

Indian soldiers to undergo DNA profiling

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The pilot project titled, "Development of protocol for deoxy ribonucleotide (DNA) profiling (identification) and repository of personnel of armed forces" is currently in progress at Armed Forces Medical College, Pune. Initiated in the year 2012, the project is expected to go upto 2014, has been approved by the Armed Forces Medical Research Committee (AFMRC).

As per the information given out by the Defense Minister, Mr AK Antony in the parliament on April 22, 2013, the objectives of the project are to devise a protocol for collection, preservation and transportation of blood samples of the soldiers, maintain absolute accuracy in personal information and tagging of specimen and to devise protocol for procedure for identifying service personnel from any fragment of body tissue.

"Army has a well established procedure/ system for identification of a soldier in the forward/ battle zone. A soldier is either part of a sub unit (section, platoon) deployed on the border and every one recognizes him due to his physical attributes, or he moves out with a companion. Never a soldier is left alone in these areas. In addition every personnel has two metallic discs, one tied to his neck and other on the wrist. These discs have his Army Number engraved for identification," said the Minister while speaking about the manual identification process.

However, in the extreme conditions when the soldiers die due to mine blasts, the remains left are totally unidentifiable even by the family members. That is when the quick DNA profiling with the help of samples already deposited would be of critical help. In USA, the collection of DNA samples was made mandatory from the soldiers in the year 1992.