

Tharoor Moves Bill to Regulate Online Gaming

Congress MP says govt oversight needed to track suspicious bets and curb black money flow

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Mumbai: Senior Congress leader and a member of parliament from Thiruvananthapuram, Shashi Tharoor, introduced a private member's bill in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of parliament, seeking a regulatory mechanism for the largely unorganised online gaming sector, which has seen the entry of many new players in the last two years.

Tharoor told ET that while self-regulatory practices need to be followed by the industry, there is an urgent need to have a statutory framework with government oversight to ensure

service providers are following license conditions, to track suspicious betting patterns and to have some control over the money flow, to curb the generation of black money. He said the country needs a regulatory body, like the one he has proposed, in his Sports (Online Gaming and Prevention of Fraud) Bill.

"The main purpose of my bill is to preserve the integrity of sports. The bill is primarily divided into two parts for this purpose. One part recognises the offence of sports fraud and prescribes a special procedure to deal with it. The other part acknowledges the fact that the increasing commercial nature of sports increases financial incentives for vested interests to manipulate



Bill suggests procedure to deal with sports fraud & provides for regulation of online sports betting

present market for online gaming is worth \$360 million, which is expected to rise to \$1 billion by 2021.

sporting events, therefore it provides for the regulation of online sports betting activities," Tharoor said.

As per the All India Gaming Federation (AIGF), India has 120 million gamers and the number has seen more than a 30% jump on-year in the last three years. The 276th report of the Law Commission of India said that the

Tharoor's bill seeks to regulate online sports gaming, which basically means games involving the prediction of the results of a sporting event and placing a bet on the outcome, in part or in whole, by means of a telecommunication device. As fantasy gaming is in relation to an actual sporting event, it will also be covered by the ambit of this bill.

"There is an urgent need to have government intervention in order to streamline the industry, preserve integrity of sports and eliminate sports fraud," said Roland Landers, CEO, AIGF. "...AIGF is committed to dealing with issues pertaining to online gaming industry."