

Lok Sabha passes DNA Technology Regulation Bill

<https://www.biovoicenews.com/lok-sabha-passes-dna-technology-regulation-bill/>

By : BioVoice Correspondent - January 9, 2019



New Delhi: The lower house of the Parliament (Lok Sabha) passed a Bill on regulation of use and application of Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) technology for establishing the identity of certain categories of persons, including offenders, victims, suspects and undertrials on 8th January.

The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018, was introduced by Science and Technology Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan but received negative feedback from few members who had concerns on privacy and wanted it to be sent to a standing committee for review.

Replying to the debate, Dr Vardhan said the DNA testing is being done on less than one per cent of the population. “Even the blood sample collected by the clinical laboratories has the potential of misuse,” he was quoted in the media reports that it had taken 14-15 years to bring the Bill to this stage.

The Bill provides for establishment of a National DNA Data Bank and Regional DNA Data Banks. Every Data Bank will maintain the indices including crime scene index, suspects’ or undertrials’ index and offenders’ index.

By providing for the mandatory accreditation and regulation of DNA laboratories, the Bill seeks to ensure that with the proposed expanded use of this technology in the country, there is also the assurance that the DNA test results are reliable and the data remain protected from misuse or abuse in terms of the privacy rights of our citizens. It would ensure speedier justice delivery, increased conviction rate.

Bill's provisions will enable the cross-matching between persons who have been reported missing on the one hand and unidentified dead bodies found in various parts of the country on the other, and also for establishing the identity of victims in mass disasters.

Why is it a historic move?

Forensic DNA profiling is of proven value in solving cases involving offences that are categorized as affecting the human body (such as murder, rape, human trafficking, or grievous hurt), and those against property (including theft, burglary, and dacoity).

The aggregate incidence of such crimes in the country, as per the statistics of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for 2016, is in excess of 3 lakhs per year. Of these, only a very small proportion is being subjected to DNA testing at present. It is expected that the expanded use of this technology in these categories of cases would result not only in speedier justice delivery but also in increased conviction rates, which at present is only around 30% (NCRB Statistics for 2016).