

1. The concerns of using Aadhaar in welfare**Introduction**

Credit rating agency Moody's Investor Service has expressed concerns about using centralized biometric systems like India's Aadhaar in welfare programs, highlighting security and privacy issues.

India's Response

The Indian government vehemently defends Aadhaar, claiming it as the world's most trusted digital ID. Government also argued that Aadhaar's integration with the MGNREGS database doesn't require biometric authentication for workers and payments are directly credited to accounts.

Rationale for Aadhaar

Aadhaar, issued by the UIDAI, collects demographic data, fingerprints, and iris scans to provide unique identification. It aims to eliminate corruption by preventing "ghost" and "fake" beneficiaries in welfare programs.

Aadhaar's Role in Cash Withdrawals

To direct a payment using Aadhaar for MGNREGA, there are at least three steps. First, a worker's Aadhaar number must be linked to her job card. Second, her Aadhaar must be linked to her bank account. Third, the Aadhaar number must be linked correctly through her bank branch with a mapper of the National Payments Corporation of India, which acts as a clearing house of Aadhaar-based payments. Aadhaar becomes the financial address of the individual and cash transferred by the government gets deposited to the last Aadhaar-linked bank account.

Concerns About Aadhaar Usage

Aadhaar has limitations, as it doesn't address issues like quantity fraud (giving less quantity than allotted) in ration distribution or authentication challenges in rural areas with unreliable internet and fading biometrics like biometrics. Moreover, Authentication error data isn't publicly available.

There are concerns about the accountability of banking correspondents using AePS, who may misuse biometric authentication, leading to unauthorized access to bank accounts. Instances like the ₹10 crore scholarship scam in Jharkhand highlight security risks.

Current Impasse

The government's push to make Aadhaar-based payments mandatory in MGNREGA faces resistance from workers and field officials. Critics worry about dilution of accountability in welfare programs and the potential consequences of linking voter IDs with Aadhaar.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

2. Waheeda Rehman honoured Dadasaheb Phalke Award

Introduction

Veteran Bollywood actress Waheeda Rehman, aged 85, has been honored with the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award for her remarkable contribution to Indian cinema. The award for the year 2021, given by the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, is a recognition of her outstanding impact on the growth and development of the Indian film industry. The 2021 awards were given out this year as they were delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Waheeda Rehman's Journey

Waheeda Rehman, born on February 3, 1938, embarked on her acting career in 1955 with her debut in the Telugu film "Rajulu Marayi." Her popularity skyrocketed with the song 'Eruvako sagaro ranno chinnanna,' and she caught the attention of Guru Dutt during a celebration tour. This marked the beginning of her journey in Hindi cinema.

Influential Film Roles

Rehman's career boasts an array of influential roles. In "Pyaasa" (1957), she earned critical acclaim for her portrayal of a courtesan. She was a sought-after leading lady during the 'Golden Age of Hindi cinema' and starred in classics like "Guide" (1965) and "Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam" (1962).

Challenging Traditional Roles

Waheeda Rehman was a trailblazer, often challenging traditional roles for women in Indian cinema. In "Guide (1965)," she played Rosie, a character who defied societal norms and walked out of her marriage with her lover who was a tour guide.

Reflection of Womanhood

Her roles in films like "Namkeen" and "Khamoshi" showcased the challenges and anxieties faced by women. She portrayed strong, self-sufficient characters who had to protect their families from hardships.

The Significance of Dadasaheb Phalke Award

The Dadasaheb Phalke Award, established in 1969, commemorates the contributions of filmmaker Dadasaheb Phalke to Indian cinema. The award is presented at the National Film Awards ceremony. It has recognized several women who have made significant contributions to the industry, including Devika Rani, Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle, and Asha Parekh.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper I; Social Issues

Source: The Indian Express

3. MS Swaminathan's Role in the Green Revolution: India's Path to Food Security

Introduction

The recent passing of agricultural scientist MS Swaminathan, aged 98, highlights his pivotal role in ushering in the Green Revolution, a transformative period for Indian agriculture. This article explores the challenges India faced at the time and how Swaminathan contributed to the nation's journey towards food security.

MS Swaminathan: The 'Father of the Green Revolution'

MS Swaminathan, often referred to as the 'Father of the Green Revolution,' dedicated his career to agricultural research. His contributions played a significant role in the agricultural reforms of the 1960s and 70s, which ultimately led India to achieve food security.

Early Career and Dedication to Agriculture

Swaminathan's passion for agriculture developed during a critical period in India's history—the Bengal famine of 1942-43. Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's call for action and the devastating famine, he chose to study agriculture instead of pursuing a career in medicine. He even gave up career in Civil services, ultimately redirecting his path towards agricultural research.

He would go on to serve at a number of institutions related to the sector in both India and abroad – as an Independent Chairman of the Food and Agricultural Organisation Council (1981-85), President of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (1984-90), President of the World Wide Fund for Nature (India) from 1989-96 and the Director General of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), among others.

The Necessity of the Green Revolution

India's agricultural productivity was severely limited post-independence due to years of colonial rule and a lack of resources for modernization. Consequently, staple food crops had to be imported from countries like the US, highlighting the urgent need for agricultural reform.

Initiating the Green Revolution

The Green Revolution involved providing high-yielding variety seeds, improved irrigation, and fertilizers to Indian farmers in regions like Punjab, Haryana, and western Uttar Pradesh. This initiative led to a remarkable increase in crop production, particularly wheat, dramatically reducing India's dependence on food imports.

Swaminathan's Contribution

Swaminathan's research focused on enhancing crop productivity, particularly in wheat. His collaboration with American scientist Norman Borlaug resulted in the development of 'dwarf wheat' varieties, which significantly increased yields and kickstarted the "Wheat Revolution" in India.



Nobel laureate Norman Ernest Borlaug (right) and MS Swaminathan.

Challenges and Criticisms

While the Green Revolution was instrumental in achieving food sufficiency, it faced criticisms, including concerns about favoring prosperous farmers and its introduction primarily in high-productivity states. Swaminathan recognized these issues early on and emphasized the importance of balanced agricultural growth.

Legacy and Impact

He also lent his support to farmers. As the head of the National Commission on Farmers from 2004-06, he recommended that the Minimum Support Price at which farmers sell their crops to the government should be at least 50 per cent more than the weighted average cost of production.

For his contributions, Swaminathan was awarded the first World Food Prize Laureate in 1987, for "developing and spearheading the introduction of high-yielding wheat and rice varieties into India during the 1960s when that country faced the prospect of widespread famine. Wheat production doubled in just a few years, making the country self-sufficient and saving millions from extreme food deprivation.

MS Swaminathan's legacy extends beyond the Green Revolution. His dedication to agricultural research and commitment to addressing food security challenges continue to inspire future generations of scientists and policymakers in India.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: The Indian Express