

Linking Voter ID Card with Aadhar

Why in News?

The Election Commission (EC) began linking Aadhaar with Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) numbers.

- **EPIC number** - It is the voter ID card number (10-digit alpha-numeric code) that serves as identification proof for Indian citizens over the age of 18.
- **Issued by** - Election Commission of India.
- The voter ID card also allows Indians to cast their vote in municipal, state, and national elections.

ERONET is a web-based system for Electoral officials, in 14 languages and 11 scripts, to handle all processes.

- **Linking Aadhaar with EPIC** - To address the issue of duplicate entries in the electoral rolls.
- **EPIC Duplication issue** - The linking of Aadhaar and Voter ID was first tried by the EC in 2015 when it launched the National Electoral Rolls Purification and Authentication Program (NERPAP).
- However, the Supreme Court in an interim order, in August 2015, held that the mandatory use of Aadhaar should only be for welfare schemes and PAN linking.
 - Thus, the NERPAP exercise was discontinued.
- **EC's recent stance** - Recently, Election Commission said that linking of EPIC with Aadhaar would only be done as per provisions of **Article 326**, which says voting rights can only be given to citizens.
- Aadhaar card only establishes the identity of a person.
- It further said the linking would also take into effect as per the provisions of Sections 23(4), 23(5) and 23(6) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and in line with the Supreme Court judgments.
- **Section 23(6) of the RP Act, 1950** - No application for inclusion in electoral rolls shall be deleted for inability of an individual to furnish or intimate Aadhaar number due to such sufficient cause as may be prescribed.
- This in effect means that linkage would be done only in cases where Aadhaar has been submitted voluntarily by the elector.
- The EC has informed the Supreme Court in 2023 that it has already uploaded nearly 66.23 crore Aadhaar cards in the process of finalizing the electoral rolls.
- The poll body also told the Parliament that it has launched the program to collect the Aadhaar numbers of existing and prospective electors on a voluntary basis in all States and union territories.

- While the consent is obtained from the voter for Aadhaar authentication in Form 6B, there is ***no provision*** for withdrawing the consent.

Reference

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