

## Private member's bill on Uniform Civil Code introduced in Rajya Sabha

**NEW DELHI:** A controversial private member's Bill that seeks to provide for a panel to prepare a Uniform Civil Code was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on Friday.

'The Uniform Civil Code in India Bill, 2020' was introduced in the Upper House amid protests from opposition parties.

BJP MP Kirodi Lal Meena moved for leave to introduce the Bill to provide for the constitution of the national inspection and investigation committee for preparation of a Uniform Civil Code and its implementation throughout India and for matters connected therewith during the private member's business.

However, opposition members from Trinamool Congress (TMC), Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Samajwadi Party (SP), Communist Party of India (CPI), CPI (Marxist), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), and Congress protested against the introduction of the Bill saying, if passed, it will "destroy" the social fabric and unity in diversity that is prevalent in the country.

With the Opposition members seeking withdrawal of the Bill, Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar called for division and the motion for introduction of the Bill was passed with 63 votes in favour and 23 against it.

In the past, although the Bill was listed for introduction, it was not moved in the Upper House.

The Bill envisages a collection of laws to protect the personal rights of all citizens without considering religion.

"We have a private members' Bill that is totally unconstitutional, unethical, anti-secular. It is being introduced as a private member's Bill by an indulgent government to test the waters in a very dangerous game. This is brinkmanship," Jawhar Sircar of the Trinamool Congress said.

He further said, "There is still time to refrain from making demonstrations of a temporary majority and inflict one sided opinion on a very secular and plural India."

MDMK MP Vaiko accused the ruling dispensation of "implementing one after another agenda of the RSS and BJP" and said, "They have finished Kashmir. Now they have come to common civil code."

He said it is leading towards "disaster of the country and its disintegration and minority people are terribly hurt".

Similarly, Abdul Wahab of Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) said the Bill has been attempted to be introduced many times in the past and "this is a sort of provocation deliberately the BJP" and asserted that the uniform civil code cannot be implemented in India.

Leader of the House, Piyush Goyal objected to the allegations of the Opposition members.

"It is a legitimate right of a member to raise an issue, which is a directive principle of the Constitution...Let this subject be debated in the House. At this stage to cast aspersion on the government, to use the names of the very members of the constituent assembly to try to criticise at the introduction stage is uncalled for," he retorted.

Manoj Kumar Jha of the RJD said when the Bill came for introduction on many occasions earlier, the BJP requested Meena not to proceed further and good sense prevailed then.

"I am witness to six such occasions. What has changed I don't know," he said, adding at a time when cities, villages and families have been "divided", if such Bill was brought it would further divide the country.

Ram Gopal Yadav of SP said the Bill was against provisions of the Constitution related to fundamental rights and it should not have been allowed it to be introduced in the Upper House at all, requesting the Chairman to ask Meena to withdraw the Bill.

Opposing the Bill, Fauzia Khan of NCP said, "The beauty of Indian democracy and the uniqueness of India in the whole world lies in its unity in diversity and our diversity is extremely important. It has to be retained and it cannot be ravaged like this."

Calling for withdrawal of the Bill, she said, "It is not in consonance with the uniqueness of our country. It is just not a Muslim-Hindu issue. It is a question of diversity in every way."

Congress members L Hanumanthaiah, Imran Pratapgarhi and Jebi Mather Hisham along with CPI(M) members Elamaram Kareem, Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya, V Sivadasan, John Brittas and AA Rahim also opposed the Bill saying it would lead to further polarisation in the country.

Tiruchi Siva (DMK) and Sandosh Kumar P (CPI) also opposed the Bill.

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