

Aadhaar PAN linkage gets 'likes', but data leak big overhang

The government's move to link Permanent Account Number (PAN) with Aadhaar has got support from a large number of people, but a vast majority are concerned about their personal details getting leaked and being misused, two separate surveys show.

The first survey, conducted by online citizen engagement platform Local Circles, found that close to two-thirds of respondents were concerned about their Aadhaar details getting leaked during the prevailing processes of getting the ID card made and through access protocols for vendors like banks and telecom operators.

About one-fourth of respondents said they were not concerned, showing their satisfaction with the existing security measures, while the remaining did not express any opinion. According to Local Circles, a total of 10,729 citizens voted on this poll.

In the second poll, which had 9,847 respondents, 70 per cent backed the government's move to link Aadhaar with PAN in its bid to increase the compliance level. Another 27 per cent opposed such linkage, while three per cent did not express their opinion. The Finance Act, 2017, has made it a must for taxpayers to link their PAN to the 12 digit Aadhaar or the enrolment ID at the time of application, to file their returns. The government has also made it mandatory to have Aadhaar before one can apply for PAN, effective July 1.

Such linkage in the long run will help the government establish that its subsidies are reaching the intended targets as the income tax department can verify the link between the beneficiary and the eligible income group.

The government is swearing by the utility value of Aadhaar as one of the most effective tools of checking tax evasion and keeping tabs on black money. According to the poll, some spoke of operators who go to the extent of selling the personal details in the market. Many suggested severe penalties including jail term for those found guilty of compromising biometric and other information.

Local Circles said it spoke to some vendors who outlined their own concerns including the costs they have to incur in the form of the money needed to become a licensed player and the high upfront investment in equipment.

Some vendors complained about the delay in payment of Rs 100 per Aadhaar card by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), the nodal agency entrusted with the job. Of late, the data leak vulnerability has assumed serious proportions, given the frequency of such breaches.

Star cricketer MS Dhoni found himself at the receiving end of one such data misuse which was attributed to the over-zealousness of an enrolment entity that let out his personal details. The government stepped in after his wife Sakshi flagged the matter to Union IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad.

(Business Standard)