Innovation Hub is the think tank of the government, which formulates and initiates policies to be implemented. Its initiatives include My Gov, Atal AMRUT Abhiyaan, Digital India, Atal Innovation Mission, Medical Education Reform, Skill India, Make in India, Atal Tinkering Lab and others.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



The Aadhaar is a identity card issued by the government of India. It has a 12 – digit unique code given to each card holder. It also comprises of ones biometrics. It can be connected to you mobile, pan card, bank account and can be used as an ID card. It facilitates payment using OTP, government scheme welfare population identification and many other tasks for the smooth functioning of the government.

The first idea of a common citizenship card came after the Kargil War when a committee headed by security analyst K. Subrahmanyam, was formed to study the state of national security. Among its various recommendations was the proposal that citizens in villages in border regions be issued identity cards.

Aadhaar was the brain child of Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani. It was launched by the UPA government in 2009. All the data was to be held by UIDAI (Unique Identification Authority of India).

On 26 November 2012 Prime Minister Manmohan Singh launched an Aadhaar-linked DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) scheme. The project aimed to eliminate leakages in the system by directly transferring the money to the bank account of the recipient. This was a crucial step to ensure transparency in the government.

After the NDA came to power they had the similar agenda on Aadhaar. They allotted around 280 million just for collection of data for the Aadhaar. emphasized on the JAM Trinity (Jan-Dhan Aadhaar Mobile), that if these three are connected, money can directly reach the poor.

The NDA government wanted to make Aadhaar mandatory for all Indians but the intervention of the Supreme Court did not allow that and enacted “The Right to Privacy.

By now we would have had a good idea about what Aadhaar basically is and what for what is it used for.

Now, given below are **some** points on why the government wanted to implement Aadhaar and how can it help in the development of the nation.

BENEFITS OF AADHAAR

1. Aadhaar based Direct Benefit Transfer (LPG Subsidy): The 12 digit individual identification number on Aadhaar card is used to get LPG subsidy amount directly in the bank account. This DBT scheme is named as PAHAL. The 2018 the implementation of the scheme reported a savings of 1.8 billion USD.
2. Jan Dhan Yojana: The Guinness world record holder scheme Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accepts Aadhaar card/number as the only document sufficient to open the bank account. The government can get a database of beneficiaries using Aadhaar and easily send the services directly into their bank account.
3. Passport in 10 days: This benefit of Aadhaar card will relieve you the most! If you have an Aadhaar card, you can get passport in just 10 days. Under this format, police verification will be done at a later date as opposed to the previous rule requiring police verification which used to be time consuming.
4. Voter Card Linking: Starting 9th March 2015, Aadhaar card UIDAI number would be linked to the voter ID's. This action helped in eliminating bogus voters. Once an Aadhaar number is linked, it would become impossible for an multiple voter ID card holder to make it's illegal use, as registration requires voter card holder to be physically present and produce Aadhaar card to the polling booth officer for linking.
5. Helping in transparency: The advantages of Aadhaar in the reduction of corruption (such as fake beneficiaries in schemes, middle-men in subsidised money to reach people and fraudulent transactions) also been praised by World Bank in 2016 and world bank has advised other countries to replicate the same model.

6. Opening new bank account: Aadhaar letter provided by UIDAI is now acceptable by banks as a valid proof to open bank account. In fact, it can serve as an address proof as well provided address on Aadhaar card and address proof perfectly matches. i.e. no need to produce bunch of documents to the banks for opening the account.
7. Digital Payment : The Aadhaar can also be used for online payment, through the UPI (United Payments Interface). This ensures easy and safe transactions for customers and also easy regulation on money flow for the government.
8. SEBI: It is now accepted as a proof of address by Securities and Exchange board of India for investing in stock market. Till now, it was used by SEBI as identity proof.
9. ID Proof and population data: It can act as an ID proof for every citizen and the 12- digit code can be each ones identity. It solely can be a substitute for all the documentation. As India does not have any citizenship card this is going to be very helpful for the government in keeping data and statistics of the population.
10. Government Vigilance : The government can easily keep watch on the money and also easily track a criminal or an outsider. For e.g. You booked a hotel and murdered someone or paid a bribe, in both the cases if Aadhaar is made mandatory the government can easily keep a track on crime.

