Fallouts of Aadhaar judgement

Why in news?

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The Supreme court recently retained section 7 of the Aadhaar act.

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What is the provision?

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- Section 7 states that central or state governments can make possession of an Aadhaar number mandatory for receipt of subsidies, benefits or services funded out of the Consolidated Fund of India.
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- An individual who has not been assigned an Aadhaar number, shall be offered an alternated viable means of identification till number is assigned to him/her.
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- The court retained this provision noting that it is aimed at offering benefits to the marginalised section and hence becomes an aspect of social justice.
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What are the concerns?

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- As per the UIDAI statement, the 'failed percentage' of iris and finger authentication are 8.54% and 6%, respectively.
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- Since 2017, there have been at least 25 hunger deaths that can be traced to Aadhaar-related disruption in rations and pensions.
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- Though UIDAI has taken step to put in place an exemption mechanism to address disruption, there is little evidence of its implementation.
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- The no.of people (as % of total population) excluded from getting Aadhaar is

small.
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- But it happens to be the most vulnerable like bed-ridden old persons, victims of accidents, people with visual disabilities, etc.
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- An RTI response shows that 99.97% of those who got Aadhaar numbers did so on the basis of existing IDs.
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- Hence it clears the misconception that aadhaar is the only (or first) ID for millions of Indians to receive government benefits.
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- Also, each government programme has its own eligibility criterion to include or exclude people.
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- For instance, even in the PDS, there are State-specific inclusion/exclusion criteria and targeted/universalised PDS.
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- Now, after Aadhar, beneficiaries under the state-specific list have to link their aadhar number to remain eligible for PDS.
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- With Aadhaar being made compulsory, it has become **necessary but not sufficient** to get welfare.
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- The exclusion errors under PDS remains to be addressed.
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- **Identity frauds** where the welfare rolls in India included some ghost beneficiaries.
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- Quantity frauds, where a beneficiary is sold less than his/her entitlement, but signs off on the full amount also continued.
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- A rogue dealer can force the beneficiary to biometrically authenticate a lower purchase than what he/she was entitled to.
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- But the recent independent surveys and government data are beginning to suggest that it wasn’t the main form of corruption.
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- For instance, linking Aadhaar cards with the PDS in Odisha led to the discovery of only 0.3% duplicates.
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- Hence the government should ensure that no beneficiary is left out and every

deserving person be included in the list of beneficiaries.
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Source: The Hindu

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