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BBMP puts up personal details of pourakarmikas on website

The data, up for a month now, was restricted from public access only by Monday

As the debate over privacy and Aadhaar rages across the country, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) courted controversy of its own on Monday by putting out personal details of thousands of pourakarmikas on its website. The information was restricted from public access only by Monday evening after a push from the government.

The BBMP put out details such as Aadhaar, ESIC and Provident Fund numbers, date of joining and type of employment along with the pourakarmikas photographs. They said it was done in an effort to bring in transparency over the employment of pourakarmikas in the city and admitted that it was an "oversight."

According to sources, the BBMP officials were intimated by Monday afternoon that publishing Aadhaar details was in violation of Aadhaar Act, 2016, which expressly prohibits the same. By evening, the details were removed from public access.

Terming the updating of Aadhaar numbers of pourakarmikas as ‘unnecessary’, Mythri K., of Alternative Law Forum, told *The Hindu* that the BBMP’s effort to put up these details has revealed that problems such as duplication of names, fake names and the names not matching with the ground reality, exist. She said details of 32,000 pourakarmikas in 198 wards had been published on the BBMP website.

Office memorandum

Incidentally, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology e-Governance group, in an office memorandum on March 25, asked all chief secretaries of the State and IT secretaries not to publish identity information such as Aadhaar number as it is in clear contravention of the provisions of Aadhaar (Targeted delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act 2016. It specified sections 29(2), 29(3) and 29(4) that constitute an offence under sections 37, 40 and 41, punishable with imprisonment of upto three years.

The memorandum came in the light of personal identity or information of residents, including Aadhaar numbers and demographic information collected by various ministries,

departments in administration of various welfare schemes, reportedly being published online and made easily accessible on an online search.

One month

Meanwhile, acknowledging that the publishing of Aadhaar details had been an "oversight" on their part, BBMP Commissioner Manjunath N. Prasad said the details had been up on the website for about a month now. "There had been many allegations that the number of pourakarmikas with the BBMP was inflated. So, their names and other details were put up on the site as a step to increase transparency." Once this came to his notice on Monday, the details were taken off the website. "The Aadhar details will be removed and rest of the information will be put up after that," he added.

Despite the main link from the website being removed, another link on the website still had details available online. The Commissioner said that he would ensure that the link would be made accessible only to officials.

The UIDAI has also washed its hands of the matter, saying it is the government agency that puts out the details that is responsible. Scores of details have been leaked in this manner. Even a layman can access details through a Google search. This adds to the vast amount of details already leaked online.

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Free Software Movement, Karnataka