Linking of Aadhaar to voter ID

Why in news?

Election Commission has clarified that linking Aadhaar with Voter ID in Form-6B is completely voluntary.

What were the previous attempts made in this regard?

- In 2014, the Election Commission of India (ECI) conducted two pilot programmes on linking the voter id with Aadhaar in the districts of Nizamabad and Hyderabad.
- The ECI launched the **National Electoral Roll Purification and Authentication Programme (NERPAP)** on April 2015.
- However a Supreme Court order on August 2015 halted the programme.

What is the rationale behind linking Aadhaar to voter ID?

- The Lok Sabha passed the [Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021](#) seeking to link the Aadhaar to voter ID.
- The main objective of the linking is to avoid errors such as voter duplication on the electoral roll.
- Due to increase in migrant populations in urban sprawls, demographic changes due to the entry of more eligible voters, death of older people, it is necessary to clean up the electoral rolls.
- The Ministry of Law and Justice amended form 6, used for electoral roll authentication, to make it compulsory to provide an Aadhaar number if the citizen had an Aadhaar ID card.
- But the Government and later, ECI authorities, have insisted that this process would be voluntary.

SUPREME COURT'S VERDICT ON AADHAAR

Aadhaar has to be linked with PAN and ITR

Aadhaar is not mandatory for school admissions

Aadhaar is still mandatory to avail Welfare Scheme benefits

Aadhaar details cannot be disclosed in the name of national security

Aadhaar is not mandatory for opening a bank account

Individuals can also file a case under the Aadhaar Act

You don't have to provide Aadhaar for a mobile connection

Aadhaar is not mandatory for examinations conducted by CBSE, UGC & NET

eKYC using Aadhaar is not mandatory for mobile wallets

Children cannot be denied benefits for the lack of Aadhaar Card

What are the criticisms against the linking?

The Aadhaar number is **not** a proof of citizenship and is meant to be issued to residents.

- **Unconstitutional**- Activists note that such a law can be considered unconstitutional since an Indian citizen only has to prove his or her citizenship in order to be provided with a voter ID.
- **Proportionality**- Linking Aadhaar and voter IDs may also violate citizens'

fundamental rights as per the Supreme Court's proportionality criteria that had to be met to restrict the right to privacy.

- **Not necessary**- Aadhaar is meant to be issued to residents, while only adult citizens who are resident in India are eligible to vote.
- Since, voters allowed to register based on proofs of their age and current place of residence, linking of Aadhaar is of no use.
- **Increase the cases of fraud**- A recent report by the comptroller and auditor general noted that close to 5 lakh Aadhaar cards were deleted for being duplicates.
- **Profiling of voters**- Aadhaar linking to voter IDs can possibly lead to misuse by agencies that can access them to profile voters based on harvested information and may propel targeted campaigning.
- **Security concerns**- The absence of a data protection law heightens the risk of this possibility as well.
- **Data quality issues**- Linking Aadhaar would dilute the sanctity of the Voter ID database.
- The Internet Freedom Foundation has cited data to show that self-reported errors in the Aadhaar database are higher than those in the electoral database.
- **Disenfranchisement**- Nearly 55 lakh voters saw their names deleted from the voter list after voter IDs were linked to Aadhaar numbers in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
- Voting is a constitutional right under **Article 326** that can only be restricted on grounds of non-residence, unsoundness of mind, crime or corrupt or illegal practice.
- **An edge for parties in power**- Online trends on the day of voting and micro-targeting voters using their data will make it easier for political parties in power to use data for elections.

References

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