

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 471
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03.12.2025

MANDATED FACIAL RECOGNITION IN POSHAN

471. SHRI SAKET GOKHALE:

Will the Minister of Women and Child Development be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Ministry has mandated the use of Facial Recognition Technology (FRT) in the POSHAN Tracker application for recording attendance or distribution of Take Home Rations (THR), if so, the details of the basis for collecting facial biometrics of beneficiaries including minors;
- (b) whether any independent data protection or privacy impact assessment has been carried out before deployment, if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) State-wise/UT-wise details of the number of beneficiaries denied rations or services due to failure of FRT authentication since July, 2025, till date?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI SAVITRI THAKUR)

(a) The Ministry introduced Facial recognition system (FRS) for distribution and tracking of last mile delivery of take-home ration (THR) on an experimental basis from August 2024 as a pilot in 6 States/UTs as Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Chandigarh.

Based on the learning therein, pan India roll out was implemented in phased manner from December 2024. Taking biometrics of the beneficiaries like facial markers is under the provision of section 7 of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016. As per the act, any individual who is desirous of availing any subsidy, benefit or service for which the expenditure is incurred from the Consolidated Fund of India or Consolidated Fund of the State, shall be required to undergo authentication, or furnish proof of possession of Aadhaar number or in the case of an individual to whom no Aadhaar number has been assigned, such individual makes an application for enrolment.

- UIDAI uses authentication of face as a process by which an Aadhaar number holder's identity is verified. A successful face authentication confirms that the physical face which is being scanned for verification matches the one which was captured at the time of enrolment when the Aadhaar number was generated. A successful face authentication confirms that the applicant/ enrolled person is the one who he/she claims to be.
- Face authentication is based on a 1:1 matching which means that the facial image captured during authentication is matched with the facial image which is stored in the Repository against the Aadhaar Number concerned, which was captured at the time of enrolment.
- Face authentication is consent based.

For children under the Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, the parent or any guardian undergoes the process of Facial Recognition System/eKYC and not the children since Bal-Aadhaar (age 0-5 years) do not have biometrics.

(b) & (c) FRS, as a technology doesn't demand any additional equipments/device to be given to AWW. It has been introduced as one of the features in the existing Poshan Tracker Application. Facial Recognition System (FRS) involves two steps:

On-boarding, where AWWs capture the beneficiary's live photo and complete eKYC (**done only ONCE** during the eligibility period). The eligibility period of Pregnant women/Lactating Mother is for a maximum of 14 months, Adolescent girl (14 to 18 years) for maximum of 4 years and Children for a maximum of 6 years in Poshan tracker. Live captured photo is matched in back end with Aadhar Photo. In case beneficiary faces any challenge regarding updating of mobile number, photo or other details, to complete their eKYC, UIDAI facilities are made available at their nearest Aadhar Centre (Nearly 1 Lakh in the country) to assist a beneficiary for updating their Aadhaar details. For children, biometrics of parent or guardian are taken.

Monthly face matching, where a fresh photo at THR distribution is matched with the already stored verified image instead of repeating Aadhar eKYC (It can be performed in offline mode also. No Internet needed.)

Various Data Protection Safeguards already exist in the Poshan Tracker Application since its rollout in 2021. Beneficiary data is stored in line with data protection protocols. Proper governance and safeguards are in place to protect sensitive information. Beneficiary's data being collected are subject to existing data protection protocols, and further strengthened by the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, which mandates purpose limitation, informed consent, and access restrictions.

Considering the sensitivity of the collection of biometric details for beneficiaries, a specific consent is taken before face enrolment through Anganwadi Worker (AWW). The private data is not publicly accessible; it is only available to authorized personnel solely for verification

purposes. Access is role-based, logged and monitored to prevent misuse. Additional Measures taken for ensuring data privacy before introducing FRS are as follows:

1. All requests and responses related to Face Verification are encrypted during transit, ensuring data is protected from interception or tampering.
2. The internal database of mobile application is encrypted, preventing access to sensitive information outside the app environment.
3. Face images are handled in base64 encoded format within the app to ensure safe processing and transmission.
4. Individual images made available to Anganwadi Worker (AWW) for face matching purposes cannot be copied.
5. No images or data are stored permanently on the device. As a precautionary measure, all cached or temporary data is wiped automatically when the AWW logs out of the application.
6. Annual Security Audit is complied with on every year basis, security audit for 2025 has been completed by October 2025 through Cert-In empanelled agency.

This Mission is a universal self-selecting umbrella scheme where there are no entry barriers for any beneficiary to register and receive services. Every beneficiary who is willing to undergo the eKYC procedure and FRS, is fully entitled to receive the benefits of the scheme.
