

ಪತ್ರಿಕಾ ತುಣುಕುಗಳು
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UAPA Bill gets Rajya Sabha nod

Congress, BSP back legislation cleared by the Lok Sabha on July 24

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
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The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019 that empowers the Union Home Ministry to designate individuals as terrorists was passed in the Rajya Sabha on Friday with the Congress and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supporting the legislation.

In the 240-member House, 147 members voted in favour of the Bill and 42 against.

Parties such as the Trinamool Congress, CPI(M), CPI, DMK, TDP, SP, AAP and the RJD opposed the Bill.

It was passed in the Lok Sabha on July 24. With the Rajya Sabha giving its assent, the Bill will soon be notified as a law.

Home Minister Amit Shah said gathering evidence against terrorists was a complex process, and the law would help security agencies remain two steps ahead of them.

He said the Samjhauta Express, Mecca Masjid and the Ajmer Dargah blasts in which former Rashtriya Swayamsevak (RSS) member Aseemanand and others were acquitted recently were registered due to "political vendetta" and there was an attempt to link it to a particu-

Hard line

The UAPA Bill, 2019, amends the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. Some highlights:

TERRORISM: Under the Act, the central government may designate an organisation as a terrorist organisation if it: (i) commits or participates in acts of terrorism, (ii) prepares for terrorism, (iii) promotes terrorism, or (iv) is involved in terrorism. The Bill additionally empowers the government to designate individuals as terrorists on the same grounds

SEIZURE OF PROPERTY: Under the Act, an investigating officer must obtain prior approval of the DGP to seize properties that may be connected with terrorism. If the investigation is conducted by an officer of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), the approval of the Director General, NIA is mandatory

INVESTIGATION: Under the Act, investigation of cases may be conducted by officers of the rank of DSP or ACP or above. Officers of the NIA, of the rank of Inspector or above, can also investigate cases



SOURCE: PRS LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH

lar religion. "The Samjhauta chargesheet was filed in 2012 and 2013. We only argued the case. Judge did not find anything, so the accused were acquitted. Who brought political agenda here?" Mr. Shah said.

This is the third contentious legislation that has been cleared in the Rajya Sabha despite the ruling party not having a majority.

Mr. Shah said it was important to identify terrorists

and not just organisations.

Attacking the Congress, he said the Opposition party should not talk about misuse and it should look into its past when Opposition leaders were jailed during the Emergency.

'Four-stage scrutiny'

Responding to concerns over the law being misused, he assured no one's human rights would be violated as a four-stage scrutiny with pro-

vision for appeals had been prescribed when individuals are declared terrorists.

Mr. Shah said all countries had laws to designate individuals as terrorists.

Elaborating on the track record of the National Investigation Agency, he said out of 278 terror cases registered by the agency, chargesheets had been filed in 204. Of the 54 cases where judgments had come, conviction has been made in 48. He said 221 persons were convicted and 92 acquitted by the courts. A total of 131 chargesheets had been filed from June 1, 2014 to July 2019.

Congress leader P. Chidambaram said his party was not against the law but was opposed to some amendments. He said the issue was that of liberty of an individual and if the law was passed, it would be struck down by courts. He asked why an individual should be named a terrorist when the organisation he belonged to has already been banned.

Digvijaya Singh said the Congress did not have faith in the government's intent. Rejecting the charge, Mr. Shah took a swipe at Mr. Singh saying, "Digvijaya Singhji seems angry. It is natural, [as] he has just lost an election."