

Need to take steps to address the problem of Corneal blindness in the country.-laid

SHRI SRIBHARAT MATHUKUMILLI (VISAKHAPATNAM): I highlight the plight of people suffering from corneal blindness in India. Imagine waking up one day and never seeing the faces of your loved ones again-this is the reality for over 1.2 million Indians, despite corneal transplants being a proven cure. We as policymakers have collectively failed by not being able to ensure access to a simple solution like a corneal transplant to 70,000 people out of 1 lakh people every year. The Government is considering a 'presumed consent' amendment under the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994, but global evidence suggests that merely assuming consent does not guarantee more donations. Instead, we must focus on proven, humane solutions like the consent-driven Hospital Cornea Retrieval Programme (HCRP), which has transformed lives in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Odisha, where there are no waiting lists for corneal transplants. The L.V. Prasad Eye Institute alone has restored sight to over 50,000 people. I urge the Government to expand hospital retrieval programs, invest in 50 high-functioning eye banks, train 500 corneal surgeons, and launch awareness campaigns to encourage voluntary donations. A consent-driven approach, supported by infrastructure and public trust, will help eliminate preventable blindness.