

BILL FOR USE OF DNA TECHNOLOGY TO KNOW CERTAIN PERSONS' IDENTITY INTRODUCED IN LS

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: Biotechnology, Genetics & Health related developments

The Bill would allow use of DNA technology for establishing identity of persons like victims, offenders, suspects, undertrials, missing persons and unknown deceased persons. | Photo Credit: [Reuters](#)

A bill to allow the use of DNA technology for establishing the identity of certain persons was introduced in the Lok Sabha on January 8.

Science and Technology Minister Harsh Vardhan introduced The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018, even as the Congress demanded that it be sent to the Standing Committee, citing privacy concerns.

While moving the bill for consideration and passage, Dr. Vardhan said it would ensure that laboratories for DNA profiling were accredited and regulated and a DNA data bank was set up. "The issue of privacy, confidentiality and data protection has been taken care of very meticulously"

The DNA profile would be stored only after obtaining consent except in the case of convicts and relatives of missing persons. The bill would allow use of DNA technology for establishing identity of persons such as victims, offenders, suspects, undertrials, missing persons, and unknown deceased persons.

The bill seeks to set up a DNA regulatory board to give accreditation to laboratories and also frame guidelines. Six Ministries, including the Home, Defence, External Affairs and Women and Child Welfare, as well as institutions like the CBI and NIA would benefit with the passage of the bill, the Minister said.

The utility of DNA-based technologies for solving crimes and to identify missing persons was recognised in 60 countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, Norway, New Zealand, Finland, and Bangladesh. DNA profiling through fingerprinting was currently happening in the country but the number of experts and laboratories were inadequate for the demand.

Currently there were 3,000 cases of DNA profiling, which was just 2-3% of the total needed. Also, the laboratories did not have specific standards and there was no data bank to store the DNA, he added.

Participating in the debate, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor termed the bill an infringement of privacy as this would allow the government to store DNA profiles of individuals.

"It will enable creation of a big brother state. It is not a panacea.... Enacting this law before bringing in a robust data protection law will have a bearing on the right to privacy," Mr. Tharoor said. The bill failed to provide "procedural safeguard" and hence could be misused. "A government which wants to dictate what we should eat and not eat, who to love and not love... also wants to control our DNA. This is a matter of concern."

According to the government, the bill seeks to expand the application of DNA-based forensic technologies to support and strengthen the justice delivery system. The bill's provisions will

enable crossmatching between persons who have been reported missing and unidentified dead bodies found in various parts of the country, and also for establishing the identity of victims in mass disasters.

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