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Parl committee warns against potential misuse of DNA bill

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A parliamentary committee in its report on the DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill on Wednesday suggested the government to "pay very careful attention" to certain views on very important issues on the proposed legislation, saying some members have expressed their fears that the bill when it becomes a law "could be used to target certain sections of our society". The bill, sent to the standing committee after its introduction in 2019, provides for the use of DNA technology for establishing the identity of certain persons such as suspects, offenders, and victims.

It also has provisions for the establishment of a DNA Regulatory Board which will supervise DNA data banks and DNA labs.

Two members of the committee - Lok Sabha MP and leader of AIMIM, Asaduddin Owaisi, and Rajya Sabha MP

Some members of the panel have expressed fears that the bill, when it becomes a law, could be used to target certain sections of society

and leader of CPI Binoy Viswam - had submitted their dissent notes to the panel, raising their concerns over issue of violation of individual's privacy and its adverse impact on marginalised and minority communities. It was, however, clarified that the DNA profiles to be stored are not for an entire population but for specified categories of individuals such as convicts and suspects of major crimes, relatives of missing persons so that their profiles can be compared with profiles of unidentified deceased individuals.

Suggesting "independent and impartial checks and balances at every stage of the process" in the backdrop of such concerns, the panel,

headed by RS member and Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, said the government must address concerns in Parliament and outside, and pitched for procedural fairness in collection of samples of accused while underlining that illegally obtained evidence is inadmissible in court.

Noting that the rights against self-incrimination have been widely accepted as a natural right and find a prominent place in the Constitution, the panel said, "This ensures that no person is forced to provide evidence that may incriminate him/her in any crime. There are no exceptions to this rule and all courts have accepted this as an inviolable guarantee.

It said, "This will enable the legal system to understand the technology's limitations, identify when it is appropriate to use DNA technology to solve crimes appropriate and over time, substantially minimise all possible errors. Widespread and extensive training is of paramount importance."