submitted its report along with draft Bill to MeitY. The report and the draft Bill were placed in the public domain and comments were sought. Feedback has been received and based on the analysis of the feedback received certain modifications in the bill are being carried out and steps are afoot to bring about data protection legislation. The Personal Data Protection Bill 2019 is intended to be tabled soon in the parliament. In view of the above developments, the time is ripe for enactment of law for Personal Data Protection.

Aadhaar-enabled payment systems

685. SHRI SANJAY SINGH:
SHRI P. L. PUNIA:

Will the Minister of ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Aadhaar-enabled payment systems have been discontinued in all the banks or not;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether the RBI is in talks to allow the use of QR Code-based 'Offline Aadhaar'?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA): (a) and (b) The Hon'ble Supreme Court has upheld the constitutional validity of the Aadhaar Act, 2016 in its Judgment dated 26.09.2018. However, the Supreme Court said that the benefits under the Aadhaar project should be in the nature of welfare schemes. Banks would be entitled to seek authentication of the beneficiaries, who are availing subsidies/benefits/services covered by Section 7 of the Aadhaar Act, for the purpose of transfer of any monetary subsidy or benefit to the bank account of the beneficiary as well as for facilitating the withdrawal of money by beneficiary through Aadhaar based micro-ATM machines. Accordingly, the Aadhaar enabled Payment System (AePS) shall remain operative as the same is not adversely affected by the Aadhaar Judgment.

(c) The Banks and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have been advised that the voluntary use of a physical Aadhaar card, without authentication by the Aadhaar number holder who wishes to establish his/her identity, is not prohibited by the judgment. Accordingly, RBI is at liberty to include physical copy of the Aadhaar card, which includes physical copy of e-Aadhaar, masked Aadhaar and offline XML,

in its list of Officially Valid Documents (OVD) for KYC purpose. However, the Banks have been advised to mask the first 8 digits of the Aadhaar number while storing the physical copy of the Aadhaar card.

Digital plan for North Eastern States

686. SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA: Will the Minister of ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has worked out a comprehensive digital plan for North Eastern States;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the extent to which the technology would transform the lives of the people of North Eastern States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India has formulated 'Digital North East Vision 2022' to consolidate and bolster a wide spectrum of Digital India initiatives and adapt them to the varied requirements of the North Eastern Region (NER). The Vision Document focuses on the accelerated implementation of initiatives undertaken by the Government under the Digital India Programme in the NER through optimum utilisation of information and communication technologies in a manner customised to best meet the requirements in the individual States and the region as a whole. The vision for Digital North East sets the base to design specific implementation plans for each initiative and to provide a road map to transform and empower the lives of the common people in the North Eastern Region.

(c) The Digital India programme in NER is continuously adding and underscoring hitherto unimaginable empowerment and value in the lives of common people, in unheard of ways. Game-changing digital initiatives such as Aadhaar, UMANG, Digi Locker, Common Services Centres (CSCs), e-Hospital, National Scholarship Portal, Digital Payment, Government e-Marketplace, e-National Agricultural Mandi (e-NAM) and over 4000 e-enabled services available through web and mobile. These services offer a compelling blend of convenience, efficiency, affordability and transparency to the citizens. Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) is also leveraging the immense potential of new technologies such as cloud, mobiles, social media, data analytics and geographic information systems.