



IAS PARLIAMENT

Information is Empowering

A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative

Leak of Aadhaar data

Why in news?

\n\n

A reporter of The Tribune newspaper exposed breach in Aadhaar database.

\n\n

What were the findings?

\n\n

\n

- The report had exposed that it got access through an "agent" to Aadhaar details of any individual submitted to the UIDAI.

\n

- The details included name, address, postal code (PIN), photo, phone number and email.

\n

- The report had also claimed that it took just Rs 500 and 10 minutes for the newspaper to get access to the above.

\n

\n\n

How has UIDAI responded?

\n\n

\n

- The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has filed an FIR against the journalist.

\n

- It has filed a criminal complaint naming the journalist of The Tribune and others.

\n

- It justified that criminal proceedings have been initiated for the act of unauthorised access.

\n

- Accordingly, FIR has been registered for violations of the sections of Aadhaar Act, 2016, the IT Act and under the IPC.
\n
- UIDAI has responded that it was “duty bound” to place all facts before the police.
\n
- So, names mentioned in the FIR are just details of the incident and does not necessarily mean they are culprits.
\n
- UIDAI has also firmly denied that it was trying to gag the media or the whistle-blowers.
\n

\n\n

Why is the claim overstated?

\n\n

- It is important to stress that the encrypted Aadhaar biometric database has not been compromised.
\n
- The UIDAI is correct in stating that mere information such as phone numbers and addresses cannot be misused without biometric data.
\n
- Moreover these details are already available to telemarketers and others from other databases.
\n
- The suggestion that the entire Aadhaar project has been compromised is therefore overstated and false.
\n

\n\n

What is the significance?

\n\n

- **Public interest** - Undercover investigations or sting operations occupy a complex and problematical ethical space in journalism.
\n
- But it is impossible to fault The Tribune's recent unveiling of database breach.
\n
- UIDAI's criminal complaint is thus criticised for suppressing a journalist whose investigation reports was of great public interest.

\n

- **Data protection** - The issue has drawn attention to the existence of an organised racket to facilitate unauthorised access to data.

\n

- The UIDAI expose has again highlighted the long felt need for a robust data protection law.

\n

- **Freedom** - Accusing The Tribune and the reporter would constitute a direct attack on free public-spirited journalism.

\n

- It would also dissuade attempts to hold public authorities and institutions accountable for shortcomings and promises.

\n

\n\n

What should be done?

\n\n

\n

- It is obligatory for those who collect information to see that it is secure and not used for purposes other than that meant for.

\n

- This applies to both the government and private players such as a mobile company.

\n

- India does not have a legal definition of what constitutes personal information.

\n

- It also lacks a robust and comprehensive data protection law.

\n

- Having accorded privacy the status of fundamental right, it is logical to bring in place the above two legal specifications.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n



IAS PARLIAMENT

Information is Empowering

A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative