



Finance Secretary Ashok Lavasa at an Assocham meet in New Delhi on Wednesday. Also seen are Assocham President Sandeep Jajodia and Secretary General DS Rawat KAMAL NARANG

## Don't undermine Aadhaar platform: Ashok Lavasa

**OUR BUREAU**

New Delhi, March 29

Finance Secretary Ashok Lavasa on Wednesday said the Aadhaar project should not be undermined as it has brought significant savings and efficiency in schemes.

Terming it a revolutionary measure that has not been done anywhere in the world, Lavasa said it has huge potential to change how we transact with each other and with the government.

"The platform of Aadhaar should not be undermined," he said while addressing an Assocham conference, adding that it has provided a unique identity to 105 crore people. It will eventually be the only identifier required, he said. "This becomes a distinct possibility in India."

His comments come at a time when Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in the amendments to the Finance Bill, 2017, has sought to make the 12-digit number mandatory for filing income-tax returns,

and link Aadhaar and PAN.

Lavasa further noted that Aadhaar-seeding of bank accounts of beneficiaries under Direct Benefit Transfer has also had some "palpable achievements". "There have been savings to the order of ₹34,000 crore in schemes where DBT is used," he said.

At present, there are about 90 schemes of 20 ministries — including MGNRE, Pahal for cooking gas subsidies as well as various scholarship schemes — that give direct cash transfers in the beneficiary's account instead of a subsidy.

### Destination GST

Urging the industry to work towards the rollout of GST, Lavasa said: "There is a divergence of view (on the rollout date) of GST, but we must work towards July 1."

Some sections of the industry have been seeking a September 1 launch to ensure that there is sufficient time for preparation.

# Aadhaar Scheme Helped Govt Save ₹34,000cr: Finance Secy

Ashok Lavasa says direct benefit transfer using the Aadhaar has had a significant impact

Our Bureau

**New Delhi:** Finance secretary Ashok Lavasa has termed "revolutionary" the Aadhaar card scheme, saying it has helped the government save ₹34,000 crore.

Lavasa's strong defence of the scheme, which aims to provide unique identity numbers to all citizens, came at a time when a debate is raging over the security of personal data collected from the citizens for the programme.

"This platform of Aadhaar, which has been created should not be undermined....Aadhaar seeding has brought more efficiency," Lavasa said at an Assocham event on Wednesday.

The government has proposed to make Aadhaar mandatory for securing a permanent account number and for filing income-tax returns from July.

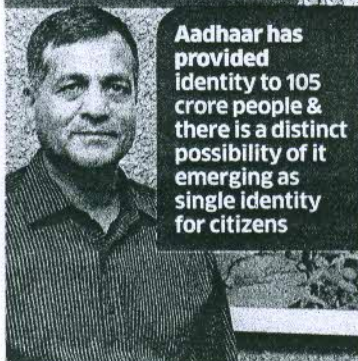
Lavasa said Aadhaar has provided identity to 105 crore people and that there is a distinct possibility of the Aadhaar number emerging as a single identity for the citizens.

"It has a huge potential of changing many of the procedures which we had to observe while conducting bu-

## Unique Benefits

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Ashok Lavasa, Finance secretary

Aadhaar has provided identity to 105 crore people & there is a distinct possibility of it emerging as single identity for citizens

business," he said. He said the governance reforms carried out over the last three years aim to make the system more transparent and less arbitrary.

Lavasa pointed that Aadhaar was linked to a whole gamut of public expenditure, which is a matter of concern not only for those who want more efficiency in public spending but also those concerned with transparency and removal of corruption.

He said Aadhaar seeding had brought efficiency and transparency in implementation of public schemes.

He said the direct benefit transfer (DBT) using the Aadhaar has had a significant impact. "There has been some palpable achievement in DBT.... Order of saving would be ₹34,000 crore," he said, adding that the DBT has already been implemented in 78 schemes.

The finance secretary highlighted how Haryana has managed to interlink the kerosene and LPG subsidy beneficiaries through the Aadhaar and is now aiming to become kerosene free in April.

## Aadhaar was Great Initiative of UPA: FM

**New Delhi:** Admitting that Aadhaar was a "great initiative" of the previous UPA government, finance minister Arun Jaitley on Wednesday said it was being expanded by making it mandatory for direct benefit transfer of subsidy and checking of tax evasion. Replying to a debate on Finance Bill

in Rajya Sabha, he said while hacking could not be prevented, this threat could not be used as an excuse to discredit the technology. "....some of us at some stage had doubts (about Aadhaar)... They were answered adequately and we were candid to say that we accept that it was a great initiative." -PTI

## DBT leads to ₹34,000-cr savings for govt: Finmin

**New Delhi, March 29:** The government on Wednesday said the direct benefit transfer in various social sector schemes resulted in savings to the tune of ₹34,000 crore and Aadhaar seeding helped in checking corruption and improve efficiency.

