

Centre retracts caution on Aadhaar photocopies

UIDAI had warned against sharing them to avoid 'misuse'

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Two days after issuing an advisory cautioning people against sharing a photocopy of their Aadhaar card, the Union government on Sunday withdrew the notification, claiming it could be “misinterpreted”.

A reading of tweets, past and present, of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), which manages Aadhaar, shows the about-turn reveals confusion on its policy on photocopies of Aadhaar.

The Bengaluru Regional Office of the UIDAI, on May 27, published a notification asking people not to share photocopies of their Aadhaar card as it could be “misused”.

In its withdrawal statement on Sunday, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the parent body of the UIDAI, said the authority had advised Aadhaar card holders only to exercise “normal prudence” in using and sharing their Aadhaar numbers and that its Bangalore subsidiary’s advisory – now withdrawn – was in the context of an attempt to misuse an Aadhaar card using a photocopy.

“Aadhaar identity authentication ecosystem has pro-

What is a **masked Aadhaar**?

An Aadhaar number consists of 12 digits. Masking an Aadhaar number means replacing the first eight digits with some characters like “xxxx-xxxx” while only the last four digits of the original number are visible

HOW TO DOWNLOAD A MASKED AADHAAR?

Downloading an electronic version of masked Aadhaar card is a five-step process

1. Go to the link <https://eaadhaar.uidai.gov.in/genericDownloadAadhaar>

2. Type your Aadhaar card number and enter the captcha



3. There will be an option "Do you want a masked Aadhaar". Select it

4. Enter the OTP received on your mobile phone

5. Verify and download your masked Aadhaar card

vided adequate features for protecting and safeguarding the identity and privacy of the Aadhaar holder,” the statement added.

Past flip-flops

The warning and withdrawal seems to be part of a series of such flip-flops. On November 11, 2016, the UIDAI from its official handle tweeted: “We urge you to be very discreet abt [about] your Aadhaar and other identity documents. Do not share the document no. [number] or a printed copy with anyone.”

Then, on multiple occasions, the authority said publicly that without biometric information, Aadhaar details could not be used to impersonate a person. However, it was said that since the

Aadhaar card is a document with details of personal information, it is akin to giving out a mobile phone number, bank account number or PAN and ought to be “ordinarily protected” to ensure a person’s privacy.

“Aadhaar as an identity document by its very nature needs to be shared openly with others as and when required for,” said a tweet by the UIDAI on March 17, 2018.

The May 27, 2022 notification advised against using a public computer to download electronic versions of the Aadhaar. Only those organisations with a “user licence” from the UIDAI could use Aadhaar for establishing a person’s identity.