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Lok Sabha okays Aadhaar Bill

MEW DELHI, DHNS: The Lok Sabha on Thursday passed a bill that allows making use of Aadhaar as proof of identity voluntarily for opening bank accounts or buying a mobile phone connection.

The Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill was passed by a voice vote after Information Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad assured the Lok Sabha on the safety and security of the biometric data gathered by the Unique Identity Authority of India (UIDAI).

"All safeguards are in place to prohibit misuse of Aadhaar biometrics. Iris and finger print data is stored in Indian machinery and it is safe and secure," Prasad said.

Seeking to allay members' fears on access to Aadhaar data, he said it can be granted only in case of a threat to national security or on court orders. "Even if I, as an Information Technology Minister, seek Aadhaar data, I will be subjected to three years of punishment," Prasad said.

The minister added that the government would soon bring a data protection legislation as it believes that India's data sovereignty has to be respected and the country should have a data analytics centre.