"There have been some palpable achievements in some of the schemes (where DBT is implemented). There is an assessment that in all these schemes, the quantum of savings would be about ₹34,000 crore. So far, DBT has been implemented in 78 schemes and there are many more in which it has to be implemented," finance secretary Ashok Lavasa said on Wednesday at an ASSOCHAM event here.

Stating that use of technology has made the system more transparent, he said Aadhaar seeding has brought about efficiency and inter linking of beneficiaries has enabled weeding out of bogus and un-deserving people.

"About 1.73 lakh PDS shops have PoS machines

and all these are Aadhar enabled... The fertiliser depots are in the process of installing PoS machine. The subsidy in fertiliser has remained where it was in previous years, but the subsidy in kerosene has come down tremendously. DBT, together with other things, is going to improve public expenditure and make it more efficient," Lavasa said.

The success achieved in DBT in some of the schemes has made a significant impact.

"Linked to this (Aadhaar) is the whole gamut of public expenditure which is a matter of concern not only for those who want more efficiency of public spending but also all of us who are concerned with transparency and removal of corruption," he said.

The DBT programme, a major reform initiative to check leakages of welfare funds, was launched on January 1, 2013.

Through DBT, all cash

benefits are transferred directly to the beneficiary's bank account.

As regards global trade, Lavasa said Indian industry should focus on deepening and strengthening local economy.

"Global trade may not maintain the share as in the past. It is important for in-

dustry to look into the Indian market in a bigger way, how to strengthen the rural economy," he said.

On prices of pulses, the finance secretary said prices have come under control and government has achieved 75% of the targeted 20 lakh tonne of buffer stock of pulses.

PTI

## 'Aadhaar should not be undermined by critics'

ARUP ROYCHOUDHURY  
New Delhi, 29 March

Amid mounting criticism by Opposition and civil society on the government's efforts to make Aadhaar mandatory for a number of schemes, including to pay income taxes, Finance Secretary Ashok Lavasa (*pictured*) defended the move and said the government's initiatives should not be undermined. Speaking at an industry body event on Wednesday, Lavasa said for many years Indians applauded developed economies which had common unique identification for their citizens.

"I think this platform of Aadhaar which has been created should not be undermined. It is very important. Linked to this is the whole gamut of public expenditure which is a matter of concern not only for those who want more efficiency in public spending but also all of us who are concerned with transparency and removal of corruption," Lavasa said. "It (Aadhaar) is revolutionary in the sense and what it has done is something which has not been done anywhere in the world. You have 105 crore (1.05 billion) people who have a unique identity."

Apart from central government schemes such as the rural employment scheme, employee pension benefit, food security act, livelihood missions, schemes for expecting mothers, small businesses, crop insurance policies, anganwadi schemes and various other programmes with or without direct benefit transfers, the Narendra Modi government has also



passed rules or amended existing acts to make Aadhaar mandatory to pay taxes and to link with all mobile numbers. This even as the Supreme Court has stated that Aadhaar is not compulsory to avail benefits under central government schemes.

The criticism has increased after Finance Minister Arun Jaitley tried to bring in additional amendments in the Finance Bill to make mandatory the linking of Aadhaar with PAN cards. Not only Opposition MPs like Derek O'Brien of the Trinamool Congress and Tathagata Satpathy of the Biju Janata Dal, but even Rajeev Chandrashekar, affiliated to the ruling party, raised concerns on privacy issues related to unique identification database.

Lavasa also said the direct benefits transfer (DBT) in various social sector schemes have resulted in savings to the tune of ₹34,000 crore for the Centre. "There have been some palpable achievements in some

of the schemes where DBT has been implemented. There is an assessment that in all these schemes, the quantum of savings would be about ₹34,000 crore. So far, DBT has been implemented in 78 schemes and there are many more in which it has to be implemented," he said.

Stating that use of technology has made the system more transparent, he said Aadhaar seeding has brought about efficiency and inter-linking of beneficiaries has enabled weeding out bogus and undeserving people.

"About 1.73 lakh (173,000) public distribution scheme shops have point of sale machines and all these are Aadhaar-enabled. The fertiliser depots are in the process of installing PoS machines. The subsidy in fertiliser has remained where it was in previous years, but the subsidy in kerosene has come down tremendously, the finance secretary stated as an example.

Lavasa also reiterated India's gross domestic product growth for 2016-17 was expected to be around seven per cent and could be higher than 7.5 per cent for 2017-18. Speaking on the increasing trend among western leaders stressing on protectionism, Lavasa said at a time when people were talking about building walls, literally and figuratively, and when global trade was expected to reduce as a share of global growth, Indian industry should focus on deepening and strengthening the local economy. "It is important for industry to look into the Indian market in a bigger way, how to strengthen the rural economy," he said.