These are some of the many benefits of implementing the Aadhaar. However, there are a lot of drawbacks due to its massive scale and system. Listed below are **some** of them

DRAWBACKS OF AADHAAR

1. Misuse: The contract for registration for Aadhaar is awarded to private companies who can misuse people's information or extract money from people for Aadhaar related services. Also for eKYC (Know your customers) which is mandatory for companies, they get a lot of Aadhaar information which can be put for personal gain.

2. Security concerns: There have been many instances of the Aadhaar database hacking and the information being leaked, an Uncovered story by the Journalist of THE TRIBUNE revealed how in just 500 Rs anyone can get the personal information of an individual. In an RTI, UIDAI revealed that there are also most 210 government sites which can easily provide you with Aadhaar database.
3. Aadhaar Duplicity: Aadhaar card duplicity is also another concern, the same journalist revealed that by an extra amount of 300 Rs can get you a duplicate Aadhaar. As according to a survey held in New Delhi city, the no of applicants of Aadhaar card id is much more in no. Then the total population in the city.
4. Illiteracy: A good amount of the population India are not aware of the working of the Aadhaar and are easily exploited.
5. Misuse by Government: All the sensitive information will be kept in the hands of some officials, who can be corrupt. The government themselves can use such information against anyone who opposes them. The government can also freeze a person's Aadhaar, because of which no activity can be done by them.
6. Flawed Data: There have been many cases where the data on a person's Aadhaar was flawed, also the PDS (Public Distribution System) was unable to recognise the fingerprints of many legitimate Aadhaar holders. Issues like theses cause a lot of problem in a mighty database such as Aadhaar.
7. Accessibility: Aadhaar requires you to have a mobile phone and an internet to avail its basic facilities and India being a country with a good number of people falling below the poverty line, these services may not be available to them. Also, many villages in India do not have Aadhaar care centres.
8. Counterfeiting: Counterfeiting something like a drivers licence needs a professional artist, as there is a hologram in an original copy. But for Aadhaar there is no original copy, anyone with the 12-digit number can take a copy and print it from the internet which is very dangerous.

9. Right to privacy: The supreme court gave a verdict that Aadhaar cannot be made compulsory but is only voluntary due to the “Right to privacy”. So, to make Aadhaar mandatory some strong legislation has to be brought.

10. Economic problems: The collection of Aadhaar data and storage incurs huge expenditure on the part of the government which is paid by people in form of taxes. The expense in Aadhaar services could be utilised for other beneficial schemes and especially when this database is not implemented the way it was intended to, the expenditure goes useless.

These give you a brief idea about the Aadhaar and its functioning’s including **some** of its merits and demerits.

However you can easily find out counter-arguments for each merit or demerit which Aadhaar has (may not be listed here, this background guide is too small for such a vast issue) if you go deep into the topic that is why you are expected to research more on this topic and get to its intricate details.

Some external reference links are given below –

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aadhaar> (Should go through the whole link)

<https://www.indiabix.com/group-discussion/making-aadhaar-mandatory-benefits-and-drawbacks/>

<https://www.moneylife.in/article/supreme-court-says-aadhaar-not-necessary-for-essential-services/34570.html>

<https://www.mbauniverse.com/group-discussion/topic/social-issues/linking-of-aadhaar>

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/aadhaar-must-not-be-made-mandatory-for-any-purpose/story-2sDmTvpDCk2jXTPWj5LGKJ.html>

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/wealth/save/aadhaar-not-mandatory-but-it-can-make-your-financial-life-easier/articleshow/63643652.cms>

NOTES-

- Each state will be represented by its Chief Minister as it happens in the NITI Aayog Team India Conferences.
- Each of the delegates will be representing their respective states and your stance on the topic will be based on the stance of the ruling party of the state. For instance the representative of Rajasthan will oppose the Aadhaar as it is a Congress ruled state which is primarily against the concept whereas if you are representing Maharashtra you will be for it as Maharashtra is BJP ruled state.
- However, as the session proceeds you are allowed to change your stance.
- You are expected to come well prepared, with a good understanding on the topic and a list of your own points on your stance.
- An opening speech is compulsory for all delegates and you should be prepared. In your opening speech you should talk about what you feel towards this issue and clear your stance, whether you are for its implementation or against it.

We look forward to having a good time in our committee and coming out with a possible solution to the problems pertaining to the issue, so please do come prepared.

BEST OF LUCK.