

NEWS WRAP

AGD

THE UNION GOVERNMENT OF India has created a technology cell of skilled administrators and computer software programmers to help transform the crippling government bureaucracy. India's identity data base is a 12-digit identity, the first official proof that a citizen exists. The number, alongwith a thumbprint, name, year of birth, address, a scanner of iris of the eyes will identify the citizen anywhere in India. It will allow a poor, uneducated citizen to gain access to welfare benefits, open a bank account, purchase a cell phone far from his village, aid migration and allow the individual to escape from the trap of the village based identity proof system. Known as *Aadhaar* or foundation, the new number system will verify the identity of any Indian anywhere in India, within eight seconds, utilising inexpensive handheld devices linked to the mobile phone network. In a society where identity is almost always traced through a caste, kin and religious group, the Aadhaar number based system would for the first time officially identify each Indian, as an individual.

While India is the world's second fastest growing economy, more than 400 million Indians live in poverty, and half of children younger than five years are underweight. Electronic transmission and verification of government services is expected to drastically reduce corruption. Even though the Aadhaar data base is designed to contain as little information as possible, viz only a name, date of birth, sex and address, privacy advocates fear that the government could use it to track citizens. With concerns over extensive wire tapping and surveillance, strict legislation is required to govern the use of information, which is collected by the government.

NO TRUCKS ON MANIPUR HIGHWAYS

Truckers are refusing to ply along NH-53 in Manipur, because of two blockades, running concurrently. The Kukis have imposed an economic blockade, demanding a separate Sadar Hills district. A counter blockade has been called by the Nagas, opposing the creation of the Sadar Hills district. Three National Highways connecting Manipur, with the rest of India, have been paralysed, by the battle of the proposed new district. NH-39 connects Manipur with Dimapur in Nagaland, and Moreh on the India-Myanmar border. Imphal and Silchar (Assam) are connected by NH-53. Via Jessami (Ukhrul District, Manipur), Imphal is connected with Nagaland, by NH-150. Although in the Sadar Hills area, the Kukis are in majority, the territory is a part of the Naga dominated Senapati district. The area has an autonomous district council, with an additional deputy commissioner in charge, under the Manipur (Hill Areas) Autonomous District Council Act, 1971. The Sadar Hills District Committee and village chiefs, have issued a "call to arms", to its supporters.

BLOODY SKIRMISHES

IN YEMEN

Returning to Sanaa, after a three-month stay in Saudi Arabia, Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh called for a truce and ceasefire in the fourth week of September 2011. Since January 2011, the 69-year-old Saleh has faced massive street protests demanding his ouster. Tally of figures given by medics and tribal sources indicates that more than 300 people have died since September 2011, in clashes between rival army units backed by tribal forces and in attacks by Saleh's forces on pro-regime change demonstrators. All roads are blocked in the capital, and bullets fly everywhere. Hospitals are overwhelmed with casualties. After a relative lull in violence, thousands of Yemenis have taken to the streets demanding that President Saleh should quit. There are dangers that the fighting is slipping out of control, with loyalist forces firing mortar shells on peaceful demonstrators in the capital Sanaa, in the port city of Aden, and in the southern city of Taiz. There are worries that al-Qaeda could establish a new stronghold in the Yemeni mountains. □□□