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## **Statement on Allowing Aadhaar Authentication by Private Entities**

The recent move by the Government of India to expand Aadhaar authentication for businesses raises serious concerns about privacy. By allowing private entities to use Aadhaar for verification, the government is risking the misuse of sensitive biometric and demographic data, exposing millions to potential breaches and surveillance. This decision undermines the fundamental right to privacy, as affirmed by the Supreme Court in the Justice Puttaswamy case, and opens the door to unchecked data exploitation by corporations.

Moreover, the over-reliance on Aadhaar for service delivery continues to exclude marginalized communities. The MGNREGA scheme is a stark example, where authentication failures and technical glitches have denied wages to countless workers, leaving them without a safety net. Expanding Aadhaar's use in the private sector will only exacerbate such exclusions, as those without Aadhaar or with authentication issues will be barred from essential services.

The government's push to legalize Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act, which was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2018 for enabling private entities to mandate Aadhaar, is deeply troubling. This move disregards the Court's ruling and risks reviving the same privacy violations the judgment sought to prevent. Additionally, the government has failed to disclose the public consultations received for the Aadhaar Act 2020 amendments, raising questions about transparency and accountability. Why is the government withholding this critical information from citizens?

Technology in the public realm should empower citizens, not render them vulnerable, powerless or exclude.

FSMK strongly opposes & condemns the amended rules to the Aadhaar Act and calls upon the people of Karnataka to also voice out their opposition strongly. The welfare of citizens must not be sacrificed at the altar of technological overreach.

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