

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO.*183
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 05.12.2019

SAFETY OF CITIZEN'S DATA

***183. SHRI HUSAIN DALWAI:**

Will the Minister of Electronics & Information Technology be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether according to a study by UK-based research firm Comapritech, India ranks behind only Russia and China when it comes to surveilling citizens (rated-2.4/5);
- (b) if so, in what manner Government propose to ensure the safety of data when reportedly ten Government agencies have access to citizen's data, the details thereof; and
- (c) what are the measures taken by Government to protect Aadhaar identification system which has been breached several times and in what manner Government recommends protecting data breaches?

ANSWER

MINISTER FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD)

- (a) to (c): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

**STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO RAJYA SABHA STARRED
QUESTION NO. *183 FOR 05-12-2019 REGARDING SAFETY OF CITIZEN'S DATA**

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(a) and (b) : There are media reports about UK-based research firm Comparitech, highlighting that India ranks behind only Russia and China when it comes to surveilling citizens. From the media reports, the basis on which such a conclusion is drawn, appears flimsy and questionable. Absence of data protection bill and a data protection authority as regulator has been cited but there are suitable provisions under the IT Act and work is in progress to bring in a law for data protection. Another factor cited is that, ***“The Aadhaar Identification Scheme gives citizens a unique ID number and is also home to the largest biometric database, which contains 1.23 billion people”***. Further, there is a baseless assumption that the Aadhaar database includes information such as purchases, bank accounts, insurance etc. The Government’s request to WhatsApp regarding traceability without compromising on encryption has been wrongly projected as a possible privacy intrusion. Therefore, even while the report recognises that the laws and courts in India are working to protect data privacy, it seems to have jumped to a conclusion without looking at the legal regime in India and the checks and balances available.

These attempts to malign the Government of India for reportedly surveilling citizens are completely misleading. The Government is committed to protect the fundamental rights of citizens, including the right to privacy. The Government operates strictly as per provisions of law and laid down protocols. There are adequate safeguards to ensure that no innocent citizen is harassed or his privacy breached. Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology is working on the Personal Data Protection Bill to safeguard the privacy of citizens, and it is proposed to table it in Parliament.

(c) : There has never been any instance of data breach from Aadhaar database (Central Identities Data Repository). For security of Aadhaar data centres, Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has a well-designed, multi-layer robust security system in place and the same is being constantly upgraded to maintain the highest level of data security and integrity. The architecture of Aadhaar ecosystem has been designed to ensure security and privacy which is an integral part of the system from the initial design to the final stage.

Various policies and procedures have been defined and are reviewed and updated continually thereby appropriately controlling and monitoring any movement of people, material and data in and out of UIDAI premises, particularly the data centres. UIDAI data is fully secured/ encrypted at all times i.e. at rest, in transit and in storage. For further strengthening of security, security audits are conducted on regular basis.

Additionally, there are multiple layers of security at physical level in UIDAI Data Centres and is being managed by armed CISF personnel round the clock.

The security assurance of Aadhaar ecosystem has been strengthened with enactment of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 and subsequently the Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Act, 2019 which has stringent penalties/punishments for offenders.

UIDAI has been declared ISO 27001:2013 certified with respect to information security which has added another layer of IT security assurance. In pursuance of sub-section (1) of Section 70 of the IT Act 2000, UIDAI has also been declared as a Protected System by National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre.
