Human DNA profiling

Why in news?

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The government has told the Supreme Court that it was in the process of finalising a fresh version of the draft Human DNA profiling bill.

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What is the case?

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- The government’s submission in the apex court came in response to arguments that the absence of a national DNA database was hindering the identification of unclaimed bodies.
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- The court is hearing a petition by Lokniti Foundation, an NGO.
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- The NGO had suggested that maintaining of DNA profiles of bodies before their disposal could help in their identification by family members at a later stage.
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- Since the bodies cannot be identified using traditional methods, the perpetrators of the possible crime remained untraced and the family of the victims could not know about the fate of the victims.
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- It becomes difficult for the local police to identify persons who have no local connection and who have died without anyone complaining of death caused by any mischief.
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What are the highlights of the bill?

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- DNA profiling (also called DNA fingerprinting, DNA testing, or DNA typing)

is a forensic technique used to identify individuals by characteristics of their DNA.
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- The Bill was mainly aimed to assist law enforcement agencies in tackling crime but provides for DNA testing techniques to be used in other situations as well, like establishing parentage or blood relations between individuals.
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- Several provisions of the Bill came under heavy criticism on grounds of privacy, and reliability of technology.
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- The government decided not to introduce the Bill in Parliament and went in for fresh rounds of consultations to improve the provisions of the Bill.
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- The bill proposes to form a National DNA Data Bank and a DNA Profiling Board, and use the data for various specified purposes.
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- The proposed DNA Profiling Board will consist of molecular biology, human genetics, population biology, bioethics, social sciences, law and criminal justice experts.
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- The Board will define standards and controls for DNA profiling.
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- It will also certify labs and handle access of the data by law enforcement agencies.
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- There will be similar bodies at state levels.
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- The bill will also create a National DNA Data Bank, which will collect data from offenders, suspects, missing persons, unidentified dead bodies and volunteers.
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- It will profile and store DNA data in criminal cases like homicide, sexual assault, adultery and other crimes.
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- The data will be restricted and will be available only to the accused or the suspect.
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- A person facing imprisonment or death sentence can send a request for DNA profiling of related evidence to the court that convicted him.
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Source: The Indian Express

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