

Union Cabinet clears DNA profiling Bill

The Union Cabinet has cleared a Bill that allows law enforcement agencies to collect DNA samples, create “DNA profiles” and special databanks for forensic-criminal investigations.

The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018, is the latest version of a Bill that originated as a DNA “profiling” Bill, framed by the Department of Biotechnology. The aim of that draft legislation was to set in place an institutional mechanism to collect and deploy DNA technologies to identify persons based on samples collected from crime scenes or for identifying missing persons. However there was opposition, in that some activists argued that the manner in which DNA information was to be collected and the way they were to be stored by forensic laboratories constituted a violation of privacy.

A senior official familiar with the Bill said that several clauses of the Bill were tightened to make it stronger and immune to data abuse. “This doesn’t aim to create a database of DNA profiles...The databanks can only store information related to criminal investigations and the DNA details of suspects will be deleted,” said Renu Swarup, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology. The Bill creates a DNA Profiling Board that would be the final authority that would authorise the creation of State-level DNA databanks, approve the methods of collection and analysis of DNA-technologies.

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